

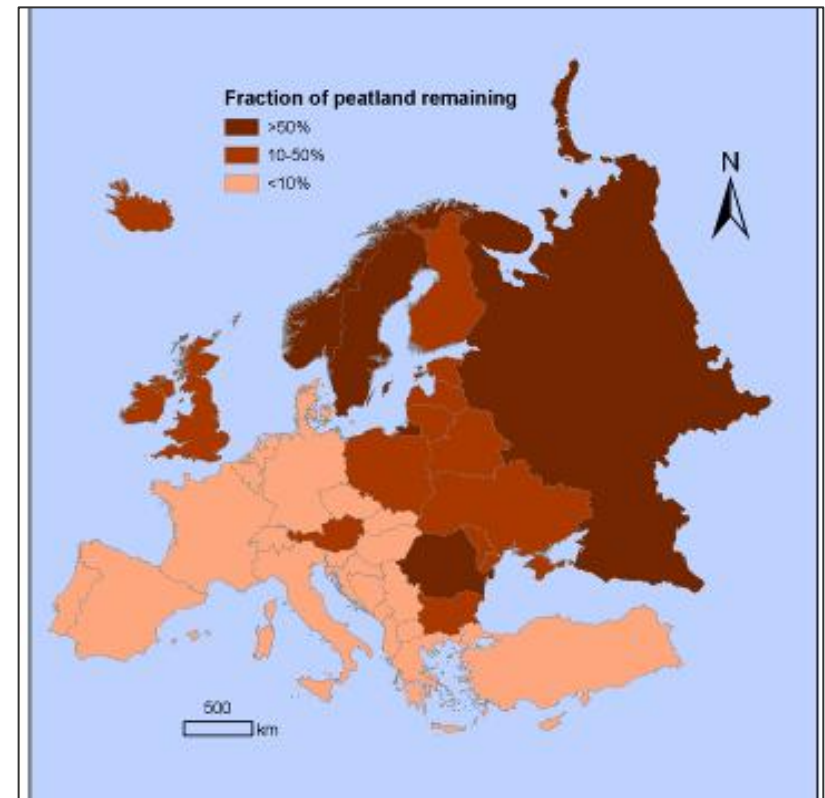
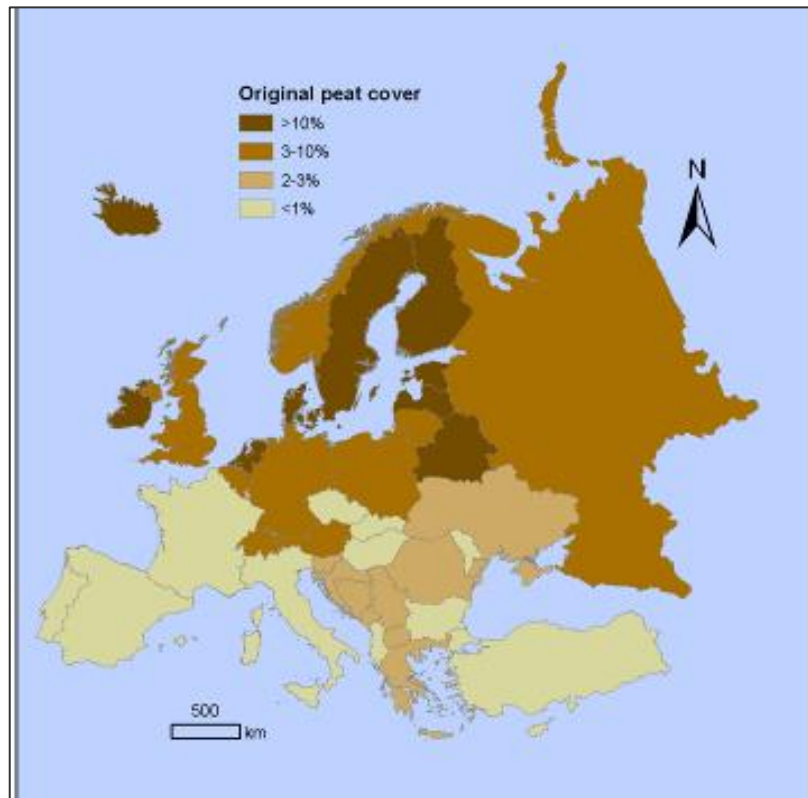


Threats to peatlands

Vera Coelho, Wetlands International EU office

Brussel, April 2014

Original & remaining European mire extent



Data: H. Joosten and J. Couwenberg

- Western European countries **lost over 90%** of their natural peatlands
- Central European peatlands now occupy a “**frontier position**”

