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Citizens, nature and industry all need healthy rivers and lakes, groundwater and bathing waters. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) focuses on ensuring good qualitative and quantitative health, i.e. on reducing and removing pollution and on ensuring that there is enough water to support wildlife at the same time as human needs.Since 2000, the WFD has been the main law for water protection in Europe. It applies to inland, transitional and coastal surface waters as well as groundwaters. It ensures an integrated approach to water management, respecting the integrity of whole ecosystems, including by regulating individual pollutants and setting corresponding regulatory standards. It is based on a river basin district approach to make sure that neighbouring countries cooperate to manage the rivers and other bodies of water they share. The key objectives of the WFD are set out in Article 4 of the Directive. It requires Member States to use their River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Programmes of Measures (PoMs) to protect and, where necessary, restore water bodies in order to reach good status, and to prevent deterioration. Good status means both good chemical and good ecological status. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the primary legislation. It is supported by two so-called daughter directives on the quality and quantity of groundwater and on the quality of surface water. The WFD contains provisions regarding the deadlines for meeting the objectives of the Directive, as well as provisions on exemptions. The annexes to the WFD specify details as regards, for example, monitoring requirements, the criteria for assessing water body status, and the contents of the RBMPs.At present, the WFD includes in its Annex X the list of priority substances that Member States must monitor in surface waters, but the standards for them are set in the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (EQSD) and must be met to achieve good surface water chemical status in accordance with WFD Article 4 and Annex V point 1.4.3. The WFD also requires Member States to set and meet Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) for substances of national concern, i.e. river basin specific pollutants; the monitoring of which currently contributes to the assessment of ecological status. This list of priority substances needs to be reviewed, and updated if necessary, every 6 years.Similarly, the list of pollutants and standards of EU-wide concern in Annex I to the Groundwater Directive (GWD) must also be reviewed every 6 years; these contribute to the assessment of chemical status in groundwater. That Directive also complements the WFD by including requirements as regards pollutant trends and quantitative status.ReviewIn December 2019, a Fitness Check concluded that the water legislation is broadly fit for purpose, with room for improvement related to investments, implementation, integrating water into other policies, chemical pollution, administrative simplification and digitalisation. The key findings show that the directives have led to a higher level of protection for water bodies and flood risk management than could have been expected without them. The objectives of the directives are as relevant now as they were at the time of the adoption, if not more. They contribute to achieving a range of sustainable development goals.Proposal to revise the water legislationIn October 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal to revise the lists of pollutants in surface water and groundwater. Some other amendments are also proposed.If the proposal is agreed by the Council and the European Parliament, Member States will be required to take measures to meet the quality standards for the additional pollutants, and to make their monitoring data available on a more frequent basis. Many European river basins are international, crossing administrative and territorial borders. Therefore a common understanding and approach is crucial to the successful and effective implementation of the Directive.The latest implementation reports can be found here.River Basin Management PlansThese are the key tools for implementing the WFD. They are drawn up after extensive public consultation and are valid for a six-year period.Other key documents and links to the reported River basin management plans and other important information about implementing the Water Framework Directive are available here and under implementation reports.Several International River Basin Districts have also published River Basin Management Plans: Danube, Elbe, Ems, Finnish-Norwegian International River Basin District,Rhine,Scheldt / l'Escaut, Sava Commission (ISRBC)Common Implementation Strategy (CIS)The implementation of the WFD raises a number of shared technical challenges for the Member States, the Commission, the Candidate and EEA Countries as well as stakeholders and NGOs. In order to address the challenges in a co-operative and coordinated way, the Member States, Norway and the Commission agreed on a Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) for the Water Framework Directive only five months after the entry into force of the Directive. The CIS aims to ensure the coherent and harmonious implementation of the WFD and its daughter directives.Working Groups and Guidance documentsWithin this framework, several technical Working Groups operate, for example by producing Guidance documents on technical aspects, key events and additional thematic documents.Organisations interested in joining the Strategic Co-ordination Group, or any of the CIS Working Groups, should send their application to the following email address: ENV-WATERec [dot] europa [dot] eu (ENV-WATER[at]ec[dot]europa[dot]eu). The application should be accompanied by all the relevant