

EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030

EFBW welcomes the European Commission's EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. Biodiversity is a critical indicator both for a well performing ecosystem and for human prosperity. Sustainable resource management has always been a top priority for natural mineral and spring water producers. Producers have been safeguarding catchment areas for hundreds of years, helping to protect the natural ecosystems through which water flows to reach its natural source.

The areas of land surrounding underground water sources are subject to rigorous and extensive environmental protection. The "impluvium" - where rain and snow seep into the soil to then journey underground through layers of rock - is a highly protected zone and can extend up to several thousands of hectares. Producers usually work in partnership with local communities, public authorities and farmers to ensure the protection of the sources. This collaboration not only helps safeguarding biodiversity and natural habitats, but also contributes to regional, social and economic activity.

EFBW is also a partner in EU's WaterProtect project¹. It relates to the Horizon 2020 Work Programme under the topic 'Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy' and addresses the topic: Water farms – improving farming and supply of drinking water.

Through this project, EFBW provides expertise related to water safety and water protection in natural mineral water protection areas. The aim is to showcase the close cooperation between farmers, communities, NGOs and bottled water producers to reduce point source and diffuse pollution at catchment scale to the benefit of the local biodiversity.

Consequently, the natural mineral and spring water producers benefit biodiversity with the following actions:

- Creation of large protections areas
- Protection and restoration of peaty wet areas (very high biodiversity reservoir)
- Cooperation with local authorities, farmers and NGOs to avoid pollution from agrochemicals
- Advice on the use of agrochemicals and prohibition of road salt in the catchment areas
- Prohibition of water drainage and promotion of percolations/infiltration
- Use of biodegradable oil in all forestry engines

¹ <https://water-protect.eu/>

To guarantee the quality and purity of its waters, for instance, one of our members cooperated with the expertise of BeeOdiversity, using their BeeOmonitoring tool to monitor biodiversity and the quality of the environment in the protection zones. The first results, back in 2015, confirmed the positive impact of the protection zone on the quality of biodiversity, reporting: a high level of biodiversity (twice as large as neighbouring rural areas), the absence of contaminants (around 500 compounds tested) and an increase of the bee population (from 160,000 to 400,000 bees).

As far as packaging is concerned, natural mineral and spring water producers recognize that the improper disposal of and the lack of well performing collection systems for beverage bottles constitute a threat to marine biodiversity. For us, bottles are valuable resources, which need to be collected, recycled and then incorporated into the new bottles. Our sector has taken many actions in relation to the Circular Economy. Our suggestions in relation to EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 are the following:

- Share best practices occurring at micro-level (like our industry's contribution) and - establish synergies to transform them at macro-level
- Link EU policies to concrete biodiversity objectives

EFBW:

The European Federation of Bottled Waters (EFBW) is the voice of the bottled water industry. We are dedicated to promoting the unique qualities of natural mineral and spring waters as well as sustainable use of water resources and circular economy. EFBW represents almost 550 natural mineral and spring water producers in Europe, most of them small- and medium sized companies located in rural areas.

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