

# NATURE POSITIVE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Background - A global guiding vision for nature conservation?

The term nature positive is increasingly understood as a global guiding principle for the protection of nature - comparable to the 1.5 degree target in climate policy. The concept combines biodiversity, climate and economy and has been gaining international significance for five years. Countries such as the United Kingdom and Japan have already integrated it into their strategies; the G7 and EU are incorporating it into their long-term visions. Companies are also increasingly using it in sustainability frameworks such as the Science Based Targets for Nature (SBTN) or the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

## Criticism - Unclear, risky and exclusive

Despite its popularity, the concept remains vague: there is a lack of clear definitions, binding standards and practical implementation guidelines - leaving room for greenwashing. The net positive approach, which offsets destruction in one place with measures elsewhere, is considered ecologically problematic because biodiversity - unlike the global climate system - is localised. Measuring nature-related impacts is also difficult, as nature encompasses many dimensions. In addition, international players dominate the debate, while local communities and indigenous groups - crucial for the protection of nature - are often insufficiently involved. A fair and inclusive approach is therefore critical for credibility and effectiveness.

## Potentials - Holistic and transformative

Despite these weaknesses, the term offers opportunities. It proposes an integrative framework that brings together objectives across climate, biodiversity, water and soil health and is intended to steer systemic change. The concept can accelerate renaturation, promote resource conservation, mobilise financial resources and reduce conflicts of interest between climate protection and nature conservation. As an overarching vision, it combines ecological, social and economic transformation.

## Guiding principle, not a marketing label

As the definitions are still unclear, nature positive should not be a marketing label, but a guiding principle. Companies can use it as a guideline for holistic impact analyses and measures in their core business - not for symbolic projects. In this way, nature positive serves as a framework for transformation, not as an advertising slogan.

## Concept proposal - A guiding economic vision

Nature positive should be understood as a macroeconomic vision to which entire sectors contribute - not as a label for individual companies or products.

### Core elements:

Clear definition of nature spanning the dimensions of biodiversity, water, soil, air and climate - without allowing trade-offs between them.

- Landscape-based approach that takes local ecosystem services into account.
- Consistently apply the mitigation hierarchy (Avoid - Minimise - Restore - Offset); offsetting/compensation only as a last resort, and only with well-regulated measures.
- Inclusive governance: Involvement of diverse stakeholders instead of top-down approaches.

### Two-tier approach:

- Macro level: Nature-positive vision of the economy.
- Company level: Guiding framework for local, core business-related measures.



# Policy recommendations

These recommendations were developed through expert dialogue and research as part of the BfN-funded project "Naturpositive Wirtschaften gestalten - Handlungsempfehlungen für die Politik und den Markt" (Shaping a nature-positive economy - recommendations for policy and the market), which was funded by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection:

**Regulation of the use of the term nature positive:** To protect against greenwashing, no use for individual products or supply chains. Introduction of transparency and verification mechanisms in accordance with the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) and the Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains (LkSG). International coordination with the TNFD strengthens credibility.

**Nature positive as a systemic guiding vision:** Promotion as a joint, long-term vision for all sectors with clear goals, key figures and roadmaps - building on NBS 2030 and the EU Restoration Regulation. Coordinated governance between environmental, economic, agricultural and financial policy.

**Iterative and inclusive further development:** Building on existing concepts such as the SBTN and the TNFD. Ongoing involvement of science, business, civil society and affected groups. Not a top-down process, but a joint, practice-orientated approach.

**Division into central environmental dimensions:** Subdivision of nature into, for example, biodiversity, water, soil, air and climate. No offsetting between the dimensions, separate valuation, no equalisation between them. Alignment with ESRS E4 ("Biodiversity and Ecosystems") and Germany's indicator framework within the National Biodiversity Strategy.

**Local relevance and landscape-based planning:** Measures must take entire landscapes and local ecosystem services into account. Planning in accordance with the German Federal Nature Conservation Act (BNatSchG) for landscape planning and Natura 2000 as well as EU frameworks such as the Nature Restoration Regulation and the Water Framework Directive for river basin planning.

## Strict application of the mitigation hierarchy

Priorities:

- Avoid,
- Minimise,
- Restore,
- Offset only as a last resort.

There is also a need for further financial incentives, support programmes and research into nature-based solutions.

**Standardised measurement and reporting:** Introduction of standardised, dimension-specific indicators and reporting standards. Integration into Germany's National Biodiversity Strategy (including indicator reporting) and the Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity (ANK) and alignment with EU CSRD/ESRS requirements. Harmonisation with global frameworks such as the TNFD and the SBTN ensures consistency and comparability and reduces the reporting burden for companies.

## Conclusion

Nature positive should be understood as a strategic, economy-wide guiding principle - not as a marketing label. Only through clear definitions, measurable indicators, local implementation and inclusive governance can the concept have a real environmental and social impact. A nature-positive change requires scientifically sound, fair and landscape-based policies - for a future worth living.

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## Nature Positive Business Practices

Discussion Paper for Download

A comprehensive overview of the current debate, risks, and potential applications



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Initiative  
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Funded by the BfN with funds from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection

Gefördert durch:



aufgrund eines Beschlusses  
des Deutschen Bundestages



Bundesamt für  
Naturschutz

