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Commission Publishes New Handbook to Strengthen Land-Use Policies in the EU

Key policies: *Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation, European Climate Law, National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), Better Regulation Principles, European Green Deal, Fit for 55 Package*

The European Commission, in collaboration with the European Environment Agency (EEA), has unveiled the **LULUCF Handbook**, a comprehensive guide to support Member States in designing and implementing effective land-use policies. This initiative comes as the EU grapples with the dual challenges of strengthening carbon sinks and reducing emissions in the land sector to address climate change.

The Role of Land in Climate Action

Land plays a pivotal role in the fight against climate change. It acts as a carbon sink, absorbing CO2, while also being a significant source of emissions. However, the EU's net land sink has declined by **35% between 2010 and 2021**, jeopardizing efforts to meet the **2030 climate targets**.

A recent report by the Commission, published on May 15, revealed a gap of **-50 Mt CO2 equivalent** in achieving the EU's 2030 target under the Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation. This underscores the urgent need for effective land policies to reverse the trend and ensure resilient and sustainable carbon sinks.

The LULUCF Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide

The **LULUCF Handbook**, launched alongside the report, provides Member States with practical tools and insights to improve their land-use strategies. Key features of the guide include:

- **Explaining the LULUCF Regulation**: The handbook offers detailed explanations of the regulation, including reporting requirements and principles. It includes practical tips, examples, and case studies from Member States to illustrate best practices.
- **Enhancing Data Quality**: It promotes the use of advanced methodologies and monitoring data to improve the quality of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals reporting in the land sector.
- **Knowledge Sharing**: The handbook disseminates knowledge and experiences to help Member States monitor the effects of policies and measures on GHG emissions effectively.

Unlocking the Potential of Effective Land Policy

Effective land-use policies have the potential to significantly reduce emissions, increase removals, and ensure future-proof carbon sinks. Measures such as **rewetting peatlands**, **increasing soil carbon**, and **sustainable forest management** can play a vital role in achieving these goals.

Evaluation and Next Steps

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme co-funded by the European Union.

In parallel with the handbook's publication, the Commission will begin evaluating the LULUCF Regulation in 2024. The evaluation aims to assess the regulation's **effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence** with other land sector policies, in line with the EU's **Better Regulation** principles.

This process will guide future improvements to the regulation, ensuring it remains fit for purpose and aligned with the EU's ambitious climate goals.

A Step Toward Climate Neutrality

The LULUCF Handbook is a critical resource for Member States as they work to close the gap in achieving the 2030 target and contribute to the EU's broader goal of **climate neutrality by 2050**. By providing actionable insights and fostering collaboration, the handbook strengthens the EU's commitment to a sustainable and resilient future.

For more details, visit the European Commission's Climate Action page.

Source: https://climate.ec.europa.eu/news-your-voice/news/commission-publishes-new-guide-designing-better-land-use-policies-2024-05-15_en