



Peatland ecosystems as long-term carbon stores: Launch of the regional “CO₂-Regio” feasibility study

- **The Audi Environmental Foundation and the “Energie Effizient Einsetzen” (“use energy efficiently”) association are investigating the impact of peatland conservation, humus formation and reforestation on the regional climate**
- **Peatland is a highly efficient carbon store offering greater storage capacity than woodland**
- **Rüdiger Recknagel, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation: “Systematic peatland conservation will help to prevent carbon stored over centuries from escaping into the atmosphere”**

Ingolstadt, May 21, 2021 – Thanks to their high content of organic matter, peatland ecosystems are highly efficient carbon stores capable of storing more carbon dioxide than woodland covering an equivalent area. This is why the Audi Environmental Foundation and an alliance of regional municipalities, cities and administrative districts are joining forces with the EU’s LEADER¹ support program to fund a study researching the greenhouse gas offsetting capacity of peatland, woodland and humus. The study also aims to outline how regional farmers can repurpose their land for alternative uses and be financially rewarded for their efforts.

Peatland ecosystems are among the most efficient greenhouse gas stores on the planet. They have positive effects on our climate and provide a whole range of flora and fauna with valuable habitats. By launching the “CO₂-Regio” project, the nonprofit “Energie Effizient Einsetzen” association has made it its mission to conserve this natural habitat with its exceptional biodiversity and promote the greenhouse gas storage capability of peatland. It aims to formulate guidelines for farmers on how they can conserve and maintain any peatland on their estates, with particular importance attached to ensuring that these “climate managers” receive proper financial compensation for their efforts. Other focal points of the study include humus formation and reforestation – both equally effective climate protection measures that can also be easily implemented by owners of property with no peatland. The EU’s support program will enable the findings of the study to be put into practice, initially over the next two years. In addition to the Audi Environmental Foundation, the districts of Aichach-Friedberg, Neuburg-Schrobenhausen and Pfaffenhofen an der Ilm as well as the city of Schrobenhausen and the communities of Königsmoos, Ehekirchen, Karlshuld, Langenmosen and Pöttmes are among the supporters of “CO₂-Regio”. Rüdiger Recknagel, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental

¹ LEADER = “Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale” (English: “Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy”)

The Audi Environmental Foundation is an active supporter of research in new technologies and scientific methods for a livable future. Its declared aim is to help protect the environment and to create and promote opportunities for sustainable action. The foundation focuses in particular on the support and development of environmentally compatible technologies, on measures for environmental education, and on the protection of the natural resources for humans, animals, and plants. Established by AUDI AG in 2009 as a fully owned subsidiary, the foundation is a part of the company’s social and environmental policy involvement.



Foundation: “Systematic peatland conservation will help to prevent carbon stored over centuries from escaping into the atmosphere, which is why it is both right and important to support landowners with peatland on their property in implementing these climate protection measures and to incentivize them financially.”

The feasibility study aims to create a carbon offsetting mechanism through peatland conservation, humus formation and reforestation with a view to strengthening regional business cycles and promoting alternative land uses. Since the landowners are themselves responsible for maintaining their peatland and keeping it healthy, they help to protect the regional climate. Moreover, they are to receive the proceeds from the certificate trading scheme planned once the study is complete as compensation. Offsetting unavoidable emissions will help to put the goal of net-zero emissions within reach. Since the measures have a long-term impact, they help to ensure that these “climate managers” can continue to live off their land over the coming decades too. The aim is to enable all local residents as well as businesses and industries to purchase these certificates, helping to promote business cycles, nature conservation and climate protection at a local level.

The feasibility study looks at a variety of measures designed to reconcile climate protection and cost-effectiveness, including cultivation methods such as paludiculture (wet agriculture and forestry), grazing on peatland, agroforestry and agriculture with different humus formation methods. But other methods such as simple peatland conservation and the combination of peatland conservation and photovoltaics are also to be investigated, taking into account their success potential, practicability, cost-effectiveness, greenhouse gas balances and legal framework conditions. The initial phase of the study aims to promote dialogue among producers and potential consumers, thereby ensuring that products like reeds, wood and bulrush are also recycled. “CO₂-Regio” will also look at the conditions that the certificates need to fulfill for them to be recognized and used. Throughout the entire study period, interested parties and residents are to have the opportunity to learn more about the study and take part in the study process. Once the study period has ended, the results will be made available and fully accessible to all. The first information meeting is already scheduled to take place in the second half of 2021. The association can now be contacted for questions and queries at the following e-mail address: verein@e-e-e.eu

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