

Joint NGO recommendations on the EU Global Challenges programme



WWF European Policy Office, Conservation International, Climate Action Network Europe, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Traffic, Wetlands International, BirdLife International

This recommendation paper has been prepared by the leading global environmental NGOs, to contribute to the programming process of the new EU Global Challenges thematic programme. The recommendations in this paper seek to assist the EU in its consultation processes with Civil Society Organizations, highlighting key opportunities for the EU to support the delivery of global commitments to climate and biodiversity, the Paris Agreement, the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the upcoming Global Biodiversity Framework.

Summary of recommendations for inclusion in the Global Challenges programme:

- Increase resources for the **implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** towards partner countries, as well as relevant **capacity building** and technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and innovation.
- Support global efforts to improve the **protection and sustainable management of marine environments** worldwide
- Support a global approach to **fighting wildlife crime** by tackling the issue at different levels
- Make available sufficient resources to ensure partner countries get the right level of support for **compliance to new EU deforestation-free requirements** and engage in a transition towards more sustainable land use
- Make **climate adaptation** centrepiece, coupled with support for trans-regional adaptation programmes, integrating disaster risk reduction, and a particular focus on least developed countries and small island developing states
- Focus on encouraging the rapid **shift from fossil fuel-based energy** sources, with emphasis on just transition and tackling energy access inequality.

- Support the implementation of global and national transitions to **sustainable and equitable food systems** and support the delivery of solutions generated by the UN Food Systems Summit process

Global Challenges programme of the new EU Global Europe/NDICI instrument should play a critical role in stepping up the EU's global leadership in addressing the interlinked challenges the world is facing, such as water scarcity, biodiversity loss, deforestation and climate change, which contribute to growing inequalities and instability around the globe. These challenges have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated ongoing economic crisis. The emergence of diseases of zoonotic origin like the COVID-19, that spread from wildlife to humans, provides a stark demonstration of the dramatic societal and economic costs that can result from the destruction and unsustainable use of nature.

Environmental degradation and climate change are undermining hard-won development gains by causing staggering economic costs and losses, and millions of premature deaths annually. It is impeding progress towards ending poverty and hunger, reduction of inequalities and sustainable economic growth and inclusive societies. This burden is felt by everyone, but disproportionately by the poor and vulnerable. Not tackling such challenges holistically undermines the benefits of EU international cooperation.

We welcome the compromise on the long-term EU budget for the period 2021-2027, adopted in November 2020 and the final adoption of the Global Europe instrument in June 2021. We appreciate that the instrument includes an increased 30% climate action target for external action, and a target of 7.5% of overall annual Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) spending to be dedicated to biodiversity objectives from 2024, and 10% from 2026. In 2020, the President of the European Commission joined 88 other global leaders to endorse the Leaders Pledge for Nature and the EU also committed to a 2030 target to protect at least 30% of land and seas proposed in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Since the vast majority of global biodiversity lies in the tropics and the oceans, the new Global Europe instrument needs to play a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the overall MFF biodiversity target. Funding allocations for the EU external action should reflect this increased ambition.

In 2014-2020, the EU spent EUR 2.839 billion on biodiversity protection, corresponding to 5.1% of total commitments under the previous MFF, making the EU institutions one of the largest donors to global biodiversity. However, considering the significant drop in the funding to thematic programmes compared with the previous 2014-2020 period, the increased climate and biodiversity spending targets for the Global Europe Instrument imply that the bulk of funding contributing to these targets would come from the geographic programmes. While acknowledging the efforts to prioritise and mainstream Green Deal objectives across the programming of country Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIPs) and Team Europe Initiatives, there is a risk that climate, biodiversity and environmental action which requires inter-regional, global or multi-lateral approaches will be insufficiently supported. For example, the successful EU flagship initiatives piloting an integrated approach on the economic benefits of biodiversity protection, in the interest of sustaining livelihoods and poverty eradication in the poorest countries may not receive adequate funding from thematic and regional programmes. There is also a risk that climate adaptation programmes will receive less attention at the country level, even while adaptation is an under-addressed issue, has strong benefits for human development, and adaptation needs are increasing.

