

**NAT Section – Upcoming opinions**  
**April 2023**

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### 1. Sustainable Food Systems, Agriculture & Fisheries

#### **NAT/908 – Plants produced by new genomic techniques**

The Commission will propose a policy [initiative](#) on plants obtained by some New Breeding Techniques (NBTs), more specifically targeted mutagenesis (e.g. mutations producing variations in the plant genome introduced by way of radiation or chemicals) and cisgenesis (e.g. a genetic modification of a recipient organism with a gene from the same species or a closely related species) and for their food and feed products. The initiative aims at an appropriate regulatory oversight for the concerned plant products, ensuring a high level of protection of human and animal health and the environment, and enabling innovation and the contribution of plants obtained by safe NGTs to the objectives of the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy. There is a considerable debate as to how these new techniques should be regulated, and whether some or all of them should fall within the scope of EU legislation on genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

#### **NAT/902 – Fisheries – SEAFO – Cat. C**

The purpose of the proposal is to implement into Union law the conservation and control measures adopted by the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO).

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/06/2023

#### **NAT/901 – Fisheries – NAFO – Cat. B**

The purpose of the [proposal](#) is to implement into Union law the conservation and enforcement measures adopted by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO).

Rapporteur: Mr Stefano PALMIERI

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 26-27/04/2023

#### **NAT/900 - Digital labelling of EU fertilising products – Cat. B**

The proposal aims to improve the readability of labels and facilitate their management by economic operators of fertilising products in light to technological and societal changes in the field of digitalisation. The rules on the labels of EU fertilising products were extended in 2019 (new rules applicable as of 16 July 2022) and labels seem already to be overloaded, creating efficiency issues.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/06/2023

#### **NAT/849 - Action plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems**

This [action plan](#) is one of the deliverables announced in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, with the overall aim to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems. Where necessary, measures will be introduced to limit the use of fishing gear most harmful to biodiversity, including on

the seabed. It will also look at how to reconcile the use of bottom-contacting fishing gear with biodiversity goals. This must be done in a fair and just way for all.

In particular, the action plan will point out where action is needed to address the by-catch of sensitive species and adverse impacts on sensitive habitats through technical measures such as area closures, gear changes and mitigation measures for sensitive species.

The overall objective of this initiative is to concretely exploit the synergies between the fisheries and environmental policies. It will contribute to one of the main objectives of the European Green Deal, in making fisheries more sustainable, protecting marine ecosystems and their biodiversity.

Rapporteur: Mr Javier GARAT PÉREZ

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

**NAT/858 - [Sustainable food in the EU during the crisis on the basis of the new CAP: the contribution of conventional and organic farming to ensuring sustainable food sufficiency in EU Member States](#) –**

OIO

Although the EU as a whole is the world's biggest food exporter, the pandemic has shown a large variance between Member States in their levels of food sufficiency, with some of them facing dire shortages of even basic staples.

In the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the new CAP, the aim of the opinion is to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of both conventional and organic farming in order to identify the policy levers that are most effective and most likely to attain food sufficiency in EU Member States, while ensuring the transition to more sustainable food systems.

Rapporteur: Ms Jarmila DUBRAVSKÁ

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: Mid of 2023

**NAT/867 - Oceans observation — sharing responsibilities – Cat. B**

Ocean observation is essential for the knowledge base of the Green Deal. Data are collected by different authorities for different purposes.

The [EC initiative](#) aims to achieve a common EU approach for measuring once and using the data for many purposes.

It proposes:

- joint planning of observation activities
- a framework for collaboration on a national and EU scale.

Rapporteur-general: Mr Javier GARAT PÉREZ

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: Q3-Q4/2023

**NAT/871 - [Information and promotion measures for agricultural and food products in the internal market and in non-EU countries](#)**

The [review of the promotion policy](#) aims to support efforts to position the EU food system as a global reference for sustainability by promoting, in addition to quality schemes such as organic farming and geographical indications, future schemes seeking to raise consumer awareness about EU sustainable food labelling, animal welfare, healthy dietary patterns (e.g. by expanding on its current promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption in the context of balanced diets as well as other food products and categories that are currently under-consumed in the EU with a negative impact on public health).

Rapporteur: Mr Decebal-Ștefăniță PADURE, Co-rapporteur: Mr John COMER

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

**NAT/883 - Conservation and control measures applicable in the area covered by the Convention on future multilateral co-operation in the North-East Atlantic fisheries (regulation) – Cat. B**

The North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) is the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) for the North East Atlantic. The area covered by the NEAFC Convention (i.e., Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in North-East Atlantic Fisheries) stretches from the southern tip of Greenland, east to the Barents Sea, and south to Portugal. The European Union is a

contracting party, along with Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and, since October 2020, the United Kingdom. The objective of the NEAFC is to perform its functions in the interests of the conservation and optimum utilization of the fishery resources of the Convention area and to take into account the best scientific evidence available to it.

