# [***'Urgent action' needed on biodiversity loss before it's too late***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:697X-GWJ1-DYRW-V0RJ-00000-00&context=1516831)

Irish Examiner

September 20, 2023 Wednesday

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**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 7

**Length:** 420 words

**Byline:** Liz Dunphy

**Body**

Government has failed to adequately protect ***biodiversity*** and "urgent action" must be taken before the environment degrades beyond "a point of no repair".

***Biodiversity*** is inextricably linked to human health yet, despite our reliance on it for our survival, it has been controlled and degraded by powerful economic interests which should not be allowed to continue, the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action heard.

"There are no thriving industries or economies on a planet where nature has gone beyond a point of repair," said Aoibhinn Ní Shúilleabháin, associate professor at the UCD School of Mathematics and Statistics and the chairwoman of the Citizens' Assembly on biodi-versity ***loss***.

"Figures outlining our ***biodiversity*** ***loss*** are stark with many plant, animal and bird species in danger of extinction, almost 30% of our seminatural grasslands have disappeared, less than half of our marine environment is in a healthy state and almost 50% of our freshwater systems are in unsatisfactory condition - where we once had over 500 pristine rivers, we now have on 32."

Ms Ní Shúilleabháin was addressing the Joint Committee on the Citizens' Assembly Report on Biodiver-sity ***Loss***.

Some 20,000 people were invited to take part in the Citizens' Assembly and more than 2,300 of those responded positively to the invitation, with 99 members then invited to take part as a representative snap-shot of our society, said Ms Ní Shúilleab-háin.

"Nature can, at times, seem inconvenient to us. But, fundamentally, we as humans are only one part of nature and we rely solely on it to provide for us and to protect us.

"At the heart of the work of this Citizens' Assembly was a realisation that a breakdown between humanity and the natural world - such as we are seeing today - puts us all at risk."

The assembly made 159 recommendations to improve and protect Ireland's ***biodiversity***.

"A recurring theme across the work of the assembly was the failure of the State to implement its own laws with regards to nature and members emphasised the progress that can be made by enacting current legislation and policies."

Farmers, who are the custodians of almost 70% of the Irish landscape, are vital to improving Ireland's biodi-versity, said Ms Ní Shúil-leabháin, and the Citizens' Assembly called for them to be adequately supported to do so.

But many farmers are "frightened" of entering environmental schemes which are complicated to apply for and do not have any longterm assurances, said farmer and Citizens Assembly member Patrick Joyce.

**Classification**

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** ***BIODIVERSITY*** (94%); ***BIODIVERSITY*** CONSERVATION (90%); ANIMALS (78%); WILDLIFE (78%); MEDICINE & HEALTH (77%); LEGISLATION (74%); CLIMATE ACTION (73%); BIRDS (54%)

**Industry:** FARMERS & RANCHERS (68%)

**Geographic:** IRELAND (92%)

**Load-Date:** September 25, 2023

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