The Global Challenges programme is therefore crucial to connect the different levels of action on these issues and to leverage the integration of the Green Deal in the programming of the Global Europe Instrument. It must provide adequate funding to ongoing and future global biodiversity, environment, and climate action to ensure a post-COVID-19 green recovery. EU global leadership on biodiversity and climate finance is all the more important at this moment as political momentum is building ahead of the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), both scheduled later this year.

Finally, specific and predictable funding allocations should be made available to civil society organizations under the Global Challenges programmes, to safeguard civic space and enable CSOs' participation in the

implementation of the global biodiversity, climate and green transition programmes. CSOs have often been excluded from the implementation of the environmental and climate programmes in the previous GPCG programme and funding has been almost exclusively channelled and managed by International Organisations and multilateral agencies. Many CSOs have the operational and technical capacity to implement technically demanding multi-country and global programmes, as well as to carry out the research.

Specific recommendations for the global initiatives to be financed from the Global Challenges programme - strategic area Planet (partially strategic area Prosperity)

1. Environment

Global programme/fund/flagship initiative for the implementation of Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

The EU Global Challenges programme should substantially and consistently increase resources for the implementation of the post-2020 GBF towards partner countries, as well as relevant capacity building and technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and innovation. Funding should be at a commensurate level with the ambition of the GBF and its goals and targets. Financing for nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation (including through nature restoration) that deliver co-benefits for biodiversity should also be identified and scaled up. While many of the initiatives need to take place at the national and regional level and should be therefore financed from the EU country/regional multi-annual indicative plans (MIPs), we recommend that 'a global biodiversity programme/flagship initiative' is set up to reflect the level of ambition of GBF and to ensure that actions agreed in the post-2020 GBF can be implemented on the ground.

The **EU global biodiversity programme** should be set up to support:

- **National biodiversity finance plans and the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs):** Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of resources at all levels is critical for successfully implementing the GBF. According to the latest estimation, the biodiversity finance gap consists of a staggering USD 711 billion annually¹. With resources for biodiversity expected to remain vastly insufficient, especially due to the economic downturn as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, good governance and planning in line with a whole-of-government approach and strong high-level political commitment will be required. Therefore, the EU should support its partner countries to clearly identify all direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss in their NBSAPs and define all activities across all of the government to address them and link these planned activities with carefully calculated costs and benefits in accordance with the identified most cost-effective way for their implementation. For this purpose, national biodiversity finance plans should be developed alongside the NBSAPs in all countries, based on the BIOFIN methodology. The finance plans should comprehensively take into account all elements of a holistic risk management approach. This includes not only an efficient mobilisation of resources, but also cross-ministerial planning on effectively phasing out harmful public and private financial flows.
- **Capacity-building, technical assistance, technological cooperation and research:** Strengthening of capacity will be required at all levels of the EU partner country's government and across all relevant ministries, including ministries of finance, justice and economy. To successfully implement NBSAPs in line with a transformative GBF, with a whole-of-government approach, all ministries that are responsible for direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, require sufficient

¹ Deutz et al., Financing Nature: Closing the Global Biodiversity Financing Gap, 2020

knowledge, expertise, and capacity to do their part. As a result, capacity-building, technical assistance, technological cooperation and knowledge-sharing should be significantly scaled up in the Global Challenges programme. In addition, support will be required for capacity development for improved and standardised planning, reporting and monitoring, including the use of global headline indicators, and the global stocktake as part of a regular process of assessment of progress and ratcheting up of action. This will be essential to make the GBF more effective than its predecessor and many parties have expressed that additional capacity needs for these improvements are a major concern.

