

Economic incentives and ecological losses: how subsidies contribute to the conversion of peatlands and wetlands into arable land



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UKRAINIAN NATURE CONSERVATION GROUP (UNCG)



In 2014, a group of Ukrainian biologists united to preserve the wild nature of Ukraine.

In 2018, we officially registered as the nonprofit non-governmental organization "Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group"



Our Mission:

Conservation of biodiversity, establishment of protected areas, and implementation of international environmental legislation in Ukraine.



We are an organization of professional biologists and activists engaged in wildlife protection in Ukraine.

The organization includes more than 50 nature conservation professionals and activists from all over Ukraine.

Analysts and young specialists also work in the organization.

We achieve our goals thanks to professional knowledge and mechanisms provided by legislation.



Areas of our work:



Protected Areas

Creating new protected areas, supporting the effective operation of those already existing.



Environmental Impact Assessment

Monitoring projects and providing comments to eliminate damage to biodiversity.



Emerald Network

Creating and monitoring Emerald Network territories and working with international nature conservation conventions.



Wetlands

Preserving rivers from new dams and other harmful infrastructure projects, protecting wetlands from drainage, reducing anthropogenic impact on grasslands, swamps, watercourses, and water bodies.



Forest conservation

Protection of valuable forest ecosystems and biodiversity, promoting the principles of sustainable forest management, civic oversight over the legality and sustainability in forest management.



Biodiversity Research

Collecting, assessing, and analyzing information on rare species and valuable natural habitats for conservation purposes; popularizing biodiversity topics and modern research methods among scientists and the general public



Steppes and Grasslands

Preserving valuable herbaceous ecosystems from destruction, construction, and afforestation.

Some of our results:



75% Conservation areas

in country were created with our participation for the last 6 years



143,706ha

Protected forests with our participation



36,853ha

Protected grasslands and steppes with our participation



213,099ha

Protected wetlands with our participation



1,600,000ha

Emerald Network Sites approved



>449,308

Species occurrence records published on GBIF



>202

GBIF datasets published



>425

Research articles referencing our GBIF data

We work towards improving legislation. In recent years, with our participation, a law introducing the conservation of naturally afforested agricultural lands, steppes, and grasslands was adopted; Cabinet of Ministers resolutions were passed on creating protective zones for biodiversity preservation and new rules for forest management planning.

The importance of peatlands and wetlands:

- biodiversity conservation;
- climate regulation (carbon storage);
- water purification and regulation of the hydrological cycle;
- and many other things...

However, these areas are rapidly disappearing due to agricultural development. This is because their conservation is not sufficiently regulated.

On the contrary, there is an incentive to plow land to support the economy and food security of the country.

In Ukraine, arable land accounts for 56.8% of the country (World Bank data).



Incentives to increase arable land:

- “Ukraine is the breadbasket of Europe”;
- stimulate the expansion of arable land;
- low state control over land use;
- subsidies for land reclamation (drainage, irrigation);
- the Government plans to provide subsidies for the use of degraded, unproductive and contaminated land;
- lack of understanding that ecosystem services have a value.



Directions of agricultural policy

Vitaliy Koval, [Minister of Agrarian Policy](#), notes that the priorities for 2025 include European integration, demining of agricultural land and returning it to cultivation, digitalization, development of agro-processing, support for small and medium-sized farmers, especially in the frontline areas, development of livestock, fisheries and **melioration**.



МІНІСТЕРСТВО АГРАРНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ ТА ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВА УКРАЇНИ

[Головна](#) / [Новини](#) / У Мінагрополітики визначили пріоритети діяльності на 2025 рік

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Європейська інтеграція

Земельні відносини

Меліорація та зрошення

Рибництво

Тваринництво

Цифрова трансформація

2020-08 Google Earth Pro



2024-09-17 Sentinel-2 L2A



2025-03-06 Sentinel-2 L2A



2025-03-07

Plowed peatland



Corn

Peat

2024-10-19

Plowed peatland

Kutianka

2024-06-21

There is no specific legislation on the protection and use of peatlands in Ukraine

The **Land Code** of Ukraine.

Article 150.

1. Particularly valuable lands include:

...

b) peatlands with a peat depth of more than one meter and drained regardless of the depth, peatlands within wetlands of international importance.

...

3. The peculiarities of the legal regime of land use under peatlands and possible types of their designated purpose are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

Does Ukrainian law protect wetlands?

For water bodies, the law establishes coastal protection strips, which are protected areas that cannot be plowed. Their width is regulated - from 25 meters to 200 meters. But, as I said earlier, Ukraine has low state control over land use, so such buffer zones are often plowed up.



Solutions for peatland and wetlands conservation:

- strengthen control and responsibility for the use of land within the wetlands and peatlands.
- provide support to farmers who do not violate environmental legislation.
- develop a Regulation on peatlands;
- create protected areas and zones;
- to unite with foreign partners to preserve the world's wildlife and prevent climate change...



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



УКРАЇНЬСЬКА ПРИРОДООХОРОННА ГРУПА