Loss of natural peatland in Europe

- Countries with originally least peatland have lost most
- Most countries have lost between 50% and 99%
- The Netherlands (original peat area 15,000 km²) lost virtually all its natural peatlands
- Most of the 96,000 km² of natural peatlands in Finland are impacted by drainage for forestry
- Ireland (original peatland area 14,000 km²) lost 93% of its raised bogs and 82% of its blanket mire resource



Turf cutting in Co. Kerry, Ireland

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Loss of natural peatlands in Central Europe

Country	Peatland area (ha)	Present extent near-natural mire (ha)	Estimated loss of mire (%)
Slovakia	26,000	2,575	90
Poland	1,254,800	201,938	84
Lithuania	352,000	75,000	79
Estonia	1,009,100	300,000	70
Latvia	672,204	316,712	53
Czechia	27,000	14,742	45
Belarus	2,939,000	1,634,800	44
Ukraine	1,000,000	580,000	42

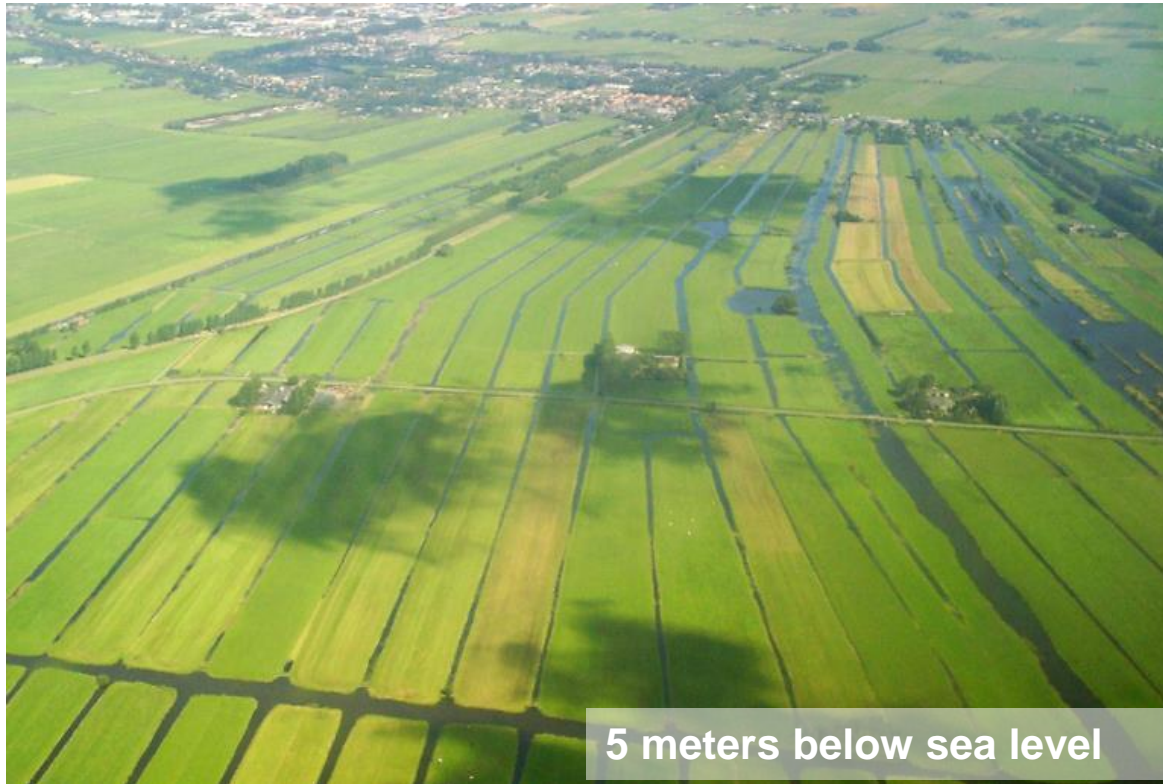
Source: Strategy and Action Plan for Mire and Peatland Conservation in Central Europe. Wetlands International.