European Commission document publication foreseen in 2023

Rapporteur: Mr Javier GARAT PÉREZ

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

#### **NAT/884 - Revision of EU marketing standards for agricultural products**

The Farm to Fork Strategy envisages a revision of marketing standards to provide for the uptake and supply of sustainable agricultural products. The objective of the proposed Directive is to update marketing standards to changing needs, including of food supply chain operators and society at large, as well as to demands that food is produced in a more sustainable way. Furthermore, the [initiative](#) will explore the need for introducing new marketing standards. Marketing standards relate to technical specifications, classification, presentation, marking, labelling, packaging, production methods, conservation, storage, transport, administrative documents, certification, time limits, restrictions of use and disposal. Their purpose is to take into account the expectations of consumers and to enable the market to be easily supplied with products of a standardised and satisfactory quality.

Rapporteur: Ms Kerli ATS

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

#### **NAT/890 - Measures to reduce child obesity**

On the request of the Spanish presidency, the NAT Section will develop an exploratory opinion on measures to reduce child obesity (NAT/890). Building on previous work on [Healthy and sustainable diets](#) and on children education ([NAT/860 on empowering youth to achieve sustainable development through education](#) and [NAT/855- Evaluation of the EU school scheme](#)), the opinion will address the problem of child obesity, affecting 13% of male and 9% of female children in the EU and propose recommendations to support SDG 3 on Good Health and Wellbeing, promoting healthy lifestyles and addressing the impact of obesity on health. This opinion will be developed in close collaboration with the SOC Section."

Exploratory opinion at the request of the Spanish Presidency

Rapporteur: Mr Josep PUXEU ROCAMORA, Co-rapporteur: Isabel CAÑO AGUILAR

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

#### **NAT/892 - Towards a European Food Policy Council as a new governance model in the future EU Framework on Sustainable Food Systems – OIO**

The European Commission is currently working on the preparation of a [new EU framework on a sustainable food system](#) (FSFS), which was foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy and is due for publication by the end of 2023. The framework will set the foundations for the systemic changes that are needed by all actors of the food system, including policy makers, business operators and consumers in order to accelerate the transition to a sustainable EU food system, and also provide a frame for the future governance of food systems.

In its previous opinions, the EESC called for the creation of a "*European Food Policy Council*" that should be multi-stakeholder (encompassing the whole food supply chain) and multi-level (including representatives from local, regional, national levels). The purpose of this own-initiative opinion would be to feed strategically into the Commission's preparatory work on the FSFS by providing concrete ideas for governance of food systems and meaningful and structured civil society's (including young people's) engagement in the development, monitoring and implementation of food policies. The opinion would build on previous opinions related to sustainable food and youth education, and create synergies with other related ongoing work, for example on the Rural Pact.

Rapporteur: Ms Piroska KÁLLAY

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/06/2023

**NAT/895 - Decarbonisation of the fishing fleet** - Exploratory opinion at the request of the Spanish Presidency

Fisheries in the EU are a fundamental activity for the food supply to the population. The current situation, ultimately resulting from the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, has further highlighted the vulnerability of the sector to energy price fluctuations. Therefore, energy transition is essential, not only in strictly environmental terms, but also to increase the adaptability of a sector such as the fisheries sector, which is highly dependent on fossil fuels, in the face of present and future economic difficulties arising from the progressive rise in the prices of these fuels.

However, this strategy is hampered by the fact that at present there seem to be no real viable alternatives to fossil fuels for the widespread use of alternative energies. Smaller vessels are of a size that does not allow the incorporation of some of the alternative energy sources that are being developed, while large fishing vessels will face financing problems to undertake this energy transition given the magnitude of the changes needed to do so.

Rapporteur: Mr Javier GARAT PÉREZ

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

**NAT/899 - The impact of high energy prices on the agricultural sector and rural areas**

Following the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU encountered high prices and imbalances in the energy market. At the same time, the EU is rolling out an ambitious transition to a carbon-neutral economy, with energy solutions playing a very important role in this transition.

This opinion intends to focus on the rise in energy prices, especially from the point of view of the agricultural sector and rural areas. Households in rural places spend their money differently than households in cities: more of their budget goes to energy. The agricultural sector, which is a very important part of our rural areas, consumes large amounts of energy, either directly or indirectly through the use of energy-intensive inputs, especially fertilisers.

The opinion aims to identify the relevant characteristics of rural areas and establish who is suffering most from this situation, what could be done to remedy this situation and what opportunities there are, for instance with a view to the green transition, take into account the goals of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas. This opinion will also examine the state of play in the agricultural sector in line with the Member States' CAP strategic plans.