In line with the recommendations of the High-level group of experts², the Global Challenges programme should reinforce public expertise and research centres at national and regional levels and to facilitate the transfer of research results to stakeholders and civil society in order to serve concrete and operational actions and innovation. Global Challenges programme should supplement existing domestic research under Horizon Europe and fill the implementation knowledge gap in partner countries with a focus on: (i) applied research on ecosystem functioning and wildlife and their interactions with humans, (ii) strengthen capacities to produce scientific and technical information, to integrate scientific and indigenous knowledge and to use this knowledge in decision-making, and (iii) analysis and dissemination of the information through integrated platforms. Regional centres of excellence combining the 3 aspects would represent real progress in many regions. Specific attention should be paid to interactions between biodiversity and health (One Health), in particular around pandemics and nutrition issues and to capitalising on IPLCs' traditional knowledge. National biodiversity centres of excellence such as those in South Africa (SANBI) and Mexico (CONABIO) which act as central repositories of biodiversity data at the national level provide a good example for the regional level.

- **Co-benefits for biodiversity through climate and development finance:** Biodiversity is essential for sustainable development and tackling climate change. The two SDGs primarily addressing biodiversity, SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land), along with SDG 13 (climate action) are fundamental for implementing the Agenda 2030. In addition, according to the IPBES Global Assessment Report, nature-based solutions could contribute 30 to 36 per cent of the climate mitigation needed to achieve the commitments of the Paris Agreement. Biodiversity co-benefits should thus be scaled up and, wherever relevant, marked as a criterion for all EU development financing. As biodiversity is essential for meeting the commitments under the Paris Agreement, financing nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation with co-benefits to biodiversity should be scaled up as well. In this respect, commitments in the Global Challenges programme to leverage a fixed percentage of climate financing for nature-based solutions can provide valuable co-benefits for biodiversity.
- **Enable a meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and CSOs from the South which represent them, to the international negotiations**
IPLCs' lands contain approximately 85% of the world's biodiversity and they are the most effective stewards of biodiversity, with landmark United Nations and peer-reviewed research documenting their contribution. Accounting indigenous and community conservation efforts towards global area-based targets will be crucial to delivering on the post-2020 GBF. The EU should support the inclusion of IPLCs in the international biodiversity negotiations and equitable access to resources and support to manage their natural resources, secure recognition and enforcement of their rights, and ensure their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to decisions that may affect their lands or livelihoods. IPLCs and their organisations are best placed to define the means of inclusion and support that works best for them. The Global Challenges programme should consider supporting a dedicated IPLC's platform to enable IPLCs to meaningfully engage in negotiations, implementation and monitoring of GBF. As women have a particularly strong and

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https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/edd2021-biodiversity-hlg-recommendations-synthesis_en.pdf

differentiated role in natural resource management, the EU should also include a gender approach to ensure that women are included at all stages of these negotiations.

- **Multilateral environmental governance:** The Global Challenges programme should contain allocations to support the adoption of environmental assessments and ecosystem accounting across multiple institutions and multiple scales to highlight the state, and, where possible, the value of natural capital assets such as biodiversity and ecosystem services. These natural capital accounts could institutionalise the monitoring of the state of the natural environment, and reflect changes in the natural environment as changes in a partner country's asset base. The impact of COVID-19 on resource availability shows that results-based budgeting for biodiversity (rather than incremental budgeting) could, in time, improve the visibility and coherence of biodiversity-related policies. Global Challenges programme could also promote specific initiatives such as strengthening the assessment and reporting (MRV) capacities of partner EU countries; reskilling and upskilling of technicians to accelerate the economic green transition; supporting the elaboration and reassessment of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and future national biodiversity financing plans, and updating nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and their articulation with other national plans and strategies

- **Mainstreaming biodiversity into spatial development planning and corporate decision making**

Biodiversity is not equally distributed across the planet, and we can greatly accelerate efforts to bend the curve of biodiversity loss with a global effort to minimise negative impacts in those places most important for biodiversity. The Global Challenges programme should include allocations for:

- Scaling up the systematic identification of sites of global importance for biodiversity - Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). Currently, only a few countries have conducted full cross-taxa KBA identification at the national level.
- Further strengthening the use of KBAs in spatial development planning³
- Engaging with financial institutions and real economy corporations which have specific policies ensuring they reduce impacts on KBAs. Such policies are already common in many Financial Institutions, and the potential to further mainstream and strengthen such policies is significant.
- The combination of the development of a robust global KBA database and a critical mass of FIs and corporate commitments and policies to reduce impacts on KBAs would be a highly tangible element of a Green Transition, delivering visible impacts in the places it will matter most.

