

EU's Nature Restoration Law

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In news—The European Commission (EC), the European Union's executive arm has recently tabled a new Nature Restoration Law with legally binding targets.

Key features of the law-

- The aim of the proposed regulation is to **restore natural degraded ecosystems, in particular those with the most potential to remove and store carbon**, and to reduce the impact of natural disasters linked to global warming.
- It has provision of **€100 billion for EU member states** to restore nature and reverse biodiversity loss in agriculture, forests, oceans and urban areas.
- Need for the law arises as 81% of EU protected habitats are in poor condition.
- The proposed EU Nature Restoration Law sets an **overarching target of restoring 20% of the EU's land and sea area by 2030 and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.**
- EU member states will have two years after the adoption of the legislation to prepare their national restoration plans.
- As part of the proposal, natural and semi-natural biodiversity ecosystems – wetlands, forests, grasslands, river and lakes and even dunes, will be improved and re-established on a large scale.
- As per the new law, use and risk of chemical pesticides will be reduced 50 per cent by 2030 to reverse the decline of bees, butterflies, bumblebees, hoverflies and other pollinator populations by 2030.

The proposed targets under new law include-

- **Reversing the decline of pollinator populations by 2030** and increasing their populations from there on.

- **No net loss of green urban spaces by 2030**, a 5% increase by 2050, a minimum of 10% tree canopy cover in every European city, town, and suburb, and net gain of green space that is integrated to buildings and infrastructure,
- In **agricultural ecosystems, overall increase of biodiversity, and a positive trend for grassland butterflies, farmland birds**, organic carbon in cropland mineral soils and high-diversity landscape features on agricultural land,
- **Restoration and rewetting of drained peatlands under agricultural use** and in peat extraction sites.
- In **forest ecosystems, overall increase of biodiversity** and a positive trend for forest connectivity, deadwood, share of uneven-aged forests, forest birds and stock of organic carbon,
- **Restoring marine habitats such as seagrasses or sediment bottoms**, and restoring the habitats of iconic marine species such as dolphins and porpoises, sharks and seabirds,
- **Removing river barriers** so that at least 25,000 km of rivers are turned into free-flowing rivers by 2030.

What is the nature restoration model?

- **Restoration is a process to support the recovery of degraded, damaged or destroyed ecosystems** and bring more nature and biodiversity back everywhere, from agricultural and forest land to marine environment and urban spaces.
- **Measures for nature restoration can include enhancing degraded soil and agricultural land with natural features like hedgerows and trees**, restoring monoculture forest plantations with mixed native woodland, greening up cities, buildings and infrastructure, replanting seagrasses on the seabed, reversing human-induced pressures such as pollution and excessive use of

pesticides.

- **However, nature restoration does not imply stopping economic activity in restored ecosystems** but it is primarily about living and producing together with and more respectfully towards nature