Rapporteur: Mr Simo TIAINEN

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

## **2. Environment and Biodiversity**

**NAT/911 - Chemicals – making best use of EU agencies to streamline scientific assessments** – Cat. B+

The European Green Deal aims to move towards a 'one substance, one assessment' process for chemical safety assessments. Streamlining EU-level scientific and technical work on chemicals by making best use of the relevant EU agencies' expertise will considerably contribute to achieving this.

This [initiative](#) will:

- simplify the current arrangements for assessments;
- improve the quality and consistency of safety assessments across legislation;
- ensure that resources are used more efficiently.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 09-10/2023

**NAT/910 - Revision of the Restriction of the use of hazardous substances in electronics – Cat. B**

EU rules limit the use of certain harmful substances in electrical and electronic equipment in order to protect human health and the environment and ensure proper functioning of the internal market. The [initiative](#) will simplify and increase the efficiency of the current rules and improve their enforcement.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 09-10/2023

**NAT/909 - Revision of the Mercury legislation – Cat. B**

While the use of mercury is restricted in most products in the EU, in some products its use still occurs. This [initiative](#) focuses on further restricting the remaining uses of mercury in the EU, especially in dental amalgam and certain other mercury-added products, such as lamps and measuring devices, and their international trade. This contributes to the zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, as announced in the European Green Deal.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 20-21/09/2023

**NAT/906 - Soil Health Law**

Soils are crucial for food, nature and our economy and deserve the same level of protection as water, air or the marine environment. The aim of the [Soil Health Law proposal](#) announced in the EU soil strategy for 2030 is to:

- specify the conditions for a healthy soil;
- determine options for monitoring soil and;
- lay out rules conducive to sustainable soil use and restoration.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

**NAT/905 - Seeds and other plant and forest reproductive material – Cat. B+**

The current EU legislation on plant and forest reproductive material (PRM legislation) dates back to the '60s. The Commission aims to modernise it and to better align it with the goals of the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork, Biodiversity, new EU Forest and EU Adaptation Strategies. The [revision](#) will seek for the legislation to be implemented in a more harmonised way across the EU, efficient and effective, more open to integrating new and future developments, and to contribute to sustainability goals, the protection of biodiversity and adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 20-21/09/2023

**NAT/904 - RescEU transitional period – Cat. C**

The proposal extends the end of the capacities developed under the 'rescEU transition' from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027, when the permanent European aerial forest firefighting fleet will become available.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 14-15/06/2023

**NAT/891 - Water scarcity and climate emergency: circular and other solutions for the EU agri-food system in a future "Blue Deal" – OIO**

The opinion will be part of the "Blue Deal" package of EESC opinions on water and will address more specifically the challenges and opportunities that the agri-food system, including fisheries and aquaculture, is facing while dealing with water scarcity. It will address the call of European civil society to tackle the threatening trends and foster resilient infrastructures, circular and innovative solutions, while enabling a multi-stakeholders governance to develop more sustainable agri-food systems. In particular, it will explore how social innovation, circular solutions, digitalisation and new technologies

can play a crucial role, for example desalinisation. The opinion will also address the specific challenges of the most vulnerable regions, namely the EU Mediterranean countries, and explore the direct and indirect connections with the sustainable development of urban and rural areas.

Rapporteur: Mr Josep PUXEU ROCAMORA, Co-rapporteur: John COMER

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

#### **NAT/894 - Microplastics pollution - measures to reduce its impact on the environment**

[This EC initiative](#) aims to tackle microplastics unintentionally released into the environment. It will focus on labelling, standardisation, certification and regulatory measures for the main sources of these plastics.

It aims to:

- improve the science on the risks and occurrence of microplastics in the environment, tap water and food;
- reduce environmental pollution and potential health risks, while respecting the principles of the single market and encouraging competitiveness and innovation.

Rapporteur: András EDELÉNYI, Co-rapporteur: Maria NIKOLOPOULOU

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 20-21/09/2023

#### **NAT/896 - Revision of the EU pollinators initiative – A new deal for pollinators**

The EU pollinators initiative adopted in 2018 was a first response to the serious decline of insect pollinators in Europe, but the EU now needs to step up its efforts as Europe and the world are still confronted with a dramatic loss of wild pollinators. The decline of pollinators poses a threat to both human wellbeing and nature and undermines long-term agricultural productivity, further exacerbating a trend influenced by other factors, notably the current geopolitical situation with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Commission is therefore proposing to revise the initiative to put in place enabling tools and measures to address the main factors behind this decline. In particular, the revised Pollinators Initiative sets objectives for 2030 and related actions under three priorities: I: Improving knowledge of pollinator decline, its causes and consequences, II: Improving pollinator conservation and tackling the causes of their decline and III: Mobilising society and promoting strategic planning and cooperation at all levels.

This [initiative](#) is part of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and will help to meet the European Green Deal goal of reversing the decline of pollinators by 2030, ensuring they can continue to provide essential benefits to nature and humans.

