16th session of the UN Permanent Forum on indigenous issues

A new set of recommendations were presented recently to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity, and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. The recommendations are usually considered during the periodic meetings of the working group of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), which is a high-level advisory body established in 2000 with the mandate to deal with indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights. In the report of the 16th session of the UNFPII in April-May 2017, paragraph 33 stated important recommendations on conservation and human rights.

The recommendations were suggested by the ICCA Consortium, Natural Justice, USC Canada, Global Forest Coalition, Ecoropa, Uusi Tuuli, Mexican Alliance for Biodiversity, Ecoropa, EcoNexus and Japan Civil Network for the UN Decade on Biodiversity. Some recommendations concern the alarming trend of killings of environmental defenders, including indigenous people and local communities specifically. These bodies and organizations encouraged the working groups to: 1) take up the issue of environmental defenders as part of the UN's system-wide action plan on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and 2) protect environmental defenders across the work of the Convention, including in the ongoing work to mainstream biodiversity in key sectors. Other recommendations include urging the working groups and parties to implement the Permanent Forum recommendations on conservation and human rights and giving special attention to the CBD Conference of the Parties' decisions related to protected area governance and equity with immediate effect.

Statement by the ICCA Consortium, Natural Justice, USC Canada, Global Forest Coalition, Ecoropa, Uusi Tuuli & Mexican Alliance for Biodiversity. (2017, December 15). ECO Journal, 55(4). Retrieved from *http://www.cbd-alliance.org/en/cbd/eco/2017/eco-55*

Virtual Classroom Visit

On Wednesday, April 4, 2018, Jonathan Safran Foer, a critically-acclaimed novelist, will have a number of virtual classroom visits to discuss his bestseller *Eating Animals*, using professional webinar technology. These sessions will be funded by the Farm Forward organization. Farm Forward is an American nonprofit organization which implements innovative strategies to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce farm animal suffering. As part of its broader educational efforts, Farm Forward is covering all costs of this program for educators who discuss Eating Animals in their courses.

Eating Animals presents the most critical issues of industrial farming. Since it looks at animal consumption from different perspectives, this book can been successfully used as an educational tool across several academic fields, including Business, English, Environmental Studies, Nutrition, Philosophy, Public Policy, and Religious Studies.
On the day of the event, there will be 4 available sessions to choose from:
Schedule of Sessions (U.S. Eastern Time) - Wednesday, April 4, 2018

- Session 1 – 12:00pm - 12:35pm
- Session 2 – 12:45pm - 1:20pm
- Session 3 – 1:30pm - 2:05pm
- Session 4 – 2:15pm - 2:50pm

To sign up a class for a session, instructors can visit:
https://farmforward.com/virtual-classroom-visit-2018-sign-up/

ISSN-Internet 2197-411x OLCL 862804632

Retrieved from *https://networks.h-net.org/node/19397/discussions/1078235/2018-jonathan-safran-foer-virtual-classroom-visit*

The 3rd German Future Earth Summit (2018)

The German Future Earth Summit (2018) in Berlin, the third of its kind, is a national gathering that provides an opportunity for German researchers and stakeholders to network and exchange ideas on global sustainability. The main focus of the 2018 Summit, held on February 8th and 9th, will be Future Earth Knowledge Action Networks (KANs). The German Committee Future Earth is now inviting the German Future Earth and World Climate Research Programme communities, as well as all researchers and stakeholders interested in discussing topics related to Health, Natural Assets, Ocean, Sustainable Consumption & Production, Sustainable Development Goals, Transformations, Urban, Water-Energy-Food Nexus, and Finance & Economics in the context of the Knowledge Action Networks. More information at *https://www.dknsummit18.org*

Ecological Armageddon

Insects play the key role in many ecosystems. Around 60% of birds feed on insects, and more than 75% of wild plants depend on insects for pollination. It is likely that if insects disappeared, ecosystems in the area may collapse.

