

OECD WORK ON

# BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS



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# Biodiversity and ecosystems

*“We urgently need more ambitious and effective policies to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.”*

**Simon Upton**, Environment Director, OECD





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Biodiversity is fundamental to sustaining life, supplying critical ecosystem services such as food provisioning, water purification, flood and drought control, nutrient cycling, and climate regulation. These services are essential to support human well-being and economic growth. Yet despite the significant economic, social and cultural values of biodiversity and ecosystem services, biodiversity worldwide is being lost, and in some areas at an accelerating rate.



**The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** has been working on the economics and policies related to biodiversity for more than two decades. The OECD supports governments by providing the analytical foundation to develop policies that promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Such policies must be environmentally effective, economically efficient, and distributionally equitable. A central challenge in responding to biodiversity loss and degradation is the integration and mainstreaming of biodiversity policy objectives into economic development strategies and sectoral policies.

In the wake of the economic crisis, the OECD is also looking at how measures that governments are taking to spur economic growth can best be formulated so that they support – or at least, do not work against – the objectives of moving towards a green, low-carbon and biodiversity-rich economy. The OECD is in a unique position to assist countries in putting biodiversity conservation and sustainable use policies on a solid economic footing consistent with green growth. Work on biodiversity is underway across the OECD, engaging government representatives from a wide range of ministries. This brochure provides an overview of the recent and on-going OECD work on biodiversity.

## THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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The OECD is a multi-disciplinary inter-governmental organisation, tracing its roots back to the post-World War II Marshall Plan. Today, it comprises 34 member countries committed to democratic government and the market economy, with the major emerging economies increasingly engaged in the work. A unique forum, the OECD provides the analytical capacity and comparative data to assist governments in evaluating and exchanging policy experiences and to identify, recommend and promote cost-effective policy practices.



BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

# Biodiversity in the international context

Biodiversity is defined as the “*variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems*” (CBD, 1992).

The three ultimate objectives of the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are:

1. the conservation of biological diversity;
2. the sustainable use of its components;
3. the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

In 2002, parties to the CBD adopted a strategic plan “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth” (the 2010 target; Decision VI/26). This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and incorporated as a target under the Millennium Development Goals. It is widely acknowledged however, that the 2010 biodiversity target was not met. Recognising the importance of this global environment problem, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2011-20 the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.





## USD 150-440 billion per year

The finance needs estimated for implementing the twenty Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-10) to the CBD in 2010, held in Nagoya, Japan, led to the successful agreement on a revised **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** and the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets**. In addition, Parties adopted a **Strategy for Resource Mobilisation**, a consolidated list of guidance to the financial mechanism, and an international regime for **Access and Benefits Sharing** (i.e. for the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources). CBD COP-11 in October 2012, in Hyderabad, India focused on addressing implementation issues and established, for example, an indicator framework to monitor progress on the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Strategy for Resource Mobilisation. The OECD's analysis supports the work of the CBD.



# Economic and policy analysis of biodiversity

USD 192 billion

The worldwide economic value of pollination services provided by insect pollinators, estimated in 2005



## BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS, VALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Economic and policy analysis by the OECD focuses on the valuation of biodiversity, and the use of economic instruments, incentives and other policies to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services.

Biodiversity indicators and economic valuation enable the quantifiable assessment and comparison of biodiversity benefits across space and time. This is essential for the design and implementation of effective biodiversity policies. The OECD's work evaluates best practice in the use of biodiversity indicators and valuation for policy, and regularly provides economic and environmental analysis of biodiversity trends and outlooks, including modelling-based analysis.

The *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction* (2012) focused on four environmental themes, identified as most critical in previous OECD work, of which biodiversity is one. The main drivers of projected global biodiversity loss are land use change and management (e.g. for pasture, food crops and bioenergy), commercial forestry, infrastructure development, habitat encroachment and



fragmentation, as well as invasive alien species, pollution (e.g. nitrogen deposition) and climate change.

