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PRESS RELEASE

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New study shows sustainable development depends on biodiversity

A new study co-authored by Ricardo and published today in *Nature Sustainability*, exemplifies the breadth of ways in which biodiversity can contribute to achievement of all 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thereby help to underpin sustainable development

The authors of *Biodiversity's contributions to sustainable development* (published in *Nature Sustainability*, 25 November 2019) note that despite biodiversity's wide-ranging benefits for people, it continues to decline at an alarming rate. Richard Smithers, the study's co-lead author from Ricardo Energy & Environment warns that "we are currently fulfilling our wants and desires in ways that mean future generations will be unable to meet their basic needs".

The study highlights that complex links between biodiversity and sustainable development may not only lead to them being overlooked but also to well-intended but misguided actions. For instance, in comparison with developing countries, many developed countries thrive economically despite having less biodiversity. Yet this paradox can be explained when one realizes that such countries often sustain their development by benefiting from degradation of less-developed countries' biodiversity. For example, the UK was the world's second largest net importer of forest products in 2015.

“Such coupling of socioeconomic and environmental interactions means that national, transboundary and international actions are needed to sustain biodiversity and development globally,” says Associate Professor Malgorzata Blicharska, the study’s co-lead author from the Natural Resources and Sustainable Development Programme at Uppsala University. “People benefit from biodiversity in so many ways that are under-appreciated or ignored. For example, a diversity of pollinators ensures crop pollination and a third of global food production is dependent on them, microorganisms contribute to waste management, and many species have inspired people to develop new products and ways of doing things.”



“We hope that increasing people’s awareness of biodiversity’s many contributions to sustainable development will encourage policymakers at all levels to mainstream biodiversity considerations across a broad range of development sectors and thereby halt and reverse biodiversity loss,” continues Richard Smithers of Ricardo Energy & Environment.

The authors note that if it continues unchecked, future generations are unlikely to forgive how we have destroyed biodiversity and compromised their lives.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Ricardo plc is a global, world-class, multi-industry consultancy for engineering, technology, project innovation and strategy. Our people are committed to providing outstanding value through quality engineering solutions focused on high efficiency, low emission, class-leading product innovation and robust strategic implementation. With a century of delivering excellence and value through technology, our client list includes the world's major transportation original equipment manufacturers, supply chain organizations, energy companies, financial institutions and governments. Guided by our corporate values of respect, integrity, creativity & innovation and passion, we enable our customers to achieve sustainable growth and commercial success. Ricardo is listed in the FTSE4Good Index, which identifies global companies that demonstrate strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices. For more information, visit www.ricardo.com.

The Natural Resources and Sustainable Development (NRHU) Programme at Uppsala University focuses on the different dimensions of sustainable development, and particularly, on interactions between society and environment, applying interdisciplinary approaches and a wide variety of natural and social science research methods. NRHU researchers consider the environment and its natural resources and ecosystem services as an overarching foundation for society and economy and aim at providing knowledge on how to utilize natural resources in a sustainable way. NRHU work is conducted in collaboration with stakeholders at different governance levels, from local communities and organisations to governmental authorities.

Ricardo Energy & Environment is a leading sustainability consultancy, helping clients to respond to environmental challenges and opportunities around the world. Its team of over 450 staff draws on an impressive heritage supporting governments and businesses for over 40 years. The consultancy is an operating division of Ricardo plc. For more information, visit <https://ee.ricardo.com/>

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