

Executive Summary

5th French National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity – as per October 2014

The text below is a courtesy translation.

In 2014, two draft laws bring the basis for better protection and promotion of French biodiversity:

-the *Law on Energy Transition for Green Growth*, which has been adopted at first reading by the National Assembly, defines new goals and new ambitious tools to reduce greenhouse gases emissions and pollution;

-the *Biodiversity Law*, which has been examined by the Commission on Sustainable Development of the National Assembly and will be debated in public session in spring 2015; this draft law aims to contribute to a better reconciliation between human activities and biodiversity and provide a response to the commitment made as a Party to the CBD to “Live in harmony with nature”.

Since 2009, France has taken further action to promote biodiversity, following the lines of the Strategic Plan adopted at CBD COP10 and the goal of "Living in harmony with nature". It has drafted a new national biodiversity strategy for the period 2011-2020.

France, which will welcome the UNFCCC 21st Conference of the Parties in 2015, wishes to use all the tools available to be fully engaged in the environmental transition.

Q1: Why is biodiversity important for your country?

France has a territory rich in natural resources and an exceptional biodiversity in fauna and flora on land and at sea.

Due to its geographical position in Europe and overseas, France has natural and cultural heritage of great richness that makes it a "megadiverse" country. France's position in continental Europe lies at a meeting point for several influences and covers four of the eleven biogeographical regions (Atlantic, Alpine, Continental and Mediterranean). Moreover, French overseas departments, territories and collectivities are located at many latitudes: the Mascarene Islands, the Guiana Shield, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, the Austral and Antarctic Islands, and sub-boreal North America biome. French territory is thus located in five of the world's 37 terrestrial biodiversity hotspots identified by the WWF and the IUCN; four of these hotspots are overseas. In addition, the French exclusive economic zone covers more than 11 million km², making it the second largest in the world. All these elements give the country a high degree of responsibility in terms of biodiversity.

Biodiversity, whether it is genetic, specific, ecosystem or landscape-based, is one of the foundations of the cultural diversity and the specific nature of French territory. The traditional skills of French populations are partly linked to their knowledge of biodiversity, both in mainland France and overseas. Biodiversity is a direct or indirect contributor to many human activities, from food to medicine, clothing, construction, agriculture and livestock. It is also a source of advantages that benefit all. Biomimicry is now one of the most important sources of inspiration in scientific research and technological innovation. In addition, land biodiversity, and even more marine biodiversity, is a major factor of climate change mitigation, due to carbon storage in functional and productive ecosystems. The exploratory study to assess the services provided by ecosystems in France identified 43 ecosystem services in three categories:

1. supply services (cultivation of fruit and vegetables, wood for construction and energy, fish resources etc.);
2. regulatory services (forests preventing avalanches, regulating rivers flooding, attenuation of climatic variations etc.);
3. cultural and aesthetic services (landscapes for leisure, cultural or religious value of certain natural environments etc.).

The EFSE programme is currently carrying out a joint project to assess these services in detail.

Q2: What major changes have taken place in the status and trends of biodiversity in your country?

Q3: What are the main threats to biodiversity?

Q4: What are the impacts of the changes in biodiversity for ecosystem services and the socio-economic and cultural implications of these impacts? Optional question: What are possible future changes for biodiversity and their impacts?

The state and trends of biological diversity remain worrying, but society as a whole is being mobilised, both for energy transition and green growth, and biodiversity, in the context of two draft laws. The conservation status of habitats and species classified as important for the European Union has stabilised but has not yet seen any significant improvement.

National biodiversity is vulnerable. The major pressures identified at global level apply equally to France: the destruction, fragmentation and alteration of habitats, the pollution of air, soil, watercourses and oceans, species exploitation at a greater rate than the speed with which their populations can recover, the arrival or expansion of invasive exotic species, climate change and changes or reductions in human activity are leading to landscape homogenisation and the loss of biodiversity.

In 2013, only 28% of species classified as important at the EU scale had a favourable conservation status according to data from the 2013 reports, produced under the European Union's Habitats Directive; in terms of trends compared to 2007, 15 % of these species were in decline (more particularly aquatic species) and 50% were in a stable state of conservation. Also in 2013, 22% of habitats classified as important at the EU scale had a favourable conservation status, a slight improvement on 2007, when that figure was 17%. Between 2007 and 2013, little change is therefore noticeable. Another finding from the 2013 reports is a clear improvement in knowledge of habitats and species and methods of evaluating them. However, situations vary from one ecosystem type to another, which may guide priorities. Some agricultural ecosystems, for example, are particularly threatened, and this would justify priority investment.

