

Ecology and sustainable development

Biodiversity in France

France has a truly **exceptional natural heritage**. It stretches across three continents (Europe, South America and Antarctica) and three oceans (Atlantic, Pacific and Indian).

The **territory of metropolitan France** is home to **extremely diverse ecosystems** within each of the four European biogeographic zones: Alpine, Continental, Atlantic and Mediterranean. The **French overseas territories**, divided across three oceans, in subboreal, tropical and equatorial, austral and Antarctic zones, are home to 3,450 plant species and 380 vertebrates which are **unique in the world**.

At a period in our history when scientists are claiming that **60% of the world's ecosystems** are damaged, France has to show it is able to shoulder its responsibilities. It has made a commitment to a central objective, which was already expressed at the Johannesburg Summit and taken up by the European Union, which is to **halt the loss of biological diversity by 2010**.

In February 2004, it adopted a **National biodiversity strategy**, broken down into 10 action plans: agriculture, international co-operation, land transport infrastructures, sea, natural heritage, territorial projects, city planning, forests, research, overseas. These action plans are managed by the technical ministry concerned, and can be revised every two years. They revolve around **concrete actions**, such as **for example**:

- the adoption of agricultural practices that encourage insect diversity
- improved management of road verges
- the creation of new protected areas
- the creation of an information portal on nature and landscapes
- tax incentives to help fund nature protection
- protection of biodiversity overseas

France has a dense network of protected and regulated areas: 9 National Parks (the two most recent – the National Park of Reunion and the Amazonian Park of Guyana – date from the start of 2007), 156 nature reserves, 600 biotope protection decisions and over 70,000 ha of land belonging to the coastline protection agency (i.e. 1.5% of the total surface area of France).

In addition to this network of highly protected areas, there is the network of 45 regional nature parks (comprising more than 12% of the national territory) and the 1,701 Natura 2000 sites (i.e. 6.7 million hectares, **12% of the metropolitan territory**).