supporting documents, including justification that the organisation fulfils the eligibility criteria set out in the Rules of Procedure.Useful linksList of national competent authorities and relevant national implementation websites.Implementation Reports For questions about EU environmental policy, please contact Europe Direct. Pilot project to evaluate and address the presence of lindane and HCH in the EU (Tauw, 2022)The main project deliverable was to compile an inventory for sites that may have been affected by HCH. The sites in this inventory include lindane and HCH production and processing sites, waste deposits and landfills, storage facilities and waste treatment plants. For each EU Member State, a report featuring a country-specific list of such sites was prepared. Other deliverables are a report about the use and legacy of HCH in the EU, and support in developing an EU-wide strategy for sustainably managing HCH-impacted sites.Project summaryThe use and legacy of HCH in the EU (a guide to identify potentially HCH-impacted sites)Outline of a strategy to resolve the legacy of lindane production in the EUSummary report EU-wide inventory(AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK)Inventory of sites that are potentially impacted by HCH in EU Member States(map)Providing support in relation to the implementation of soil and land-related Sustainable Development Goals at EU level (Wageningen Environmental Research, 2019)This project aimed to analyse the state of play of the implementation of land and soil-related SDGs in the EU and to compile and communicate good practices and provide recommendations for the implementation of land- and soil-related SDGs in the EU.The conference, 'Soil and the SDGs - Challenges and need for action', was also organised and took place in November 2019.Soils4EU: Providing support in relation to the implementation of the EU Soil Thematic Strategy (Deltares, 2019)This study aimed to give insight into many aspects of soil management or land management by producing six in-depth reports that provide scientific background on a range of soil and soil policy-related issues in Europe and three policy briefs:Inventory and Assessment of Soil Protection Policy Instruments in EU Member States(Ecologic Institute, 2017)This project (see here) aimed to take stock of existing soil protection policies and measures at the EU and Member State levels. Anonline inventory of soil protection policy instruments(the Soil Wiki) has been developed. The Soil Wiki was compiled as an internal working tool to provide an overview of soil-relevant policy instruments at EU level. Therefore, the European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study.See older studies on soil Agriresearch factsheet: SOILS (June 2019)EJP SOIL (2020-2025): Towards climate-smart sustainable management of agricultural soilsEXCALIBUR (2019-2024): Exploiting the multifunctional potential of belowground biodiversity in horticultural farmingSOILDIVERAGRO (2019-2024): Soil biodiversity enhancement in European agroecosystems to promote their stability and resilience by external input reduction and crop performance increaseRELACS (2018-2022): Replacement of Contentious Inputs in Organic Farming SystemsDIVERFARMING (2017-2022): Crop diversification and low-input farming across Europe: From practitioners' engagement and ecosystem services to increased revenues and value chain organisationBEST4SOIL (2018-2021): Boosting 4 BEST practices for SOIL health in EuropeSOILCARE (2016-2021): Soil care for profitable and sustainable crop production in EuropeCIRCASA (2017-2020): Coordination of International Research Cooperation on Soil Carbon Sequestration in AgricultureiSQAPER (2015-2020): Good agricultural management practices lead to better soil qualityRECARE (2013-2018): Preventing and Remediating degradation of soils in Europe through land care Soil Data Maps(JRC, European Commission)EUROPEAN SOIL DATA CENTRE(ESDAC) is the thematic centre for soil-related data in Europe. Its ambition is to be the single reference point for and to host all relevant soil data and information at European level. A web-based map viewer is available.Land Use and Coverage Area frame Survey(LUCAS): Eurostat has carried out this survey every three years since 2006 to identify changes in the EU in land use and land cover. The latest published LUCAS survey dates from 2018. It provides observations at more than 330,000 points surveyed in the EU Member States that are the basis for the statistical report. Soil data is collected and analysed through theLUCAS Soil Modulefor a range of chemical, physical and biological parameters. The results are available from ESDAC for around 22,000 LUCAS points.Land take viewer: Providing a set of dashboards giving an overview of the land take and net land take processes for Europe derived from the Corine land cover data series.Inventory of sites that are potentially impacted by HCH in EU member states. Healthy soils are essential for achieving climate neutrality, a clean and circular economy and stopping desertification and land degradation. They are also essential to reverse biodiversity loss, provide healthy food and safeguard human health. The EU soil strategy for 2030 provides the framework and concrete steps towards protecting and restoring soils, and ensuring that they are used sustainably. As part of this, a new Soil Monitoring Law has been proposed to ensure a level playing field and a high level of environmental and health protection. It is a key deliverable of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and will contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal. 2023 Proposal for a Directive on Soil Monitoring Over 60% of European soils are unhealthy and scientific evidence shows that soils are further degrading due to unsustainable management of the land, sealing, contamination and overexploitation, combined