Demographic changes and production and consumption patterns are also increasing the pressure. The relative importance of these pressures varies depending on the geographical, human and ecological context. For example, the Polynesian atolls are particularly sensitive to rises in the sea level caused by climate change. The impact of invasive exotic species is very significant in islands, particularly overseas. Over-exploitation of fish species caught at sea has already led to a collapse in certain stocks.

A few significant examples illustrate the situation and the recent evolution of biodiversity in France:

- between 2006 and 2012, the fragmentation of natural habitats is continuing apace, with man-made spaces growing by about 400,000 hectares (reaching 9.1% of the mainland territory), mostly to the detriment of semi-natural environments including agricultural land;
- between 2000 and 2010, 47% of wetlands suffered varying degrees of degradation, 42% remained stable and 11% improved;
- just over 27% of underground water sources in mainland France and 38% in the overseas departments failed to meet quality standards in at least one year from 2007 to 2009; the figures are 11% for watercourse monitoring points in mainland France and 15% overseas, making pesticides a significant issue;

At the same time, awareness of the whole French society has been raised.

The French perception of biodiversity has evolved. Over a third of French people (35%) says that the erosion of biodiversity is already having an impact on their daily lives, rising from 28% in 2010. The French rank biodiversity loss among the most worrying problems relating to the degradation of the environment. Questions of production patterns are increasingly mentioned among causes of this loss of biodiversity.

The elaboration of the draft *Law on Energy Transition for Green Growth* led to an important citizen mobilisation. The Biodiversity Law establishes the very first major law on the issue for the past 40 years, which underlines the important mobilisation of public authorities in favour of biodiversity.

There is an increase in national spending for biodiversity, which includes spending by central and local government, the European Union, businesses and households. Investment to protect biodiversity and landscapes rose by 85% between 2000 and 2011 (latest available data) (5.8% per year on average). Funding for habitats and species management and knowledge rose by +10.6% and +16.5% respectively over the period. On the other hand, funding for actions to reduce the pressure on habitats rose by only +0.5% and thus needs to be reinforced.

Q5: What are the biodiversity targets set by your country?

"Preserve, restore, reinforce and promote biodiversity, ensure it is used sustainably and equitably, successfully involve everyone and all sectors of activity": the 2011-2020 National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) adopted in 2011 aims to protect, restore and increase the diversity of life in all the areas for which France is responsible, both in continental Europe and overseas.

This goal also applies to the European and international context wherever France can make a contribution in a spirit of global solidarity. The ambition of the NBS is to keep ecosystems functioning and to maintain their resilience in the long term. With this in mind, the NBS promotes the reduction of direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity, the sustainable use of living resources and the equitable distribution of the benefits provided by this use.

The NBS takes the form of 20 targeted objectives and is fully in line with the international approach, the strategy having been revised using an iterative participatory process involving European and international contributors throughout the international year of biodiversity and until its adoption in 2011.

The NBS is designed to contribute to integrated, sustainable regional development in mainland France and the overseas territories. It is to be incorporated as a priority into all public policy in areas such as water, soil, the sea, the climate and energy, not to mention urban planning, infrastructure, education, research, health, agriculture, forestry etc. In this way, it aims to profoundly change our relationship with nature in order to guarantee the well-being of present and future generations.

All the stakeholders came together – the State and its public organisations, local authorities, economic operators, civil society, trade unions, research bodies – to draft the NBS, and all will be involved in implementing it and measuring its effects. It aims to encourage information, awareness and involvement among elected officials and citizens and to foster their participation and initiatives to contribute to its success through responsible action.

Q6: How has your national biodiversity strategy and action plan been updated to incorporate these targets and to serve as an effective instrument to mainstream biodiversity?

The National Biodiversity Strategy is reflected in the roadmap adopted by the government following each annual environmental conference, which sets out the framework for the implementation of policies contributing to the environmental transition.

