

Cropped 16 July 2025: EU deforestation law pushback; Agri emissions; US lobster disease

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We handpick and explain the most important stories at the intersection of climate, land, food and nature over the past fortnight.

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Forests under fire

'ONEROUS REQUIREMENTS': A letter from 18 EU member states called for the bloc to "delay and further simplify" the forthcoming application of new rules to curb global deforestation, according to [Bloomberg](#). The letter said the regulation, due to take effect in December, "does not sufficiently take into account countries with effective forest protection laws and a negligible risk of causing deforestation", the outlet said. The [Financial Times](#) added that Indonesia also demanded EU "policymakers cut back on 'onerous' requirements", citing the challenges facing smallholder farmers and producers.

'ILLICIT TIMBER TRADE': Illegal loggers are "profit[ing] from Brazil's carbon credit projects", [Reuters](#) analysis found. Companies have invested "hundreds of millions of dollars" into these conservation projects. But at least 24 of 36 projects in the Brazilian Amazon

examined by the newswire “involved landowners, developers or forestry firms that have been punished by Brazil’s environmental agency Ibama for their roles in illegal deforestation”. Offences ranged from “clear-cutting the rainforest without authorisation” to “entering false information in a government timber tracking system”, Reuters said. It is a “failure of the whole idea”, said Raoni Rajão, who formerly ran Brazil’s environment ministry’s programme combating deforestation.

WILDFIRES ABLAZE: Elsewhere, wildfires “fanned” by extreme heat across France, Spain, Greece and other parts of Europe resulted in forced evacuations and “major firefighting operations”, the [Independent](#) reported. According to [Reuters](#), 227,000 hectares of land has burned in Europe since the beginning of 2025, “more than double the average for this time of year over the past two decades”. More than 100 wildfires burned in a central Canadian province, the [New York Times](#) said, while fires in a Syrian coastal mountain region “overwhelm[ed]” emergency services, according to [CNN](#).

Ag emissions projected to rise

EMISSIONS INCREASE: A [new report](#) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that the growth of farming and livestock production worldwide will increase the sector’s greenhouse gas emissions by 6% by 2034. However, yield improvements derived from changed farming practices mean that global agricultural carbon intensity will actually decrease over the next decade, the report found. FAO director general Qu Dongyu said in a [press release](#): “Lower carbon intensity of agrifood systems is also welcome, but we can do better.”

LIVESTOCK IMPACT: According to the report, the main drivers of the expected rise in emissions include the increase of ruminants and livestock (70% of the projected global emissions), followed by the use of synthetic fertilisers (28%), rice cultivation and other activities, such as burning crop residues. The largest increases are expected in south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, the report said. Agricultural emissions are projected to rise in these two regions by 14% and 8%, respectively, by 2034, partly due to the expansion of ruminant herds, it noted.

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YIELD DISPARITY: The report also estimated that current differences in agricultural yields between developed and developing countries will not have “significant changes” over the next decade. For instance, yields of maize are higher in North America, compared to the rest

of the world. This is attributed to several factors, including gaps in access to finance and modern technologies, the report noted. The authors offered solutions for increasing agricultural yields while mitigating emissions from the sector, including increasing productivity, manure management and addressing both production and consumption of livestock products.

Spotlight

Climate impacts for US lobsters



A deceased American lobster with epizootic shell disease at the University of Rhode Island. Credit: Orla Dwyer / Carbon Brief

This week, Carbon Brief food, land and nature reporter Orla Dwyer explores how climate change is impacting US lobsters, after recently attending a science workshop as part of the [Metcalf Fellowship](#) at the University of Rhode Island.

Scaly? Check. Covered in scabs resembling cigarette burns? Check. Yes, that lobster has epizootic shell disease – and climate change is making it worse.

This disease – first recorded in the north-eastern US region of New England in the 1990s – acts as a “manifestation of an environment that is increasingly inhospitable to lobsters,” said [Dr Ben Gutzler](#), a post-doctoral research fellow at the [Wells Reserve at Laudholm](#) in Maine.

He told Carbon Brief that the disease is one indication of the “stress” lobsters are under due to warmer ocean conditions, which leave them more vulnerable to these kinds of ailments.

Gutzler co-authored new [research](#) that assessed more than 1,000 peer-reviewed studies on American lobsters published over the past 25 years.

The research found that epizootic shell disease currently affects as much as half of lobsters in parts of southern New England, where overall lobster numbers have [plummeted](#) in recent [decades](#).

Warmer oceans fuelled the spread of the disease-causing bacteria, Gutzler said, telling Carbon Brief:

“The warmer water leads to faster microbial growth, because everything happens faster at warmer temperatures...Once [lobsters] get a nick on their shell that provides that portal of entry, the microbes can just go gangbusters.”

The disease causes lesions to form on a lobster’s shell and can reduce their growth and impact reproduction. In severe cases, the sores grow, spread beneath the shell and enter the lobster’s tissue, eventually damaging their internal organs and gills.



A disease-free, alive lobster at the University of Rhode Island. Credit: Orla Dwyer / Carbon Brief

'Leprosy' lobsters

Carbon Brief recently spoke to researchers at the University of Rhode Island about the impact climate change is having on lobsters in New England, where the [vast majority](#) of the US lobster industry is located.