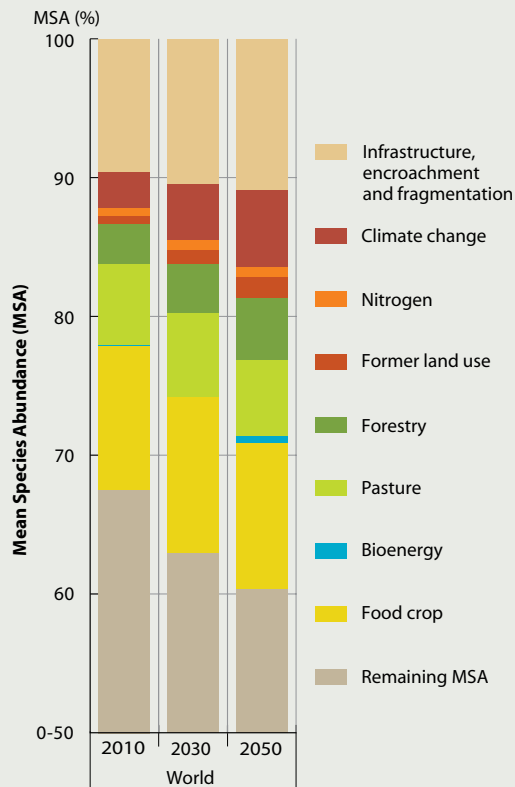
Key priorities identified for biodiversity in the Outlook include adopting more ambitious policy measures and scaling up private-sector engagement, mainstreaming biodiversity into other policy areas, reforming environmentally harmful subsidies, and improving the quantity and quality of data to inform biodiversity policy.

In February 2013, the OECD organised a seminar, jointly with France's General Commission for Sustainable Development, on **The assessment of ecosystem services and its role in public policy-making. Highlighting examples of how valuation has been used in public policy**, discussion at the seminar focused on how to strengthen the impact of ecosystem assessments. A report on "The role of national ecosystem assessments in influencing policy making" is due in 2014.

Current work underway at the OECD on biodiversity indicators is looking at types of policy response indicators that may contribute to measuring progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 3 (on incentives) and Target 20 (on resource mobilisation).



## Effects of different pressures on terrestrial MSA: Baseline, 2010 to 2050



Source: OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050, OECD, 2012.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932570943>

Other OECD work on biodiversity includes the country-specific *Environmental Performance Reviews* (EPRs). The EPRs examine actions taken by countries to meet both domestic objectives and international commitments, including in the area of nature and biodiversity management. Recent country reviews with chapters on biodiversity include Norway, Israel, Mexico, South Africa and Columbia. Two reviews that are currently underway will also examine biodiversity: the review of Spain will have a biodiversity chapter while the review of Poland will focus on forestry and biodiversity. In addition, the review of Sweden, also underway, will include a chapter on marine ecosystem services. These biodiversity chapters focus on cost-effective ways to manage conservation and sustainable use, as well as approaches to better integrate biodiversity and other policies, e.g. for water management, agriculture, and forestry.



### Key links:

[www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity](http://www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity)

[www.oecd.org/environment/outlookto2050](http://www.oecd.org/environment/outlookto2050)

[www.oecd.org/env/indicators](http://www.oecd.org/env/indicators)

[www.oecd.org/env/countryreviews](http://www.oecd.org/env/countryreviews)

## Did you know...?

The *Environmental Outlook* projects that, without renewed efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity, a further 10% of biodiversity (measured in terrestrial Mean Species Abundance) will be lost by 2050, from 2010 levels.



## ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS, INCENTIVES AND POLICIES FOR BIODIVERSITY

The local, regional, and global public good benefits of biodiversity are often undervalued in the market. This leads to excess biodiversity loss and degradation.

The OECD's work analyses how market and government failures can be addressed through the use of cost-effective policy instruments to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, ecosystem services and other natural resources.

The OECD's long-standing work on economic instruments resulted in the adoption, in 2004, of an OECD Council Recommendation on the Use of Economic Instruments in Promoting the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity. A 2008 report on the implementation of that Council Recommendation takes stock of the economic instruments that have been introduced or further



strengthened since its adoption. Aiming to support policy makers, the report provides an overview of what economic instruments are more commonly used for particular policy objectives and across different areas, as well as when and where economic instruments are less frequently applied, thus identifying where further progress is needed.

