



Working With Nature? The Smart Path to a Competitive and Resilient Europe

Introduction

The only future-proof strategy for Europe's competitiveness is to work with nature, not against it. Through nature-based solutions like ecological intensification—farming practices that enhance productivity by supporting ecosystem functions such as pollination or pest control—we can produce more with less, restore biodiversity, and unlock long-term economic benefits. This approach ensures security for food systems, positions Europe as a leader in innovation, and respects our cultural traditions rooted in the land.

Pollinators, for example, are not simply an environmental issue. They are critical economic actors that enable the production of a third of the food we consume. Without them, competitiveness in agriculture will vanish. Failing to protect them is equivalent to allowing the erosion of our natural capital, long-term productivity and competitiveness



Coherent Policy: Europe's Strategic Advantage

Pollinators are linchpins of both biodiversity and agricultural productivity. Yet current European policy lacks coherence, undermining its own goals and missing opportunities to deliver on citizens' expectations, economic resilience, and health protection.



European Pollinators Initiative (2023 update)

The updated Initiative recognises the decline of wild pollinators but remains toothless without binding targets or sufficient integration into other policy areas. To protect both biodiversity and farming, pollinator considerations must become a core part of all agricultural and environmental frameworks.



Nature Restoration Law

This law is a step in the right direction, but it's causing friction on the ground. Local managers are removing beekeepers from protected areas due to concerns about interactions between honeybees and wild bees. However, the core problem is not the presence of beekeepers—it is the ongoing destruction of natural habitats. Without coherence and habitat restoration, these measures risk alienating traditional land users and failing to achieve restoration goals that are crucial to both biodiversity and public health.



Sustainable Use of Pesticide Regulation (SUR): A Missed Opportunity

The rejection of the SUR marked a political failure to deliver on the will of over 1.2 million European citizens who demanded an 80% reduction in synthetic pesticide use and risk by 2030, and a full phase-out by 2035. This regulation would have aligned with science, economic foresight, and citizen expectations. Its collapse shows how incoherence can block transformative change in health, agriculture, and the economy.



Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): Misaligned with Nature and Innovation

CAP remains Europe's most significant lever for land-use decisions, and needs to be aligned with biodiversity and sustainability objectives. However, it continues to reward high-input models rather than systems that profit from pollination and ecosystem services. CAP must:

- Incentivise farming systems that benefit from pollinators, like agroecology.
- Provide financial recognition for the role pollinators play in boosting yield and food quality, and public health.
- Ensure that no subsidy undermines EU biodiversity, health, and pollinator goals.





New Genomic Techniques (NGTs): Risking Another Neonicotinoid Crisis

The European Commission's proposal to deregulate most NGTs could provoke the next ecological crisis. Key issues of the current proposal include:

- Over 90% of NGT-GMOs will not undergo risk assessment or traceability.
- The precautionary principle is bypassed.
- No liability or monitoring mechanisms are foreseen.
- Legal risks for beekeepers and non-GMO farmers will increase due to contamination.
- Lack of independent research on impacts on pollinators and biodiversity.

This path repeats past mistakes with neonicotinoids—marketed without adequate assessment, leading to enormous ecological and economic damage. Pollinators are directly at risk, and the credibility of European innovation is at stake.



Innovation Must Work With Nature, Not Against It

True innovation secures long-term productivity, stability, and resilience. Pollinator-friendly practices and agroecological approaches are not backwards—they are strategic investments in Europe's food security and economic independence.

Technologies must be judged not just by their novelty, but by their performance in supporting the environment that sustains them. Without pollinators, no plant technology will be productive. Innovation cannot succeed in a vacuum of degraded ecosystems and declining public health indicators.



The Bottom Line: Coherence Is Power

Incoherence between environmental, agricultural, and innovation policies creates instability, inefficiency, and public mistrust. A competitive Europe must align its major policies to:

- Work with nature, not against it.
- Protect pollinators and the ecosystems they depend on.
- Build a future-proof food system grounded in resilience, not dependency.

Pollinators are not a niche concern. They are strategic assets. Policy coherence is not an environmental luxury—it is a geopolitical necessity.

Let us lead Europe with strength, vision, and coherence. Only then can we deliver on the values of security, achievement, tradition, and prosperity for all.

Let's work together for a pollinator-friendly Europe along with a resilient agriculture and food system!



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