The 2011-2020 National Biodiversity Strategy has adopted an approach based on voluntary support which aims to encourage information, awareness, consultation and mobilisation throughout society (officials, citizens, economic sector, associations) and a process of recognition designed to encourage these stakeholders' initiatives so that they can contribute to conserving biodiversity. This second NBS, developed by and for stakeholders, replaces a strategy based on sector-specific action plans directed at

national level, which proved not to be sufficiently effective in terms of mobilisation. The approach of the NBS has also changed, positioning itself within a dynamic vision (protecting the ability of biodiversity to evolve) with a positive message (biodiversity is an ecological capital that supports investment and provides a source of innovation).

Today in addition, several French regions have also developed regional biodiversity strategies, multiplying stakeholder mobilisation and incorporating biodiversity concerns at local level in all sectors.

Q7: What actions has your country taken to implement the Convention since the fourth report and what have been the outcomes of these actions?

1. The Law on Energy Transition for Green Growth

The goals of the draft law

- To reduce by 40% our greenhouse gases emissions in 2030 and divide them by four in 2050, compared to 1990.
- To increase the production of renewable energy to 32% of our final energy consumption in 2030.
- To cap at 63,2 GW – its current level – the nuclear power capacity installed in France.
- To reduce our energy consumption by 20% in 2030.

To save energy in buildings and control energy costs

- To build “positive energy buildings” and take advantage of important building restoration programmes** (rehabilitation of façade, roofing, extension,...) **in order to significantly improve energy performance** of all buildings.
- To allow a third party financing from public firms.** This new provision allows cash advances to individuals who wish to undertake work;
- To generalize individual heat meters** in the buildings to allow users know and better control their consumption and **to strengthen the information given to users about their consumption** with the deployment of clever electric meters (Linky) and gas meters (Gazpar).

To promote cleaner transportation

- To deploy clean vehicles in public fleets** and to systematically put up **recharging points for electric vehicles in public and private buildings**
- To set up a conversion premium** for the most polluting vehicles to clean vehicles. The cumulation of bonuses for buying an electric vehicle and conversion premium could reach up to 10.000 (ten thousand) Euros.

To produce less waste and better recycle it

- To prohibit the distribution of single-use plastic bags** from 1st January 2016 in order **to encourage the development of bio-sourced packaging industries**;
- To set up a plan to fight food waste** in catering services and to generalize **selective management at source of food waste** by 2025;
- To create a **network of waste collection centres for professionals of building and public works sector** by 1st January 2017 and to **recover 70% of that sector’s waste** by 2020.

To develop renewable energies

- To set up a new scheme to support renewable energies** with the possibility to sell directly on the market the electricity produced whilst also benefiting from a premium;
- To facilitate and encourage the participation of local authorities and citizens to the capital** of firms carrying out local renewable energy projects.

To strengthen the safety of nuclear facilities

- To strengthen the means of control and the powers of the Nuclear Safety Authority** and create a **new regulatory framework for the continued operation of nuclear facilities after 40 years.**

To simplify project implementation

- To simplify procedures, shorten time frames and all over France generalize the experimentation of a single permit** for wind turbines, bio-gas plants and facilities falling under the scope of the Water Law (such as hydroelectric plants).

To steer the French energy policy, in the mainland and overseas

- To initiate a **national low carbon strategy** so as to improve our policy of climate change mitigation and a **multi-year energy programming**, setting goals over five years;
- To set up an **energy cheque** in order to help low-income households pay their bill.
- To make the French Overseas models of environmental excellence.**

2. The Biodiversity Law

A law has been drafted in favour of biodiversity. The text put forward by the government proposes incorporating four new fundamental principles into the body of French legislation:

- knowledge becomes an initiative of general interest: today, biodiversity is often destroyed because of a lack of knowledge; in France, over two thirds of land species are not scientifically located and 10% of remarkable habitats are little-known. Only with better knowledge of biodiversity can the appropriate protective measures be adopted and the costs of impact studies be reduced;
- environmental solidarity in regional development: this principle covers the interdependence of living beings (including humans) as well as their interdependence with their natural or artificial habitats;
- the addition of a principle of compensation for residual damage, taking the ecological value of the biodiversity affected into account, to the principles aiming to avoid and then reduce damage to biodiversity (the "avoid, reduce, compensate" sequence): when designing and implementing projects, developers must define appropriate measures to avoid, reduce and, when necessary and possible, compensate for significant negative impact on the environment. This approach must result in the environment being taken into account as early as possible in the design of projects, especially as the lack of feasibility of compensation may, in certain cases, jeopardize the whole project. By taking the ecological value of habitats into account and seeking to conserve it globally, this principle conserves the services provided to mankind (apart from agriculture, as agricultural land is sometimes allocated to other uses than agricultural production in this framework) and their own potential for biodiversity while enabling the development required for human activity;
- the preservation of ecological corridors: these corridors are vital for the functioning of ecosystems, the circulation of wild species and adaptation to climate change: incorporated into law in 2009 under the name of the Green and Blue Infrastructure, they are reflected, for example, in Regional Ecological Coherence Schemes (see below); these schemes contribute to regional sustainable development and to maintaining a high-quality living environment.