Rapporteur: Jarmila DUBRAVSKÁ, Co-rapporteur: Veselin MITOV

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 12-13/07/2023

#### **NAT/898 - EU forests – new EU Framework for Forest Monitoring and Strategic Plans**

Forests play a key role in responding to climate change, preserving and restoring biodiversity and developing the bio-economy, but they are under huge pressure and suffer from biodiversity loss, pests, the intensification of forest harvesting, wildfires and climate change. However, the EU is lacking a better monitoring system to have a comprehensive overview of forest damage, resource management and trends.

In line with the EGD and the EU Forest Strategy for 2030, the aim of this initiative is to develop an EU-wide forest observation framework to provide open access to detailed, accurate, regular and timely information on the condition and management of EU forests, and on the many products and ecosystem services that they provide. With this information, it will be possible to have tailored adjustments of existing policies and to propose strategic forest developments in all EU Member States. Furthermore, and in line with the digital transition's objective, it will empower relevant stakeholders by providing access to harmonised forest-related data, with the use of digital technologies.

Rapporteur: Florian MARIN

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 20-21/09/2023



### 3. Sustainable Development

#### **NAT/903 - EU and Agenda 2030: strengthening the implementation of the SDGs**

Exploratory opinion at the request of the Spanish Presidency

The first ever EU-level Voluntary Review (EU VR) of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be presented at the UN High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in July 2023. The EU VR will take stock of the EU's internal and external implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda of Spain requests an exploratory opinion to assess the results achieved by the EU, identify the pending challenges and propose recommendations on strengthening and accelerating the implementation of the SDGs with EU internal and external policies. The opinion should consider the necessary balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development -social, economic and environmental- and take into account the views of the different civil society actors. The EESC has prepared a contribution to the EU VR earlier this year and will participate in the UN High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in July 2023 with a 6-member delegation (Reale, Gerstein, Schmidt, Nikolopoulou, Lohan, Pavić-Rogošić) plus the EESC President.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

#### **NAT/893 - The role of youth in rural development - (OIO)**

Young people can and should play a key role in the development of rural areas, but for this to happen, action must be taken with policies and investments aimed at making these areas more attractive and creating opportunities for territorial growth from an economic and social point of view. The opinion aims to investigate what factors and actions are crucial in order to enable young people to contribute to rural development and what corrective measures need to be put in place to improve the current situation. The opinion will analyse a wide range of tools dealing with rural development (Rural Pact, CLLD -community-led local development-, ITI funding programs, cohesion policy, CAP funds, etc.) and propose specific recommendations and proposals to ensure better coordination of those tools from a youth perspective. The background of the opinion is the result of the consultation carried out by the Coordination Group for the European Year of Youth in the EESC.

Rapporteur: Ms Nicoletta MERLO

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

### 4. Circular Economy

#### **NAT/907 - Revision of the EU waste framework Directive**

[The Waste Framework Directive](#) protects public health and the environment through the proper management of waste. The Commission is currently working on a targeted revision of the Waste Framework Directive focused on different policy areas relating to prevention, separate collection, waste oils and textiles, including:

- Policy options supporting a more circular and sustainable management of **textile waste**, in view of the objectives set out in the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles.
- Assessing the feasibility of setting **food waste** reduction targets to implement the Union's commitments under the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Farm to Fork Strategy, and to limit the food supply chain's impact on the environment and climate.
- Reducing **waste generation** including through re-use of products or components, as well as by reducing mixed waste and increasing preparation for re-use or recycling of waste by improving separate collection.

Rapporteur: to be nominated

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: 25-26/10/2023

## **NAT/880 - Revision of the [End-Of-Life vehicles](#) Directive and the Directive on the type approval of motor vehicles**

In its work programme for 2022, adopted on 19 October 2021, the European Commission announced that it would put forward, under the European Green Deal, a revision of Directive 2000/53/EC on end-of-life vehicles and Directive 2005/64/EC on the type approval of motor vehicles with regard to their reusability, recyclability and recoverability. The revision will promote more circularity by linking design issues to end-of-life treatment, considering rules on mandatory recycled content for certain materials of components and improving recycling efficiency. The Commission envisages to merge the two Directives into a single instrument, covering the whole life-cycle of the automotive sector.

The legislative proposal, to be accompanied by an impact assessment, is expected in Q4/2022.

Rapporteur: Mr Bruno CHOIX

Foreseen adoption date at the EESC: Q3 2023

List of abbreviations:

OIO - Own initiative opinion

Cat. B - Category B opinion (rapporteur working alone / rapporteur-general)

Cat. B+ - Category B+ opinion (a three-member drafting group)

Cat. C - Category C opinion (no rapporteur)

 **Do you have a question?**

 **Contact us at [nat-events@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:nat-events@eesc.europa.eu)**