Main threats

THREATS	DESCRIPTION
Peat extraction	Horticulture Fuel
Change in hydrology	Drainage Drainage in catchment
Management regime	Fire Peat degradation (Intensification, extensification & abandonment)
Pollution	Eutrophication Radioactive fall-out, Acid rain, Liming, Pesticides, Oil spills
Construction	Urban development / roads Hydropower dams (flooding); Fish ponds, Straightening rivers
Agriculture	Cattle grazing; Expansion of corn (incl. for 'biofuel')
Forestry	Drainage for forestry; Changing vegetation
Gathering plants	Harvesting of wild plants, berries and mushrooms
Mining	Oil shales, Coal mining, Sapropel
Inadequate legislation	Privatization, lack of recognition and prioritisation
Tourism, Hunting	Disturbance of rare or sensitive species

Source: Strategy and Action Plan for Mire and Peatland Conservation in Central Europe. Wetlands International

Peatlands in Europe are often modified land

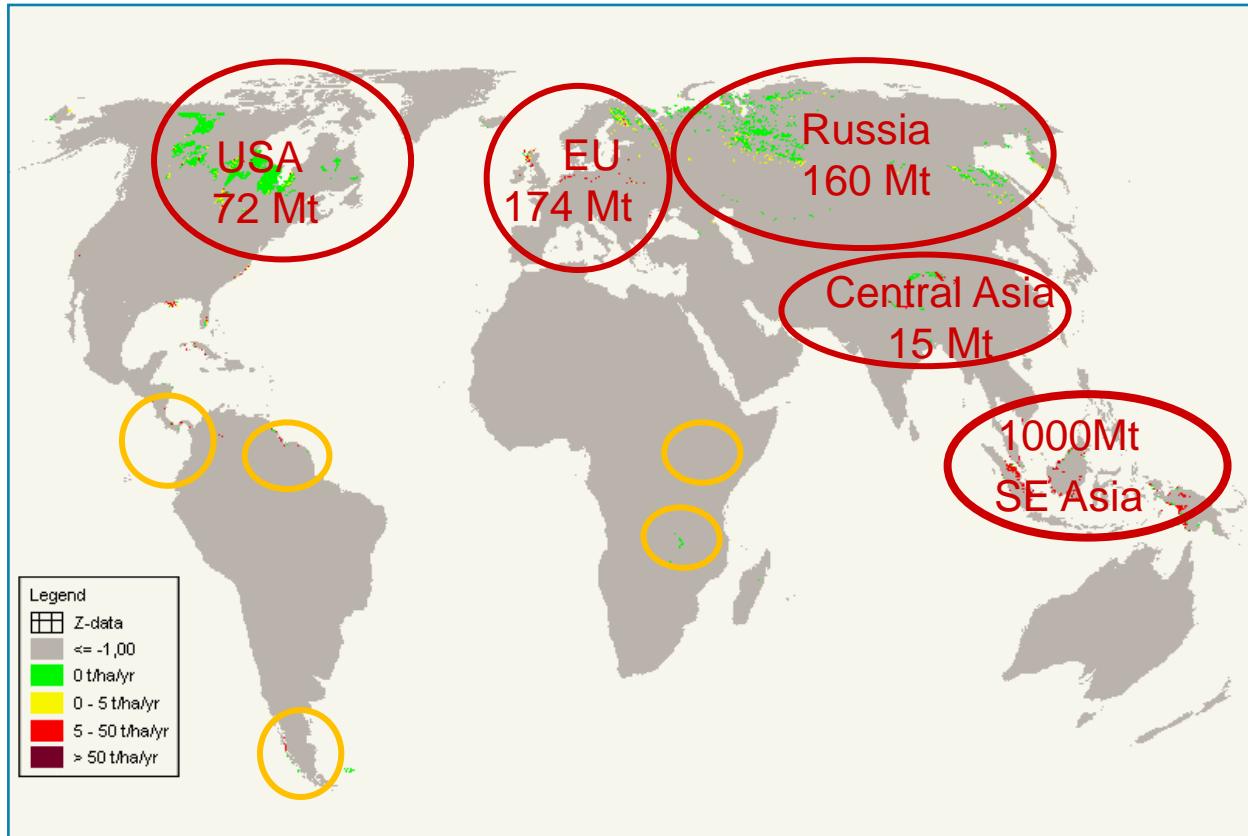


Consequence:

- High GHG emissions, land subsidence and flood risks
- **> 90% of EU agricultural soil-based emissions are from peatlands** (which occupy only 6% of agricultural land)

Degrading peatlands: a global issue

Hotspots of CO₂ emissions (annual)



- Peatlands globally store twice the amount of carbon stored in forests
- 15% (50 million ha) is drained and degrading

Biofuel production on peat

- EU biofuel demand triggers large scale tropical peat swamp drainage for palm oil production
- Germany: Large scale peatland drainage for growing corn for biogas production
 - Subsidies for such biogas for climate change mitigation (emission 10 x fossil fuel)

➤ But such 'Bio'gas is not sustainable and contributes significantly to climate change

✓ EU Renewable Energy & Fuel Quality Directives:

No source materials for biofuels from drained peatlands and wetlands!