- **Scale up Biodiversity for Life (B4LIFE) flagship initiative**

Whilst we recognise that the majority of conservation and protected area management programmes should be supported by the EU country and regional MIPs, it will be crucial to further scale up elements of the former B4LIFE programme and to leverage the integration of the B4LIFE initiatives into the country and regional MIPs. The Global Challenges programme should continue supporting an integrated approach to conservation and equitable economic development. It must be built upon an inclusive approach which encompasses a holistic outlook of working that brings people into each step of the decision-making process and develops solutions that work for all stakeholders ensuring the people that share landscapes, seascapes and habitats are included in the critical decisions that affect their livelihoods and in the benefits. Conservation impact that is relevant to the people and places where it occurs, must be articulated with and reinforce the interconnectedness of development, global and regional trends, and nature, highlighting a shared agenda that responds to global and regional threats and opportunities. To achieve this, new stakeholders and partnerships outside of the usual conservation circles must be included to achieve a truly inclusive conservation approach, while continuing to enhance the capacity of

³ <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/motion/096>

IPLCs to sustainably manage their territories and resources in a manner that positively contributes to their livelihoods.

Supporting International Ocean Governance

The EU Global Challenges programme should support global efforts to improve the protection and sustainable management of marine environments worldwide, in particular through a legally binding agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Many communities depend heavily on a healthy ocean for their subsistence; without adequate support to ensure its protection beyond national jurisdictions, human activities will continue to hamper the provision of crucial ecosystem services. The negotiations on this treaty have been delayed as a result of COVID 19, so the EU should use its resources to build bridges with relevant partner countries and CSOs, to achieve more common ground on the elements of the draft text in an effort to maintain the momentum of the negotiations in the next Intergovernmental Conference (IGC 4) and ensure the subsequent ratification and implementation of the treaty as quickly as possible.

Sustainable and legal wildlife use

Illegal trade in wildlife is the world's fourth most lucrative crime, affecting many different wild animal and plant species. With an estimated value of US\$23 billion a year, it involves organized crime groups benefiting from high profits, low risk of detection and low penalties. Wildlife crime is a development issue; it undermines the rule of law, threatens peace and security, is facilitated by corruption, aggravated by human rights abuses and fueled by demand and poverty. The EU has a role to play in fighting against illegal trade, against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and promoting sustainable trade for commodities for EU consumers and markets. The Global Challenges programme should support a global approach to fighting wildlife crime by tackling the issue at different levels:

- Supporting existing global networks that combat the illegal trade and encourage sustainability in the legal trade (eg: TWIX systems, ETIS, FAIRWILD, ICCWC, ETC). Backing or strengthening the enforcement of appropriate wildlife trade laws: For example, supporting the enforcement of CITES⁴, which regulates the international trade in wildlife; providing tools, training and funding; encouraging cross-border cooperation; funding critical research; and raising public awareness about illegal and unsustainable trade issues, capacity building of the prosecutors and the judges.
- Building interagency government and private sector capacity to act against poaching and illegal trade.
- Strengthening enforcement cooperation at the international level, as well as interagency cooperation.
- Changing consumer behaviour: targeted behavioural change activities that will reduce the buying of illegal wildlife-based products, and encourage the purchasing of sustainable biodiversity positive products (e.g. FairWild).
- Improving international legal frameworks, corporate engagement and law enforcement cooperation to tackle wildlife crime linked to the internet.
- Encouraging people to use their natural resources sustainably: Working hand-in-hand with women and men of communities to provide practical help to develop sustainable livelihoods and conserve natural resources. Providing awareness-raising and opportunities for legal sustainable income.
- Working with the private sector: Promoting sustainable wildlife trade, and taking measures to eliminate the private sector's role in illegal wildlife trade.
- Working with the transport and financial sector to make sure they don't "support" illegal trade and their human rights obligations.
- Promoting new laws for the control of wildlife trade, when appropriate, such as achieving protection under CITES for several marine and timber species.
- Increasing research to understand the impact and the trade chain of certain commodities.