with the impact from climate change and extreme weather events. Degraded soils reduce the provision of ecosystem services such as food, feed, fibre, timbre, nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, pest control or water regulation. The loss of these essential soil ecosystem services costs the EU at least 50 billion euro per year. The new law aims to address key soil threats in the EU, such as erosion, floods and landslides, loss of soil organic matter, salinisation, contamination, compaction, sealing, as well as loss of soil biodiversity. The new Soil Monitoring Law provides a legal framework to help achieve healthy soils by 2050. It will do so by putting in place a solid and coherent monitoring framework for all soils across the EU so Member States can take measures to regenerate degraded soils making sustainable soil management the norm in the EU. Member States will have to define which practices should be implemented by soil managers and which should be banned because they cause soil degradation requesting Member States to identify potentially contaminated sites, investigate these sites and address unacceptable risks for human health and the environment, thereby contributing to a toxic-free environment by 2050. Previous and upcoming actions: European Parliament approves final textTrilogue agreement reachedCommission adopts proposal for a Soil Monitoring LawCommission adopts EU Soil Strategy for 2030 For questions about EU environmental policy, please contact Europe Direct. This EU Ecolabel group covers gardening products such as growing media and soil improvers. The EU Ecolabel guarantees that goods within this category comply with criteria aimed at reducing soil and water pollution and limiting the concentrations of heavy metals in the ground. This label also guarantees that the products are recyclable as well as made of renewable and recycled materials. Do you need more information about this product group? Please fill the contact form. of EU food comes from soil of EU soils are unhealthy lost every year in the EU due to soil degradation Soils are vital for achieving key objectives of the European Green Deal, with the EU's ultimate goal being to ensure healthy soils across the region by 2050, aligning with its Zero Pollution ambition.To protect human health and the environment, the EUs soil policy aims to improve soils by:-Taking measures to protect and restore soils, ensuring that they are used sustainably;Developing the knowledge base and supporting soil research;Raising awareness about the vital importance of soils.The new Soil Monitoring Law, set for approval by 2025, will help achieve these objectives and mark the first-ever EU legislation on soils (view the public consultation here). See below for more on this. It aims to protect and restore soils and ensure they are used sustainably.The EU works with partners worldwide to combat land and soil degradation and desertification.Its main goal is to establish 100 living labs and lighthouses to transition towards healthy soils by 2030.Data platform to help monitor progress towards the European soil health objectives and targets.Other sources of information on the soil and land, including reports, studies and funded projects. The Commission has prepared a set of best practice guidelines to limit, mitigate or compensate soil sealing. Soil sealing refers to the covering of soil surfaces with materials like concrete and asphalt, typically for new buildings, roads, parking areas, and other public and private spaces. Following the commitment set in the Soil Strategy for 2030, these guidelines are under review.Soil sealing is a major contributor to soil degradation in the EU. This practice impacts fertile agricultural land, endangers biodiversity, increases the risks of flooding and water scarcity, and contributes to global warming. For questions about EU environmental policy, please contact Europe Direct. Nitrogen is a crucial nutrient that helps plants and crops grow, but high concentrations are harmful to people and nature. Pure, clean water is vital to human health and to natural ecosystems. Excess nitrogen from agricultural sources is one of the main causes of water pollution in Europe. Nitrates and organic nitrogen compounds from fertilizer and manure enter groundwater through leaching and reach surface water through runoff from agricultural fields.A high level of nitrate makes water unsuitable as drinking water. In rivers, lakes and marine waters, nitrogen and other nutrients, in particular phosphorus, stimulate the growth of algae. At moderate levels, algae serve as food for aquatic organisms, including fish. However, excessive nutrient concentration in water systems will cause algae to grow excessively. This affects the natural ecosystem and can lead to depletion of the oxygen in the water. This phenomenon, known as eutrophication, has negative consequences for biodiversity, fisheries and recreational activities. Both phosphorous and nitrogen play a role in eutrophication, but while the main cause of eutrophication in fresh water is phosphorus, it is mainly caused by nitrogen in marine water. The Nitrates Directive aims to protect water quality across Europe by preventing nitrates from agricultural sources that pollute ground and surface waters and by promoting the use of good farming practices. The Directive aims to reduce water pollution caused by nitrates used in agriculture by monitoring nitrate concentrations of water bodies designating nitrate vulnerable zones establishing codes of good agricultural practices and measures to prevent and reduce water pollution from nitrates annual cost of nitrogen lossesagricultural nitrogen input to aquatic systems caused by livestock productionammonia emissions from agriculture to atmosphere caused by livestock production The Nitrates Directive requires EU Member States to monitor the