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Peat extraction



Peat consumption in Europe

Total: 70 Million cubic meter

Soil & growing media

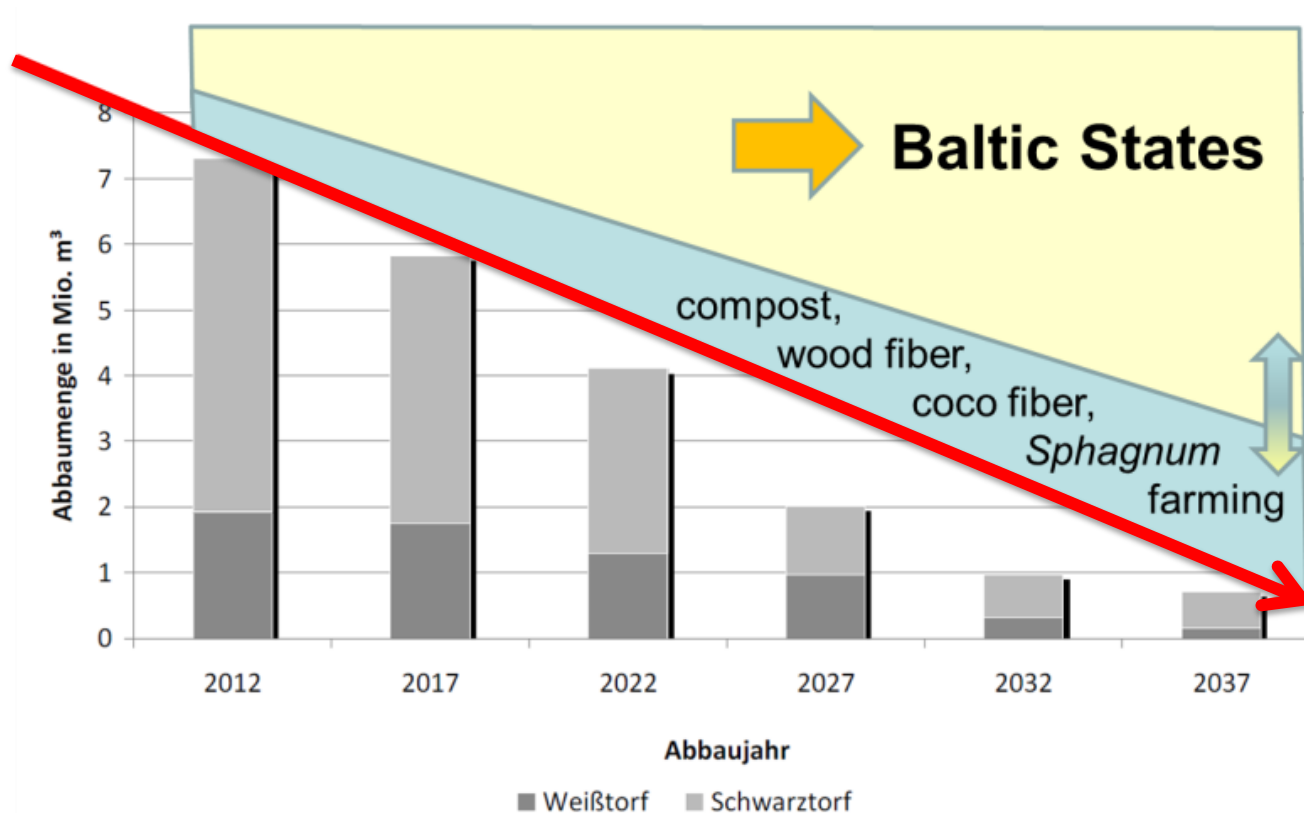
Total: 35 Million cubic meter

Energy

Total: 35 Million cubic meter

Stopping peat extraction in relatively disturbed peatlands in Germany and UK may lead to leakage: increased peat extraction in Baltics and Scandinavia

Stopping extraction in Germany and UK is a threat



Class 1 or 2 Baltic mire destined for peat extraction



Towards European Action on Peatlands

Conservation:

- Establish system of effective peatland conservation
 - ✓ Representation of all biogeographic regions

Peat mining:

- **RPP:** Peat extraction only in degraded sites, with an obligation for **peatland restoration after extraction**
 - ✓ **Nature restoration** or **Paludiculture**
 - ✓ Invest in research and **availability (!)** of **alternatives**

Agriculture:

- No expansion of drainage-based agriculture on peat
- Reduce CO₂ emissions by optimising water management, and no ploughing on peatlands
- **Phasing out of drainage-based agriculture & grazing on peat**

Cherish peatlands also for their beauty