⁴ <https://cites.org/eng>

- Advocating to ensure that the mandate of multilateral environment agreements, such as CITES, is not weakened or over-ruled by institutions such as the World Trade Organization, which pursue economic priorities with little consideration for their long-term, environmental impacts
- Include timber and fisheries (IUU) in the wildlife trafficking strategies.
- Support partner countries to drastically control the trade of wild animals for human consumption in wet markets, in particular urban and peri-urban markets for live and freshly slaughtered animals, and provide technical support to quickly strengthen wildlife laws and support law enforcement efforts.
- Support greater research on the links between wildlife and human health and targeted community-based outreach programmes to protect people and wildlife.
- Promote greater understanding, including through research and partnerships, of the links between human rights and illegal wildlife trade and best practices in mainstreaming a human-rights based approach to all IWT responses.
- **Diversifying the Wildlife Economy:** The COVID-19 pandemic has caused income to communities who normally relied on trophy hunting and wildlife tourism to supplement their livelihood strategies to plummet, creating unprecedented vulnerabilities and threatening local social-ecological resilience and the sustainability of community-based natural resource management, particularly in Africa. There is a greater imperative than ever before to diversify the wildlife economy, ensuring communities and other stakeholders are more resilient to shocks, and delivering long term viability for biodiversity conservation at scale. The development of alternative methods of diversifying the wildlife economy is rapidly accelerating, but needs a global approach that can link key communities to novel and innovative global market opportunities.

Addressing the drivers of deforestation and ecosystem conversion

As the European Commission committed to present a legislative proposal and other measures to avoid the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market and to promote forest-friendly imports and value chains⁵ sufficient resources under the Global Challenges programme should be made available to ensure partner countries get the right level of support for compliance to these new requirements, but also to engage in a transition towards more sustainable land use. The funding allocations under the Global Challenges programme should be made available on top of national and regional MIPs, and complementary to the EU Forest Partnerships that have been proposed. In particular, there should be funding dedicated to:

- Capacity building for producers, in particular smallholders and IPLCs to be included in EU supply chains, and for producer countries to address the drivers of deforestation with the relevant stakeholders
- Capacity building for IPLCs as well as other marginalised groups to participate in the political discussions and represent their interests
- Support to address land use and tenure rights, improve law enforcement and strengthen the relevant legislative frameworks to protect forests and other ecosystems
- Scaled up finance and technical support for the transition to sustainable agriculture practices and to strengthen enabling conditions for fair, sustainable production and value chains
- Better governance, multi-stakeholder land-use planning, payments for ecosystem services and developing alternative livelihoods
- Engagement with sustainable business networks to support the private sector transition through production, consumption and conservation efforts and support independent monitoring of corporate pledges, fair prices for producers and the establishment of real-life pilots.

The actions taken should not only focus on deforestation and forest degradation but also include action towards the conversion and degradation of other natural ecosystems. Actions carried out under the

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https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/new_stepping_up_the_continuing_impact_of_eu_consumption_on_nature_worldwide_fullreport.pdf

Global challenges programme should be aligned with the timeline of the adoption and implementation of new legislation on deforestation at the EU level to ensure support is provided on time.

