

## HOT SPOTS

# BRIGHTENING UP

### RESTORING THE FLOW COUNTRY

The far north of Scotland is home to Europe's largest contiguous area of blanket bog – the "Flow Country". Thick peat in this 4,000 square kilometre area stores huge amounts of carbon. Encouraged by tax concessions, in the 1980s foresters drained part of the moor to plant trees. But that dried out the peat and destroyed the habitat of birds and other wildlife. In 1987, the government scrapped the tax relief, and tree planting stopped. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has bought a large area back from the developers and is trying to restore the peat bog. One of the UK's last remaining wildernesses, the Flow Country is being considered for listing as a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Scotland

Berlin

France

### PREVENTING SPECULATION

Since 2003, the French organization "Terre de Liens" has been buying up farms and farmland in order to keep it away from speculators and to make it available to farmers to cultivate using organic methods. Several thousand regular supporters have so far raised around 34 million euros to purchase land. It currently owns 118 farms and 2,300 hectares, providing employment to more than 300 people.

Burkina Faso

### CUTTING DOWN ON CHOPPING DOWN

In 1995 alone, nearly 30,000 km<sup>2</sup> of forest – the size of Belgium – was cleared for farming and ranching. In 2013, only 5,800 km<sup>2</sup> – as big as Norfolk in England or twice the size of Saarland in Germany – was cleared. Still too much, but a big improvement. The change had many causes. They include a strong government commitment to stop deforestation, improvements in cattle raising methods, and consumer boycotts of soybeans and cattle raised on newly cleared land.

Brazil

### SECURE RIGHTS FOR A LOST PEOPLE

After a long struggle, the Quilombolas won their fight for their land. They are descendants of African slaves who fled into Brazil's jungles, where they established between 1,000 and 10,000 self-governing, fortified communities. They were rediscovered only in the 1970s when loggers reached their area. Since 1988 their land rights have been recognized in the Brazilian constitution.



### URBAN AGRICULTURE

Part of the former Tempelhof airport in Berlin has been given over to allotments where more than 500 gardeners grow vegetables, fruit and flowers. The rules prohibit allotment owners from planting in the ground, as the area may be turned over to other uses in the future. So they bring in sacks of soil and compost and make temporary raised beds out of used shipping pallets. Result: a green oasis in the heart of the city. Many immigrant families who have settled in Berlin have embraced the opportunity to grow their own food.

### REGREENING THE SAHEL

Over the past 30 years, hundreds of thousands of farmers have transformed large swathes of the Sahel into productive farmland. In Burkina Faso, farmers sow crops in planting pits and pile stones along the contour to prevent erosion. In Niger, they encourage tree stumps to regrow by careful selection and pruning. As a result, food security has improved for about 3 million people, and once-denuded landscapes are now home to abundant trees, crops, and livestock.

### SAVING HOLY GROUND

After years of legal wrangling with aboriginal groups, in 2014 the Australian government gave up its plans to set up a final disposal site for radioactive waste at Muckaty Station in the Northern Territory. In 2007, the Ngapa clan agreed to store low- and medium-level waste on their land. Thereupon four other clans laid claim to the land and declared that the site was close to their holy ground.

### DIGGING HOLES TO FIGHT EROSION

Scarred by gullies, mountainous Lesotho is one of the most eroded places on the planet. Every year, millions of tonnes of topsoil disappear down the Orange River towards the Atlantic. Between 1995 and 2010, grain production fell by half as a result. An answer is a pure form of conservation agriculture, without genetically modified seed or heavy use of herbicides. Instead of ploughing, farmers leave the crop residue on the surface to protect the soil. They dig small basins with a hoe, drop in some compost or inorganic fertilizer and some seeds, and cover them with soil. They weed by hand, and rotate crops to prevent the build-up of pests. This system, called likoti (holes) in Sesotho, can be used for maize, beans, sunflower, sorghum, potato and tomato. It can double or even treble yields, doubles incomes, and cuts erosion significantly.

Lesotho

Muckaty Station