A new study declared that flying insect biomass has decreased by more than 75% over the last 27 years in the protected areas across Germany. In their research, Hallmann and his team (2017) reported the massive decline of the flying insect biomass (decreased by 76% and up to 82% in midsummer). This research has been monitoring the total flying insect biomass using Malaise traps in more than 63 nature conservation areas around Germany since 1989. Recently, a new study supported the results by Hallman et al. (2017) with the finding that some vulnerable insect species, such as butterflies and wild bees, have decreased in number.

Photo credit: becgueule (via flickr)

Worse yet, the researchers were not able to explain this decline or attribute it to changing weather or habitat characteristics. They suggested that a more complete range of climatic and agricultural variables must be more deeply investigated to determine the reason for this decrease. Hallman stated that this decrease in flying insect biomass had been suspected for a long time, but the results show that it is more severe than was previously thought. Thus, more research is urgently needed to study the real causes of this decline, and its present and future impacts on our ecosystems.

Sources

- Caspar A., Hallmann, Sorg, M., Jongejans, E., Siepel, H., Hofland, N., Schwan, H.,...de Kroon, H. (2017). More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas. *PLOS ONE*, 12(10)
- ScienceDaily. (2017, October 19). More than 75 percent decrease in total flying insect biomass over 27 years across Germany: Changes in weather, land use, habitat do not explain overall decline. Retrieved from *www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/10/171019100927.htm*

Polluters pay?

The German Federal Council has agreed on a new law called the "Nutrients flow balance regulation" which was suggested by the Minister of Agriculture, Christian Schmidt. This regulation mainly concerns how to handle nutrients at the workplace.

Felix Prinz Löwen, the chairman of the Federation of the Organic Food Industry (BÖLW) said:

> *"The nutrient flow balance regulation (Stoffstrombilanz-Verordnung) (SSBV) deals with problematic farms which are polluting the groundwater with too much nitrate. It should not make life difficult for the farmers who are protecting the waterbodies, and thus are part of the solution. The existing law will not succeed because if one applies too much nitrogen, he is able to hide it through the way the amount is calculated. And the farmers who are protecting the groundwater with their management, are being burdened with meaningless required documentation and obligations.*
>
> *Therefore, the German states are still far away from their objective. They must improve the present law. The new regulation will force the polluters to change their practices. Only in this way may the SSBV become a part of the solution to encourage water-friendly agricultural practices.*
>
> *Until now, the water pollution is still free of charge for polluters. The cost of the polluted water is being paid for by drinking water consumers and the environment. The treatment of drinking water costs billions of euros" (Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft, 2017)*

On the 14th of June 2017, the Federal German Cabinet submitted the legal drafting on how to handle the nutrients at the farm and how to create the operational material flow balances. The regulation is the last component of the Fertilizer-Package ("Düngepaket" in Germany), which emphasizes improving fertilization, overall nutrient efficiency and environmental protection.

Photo credit: norwichhouse.oakridge (via flickr)

The aim of the SSBV regulation is to control farm nutrient flows in a transparent and a verifiable way. It regulates how farmers should deal with the nutrients and how to compile the operational material flow balance (as defined in paragraph § 11a number 1 and 2 of the Fertilizers Law).

But what do farmers have to do? According to the draft regulation, the farms are required to submit an annual balance sheet including the following data:

- Nutrient intake: The amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus which are supplied by feed, seeds (including seedlings and propagating material), livestock, legumes and other substances.
- Nutrient release: The amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus which are released on the farm by the plants and animals, such as manure, feed, seeds (including seedlings and propagating material), livestock, as well as other substances.