2. Climate action

Global programme for the implementation of the Paris Agreement

A global programme on Paris Agreement implementation is necessary to support effective participation in multilateral climate fora and to ensure best practice is pooled, information shared and applied between the EU and its partner countries. Investing in a global programme makes sense because climate impacts are eroding hard-won development gains, particularly for women and girls, and women's role in governance and gender-responsive approaches need to be supported at the global level. Continued support is needed to support governance and implementation of climate plans in partner countries, with an increased focus on integrating the SDGs, particularly gender and biodiversity, as well as greater ambition. In line with the EU's new Adaptation Strategy which aims to up-skill the EU's adaptive capacity domestically and increase collaboration on adaptation internationally, adaptation should be a centerpiece of the global climate programme, coupled with support for trans-regional adaptation programmes, integrating disaster risk reduction, and a particular focus on least developed countries and small island developing states. As losses and damages from climate change increase, the global programme also needs to support institutional capacity to address loss and damage on the ground, and support the voice and agency of affected frontline communities. The global programme should enable IPLCs participation and contribution at all opportunities.

Global Challenges programme should prioritise allocations for:

- **Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs)**
The Global Challenges programme should support good governance in the design and implementation of NDCs and NAPs, for science-based, participatory and rights-based design approaches, and efforts to align or integrate them with biodiversity and SDG plans, and Disaster Risk Reduction. NDCs and NAPs should maximise opportunities from nature-based solutions, land use and agriculture, which have co-benefits such as addressing biodiversity conservation (e.g. by strengthening ecological connectivity) desertification, food security and livelihoods of local communities. NDCs should also be gender-responsive, and include gender equality objectives. Support to governments and stakeholders to enhance and deliver on nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans, including through the NDC Partnership⁶ should be increased.
- **Capacity-building, technical assistance, and technological cooperation**
Elements of the GCCA+ and particularly the intra-ACP GCCA+ should be translated into the global programme. A global dialogue, technical assistance and capacity-building facility, building on the Climate Support Facility (CSF) example under the Intra-ACP GCCA+, that facilitates dialogue and exchange on climate issues, and provides demand-driven technical support. Areas of focus should evolve based on partner countries' needs but could include the climate negotiations and implementation of the Paris Agreement, access to climate change funds, sustainable finance, gender-responsive national climate, and disaster risk reduction strategies and action plans. In line with the new EU Adaptation Strategy, increasing international cooperation on adaptation should be a focus, including climate risk and vulnerability assessment – including technological support on data and information systems - adaptation proofing of infrastructure and programmes, management of natural resources, and response planning and overcoming various barriers to create an enabling environment for nature-based solutions such as for water infrastructure (green and blue). IPLC's knowledge should be incorporated at all levels, and the Principles of Locally Led Adaptation applied. In addition to adaptation, cooperation

⁶ <https://ndcpartnership.org/>

and support to effectively minimize (through risk management), transfer (through climate risk insurance), and redress intolerable loss and damage (through grants to redress and rehabilitate).

- **Funding to support constituted bodies at the UNFCCC and for participation in the UNFCCC by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)**

The Global Challenges Programme should support action to avert, minimise and address loss and damage, the third pillar of the Paris Agreement, and an issue to which developing countries are particularly vulnerable. Funding should be provided for the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) to carry out its work programme and further for an effective operationalisation of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage, including for its hosting and activities, which should include technical assistance, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder coordination. The programme should also continue EU support to the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), another technical assistance platform under the UNFCCC. The Global Challenges programme should support participation in the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' platform and its facilitative working group

- **UNFCCC funds including the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and the Global Environment Facility**

The Global Challenges Programme should include contributions to the UNFCCC financial mechanisms, and multiannual commitments to the Adaptation Fund and Least Developed Countries Fund should be made to improve the predictability of funding and give it a more sustainable resource base. It should also improve access to the funds by supporting accreditation processes for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, and civil society organisations, particularly those representing Indigenous Peoples', women and girls.

- **Explore support to existing global climate initiatives** including the African Adaptation Initiative, African Risk Capacity, the Climate Vulnerable Forum and Vulnerable 20 (CVF and V20) Fund, the V20 Sustainable Insurance Facility.

