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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Regulation on Nature Restoration – Agricultural, forestry and maritime aspects <i>- Information from the Commission</i>

Delegations will find in the Annex a background document on the agricultural, forestry and maritime aspects of the proposal for a Nature Restoration Law. The Commission will provide information on this subject under “Any other business” at the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 21 November 2022.

Regulation on Nature Restoration – Agricultural, forestry and maritime aspects

1. On 22 June 2022, the Commission adopted its proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, which was first announced in 2020 as part of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 in the context of the European Green Deal.
2. The proposal combines an overarching **restoration objective for the long-term recovery of nature in the EU's land and sea areas** with **binding restoration targets for specific ecosystems** (e.g. wetlands, rivers, forests, grasslands, marine ecosystems). The goal is to put in place restoration measures, which together shall cover at least 20% of EU land and sea by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. By this, it contributes to promoting a transition to more sustainable food production, which will have an impact on agriculture, forestry and maritime sectors, as they all rely heavily on healthy ecosystems.
3. As far as agriculture is concerned, the proposal aims at ensuring **consistency with the Common Agricultural Policy**, as one of its general objectives is to support and strengthen environmental protection, including biodiversity. Conditionality standards, which define environmental and climate-related rules to be complied with in order to receive direct payments, play a role in this regard, notably the standard for good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC) 8 on the maintenance of non-productive features and area to improve on-farm biodiversity, together with eco-schemes or management commitments under rural development.
4. **Terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems** are among the target ecosystems of this proposal (Art. 4 and 5). The respective articles propose objectives aimed at restoring and re-establishing habitat types as well as species' habitats and ensuring that habitat types do not deteriorate before or after restoration.
5. Another target of this proposal is to establish **obligations to remove river barriers** (Art. 7). This measure is intended to contribute to the natural longitudinal and lateral connectivity of rivers and to the EU key goal of having 25 000 km of free-flowing rivers by 2030. It would also help restore river areas and floodplains.

6. Specific targets of interest for agriculture are those for the restoration of **pollinator populations** (Art. 8) and of **agricultural ecosystems** (Art. 9). Specific biodiversity indicators for agricultural ecosystems (grassland butterfly index, stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soils, share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features) are set out in Annex IV and their values should increase over time, according to the proposal.
7. The proposal also includes obligations based on six indicators for **forest ecosystems** (Art. 10) which would have to increase over time: standing and lying deadwood, the share of forests with uneven-aged structure, forest connectivity, common forest bird index, and stock of organic carbon.
8. With a view to the preparation of their national restoration plans, Member States would be required to identify and map the agricultural and forest areas in need of restoration, in particular the areas that, due to intensification or other management factors, need **enhanced connectivity and landscape diversity** (Art. 11).
9. In the Council, the proposal is discussed in the “**Environment**” configuration. The competent preparatory body is the Environment Working Party, which is examining the proposal at technical level.
10. In light of the impacts of the proposal on EU agriculture, forests and waters, it is opportune to allow for a **thorough clarification of proposed targets** related to these sectors.
11. Against this background, the European Commission will inform the “**Agriculture and Fisheries**” Council on 21 November 2022 on agricultural, forestry and maritime aspects of Regulation on Nature Restoration.