One chapter of this draft law is dedicated to the fight against contamination by pesticides: it provides for the prohibition of pesticides for the maintenance of public areas from 1st May 2016 onwards (instead of 1st January 2020) and for a ban on aerial deployment of these products.

Finally, the draft law also proposes a national system for accessing genetic resources and associated knowledge and for sharing the benefits arising from their use, in application of the Nagoya Protocol.

3. The creation of protected areas

Action has been taken to reverse the downward trend in biodiversity and implement the Convention: a programme to acquire, organise and spread knowledge; delimiting new protected areas on land and at sea; identifying ecological corridors; defining species action plans; strategies to combat invasive species; spreading practices that benefit to biodiversity; raising awareness; regional and international cooperation actions.

As an example, the network of Natura 2000 sites is now almost finalized except for marine offshore areas and includes 1758 sites (1366 Sites of Importance for the European Union and 392 Special Protection Areas).

France has also established a dual strategy for protected areas to ensure that protected species and habitat types reach a favourable conservation status and that their long-term survival is guaranteed throughout their ranges: the Strategy for the Creation of Protected Areas (SCAP) and the Strategy for the Creation and Management of Protected Marine Areas (SCGAMP). For land environments, the SCAP has led to the creation of a new national park, the Calanques National Park. Moreover, the policy of protected areas development is dynamic and ambitious outside the regulatory approach allowed by the SCAP. In the spirit of Aichi Goal 11, and in line with the definition of IUCN protected areas, vast territories are given a protection status on the basis of area-based conservation projects supported by local authorities. Thus, “regional natural parks”, which cover 14% of land area in the mainland, are being developed with increased requirements for conservation and restoration activities. Since 2011, four parks have been established, two of which during 2014: the Ardennes, the Pré-Alpes d’Azur, the Poitevin marsh and the Morbihan Golf.

Marine natural parks also experience a very strong development, allowing France to fill a gap in marine ecosystems conservation. Here again, in 2014 only, two parks were created (Arcachon and Pertuis de Charente-Gironde), and two new parks are being considered (Martinique and Cap Corse) for establishment by 2016, which illustrates the government willingness to accelerate marine environment protection.

In terms of combating the fragmentation of natural spaces, France has developed its own innovative land development tool to maintain and restore ecological corridors. The "Green and Blue Infrastructure" ("*Trame verte et bleue*") consists in building an ecological infrastructure, based on connectivity within a coherent network of protected areas. This policy, which also responds to the element of Aichi Goal 11 related to protected areas connexion, has now been incorporated in the legal frameworks governing the environment, urban planning, local authorities, rural areas and forests. It is based on the adoption of Regional Ecological Coherence Schemes, which follow national guidelines and have operational elements. These schemes have been implemented since 2014 in overseas *Départements* (where they are integrated in general Spatial Planning Schemes, taking into account the small area concerned by the continuity issue). They are also operational in four mainland Regions (Ile de France, Basse Normandie, Nord Pas de Calais and Rhône Alpes). The central government and Regional authorities involved aim at adopting these schemes on the whole territory by the end of 2016.

The measures in place to protect habitats are accompanied by several actions initiated to protect species, such as the adoption of 72 national action plans (NAP) on 1 January 2011, updates to red lists of endangered species and the assessment of the conservation status of species of importance to the European Union.

Q8: How effectively has biodiversity been mainstreamed into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, plans and programmes? Q9. How fully has your national biodiversity strategy and action plan been implemented?

The initial results from the implementation of the 2011-2020 National Biodiversity Strategy are promising. In addition to the stakeholder commitment already seen, the French Observatory for Biodiversity set up in 2012 has produced a series of indicators measuring the effects of the NBS on biodiversity in the medium term. These indicators will be updated and reinforced through collaboration with the observatories set up at different regional levels.