3. Green transition

Sustainable energy

The Global Challenges programme should play a role in driving the global transition to 100% energy access through 100% renewable energy and energy-efficient systems. It should focus on encouraging the rapid shift from fossil fuel-based energy sources, supporting just transition plans, and in countries with low energy access the rapid shift to 100% energy access using decentralised solutions as a least-cost solution in particular for rural electrification. Efforts should take an integrated approach to the SDGs, focusing on tackling energy access inequality, and using gender-responsive approaches. The Global Challenges programme should provide a central offer of capacity-building and technical assistance on policy and regulatory frameworks. Since government policies and economic stimulus packages will have a huge impact on the energy transition, the Global Challenges Programme should strengthen the role of renewables and energy efficiency in recovery and development plans, through support to existing trans-regional and global initiatives, including supporting the African Union Green Recovery Plan.

Sustainable food production: nature positive and healthy food systems

The Global Challenges Programme should support the implementation of global and national transitions to sustainable and equitable food systems - as included in the EU "Farm to Fork" Strategy - and support the delivery of solutions generated by the UN Food Systems Summit process. The food system is putting an impossible strain on nature and failing to nourish all people on the planet. However, the food system can be part of the solution for nature, climate and people. Rethinking our food system is a key to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

The challenge ahead is to improve our food production systems without exceeding the carrying capacity of ecosystems and the planet, in order to meet the food and nutrition needs of current and future generations. For the successful implementation of the SDGs, **a food systems approach must be integrated into global agendas such as the UN Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD), Climate (UNFCCC) and Land (UNCCD)**, and be coupled with implementation on the ground. To achieve nature-positive food production systems, practices must be adopted that protect, manage and restore nature, while globally meeting the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food for all. Global Challenges programmes should complement the implementation of sustainable food production and sustainable land management actions and programmes identified in the EU country and regional MIPs and focus on:

- **Protection of natural ecosystems against new conversion:** support the implementation of transparent deforestation- and conversion-free supply chains; the transition to sustainable agriculture through policy reform and public support, to meet the triple challenge of food, climate and biodiversity; and the integration of land and water resource management in food systems.
- **Sustainable management of existing food production systems:** support the strengthening of scientific and local knowledge and innovations on agriculture production systems such as agroecology and regenerative agriculture; the strengthening and scale-up of agrobiodiversity by using indigenous knowledge and experience; and sustainable blue and aquatic foods with a special focus on small scale actors in fisheries and aquaculture.
- **Restoration of degraded ecosystems and rehabilitation of soil functions, with a special focus on grassland and wetland ecosystems:** support the implementation of restoration targets made under the UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality and UNFCCC to Nationally Determined Contributions. Support the establishment of a multi-stakeholder coalition to facilitate the adoption and scaling of restoration practices, improve peer-to-peer exchange in government and build up knowledge hubs, setting a specific focus on grassland, wetlands and rangeland restoration.
- **Support redesign of the business models:** many emerging food markets in developing countries are based on new food products that value biodiversity or are based on organic production. This is an opportunity to redesign business models by encouraging them to adopt a species-portfolio approach that considers diversity at a landscape level and issues of multi-functionality as a reference to be preserved through the conservation of species diversity while developing businesses for natural products
- **Prevention and reduction of food loss and waste:** building upon the regional SWITCH initiatives, support policies that target food loss and waste reduction and voluntary agreements in retail and manufacturing sectors to deliver SDG 12.3, encouraging businesses to help consumers reduce food waste. It should also support investment in supply chain infrastructure and storage facilities to reduce post-harvest food loss; short supply chain management (e.g. transport to local markets, urban-rural linkages, connection between food producers and consumers); technical support to measure food loss/waste; and in hot countries, energy-efficient cold chains. It should support education, training and behaviour change interventions to reduce consumer food waste.
- Support local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to **phase out harmful economic subsidies, incentives and policies in agriculture and fisheries** aiming at promoting mono-cropping, intensive farming systems based only on the use of external inputs or production and marketing systems conducive to intensive exploitation of natural resources. Incentives and policies should be oriented to better promote diversified and agro-ecological farming systems and productive systems compatible with the regeneration of natural resources.
- Effectively manage the **interface of agricultural systems with natural ecosystems**, by ensuring agricultural systems are designed and managed in ways that best support ecological connectivity of broader landscapes, and ensure human-wildlife coexistence.

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