

INVESTING IN BIODIVERSITY TO GENERATE EMPLOYMENT (I)

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The 2011 study "[The Social Dimension of Environmental Policy](#)" of the [Address General Committee for the Environment of the European Commission](#) has investigated the social dimension of biodiversity policy in the EU and in the world. The study considers that employment related to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity includes two types of jobs:

□ Jobs directly related to the **conservation and management of biodiversity**. They include jobs in land management, area and species protection, consultancy, scientific research and surveillance activities. These works are relatively small in number, but their link to biodiversity is clear and direct;

□ Employment dependent on **ecosystem services**, which in turn are highly dependent on ecosystem biodiversity. They include jobs and livelihoods that depend on provisioning, regulating, and cultural services directly related to biodiversity. These jobs are much larger in number, but the role of biodiversity in fostering these jobs is generally indirect, uncertain, and difficult to quantify.

A small number of jobs are very directly related to biodiversity management, nature conservation and related activities. More jobs in sectors such as fishing, hunting and organic farming are highly dependent on, or contribute significantly to, biodiversity conservation. Jobs in activities such as intensive agriculture, forestry and water supply may be less closely related to biodiversity, but they still depend on biodiversity to maintain the functioning of ecosystems and the services they provide. In a more indirect way, manufacturing industries use raw materials of natural origin and therefore depend on ecosystem services and, through their purchasing decisions, influence the management of the natural environment. Finally, all the other jobs in the economy depend on biodiversity insofar as it is an important component of ecosystems and, by contributing to their functioning, helps maintain ecosystem services that sustain human life, they offer a reasonable living and working environment, and protect people and property from the dangers of nature.

The study quantified employment in different sectors dependent to different extents on ecosystem services. It also examined the qualitative aspects of the relationship between biodiversity and employment. It concluded that 14.9 million jobs (7% of the EU total) are in natural resource-based activities closely related to biodiversity and highly dependent on the provision of ecosystem services. For its part, "[The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity](#)" has estimated that global business opportunities linked to investments in biodiversity could be worth between 2 and 6 trillion US dollars in 2050.

From the above it follows that there is some evidence that biodiversity policies currently support significant levels of employment and have the potential to generate a large number of new jobs in the short, medium and long term. There are, however, important gaps in knowledge about the different types of occupations that will be generated, and about the qualifications and training actions that will be needed to cover these occupations. The study of the Directorate General for the Environment of the European Commission "[The EU biodiversity objectives and the labor market: benefits and identification of skill gaps in the current workforce](#)" prepared by [ICF-GHK](#) in collaboration with [BIOis](#), [Ecologic Institute](#), [IEEP](#) and [Naider](#), try to fill those gaps. In a future article we will analyze the main implications of this study.

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