They explained that lobsters are cold-water creatures, generally most comfortable in waters of around 16C. The north-eastern Atlantic waters are warming [faster](#) than the global average and lobsters in the region are struggling as a result.

Although epizootic shell disease looks unpleasant, Gutzler said that it does not impact the taste of a lobster:

“It just becomes annoying for the fishermen, because nobody wants to eat a lobster that looks like it has leprosy.”

This disease is far from the only way lobsters are affected by the impacts of climate change. Warmer, more [acidic](#) oceans are impacting the areas in which lobsters settle and grow in abundance. Gutzler added:

“There’s a whole suite of things driven by ocean temperature that all add up to: it’s harder to be a lobster and successfully complete your life cycle in this new thermal regime.”

News and views

POLICY CONTRADICTIONS: Labour proposals to “weaken environmental regulations for small housebuilders” in the UK would exempt 97% of planning approvals from the “requirement to replace destroyed nature”, the [Guardian](#) reported. The plans could “destroy 215,000 hectares of nature in England”, it added. Meanwhile, the UK government released a new [food strategy for England](#), promising to “improve environment and health”, according to [BusinessGreen](#). The strategy “promises [a] wave of fresh policies to tackle emissions [and] curb nature impacts”, the outlet said, adding that campaigners “have repeatedly warned the UK remains off track to meet targets to reverse nature loss by 2030”.

‘GREEN GREAT WALL’: China has completed a “sand control belt” that spans the Badain Jaran, Tenegger and Ulan Buh deserts in the westernmost part of Inner Mongolia, according to the [South China Morning Post](#). The green belt, stretching 1,856km, represents the “latest phase” in China’s “decades-long efforts to curb desertification”, the outlet said. Similar projects to combat [desertification](#) include Africa’s ‘Great Green Wall Initiative’, which China supports through “sharing technology expertise and funding”, it added.

SALTY: Thousands of salt farmers in the western India state of Gujarat are undertaking an “unlikely green revolution” by switching from diesel to solar-powered water pumps, [JUST Stories](#) reported. The outlet noted that 80% of India’s salt is produced in Gujarat, where the

“vast majority” of salt workers are women. The salt pan workers, known as Agariyas, have been “steadily replacing” their pumps with help from a self-employed women’s trade union, the outlet said. Mary Robinson, climate advocate and former president of Ireland, said this initiative is “one of the most stunning examples of a truly just transition”.

ALL OVER THE WORLD: A [report](#) from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification found that the 2023-24 drought, which was exacerbated by El Niño, affected wide swathes of the planet, including the Mediterranean, Amazon basin, Panama, Mexico and south-east Asia. According to the report, the drought’s impacts varied by region, but generally included water supply shortages, agricultural failures and power rationing. Human and livestock deaths were recorded in eastern Africa, while the Amazon released more carbon into the atmosphere as a result of the drought.

HYDRO-POWERED: Women in Somalia who have been displaced by conflict and climate change are growing spinach, tomatoes and leafy greens with hydroponics, instead of planting them in the soil, [Deutsche Welle](#) reported. The hydroponics project was launched by the not-for-profit SOS Children’s Villages in 2022 in “response to the country’s worsening droughts and floods, which have devastated traditional agriculture”. The project is carried out in 41 solar-powered greenhouses and allows women to earn up to €43 a month, per person. The outlet quoted a farmer who said: “These beautiful farms have changed our lives.”

Watch, read, listen

SWEET COEXISTENCE: [Euronews Green](#) explored whether wild pollinators and honeybees can co-exist and assessed the risk of pollinator extinction in the EU.

‘MEDIocre’ MILK: A joint investigation by [DeSmog](#) and the [Premium Times](#) examined how a milk powder produced using Irish dairy is being sold in west Africa under a “carefully constructed” image of being “healthy and sustainable”.

BIG SHIFT: This [NPR Short Wave](#) podcast addressed how ocean currents, such as the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, are shifting due to climate change.

PLANT POWER: The [Guardian](#) spoke to “rainforest gardeners” at a botanical sanctuary in Kerala, which is a “haven for more than 2,000 native plant species from southern India”.

New science

- A new review article, published in [Nature](#), found that marine heatwaves have intensified since around 1980 due to human-driven climate change, resulting in “biological, ecological and socioeconomic change in almost all oceans and seas”. The authors wrote that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the “only long-term solution”.

- A [PLOS One](#) study found that 80% of areas with the highest potential for flowering plant discoveries in Brazil are not within protected areas, but 50% of them lie in Indigenous lands. The study highlighted the “urgent need” to expand collection efforts, protected areas and collaboration with Indigenous peoples, the authors said.
- Cropland productivity “stagnated” in most parts of southern Africa over the past 20 years, according to research published in [Nature Food](#). The findings are in contrast to official crop statistics and, although climate change influenced annual fluctuations in productivity, the study authors said climate trends do not explain the stagnation.

In the diary

- **7-25 July:** [30th session of the International Seabed Authority_\(part two\)](#) | Kingston, Jamaica
- **23-31 July:** [15th meeting of the conference of the contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands](#) | Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
- **24 July:** [EU-China summit](#) | Beijing
- **27-29 July:** [Second UN food systems summit stocktake](#) | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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