

WCS EU welcomes this opportunity to provide feedback to inform the development of EU bioeconomy policies. WCS EU is a Belgian NGO supporting the conservation of landscapes and seascapes globally. Our response is also submitted on behalf of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the world's largest field-based conservation organization, with which we are affiliated.

We highlight here two vital considerations for new EU bioeconomy policies:

1. **Building a successful bioeconomy sector requires protecting and enhancing the long-term resilience of the natural capital and biodiversity on which it depends.** This often requires going beyond conservation of current biodiversity values to restoring ecosystems that support the natural resource base. A key focus should be the protection, conservation, and restoration of ecological integrity (defined as ecosystem structure, function, and composition), with a focus on areas of high ecological integrity. Such areas support biodiversity, cultural and social values, are resilient to climate change, and provide climate mitigation and adaptation benefits. It is critical that supporting the bioeconomy is not used to justify the unsustainable exploitation of wildlife species.

A new EU bioeconomy strategy must therefore support the implementation of existing biodiversity policies, notably the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework GBF), the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the European Ocean Pact, the EU Action Plan on protecting and restoring marine ecosystems, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the EU Deforestation Regulation, and the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking. In particular, the strategy should contribute to the implementation of Goal A of the GBF (and associated 8 targets), *“Substantially increase the area of natural ecosystems by maintaining, enhancing or restoring the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems”*.

2. **A new EU bioeconomy strategy must include the external dimension (i.e. outside of Europe), including support to develop the bioeconomy and enhance natural capital and biodiversity of partner countries.** Most global biodiversity lies in the tropics and the ocean, but is highly impacted by EU policies, trade, and consumption patterns. For example, 10% of global deforestation is directly related to EU trade and consumption, although forest cover is increasing within the EU. The EU has a responsibility to reverse the negative impacts on biodiversity of its trade

and consumption patterns, including through increased investments to protect and restore natural capital, which is also vital to the EU's own economy, prosperity and security.

In many contexts, this will require a focus on ensuring and strengthening rights for Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LCs) and increasing their capacity to manage and govern land and natural resources. It will also require support for investment and development pathways which are compatible with or enhance biodiversity, ecological integrity and the natural resource base. Support for research at the science-policy interface is required to increase knowledge and explore develop integrated approaches to development as outlined in the recent Assessment Report on the Interlinkages among Biodiversity, Water, Food and Health, by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service (IPBES).<sup>1</sup> Supporting the development of the bioeconomy in partner countries outside of the EU will contribute to achieving the green economy goals of the EU Global Gateway investment programme.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ict.ipbes.net/ipbes-ict-guide/data-and-knowledge-management/citations-of-ipbes-assessments/nexus-assessment>