A 2010 OECD publication, *Paying for Biodiversity: Enhancing the Cost-Effectiveness of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)*, identifies good practice in the design and implementation of PES programmes so as to enhance their environmental effectiveness at a lower economic cost. Drawing on theory and more than 30 case studies worldwide, the publication highlights lessons learned from existing programmes and insights on how to make PES more environmentally and cost effective. An expert workshop on this issue was convened in March 2010.



### Did you know...?

There are more than 300 PES programmes implemented worldwide and five national PES programmes alone are channelling more than USD 6.5 billion annually.





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The OECD is currently examining biodiversity offsets. Key questions this work intends to address include:

- **What are biodiversity offsets and how do they work?**
- **How do they compare relative to other instruments available for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and how have existing programmes fared to date?**
- **What are the key design and implementation features that need to be considered to ensure that they are environmentally effective, economically efficient, and distributionally equitable?**
- **What lessons and insights can be derived for good practice?**

As part of this work, the OECD convened an international expert workshop on *Biodiversity Offsets: Examining Opportunities and Challenges*, on 6-7 November, 2013. The workshop brought together governments, the private sector, IGOs and NGOs, as well as other experts and practitioners, to exchange experiences and lessons learned associated with biodiversity offset schemes. It examined the technical and analytical issues related to their effective design and implementation and aimed to derive insights on and examples of good practice. Insights from the workshop will feed into the OECD publication on biodiversity offsets (due in 2014).

**Key links:**

[www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity/pes](http://www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity/pes)

[www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity-offsets-workshop.htm](http://www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity-offsets-workshop.htm)

## BIODIVERSITY FINANCE, DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTIONAL ISSUES

The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity requires finance and investment from the public and private sector. OECD work considers how these financial flows can be scaled-up, while enhancing the cost-effectiveness of existing biodiversity financing.

In May 2012, a workshop on *Finance Mechanisms for Biodiversity: Examining Opportunities and Challenges*, was convened by the OECD, World Bank, GEF, European Commission, together with Sweden and India in Montreal, Canada. The workshop brought together participants from governments, experts and practitioners from a wide range of countries to exchange views and experiences with different types of finance mechanisms for biodiversity, and to explore the most promising avenues for effectively scaling up



finance. The workshop aimed to foster an informal dialogue on key opportunities and challenges associated with finance mechanisms and to examine the technical and analytical issues related to their effective design and implementation.

An OECD publication, entitled *Scaling-up Finance Mechanisms for Biodiversity*, was released in 2013. The book considers opportunities for scaling-up finance for biodiversity from six so-called “innovative financial mechanisms”, as classified under the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- **environmental fiscal reform;**
- **payments for ecosystem services;**
- **biodiversity offsets;**
- **markets for green products;**
- **biodiversity in climate change funding;**
- **biodiversity in international development finance.**



### Did you know...?

There are more than 50 biodiversity offset programmes in place around the world. In 2011, these mobilised between USD 2.4 and 4 billion.



Drawing on literature and more than 40 case studies worldwide, the publication addresses the following questions:

- **What are these finance mechanisms and how do they work?**
- **How much finance have they mobilised and what potential is there to scale this up?**
- **What are the key design and implementation issues – including environmental and social safeguards – that need to be addressed so that governments can help ensure these mechanisms are environmentally effective, economically efficient, and distributionally equitable?**



The distributional implications of biodiversity policies (which can create both winners and loser) are also critical, as are the linkages between biodiversity and development. Though biodiversity policies can create significant public benefits and contribute to social well-being, their implementation often benefits different groups to a greater or lesser degree. The source of these so-called distributive effects lies in the policies' objectives, and the choice and implementation of policy instruments. Distributive effects influence the viability of biodiversity policies. Significant negative impacts on specific groups can lead to policies being derailed, even if they make a large number of people better off. With sufficient planning, however, potential problems can be identified and addressed.

Combining analysis and a wealth of case studies, the 2008 OECD publication, *People and Biodiversity Policies: Impacts, Issues and Strategies for Policy Action* offers concepts and tools for addressing distributive issues within a biodiversity policy context. It aims to help policy makers put together strategies for anticipating distributive impacts across different groups; and for selecting processes and instruments that manage distributive impacts without compromising conservation and sustainable use objectives.