In October 2014, 411 structures had signed their "accession to the NBS": 160 associations, 154 firms/professional organizations, 47 public institutions, 47 territorial authorities and 2 trade unions. NBS recognition has been awarded to 55 projects sponsored by 33 members. In the context of the calls for bids issued by the government to meet its NBS commitments, 115 projects have been selected, nearly a quarter of them overseas, for a total amount of 17 million euros. The government's other commitments have been kept or, from 2013, carried over into guideline documents based on the roadmap for the environmental transition issued to all government ministers. 62% of these actions have been implemented or are being implemented in accordance with the schedule defined in 2013. The second roadmap for the environmental transition in 2014 contains measures with a favourable impact on biodiversity, including those arising from the round-table discussions on "marine biodiversity and the seas and oceans" and "water policy".

Moreover, the French Observatory for Biodiversity has been established . Its work is available online at: <http://indicateurs-biodiversite.naturefrance.fr>.

Q10: What progress has been made by your country towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets?

The adoption of the 2011-2020 National Biodiversity Strategy, which is rooted in the Aichi targets, is a first step in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. With a match between the national and international objectives having been established, the NBS covers all the Aichi targets. Target 17, on the adoption of the strategy, has thus already been achieved in France.

The 20 Aichi targets are clustered in 5 strategic goals:

- A) To address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society;
- B) To reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use;
- C) To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity;
- D) To enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- E) To enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity-building.

All Aichi targets correspond to one or several targets of the NBS. However, the latter are expressed in more general terms, and some of them respond to national concerns which have no equivalent in the Aichi targets.

Aichi targets 1 (on people's awareness), 11 (on conservation levels in terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas), 16 (on the Nagoya Protocol), 18 (on indigenous and local communities) and 19 (on the improvement, sharing, transfer and application of knowledge) are well on the way to being achieved by the deadlines set at the very latest.

Significant challenges remain to be met in terms of achieving targets 2 (on integrating biodiversity value), 3 (on incentives), 6 (on fishing), 8 (on pollution), 10 (on marine and coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs), 14 (on ecosystems that provide essential services) and 15 (on ecosystem resilience). The delays in meeting these objectives are partly due to the fact that certain concepts, including biodiversity value, the evaluation of ecosystem services and the links between biodiversity and climate change, are still undergoing research.

Progress towards achieving other targets can be considered moderate.

Q11: What has been the contribution of actions to implement the Convention towards the achievement of the relevant 2015 targets of the Millennium Development Goals in your country?

As the Millennium Development Goals were defined for developing countries, the question does not apply to France. In connection with the achievement of the MDG in other countries, we could nevertheless mention the scale of French public development aid dedicated to biodiversity: 226.45 million Euros in 2013, a significant rise on previous years. In addition, with regard to the decisions taken at the twelfth Conference of the Parties to the CBD on resource mobilisation, the French Development Agency (AFD) adopted a Transverse Intervention Framework (CIT) on Biodiversity in September 2013, covering the period 2013-2016, which provides for a doubling in the AFD's interventions in this sector and a commitment to allocate an average of 160 million euros a year to actions dedicated to protected areas and sustainable natural resource management.

Q12: What lessons have been learned from the implementation of the Convention in your country?

The French strategy promotes a governance that involves all levels, from the local to the international. The Convention on Biological Diversity provides the global frame of reference for biodiversity policy.

This ensures that national policies and measures are in line with a regional, cross-border and transnational logic. This is especially true in Europe, in the context of the Berne Convention, and in the Alps, in the context of the Alpine Convention. It is also the case in European overseas territories, in the context of regional marine conventions. Many bilateral and even wider cross-border cooperation agreements are in force with regard to migrating species.

The Convention has encouraged France to engage in advanced, multi-partner reflection on the subject of genetic resources, as our country is both a user and a supplier of resources (available inside and outside the country). This work has led to a proposal for a national system that would be both progressive and firm.

Similarly, the Convention has promoted the importance of a socio-economic approach to biodiversity issues. For this reason, several projects have been undertaken and are in progress at national level: identifying subsidies and taxes that harm biodiversity, evaluating ecosystem services, consideration for payments for environmental services by the standing committee on environmental taxation.

France has also intervened at international level to support the creation of tools to promote knowledge and the valuing of biodiversity such as the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the establishment of international law on the high seas.