

Recommendations for MEPs working on the Own Initiative Report on the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030

During the preparation of the EU Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity to 2030 strategies, the COVID-19 pandemic offered a particularly timely reminder that devastating results can come out of the way we trade, farm and keep animals. Wild and domestic animals have carried viruses and bacteria for millennia, but what has changed is the way we humans interact with them. The legal and illegal wildlife trade, urbanisation and the destruction of wildlife's natural habitats for agricultural purposes, especially for the intensification of animal farming, are combining to push humans, wildlife and other animals closer than ever before – and heightening the risk of pandemics like the one we're suffering now.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 is a first step for a strong EU leadership during the negotiations next year for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the Convention on Biological Diversity. The document includes many positive elements, like the commitment to keep existing environmental policies strong and stimulating the enforcement of the Birds and Habitats Directives, with ambitious goals for protecting European species. However, to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategy, the definition of further concrete actions is necessary.

We urge the Members of the European Parliament to call for:

- **Stricter EU regulation of the trade on live wild animals.** While the Biodiversity Strategy highlights that reinforced regulation of the wildlife trade is crucial to both prevent and build resilience to future zoonosis outbreaks, a clear commitment in this sense is missing. The unregulated trade in live wild animals is associated with an impact on global biodiversity, animal welfare and health risks to EU citizens that cannot be ignored. In recent years, the potential for the transmission of zoonotic diseases and the introduction of invasive alien species in the EU has significantly increased, due to a growing trend for exotic pet keeping. Specific measures to better regulate and limit the trade in wild animals in the EU need to be promptly adopted. An EU-wide 'Positive List' stating which animal species are more suitable and safer to be kept as pets should be adopted.
- **A clear commitment by the European Commission to step up efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade.** This trade contributes to the extinction of species, is the world's fourth most lucrative illegal market and, together with the unregulated legal wildlife trade, contributes to the emergence and spreading of zoonotic diseases. The planned revision of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking should lead to the formulation of an ambitious post-2020 Action Plan addressing also the strictly interconnected legal wildlife trade
- **The prompt adoption of an EU-wide ban on the import, (re)export, and internal trade in ivory.** The Biodiversity Strategy merely states that the EC will propose a further tightening of the rules of the EU ivory trade in 2020. A full ban is urgently needed to save elephants from extinction.
- **EU and Member States' financial support to wildlife rescue centres and sanctuaries.** These facilities play a critical role in supporting Member States' effort to fight against wildlife

trafficking, ensure the welfare of confiscated wild animals and, in some cases, control invasive alien species. Consequently, they should receive adequate financial support.