Natural capital constitutes a quarter of total wealth in low-income countries. OECD's 2008 book, *Natural Resources and Pro-Poor Growth: The Economics and Politics*, demonstrates that natural resources can contribute to growth, employment, exports and fiscal revenues. It emphasises the need to focus on the political challenges of natural resource management for long-term pro-poor economic growth, by encouraging policies for the sustainable management of resources.

The OECD tracks bilateral aid in support of biodiversity. The developed countries that signed the three Rio Conventions in 1992 committed themselves to assist developing countries in the implementation of these Conventions. Since 1998 the OECD Development Assistance Committee<sup>1</sup> (DAC) has monitored aid targeting the objectives of the Rio Conventions through its "Creditor Reporting System" using the so called "Rio markers" including the Rio marker on biodiversity. Biodiversity-related aid is defined as activities that promote at least one of the three objectives of the CBD.

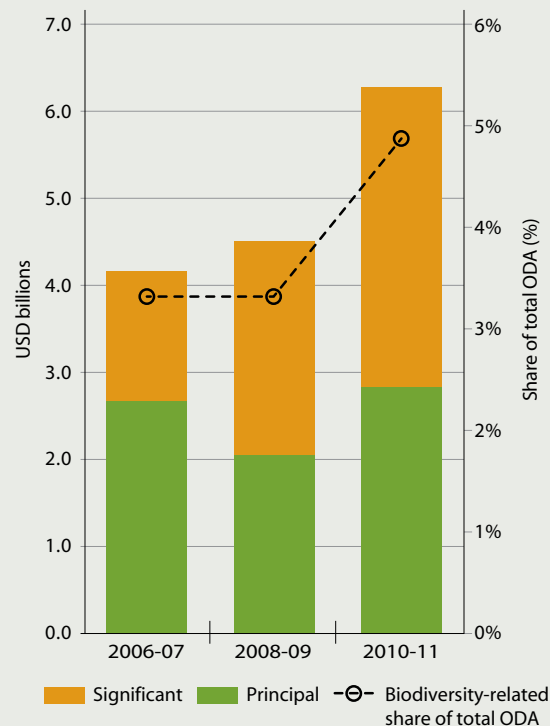


## Did you know...?

Roughly half of the aid that DAC members commit to biodiversity every year targets agriculture, forestry, fishing, rural development, and water supply and sanitation.

### Trends in biodiversity-related aid, two-year averages

2006-2011, bilateral commitments, USD billion, constant 2011 prices



Source: OECD DAC Statistics (2013)

1. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is an international forum of many of the largest funders of aid. It comprises 29 members; 28 donor governments plus the European Union. The World Bank, IMF and UNDP participate as observers.



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New work has recently begun to review and improve the Rio markers in environment and development finance statistics. The overarching goal is to ensure that DAC methodologies and data remain the reference for the international community in measuring official development assistance (ODA) and other non-export credit other official flows related to climate change, biodiversity, desertification and other environmental concerns. This will be achieved through improving communications and outreach on the Rio markers, reviewing options to improve the quality and robustness of the Rio markers and their implementation, and increasing transparency and accountability in reporting against the Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD).

In 2010, the OECD DAC developed and endorsed a Policy Statement on “Integrating Biodiversity and Associated Ecosystem Services

into Development Co-operation”. It outlines 30 key actions that international donors can take towards halting the loss of biodiversity and associated ecosystems.

The OECD is currently developing a paper on “Biodiversity and Development Co-operation” (due in 2014). This will review key statistics and characteristics of ODA to biodiversity in partner developing countries, assessing its alignment with the needs and priorities of partner countries. The frameworks, strategies and mechanisms that donor agencies use to mainstream biodiversity into development planning in partner countries and into development co-operation activities will also be examined. Furthermore, the paper will look at mechanisms to effectively manage the synergies and trade-offs involved in the development-biodiversity nexus, and to monitor and evaluate the impacts of their biodiversity projects and programmes.