quality of waters and to identify areas that drain into polluted waters or at risk of pollution. These concern waters that due to agricultural activities are eutrophic or could contain a concentration of more than 50 mg/l of nitrates. Those areas are defined as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs). The Nitrates Directive forms an integral part of the overarchingWater Framework Directive and is one of the key laws protecting waters against agricultural pressures. Evaluation of the Directive The Commission has launched a public consultationon the evaluation of the Nitrates Directive. Interested parties such as farmers, industries, NGOs, citizens, public administrations, water authorities and others are invited to share their views until8 March 2024.The evaluation will assess if the Nitrates Directive remains fit for purpose. Find out more about the evaluation. On19 April 2024the Commission launched a public consultationlasting until 17 May on a Commission Directive amending Annex III of the Nitrates Directive. Designate Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)areas of land that drain into polluted waters or waters at risk of pollution and which contribute to nitrate pollution; orEU Member States can also choose to apply measures (see below) to the whole territory (instead of designating NVZs)the current status of NVZs and whole territory designations can be viewed using the map viewerEstablish Codes of Good Agricultural Practice to be implemented by farmers on a voluntary basis, includingmeasures limiting the periods when nitrogen fertilisers can be applied on land to target application to periods when crops require nitrogen and prevent nutrient losses to watersmeasures limiting the conditions for fertiliser application (on steeply sloping ground, frozen or snow-covered ground, near water courses, etc.) to prevent nitrate losses from leaching and run-offrequirement for a minimum storage capacity for livestock manure; andcrop rotations, soil winter cover and catch crops to prevent nitrate leaching and run-off during wet seasonsEstablish action programmes to be implemented by farmers within NVZs on a compulsory basis, includingmeasures already included in Codes of Good Agricultural Practice that become mandatory in NVZs; andother measures, such as limitation of fertiliser application (mineral and organic), taking into account crop needs, all nitrogen inputs and soil nitrogen supply, maximum amount of livestock manure to be applied (corresponding to 170 kg nitrogen/ha/year);recommendations for establishing action programmes are available for each type of measure to be included in action programmes, according to the pedo climatic region in Europe, so as to minimise the risk of water pollution.the Action Programmes need to be revised at least every four years. National action programmes under the Nitrates Directive are accessible in theNAPINFO database.Identify polluted water, or waters at risk of pollutionsurface freshwaters, in particular those used or intended for the abstraction of drinking water, containing or that could contain (if no action is taken to reverse the trend) a concentration of more than 50 mg/l of nitratesgroundwater containing or that could contain (if no action is taken to reverse the trend) more than 50 mg/l of nitratesfreshwater bodies, estuaries, coastal waters and marine waters found to be eutrophic or that could become eutrophic (if no action is taken to reverse the trend) Every four years, EU Member States are required to report on:- nitrate concentrations in groundwaters and surface waters eutrophication of surface waters assessment of the impact of (an) action programme(s) on water quality and agricultural practices revision of NVZs and (an) action programme(s) estimation of future trends in water quality These four-yearly reports produced by Member States are used as the basis for a four-yearly report by the European Commission on the implementation of the Directive. For questions about EU environmental policy, please contact Europe Direct. Land degradation and desertification are issues of both global and EU concern. They are caused by many factors including population growth, poor land management, climate change and deforestation. Actions to address land degradation are key to address other environmental issues such as climate change, water and biodiversity, as well as ensuring food security and alleviating poverty. The EU is working with its partners and with the international community in many ways to address the challenges related to soil and land degradation and is active in developing a global policy framework for soil and land protection and restoration. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015. Healthy land and soils play an important role in achieving more than half of the goals. These include the goals on food security, food safety and human health, urban development, reducing poverty, clean water, responsible production, land management, climate change and overall biodiversity preservation. Target 15.3 on land degradation neutralitycommits the following: by 2030 to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world The UNs Food and Agriculture Organization has developed a common vision and an integrated approach towards sustainability across agriculture, forestry and fisheries.Soil protectionfeatures high in theorganisations workand a number of policy, knowledge base and awareness raising activities have been developed over the recent years. The organisation established a voluntary Global Soil Partnership in 2012. The main objective is topromotesustainable soil management and improve soil governance to guarantee healthy and productive soils. Regional soil partnerships were also established, including the European Soil Partnership to provide guidance on goals and priorities within specific regions and to develop relevant activities within each region. Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Established in 1994, the UNCCD is the most ratified environmental convention. It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Its objective is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in affected countries, particularly in Africa.Thirteen EU Member States have declared that they are affected parties under the Convention. The Conventions 197 parties, including the EU and its 27 Member States, work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands maintain and restore land and soil productivity and mitigate the effects of drought As land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, the UNCCD collaborates closely with the other two Rio Conventions: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 2017, the UNCCD adopted its 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, which focuses on achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3. The European Commission funds a large number of land degradation and desertification-related projects, such as theSoil Atlas for Europe and theWorld Atlas on Desertification, as well as the Economics of Land Degradationand the Great Green Wall initiatives. The Convention on Biological Diversity entered into force in 1993 to conserve biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. In 2002 anInternational Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversitywas established. This initiative should make better use of the current knowledge on soil biodiversity and ecosystem services rather than starting new research. In 2018, several targets relevant to soil and land protection were adopted. The mostprominent one promotes the conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity. Find out more about the EUs aim for an ambitious global agreement at the next Conference of the Parties (COP 15). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, agreed in 1992, is the main international treaty on fighting climate change. Its objective is toprevent dangerous man-made interferencewith the global climate system. The EU and all its member countries are among the 197 Parties of the Convention. Climate change creates additional stresses on land, exacerbating existing risks to livelihoods, biodiversity, human and ecosystem health, infrastructure, and food systems. Increasing impacts on land are projected under all future greenhouse gas emission scenarios. Many land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation can also combat desertification and land degradation and enhance food security. Many activities for combating desertification can contribute to climate change adaptation with mitigation co-benefits, as well as to halting biodiversity loss with sustainable development co-benefits to society. Avoiding, reducing and reversing desertification would enhance soil fertility, increase carbon storage in soils and biomass, while benefitting agricultural productivity and food security. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provides governments with scientific information to develop climate policies. In particular the Special reportClimate Change and Land(2019) provides scientific evidence on how land degradation is increasing climate change, how climate change is accelerating land degradation processes, notably desertification, and how many land-related responses that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation can also combat desertification and land degradation and enhance food security. The EU Soil Strategy is designed to achieve the following goals by 2050:-Ensure that all EU soil ecosystems are healthy and more resilient, enabling them to continue delivering essential services.Achieve no net land take and reduce soil pollution to levels healthy for humans and ecosystems.Establish the protection of soils, sustainable management practices, and restoration of degraded soils as common EU standards. The strategy contains several key actions, ultimately aimed at achieving optimal soil health by 2050. These include:-Developing a dedicated legislative proposal on soil health by 2025.Promoting sustainable soil management as standard practice through a program that allows landowners to have their soils tested at no cost, and sharing best practices.Restoring managed and drained peatlands to address and adapt to climate change.Evaluating the need for a legally binding soil passport to foster a circular economy and enhance the reuse of clean soil.Developing a common methodology to assess desertification and land degradation.Increasing research, data collection, and monitoring efforts through societal engagement and mobilisation of financial resources. Previous and upcoming actions: The former Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection from 2012 identifies the key soil threats in the EU as erosion, floods and landslides, loss of soil organic matter, salinisation, contamination, compaction, sealing and loss of soil biodiversity. It consists of a Communication (COM (2006) 231) from the Commission to the other European institutions, a proposal for a framework Directive (COM(2006) 232), and an Impact Assessment (SEC(2006) 620).The 2012 policy report on the implementation of this strategy contains an overview of actions taken to implement the four pillars of the strategy, namely awareness raising, research, integration, and legislation. For questions about EU environmental policy, please contact Europe Direct. The zero pollution vision for 2050 is for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, that respect the boundaries with which our planet can cope, thereby creating a toxic-free environment. This is translated intokey 2030 targets to speed up reducing pollution at source. These targets include: improving air quality to reduce the number of premature deaths caused by air pollution by 