



Briefing: IPCC-IPBES Working Group report

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CAN Briefing on IPCC-IPBES Working Group report

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Climate Action Network (CAN) is the world's largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 1500 members in over 130 countries.

www.climate-network.org

Background

In June 2021, for the first time ever IPCC and IPBES scientists produced a joint report on "["Tackling Biodiversity & Climate Crises Together and Their Combined Social Impacts"](#)

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the intergovernmental body that provides policymakers with objective scientific assessments about the state of knowledge regarding the planet's biodiversity, ecosystems and the contributions they make to people, as well as the tools and methods to protect and sustainably use these vital natural assets. IPBES was established as an independent body by Governments in 2012 and has 137 member states.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide political leaders with periodic scientific assessments concerning all climate change issues, its implications and risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation strategies. It has 195 member states.

NB It is important to note that the workshop report has not been subjected to usual governmental IPBES or IPCC review procedures, and that IPBES and IPCC co-sponsorship of the workshop does not imply the full scientific IPBES or IPCC endorsement or approval of the workshop or its conclusions.

However, CAN strongly welcomes that the report has been developed by leading global scientists associated with both IPBES and IPCC and is speaking refreshingly clear language – a straightforward presentation of the evidence without the political influence of governmental inputs or changes by those who might have had a different agenda.

CAN believes that the dual crisis of climate and biodiversity needs to be tackled together by all governments and stakeholders. It also needs to include the crisis of poverty and social justice in all developing countries as well as overall consumption and lifestyle behaviour by the global rich and middle classes. To see CAN's more detailed views on this subject please read our 2021 briefing on [The Role of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Climate Change Mitigation Ambition and Adaptation & Resilience](#).

CAN supports the proposal by several countries to protect up to 50% of all land and oceans in a sustainable, participatory and democratic manner by 2030 to allow for recovery of biodiversity and natural carbon

sequestration potentials. CAN urges in addition that all remaining land and oceans must be restored and managed in a sustainable, precautionary, ecological way for all species, peoples and the natural ecosystems.

Key points

- The joint climate and biodiversity crises resulting from human activities threaten nature, human lives, livelihoods and well-being around the world. And they must be tackled together.
- Climate change is threatening nature and people e.g. less food and drinking water; while biodiversity loss is affecting climate change through losses in carbon sequestration and impacts on nitrogen and water cycles.
- Increasing energy consumption, overexploitation of natural resources and unprecedented transformation of land-, freshwater- and seascapes over the past 150 years have paralleled technological advances and supported better living standards for many but have also led to changes in climate and the accelerating decline of biological diversity worldwide, both negatively impacting many aspects of good quality of life. A sustainable society requires both a stabilized climate and healthy ecosystems. However, 77% of land (excluding Antarctica) and 87% of the area of the ocean have been modified by the direct effects of human activities. These changes are associated with the loss of 83% of wild mammal biomass, and half that of plants. **Livestock and humans now account for nearly 96% of all mammal biomass on Earth**, and more species are threatened with extinction than ever before in human history. Climate change increasingly interacts with these processes
- Solutions are still achievable but will require transformative change with rapid and far-reaching actions of a type never before attempted, building on ambitious emissions reductions.
- Solving some of the strong and apparently unavoidable trade-offs between climate and biodiversity will entail a profound collective shift of individual and shared values concerning nature – such as moving away from the conception of economic progress based solely on GDP growth, to one that balances human development with multiple values of nature for a good quality of life, while not overshooting biophysical and social limits.
- Narrowly focused actions to combat climate change without considering wider concerns and environmental and social precaution can directly and indirectly harm nature and vice-versa, but many measures exist that can make significant positive contributions in both areas
- It is important also to address the lack of effective governance systems and mechanisms to improve integration between solutions for climate change and biodiversity

Solutions that deliver for climate and biodiversity

- **Stopping the loss and degradation of carbon- and species-rich ecosystems on land and in the ocean**, especially forests, wetlands, peatlands, grasslands and savannahs; coastal ecosystems e.g. mangroves, salt marshes, kelp forests and seagrass meadows; as well as deep water and polar carbon-rich habitats. Reducing and eliminating deforestation and forest degradation can reduce GHGs by a wide range from 0.4-5.8 gigatonnes of CO₂e/yr.
- **Restoring carbon- and species-rich ecosystems**. Authors highlight restoration is among cheapest and quickest nature-based climate mitigation measures to implement – offering much-needed habitat for plants and animals, enhances biodiversity resilience in the face of climate change, with many other benefits such as flood regulation, coastal protection, enhanced water quality, reduced soil erosion and ensuring pollination. It can also create jobs and income, especially when taking into consideration the needs and access rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

- **Increasing sustainable agricultural and forestry practices** to improve the capacity to adapt to climate change, enhance biodiversity, increase carbon storage and reduce emissions. These include measures such as diversification of planted crop and forest species, agroforestry and agroecology. Improved management of cropland and grazing systems, such as soil conservation and the reduction of fertilizer use, is jointly estimated by the report to offer annual climate change mitigation potential of 3-6 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.
- **Enhancing and better-targeting conservation actions, coordinated with and supported by strong climate adaptation and innovation.** Protected areas currently represent about 15% of land and 7.5% of the ocean. There is the need to increase intact and effectively protected areas (PAs) **to 30 to 50 percent of all ocean and land surface areas.** Better PA management is also required. Conservation measures e.g. species migration corridors and planning for shifting climates should add to that and help better integration of peoples with nature to assure equity of access and use of nature's contributions to people.
- **Eliminating subsidies that support local and national activities harmful to biodiversity** can also add up to support climate change mitigation e.g., halting deforestation, overfertilization or overfishing, as well as adaptation and building resilience.

Measures focused on climate mitigation and adaptation that can have negative impacts on nature and nature's contributions to people.

- **Planting bioenergy crops in monocultures over a very large share of land areas.** Such crops are detrimental to ecosystems and food security when deployed at very large scales. At small scales, alongside pronounced and rapid reductions in fossil-fuel emissions, dedicated bioenergy crops for electricity production or fuels may provide co-benefits for climate adaptation and biodiversity.
- **Planting trees in ecosystems that have not historically been forests and afforestation with monocultures – especially with exotic tree species.** This should be avoided and priority should be given to natural recovery of degraded ecosystems including forests with indigenous species.
- **Where nature-based solutions are used as carbon offsets, they are most effective when applied subject to strict conditions and exclusions, and not used to delay mitigation actions in other sectors.** The use of offsets has come under increasing scrutiny because of challenges of additionality, problems with overstated emissions reductions and double-counting, difficulty in monitoring and verification, and the unclear permanence of such actions. Ideally, the appropriate use of offsets would raise ambitions, enhance financing for nature, and provide for the possibility of tackling residual emissions mid-century, but not create the conditions for a lack of urgency on greenhouse gas emissions reductions currently.
- **Increasing irrigation capacity** - often leads to water conflicts, dam building and long-term soil degradation from salinization.
- **Any measures that focus too narrowly on climate change mitigation should be evaluated in terms of their overall benefits and risks,** such as some zero carbon components of the energy transition like manufacturing batteries generating surges of highly unsustainable mining activity or consuming large amounts of freshwater and energy; or building dams and sea walls that interfere with migratory species and habitat fragmentation.