**Key links:**

[www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity/people](http://www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity/people)

[www.oecd.org/dac/stats](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats)

[www.oecd.org/dac/environment](http://www.oecd.org/dac/environment)

# Sector-specific analysis

Many of the drivers of biodiversity loss and degradation are determined by decisions that are made outside the domain of environment ministries. Better policy coherence is needed at both the national and international level to help mainstream biodiversity into cross-sectoral policies. OECD work examines linkages between biodiversity and climate change, water, agriculture and fisheries, as well as biotechnology.

## BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Biodiversity and climate change are intrinsically linked. Climate change will have significant impacts on biological diversity (e.g., shifting the distributional location of some ecosystems as well as altering their composition, including via impacts on invasive species) and thus will also affect the quantity and quality of the services provided by ecosystems. It is therefore essential to recognise the role of biodiversity in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, through, inter alia, carbon sequestration such as REDD-plus and ecosystem-based adaptation, while taking action to minimise the adverse effects to biodiversity as a result of climate change.



A 2009 OECD working paper on “**Promoting Biodiversity Co-Benefits in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD)**” examines how biodiversity co-benefits in REDD can be enhanced, both at the design and implementation level. It discusses potential biodiversity implications of different REDD design options that have been put forward in the international climate change negotiations and examines how the creation of additional biodiversity-specific incentives could be used to complement a REDD mechanism, so as to target biodiversity benefits directly.



This paper built on discussion at an OECD expert workshop on *Capturing the Carbon and Biodiversity Benefits for Reducing Deforestation: Linkages, Synergies and Limitations*, held in March 2008.

Previous work at the OECD has examined the implications of climate change and adaptation opportunities in critical ecosystems such as Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and the Sundarbans in Bangladesh.

### Key links:

[www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity](http://www.oecd.org/env/biodiversity)

[www.oecd.org/env/cc/redd](http://www.oecd.org/env/cc/redd)

[www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation.htm](http://www.oecd.org/env/cc/adaptation.htm)

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## BIODIVERSITY AND WATER

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Water management and biodiversity are closely intertwined. The OECD book *Water Security for Better Lives* (2013) identifies the resilience of freshwater systems as one of the four water-related risks that need to be managed. It argues that setting acceptable levels of water risk should be the result of well-informed policy choices which take trade-offs with other related security objectives, including biodiversity, into account. The book explores how biodiversity policy can enhance water security.



OECD work on the financing of water resources management has analysed, among other issues, how ecosystem management can be considered and funded as a water management tool, alongside water infrastructure and water governance needs, in national water policy and practice. The OECD publication *A Framework for Financing Water Resources Management* (2012) acknowledges biodiversity and ecosystem conservation as a direct benefit of improved water management.

According to the 2010 OECD publication *Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Agriculture*, over-exploitation of water resources by agriculture in certain areas is damaging ecosystems by reducing water flows below minimum levels in rivers, lakes and wetlands, which is also detrimental to recreational, fishing and cultural uses of these ecosystems.

**Key link:** [www.oecd.org/water](http://www.oecd.org/water)

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## BIODIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURE

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Agriculture is the major land and water user in OECD and non-OECD countries. As such it heavily impacts on biodiversity. The *OECD Compendium of Agri-environmental Indicators* (2013) shows that despite improvements in environmental performance of agriculture during the last decade, the results for biodiversity are more mixed.

Although agriculture plays a relatively minor role in most OECD countries in terms of its contribution to GDP and employment, a wide range of government policies provide significant support in many OECD countries. Support to farmers in OECD countries has fallen in the last two decades as measured by the percentage Producer Support Estimate (PSE), from 30% of farmers' total receipts in 1995-97 on average to 19% in 2010-12. In total it amounted to an estimated USD 253 billion on average per year in 2010-12. Such policies can have important effects on biodiversity associated with agricultural activities.

Over recent decades, as a consequence of policy reform in many OECD countries, there has been some shift away from production-linked support (decoupling) which has thus enabled the sector to respond to a greater extent to market signals, with potentially positive implications for biodiversity. Nevertheless, production-linked



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support still predominates. The effect of policies and policy reform on biodiversity is, however, complex and varies across and within countries. Policies to subsidise inputs (such as water) or outputs (such as price support) can maintain or increase production above what would otherwise be the case, using greater amounts of inputs that have harmful environmental effects. This can contribute to loss of biodiversity as well as water pollution from greater use of fertilisers and pesticides (and from manure application causing nutrient run-off due to higher numbers of livestock), soil erosion, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. In some regions however such policies can maintain extensive production, traditional farming systems and practices that are associated with the preservation of environmentally sensitive land or valued ecosystems and biodiversity.