55%; improving water quality by reducing waste, plastic litter at sea (by 50%) and microplastics released into the environment (by 30%); improving soil quality by reducing nutrient losses and chemical pesticides use by 50%; reducing by 25% the EU ecosystems where air pollution threatens biodiversity; reducing the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30%, and significantly reducing waste generation and by 50% residual municipal waste. The Action Plan aims to strengthen the EU green, digital and economic leadership, whilst creating a healthier, socially fairer Europe and planet. It provides a compass to mainstream pollution prevention in all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps. The European Green Deal announced headline actions on zero pollution.You can track the progress of the individual flagships and actions announced in the Zero Pollution Action Plan:See progress on actionsThe second Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook, published on 3 March 2025, offers an updated snapshot of the current state of the pollution in the EU, and answers questions on the pollution trends over the past years, and whether we are likely to achieve 2030 zero pollution targets.See progress on targetsThe Dashboard, released on 3 March 2025, tells you how clean your region is and which EU capital cities are the cleanest.See Towards zero pollution in regions and capital cities Dashboard Previous and upcoming zero pollution actions Air: EU action to improve air quality and reduce air pollution. Chemicals: EU action to ensure chemicals are safe, for health and the environment. Circular economy: The EUs transition to a circular economy with a focus on green growth. Industrial emissions: EU action to make industry more sustainable and reduce industrial emissions. Marine and coastal environment: EU action to protect Europes coasts, seas and oceans. Nature and biodiversity: EU action on environmental conservation and protection. Noise: EU action to reduce environmental noise pollution. Plastics: EU action on plastic production and pollution to contribute to a circular economy. Soil and land: EU action for the sustainable use of soil and land. Water: EU action on water issues, to protect water resources. Today, on Desertification and Drought Day, the Commission has announced two new initiatives to strengthen global resilience against drought and enhance gender equality in land restoration efforts.Boosting global drought resilienceIn partnership with the UNEP, the Commission is developing a Water Resilience Indicators Report, which will offer data-driven insights to strengthen drought preparedness worldwide.The report will support policy and decision-makers in designing more effective drought response strategies. Additionally, the Commission is contributing scientific input to the International Drought Resilience Observatory, as proposed by UNCCD in the context of the International Drought Resilience Alliance.Empowering women in environmental negotiationsThe EU is launching a Training Programme for Women Negotiators to strengthen womens leadership in environmental diplomacy.The goal is to promote inclusive and gender-responsive solutions to land degradation, ensuring a diverse and inclusive team of negotiators at UNCCD COP17, which takes place in August 2026 in Mongolia - a key partner and committed supporter of multilateralism.Speaking on the issue, the Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, Jessika Roswall, said:"Desertification and drought demand urgent global action. By investing in resilience tools and empowering women, the EU is driving forward inclusive and innovative solutions for sustainable land and water management.Broader commitment to water and land resilienceThese initiatives align with the EUs recently launched Water Resilience Strategy, which aims to enhance EU-wide water management for improved water security and disaster preparedness.It proposes measures to restore and protect the water cycle, secure clean and affordable water for all and create a sustainable, resilient, smart and competitive water economy.The Strategy recognises the links between sustainable and resilient water and land management, by stepping up efforts to improve water retention on land. At the same time, the EUs Nature Restoration Regulation aims to revive critical ecosystems and enhance Europe's resilience against natural disasters and droughts.The EU is also working beyond its borders to combat desertification, land degradation and drought. In the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, for example, several EU-funded projects and programmes are actively supporting the Great Green Wall Initiative.These range from land restoration, sustainable agriculture, soil and water management and conservation to rural renewable energy solutions and climate-smart infrastructures. Overarching support is provided through the Knowledge for Great Green Wall Action K4GGWA programme, which is organising a dedicated information event for Desertification and Drought Day.Meanwhile, the Global Drought Observatory part of Copernicus Emergency Management Service provides real-time drought monitoring and forecasts worldwide. Its tools are already helping to shape early warning systems, such as the East Africa Drought Watch.BackgroundThe theme of this years Desertification and Drought Day is "Restore the land. Unlock the opportunities." It underscores the urgent need to invest in nature-based solutions that protect our environment and unlock sustainable economic and social opportunities.The EU remains committed to addressing the critical issues of desertification, land degradation, and drought. It recognises the pivotal role of nature-based solutions in reversing land degradation and securing the future of our economies, communities, and ecosystems.

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