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Finance, Business and Natural Capital

Integrating Biodiversity
into Economic Strategies
for a Nature-Positive
Transition



FROM 9:30 AM TO 4:30 PM · ASSOCIAZIONE CIVITA, PIAZZA VENEZIA 11

Natural capital is plummeting by 40% while the economy grows: the paradox that threatens global stability

Current production models are undermining the functioning of ecosystems, increasing risks for businesses, and reducing social well-being. We must reverse course to halt the loss of nature and thereby ensure greater resilience in economic systems. In Rome, businesses, the financial sector, and institutions came together to accelerate the transition toward a Nature Positive economy.

After a summer marked by extreme temperatures, increasingly intense weather events, and new signs of growing pressure on natural systems, the relationship between the economy, climate change, and natural capital is taking on ever greater practical significance; yet even today, for every dollar invested in protecting or restoring nature, approximately thirty dollars continue to support activities that degrade it. And over the past 30 years, per capita economic capital has more than doubled, while global natural capital has declined by about 40 percent.

It is against this backdrop that the international conference “*Finance, Business and Natural Capital – Integrating Biodiversity into Economic Strategies for a Nature-Positive Transition*,” was held at the Civita Association in Rome. The event was promoted by the Nature Positive Network—an initiative of the Foundation for Sustainable Development and the Po River Basin Authority—in collaboration with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Italy and with Materia Rinnovabile as media partner. The conference aimed to shed light on how natural capital can be incorporated more systematically into economic strategies and decision-making processes. To this end, it brought together representatives from European and national institutions, international experts, stakeholders from the financial sector, and executives from leading companies. Furthermore the event featured an interesting comparison between Italy and the Netherlands, two countries in which key economic sectors—starting with the agri-food sector—are heavily dependent on the preservation of natural balances.

Changing Course

Changing course has become a categorical imperative for safeguarding economic stability and the well-being of populations: investing in nature reduces the costs of climate adaptation and facilitates access to new markets. Discussing biodiversity and natural capital means addressing an issue that also directly affects the resilience and competitiveness of businesses; fertile soils, high-quality water, and healthy ecosystems capable of storing carbon and mitigating the effects of extreme weather events are essential for sustaining productive activities.

“According to the recent Business Breakthrough Barometer 2026 survey by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), 92% of the 508 business leaders surveyed expect sustainability to become a source of competitive advantage over the next 5–10 years,” explained Edo Ronchi, President of the Foundation for Sustainable Development - The critical international geopolitical context, the dramatic acceleration of the climate crisis, supply insecurity, and high prices for fossil fuels, various critical raw materials, and key food products should prompt businesses, too, to engage in a fundamental reevaluation: ecological sustainability—comprising decarbonization, circularity, and a more prudent use of resources; comprising increased resilience and the regeneration of natural capital and ecosystem services—in today’s world, isn’t this now an unavoidable challenge for laying new foundations—ones that are durable, more solid, and more extensive—for development?

The Role of Businesses

In this process, businesses must also do their part. In his presentation, Matt Jones introduced—for the first time in Italy—the key findings of the IPBES *Business & Biodiversity Report*, published in 2026 and adopted by 150 member states. The report clearly shows that “nowdays”, biodiversity and nature provide more food, energy, and materials than at any other time in human history. Yet, less than 1% of companies that publish sustainability reports explicitly state their impacts on biodiversity and have a clear understanding of their dependence on essential ecosystem services, such as soil fertility, water availability, flood mitigation, and pollination.

Knowledge of the economic risks associated with ecosystem degradation and collapse has reached an unprecedented level, and the strategies and tools are now clear as well. Matt Jones has outlined 24 concrete actions that companies can take starting today at various levels: from corporate governance to operations, all the way to the supply chain. There are no more excuses for delaying action.

“Healthy ecosystems are vital for nature and our food supply. Achieving this is a major challenge, but innovation - both technological and financial - can help us build a resilient ecosystem. Government and business share this responsibility, and the diplomatic community has a role to play too”, said Hayo Haanstra, Counselor for Agriculture and Nature at the Embassy of the Netherlands.

Closing the Financial Gap

According to the latest edition of UNEP's *State of Finance for Nature*, investments in Nature-based Solutions currently amounts to approximately 220.4 billion U.S. dollars, 89.4% of which comes from public sources. This funding is projected to reach approximately \$571 billion per year by 2030, equivalent to just under 0.5% of global GDP. While this is a substantial figure, it is significantly lower than, for example, **about 7,300 billion dollars in financial flows contributing to environmental degradation**, compared to just 220 billion invested in nature-positive solutions.

According to estimates presented by the **Nature Positive Network**, in Italy in 2025, environmentally harmful subsidies that had direct or indirect impacts on biodiversity amounted to over 6 billion euros. The reallocation of these resources would enable the implementation of effective measures to protect and enhance natural capital. This type of support is crucial for regions which are particularly vulnerable to climate-change, such as the Po District: one of the most vulnerable areas of the entire Mediterranean, while also accounting to more than 40% of Italy's GDP.

"The Po River District is now facing a profound transformation: climate change is altering the balance of the territory, the availability of water resources, and the resilience of ecosystems," stated Alessandro Delpiano, Secretary General of the Po River Basin Authority. *"We can no longer limit ourselves to managing emergencies; instead, we must change the way we plan and act, strengthening prevention, adaptation, and our ability to anticipate risks. This requires a vision in which water conservation, ecosystem restoration, territorial safety, and economic development are interconnected and part of the same strategy. But a challenge of this magnitude cannot be tackled by institutions alone. The involvement of businesses is essential: the private sector can contribute through investments, innovation, and solutions capable of reducing pressure on natural resources, restoring degraded ecosystems, and strengthening the resilience of supply chains. Public-private partnerships must therefore become a concrete tool in this new phase. Po can serve as a testing ground for this new governance model—one that is more proactive, integrated, and collaborative, capable of transforming the climate challenge into an opportunity for innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness,"* concluded Secretary General Delpiano.

This day of reflection and discussion—which brought together businesses, the financial sector, and institutions to accelerate the transition toward a Nature-Positive economy—comes at a particularly significant moment: just a few days after the release of the new report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which highlighted that exceeding the 1.5°C threshold above pre-industrial levels—as set out in the 2015 Paris Agreement—is now inevitable.

Therefore, it is essential to significantly increase the resilience of local communities by addressing the climate and ecological crises in an integrated manner. Especially in our country—which is particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, as was dramatically confirmed again this summer—**an effective adaptation strategy must inevitably include measures to protect, manage, and restore ecosystems.**

"The Rome conference highlighted something we already know, but which must be addressed with greater urgency and intensity. All the materials will be made available on the Nature Positive Network website—www.naturepositivenetwork.net—because we want to continue raising awareness and ensure that it quickly translates into concrete decisions. Reversing the loss of nature depends on three factors: how many resources we mobilize, where we direct them, and the private sector's

ability to recognize that nature is not a cost, but the infrastructure upon which everything rely on. The Nature Positive Network will continue to work toward this goal to support the Italian economic system in its transformation toward a Nature Positive economy,” concluded Giuseppe Dodaro, Coordinator of the Nature Positive Network.

Nature Positive Network

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