Not all forms of agricultural support are environmentally-harmful, and some support measures are targeted to the achievement of specific environmental objectives, including biodiversity. Some support, for example, pays for research and development, information and advice, food inspection services or the provision by farmers of non-marketed environmental services, such as biodiversity, flood and drought control, sinks for greenhouse gases and carbon storage. In some countries, income support is conditional on the respect of environmental and other regulations.

**Key links:**

[www.oecd.org/agriculture/env/indicators](http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/env/indicators)

[www.oecd.org/agriculture/agriculturalpoliciesandsupport/producerandconsumerssupportestimatesdatabase.htm](http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/agriculturalpoliciesandsupport/producerandconsumerssupportestimatesdatabase.htm)

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## BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

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The oceans are home to an extraordinarily rich and diverse marine life. The marine environment is under pressure from a variety of ocean activities as well as climate change. Maintaining a healthy level of marine biodiversity helps ensure the oceans will remain a productive food source and a provider of other valuable ecosystem services. Fisheries and aquaculture are an important source of nutrition and livelihoods for many coastal communities, but putting these sectors on a sustainable footing has been a challenge.



The OECD has been helping to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges facing fisheries and aquaculture for many years. Two reports, “The Economics of Rebuilding Fisheries: Workshop Proceedings” (from a workshop in Rhode Island, May 2009) and “Rebuilding Fisheries: The Way Forward” (2012), provide evidence-based guidelines for economists, biologists, fisheries managers and policy makers on how to best rebuild depleted fisheries. On the basis of this work, the OECD’s Council, in April 2012, agreed to a Recommendation on Principles and Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Plans for Rebuilding Fisheries.

Released in 2013, *The OECD Handbook for Fisheries Managers* illustrates how to design and implement policies to maximise the economic and social value of the fisheries while conserving marine biodiversity and habitats. Future work is aimed at demonstrating how the OECD’s

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green growth principles can help the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to be a source of sustainable economic growth – in particular by increasing efficiency, reducing waste and improving governance.

**Key link:** [www.oecd.org/fisheries](http://www.oecd.org/fisheries)

## BIODIVERSITY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

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Modern biotechnology offers a wide range of new products in the fields of industry, health and agriculture. Agricultural applications, as well as those for forestry and animal breeding, can lead to the use of new varieties with traits which offer improvements in yield or, for example, the decreased use of pesticides through pest resistance. Drought-tolerant varieties are becoming available for major crops such as maize. In the future, other traits such as flood resistance, soil salinity tolerance, or carbon assimilation could play a role in the adaptation to climate change and the reduction of agriculture's environmental footprint.

However these innovations – new varieties of plants, animals or micro-organisms – should only be used after taking into account their potential negative impacts on the environment, including biodiversity. Such biosafety concerns are recognised and many countries have a system in place to ensure environmental safety, especially with respect to transgenic crops. The Series of “OECD Consensus Documents” developed on the biology of major



agricultural species, trees, micro-organisms, as well as introduced traits, aims to provide practical tools for national authorities when dealing with environmental risk and safety assessment. In consultation with the FAO and the CBD Secretariat on biosafety clearing-house activities, the OECD has developed a database on biotech products in which varieties authorised for release to the environment are described.

The basis for the improvement of crop plants and agricultural animals depends upon access to a wide range of genetic resources. The loss of biodiversity could compromise the potential to obtain improved varieties which could adapt to changing conditions. Biodiversity conservation is therefore crucial for the efficiency of future breeding work.

**Key link:** [www.oecd.org/biotrack](http://www.oecd.org/biotrack)

## Did you know...?

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**Sugarcane was the first drought-tolerant variety developed by Indonesian public research and should be grown beginning in 2014. Wheat and poplar trees are also among the promising species studied for genetic improvements of their resistance to abiotic stress, including water scarcity.**

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