This regulation will enter into force on 1st January 2018.
To learn more, visit the Federal Council page:

- *http://www.bundesrat.de/DE/plenum/plenum-kompakt/17/962/962-pk.html?nn=4352768&cms_selectedTab=section-13#section-13*
- Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft. (2017, November 24). Stoffstrombilanz-Verordnung muss Wasser schützen und Ökolandbau stärken. Retrieved from *https://www.boelw.de/presse/pm/stoffstrombilanz-verordnung-muss-wasser-schuetzen-und-oekolandbau-staerken*
- Das Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft. (2017, November 24). Stoffstrombilanz: Mehr Transparenz über Nährstoffe in landwirtschaftlichen Betrieben. Retrieved from *https://www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Pflanzenbau/Ackerbau/_Texte/Duengung.html*
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ISSN-Internet 2197-411x OLCL 862804632

New hope for the damaged coral reefs

New research found that in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) in Australia, there are still 100 well-connected, unexposed, undisturbed reefs that could provide necessary larvae (fertilized eggs) to regenerate the damaged reefs. Although these 100 reefs make up only 3% of the entire GBR, they can provide larvae to more than 45% of the entire ecosystem in one year, thus promoting a regional recovery of the ecosystem after the current major damages. The results that were published on the 28th of November by the Australian Institute of Marine Science reported that these reefs were found to fulfil the most important criteria to promote coral larvae for recovery. The first criteria is location within a cool area and protection from the risk of bleaching. The second criteria is being located in area where it would be possible to supply larvae to as many reefs as possible through the ocean currents. The third important factor is that the healthy reefs can only spread the coral larvae, not the crown-of-thorns starfish larvae. However, the existence of these well-connected reefs does not mean that the GBR corals are safe from damage. More effective local protection and reduction of carbon emissions are required to keep these reefs in good condition. According to the research, the need for such a natural recovery mechanism is likely to be increased in the future due to continuous climate change, which affects the reefs badly.

Sources

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- ScienceDaily. (2017, November 28). Resilience of Great Barrier Reef offers opportunities for regeneration: Regionally connected undisturbed reefs could provide larvae necessary to regenerate damaged reefs, but researchers warn that effective local protection is required. Retrieved December 5, 2017 from *www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/11/171128230407.htm*

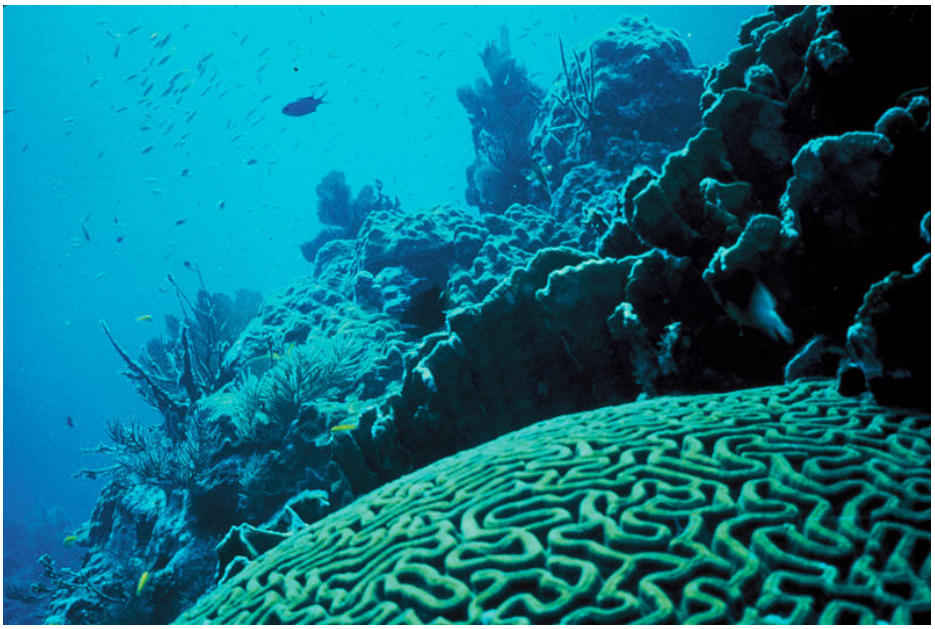

Photo credit: eutrophication&hypoxia (via flickr)

ISSN-Internet 2197-411x OLCL 862804632