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Dr Kay holds a PhD in Geography from University College London (1989) and is Senior Expert on climate action for the land sector (Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry in the UNFCCC framework). Following his academic training, he worked for nearly two decades in applied research linked to Common Agricultural Policy implementation at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Italy. Since 2013, he has been deeply involved in the formulation of the "3rd pillar" of the EU 2030 climate policy framework concerning land use and focussing on agriculture and forestry. He has been responsible within the DG CLIMA team for negotiating the current legislation on LULUCF (Regulation 2018/841), and is directly involved in the upgrading of the current land-related climate legislation under the European Green Deal.

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Presentation title: Peat & Peatlands in the European Green Deal and related climate policies

Peatlands have long featured as a complex and important phenomenon in climate policy, specifically related to land use. As substantial stores of carbon, their disturbance may jeopardize the achievement of climate targets, such as those established under the Paris Agreement. And yet historically peatlands have been an important resource in certain areas of the EU for agriculture, energy, and the natural environment. Such competing demands create a complex policy landscape touching upon the Common Agricultural Policy, nature and conservation objectives, energy policy and of course increasing the sequestration of CO₂ under land use-related climate legislation.

The European Green Deal puts ambitious objectives for biodiversity and climate at the forefront of its goals. Current legislation on land emissions already requires Member States to report on emissions from peatlands, and to include these emissions against their targets by 2030 at the latest. In parallel, restoration of previously exploited peatlands and – even more importantly – repurposing of peatlands for other - climate-proofed - economic activities will need to be identified and facilitated, as will the associated decarbonisation of (peat) energy production, providing clean, renewable heating.

The transition towards a more climate and biodiversity oriented management for these lands is underway, already financed by national initiatives or by European funds, such as LIFE; and new approaches to reinforce this are under consideration by the Commission. This transition needs to be underpinned by an inclusive approach that fulfils the Green Deal's promise of a "*fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net missions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.*"