



October 7th, 2010



Towards Nagoya and beyond – SCB-ES position on EU and national policies

Dear Madam/Sir,

The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is an international organization of scientists and conservation professionals (educators, resource managers, administrators, consultants) dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity. The European Section (SCB-ES) represents conservation professionals from all the 27 EU member states.

The SCB-ES is deeply concerned about the ongoing, rapid, human-caused loss of biodiversity. It is not only as a matter of great international concern, but also an undesired trend which scientific knowledge can assist in altering. Despite the various gaps in scientific knowledge and in the transfer of this knowledge to policy-makers, we wish to clarify that neither the lack of knowledge nor its incomplete transfer drives biodiversity loss. Instead, the key factors are **insufficient translation of available knowledge into implementation**, and **political prioritization** which allows the continuation of processes that are known to drive biodiversity loss. This is partly due to inappropriate valuation of biodiversity, both at the EU level and the national level. Prominent **examples** for such imbalances include:

1. **Agricultural intensification**, with its associated habitat loss, fragmentation and homogenization, is known to be one of the major causes of biodiversity loss. However, in the year 2009 the EU has allocated 41.1 billion Euros to subsidize intensive farming within first pillar subsidies (plus at least 2.7 billion Euros within second pillar subsidies), but only about 6 billion Euros to agri-environment programs, as part of second pillar payments.



2. While **the EU does not provide targeted funds to the implementation of its Conservation Directives**, it does allocate direct funding – often in the same regions – to the expansion of infrastructures such as roads, industrial zones etc., which only enhance the loss of valuable natural habitats and their fragmentation. We therefore wish to clarify that the scientific literature has systematically indicated “offset” approaches (reserves, or corridors) as means to diminish negative effects of development, not as measures to mitigate such effects completely in face of ongoing intensification of the human footprint.

3. While rural traditional societies and local production are repeatedly acknowledged for their capacity to maintain both cultural and biological diversity, subsidies targeted at industrial development favor large-scale economic incentives and include complex regulations which do not meet the needs and capacities of small-scale local producers. Most **incentives thus contribute to the ongoing extinction of more sustainable societies, in favor of growth-economy** that is supported by the extraction of cheap raw materials from outside the EU (i.e., externalization of environmental effects including the loss of biodiversity).

These examples indicate that current EU and national policies still suffer from major incoherence between competing targets and projects. Scientific knowledge is pushed aside, and the importance of biodiversity to human well-being is reflected neither by policy nor by implementation. Given the EU’s adherence to the precautionary principle, even gaps in knowledge do not justify lack of activity or measures that threaten to yield inappropriate results. Thus, the many early-warning signs given by scientists must invoke an urgent, preemptive, precautionary responses at the national and EU levels.

Furthermore, the EU has prime responsibility for the global loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services: it is responsible for the consumption of 25% of the world’s energy, the utilization of over-proportional resources (both renewable and non-renewable), and a substantial global deposition of waste (CO₂, toxic waste). Thus, the EU and each of its member states should match their impact by appropriate responsibility to combat biodiversity loss within the *global* context of the CBD.



The SCB-ES therefore calls upon the EU to recognize its prime role in advancing the CBD, and take the means to reflect this responsibility in Nagoya by ensuring a) sufficient **direct budgets for nature protection**, b) a **revision of (competing) harming subsidies**, and c) the **setting of immediate, measurable, and more abiding targets**. As a roof organization for conservation experts, which constantly continues to expand and strengthen its network, the **SCB-ES offers its services to the EU to a) assemble relevant knowledge upon policy needs**, b) help **setting practical and measurable biodiversity targets**, and c) **assist in resolving conflicts** between the decisions relating to the 2020 EU biodiversity target and their implementation, within the IPBES and beyond it.

Yours sincerely,

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