

# Correspondence

## US scientists – reach across the aisle, Republicans could be back soon

The Democratic White House is seeking a US\$13.5-billion increase in US federal research and development budgets (*Nature* 594, 485; 2021). It claims to have put evidence at the heart of its COVID-19 strategy, and plans to decarbonize the economy. With the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy now a cabinet-level position for the first time, President Joe Biden declares “science is back”.

But it would be a mistake for US researchers to just bask in the warm glow of a science-friendly government and jockey for the funding windfall. Republicans could easily take control again. This might involve a clean sweep of all three branches of government. And it could start in just 18 months time, after the 2022 mid-term elections.

In the United States, just 20% of people on the political right trust scientists, compared with 62% on the left – the biggest such split in public opinion across 14 countries. Only 40% of Republican voters favour increases in science funding, compared with 60% of Democrats.

Now is the time to try to bridge the political divide, structurally and personally – not to huddle on one side of a growing chasm. Science can't afford to become a one-party system. We have only to look to the pandemic to see the cost of the political gulf growing wider.

**Imran Khan** University College London, UK.  
hello@imrankhan.fyi

The author declares competing interests; see [go.nature.com/2tzdxzm](https://go.nature.com/2tzdxzm)

## Global climate models do not need more behavioural science

We disagree that it is useful to include more behavioural and political science in global integrated assessment models (IAMs; see W. Peng *et al.* *Nature* 594, 174–176; 2021). Many of the features the authors suggest have already been reflected in several IAMs (see, for instance, M. G. Morgan and H. Dowlatabadi *Climat. Change* 34, 337–368; 1996). But high degrees of uncertainty mean that these cannot provide useful quantitative conclusions about policy at the local level.

For instance, in 2000, we used autonomous agents with pro- and anti-climate policies in 13 global regions to study policy formation and dissolution under public pressure from extreme events and high taxes. The key insights were that uncertainties and regional diversity in decision-making and values are too broad and varied for global models to inform specifics in policies.

Regional adherence to global targets requires nuanced strategies at the sub-national scale, reflecting local politics and technical, economic and behavioural aspects of specific problems – just as we need downscaling for detailed climate projections. Consequently, we have spent the past two decades focusing on analysis for specific sector and transition challenges. We urge others to do the same.

**M. Granger Morgan** Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA.  
gm5d@andrew.cmu.edu

**Hadi Dowlatabadi** University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

## Peru to punish bending of clinical-trial rules

Peru's National Institute of Health (INS) is urgently reviewing its procedures for authorization and supervision of clinical trials for COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, after protocol deviations in one such trial (see *Nature* 592, 174–175 (2021) and C. F. Cáceres *et al.* *Nature* 592, 685; 2021). Now under investigation by a regulatory body, the incident dented public confidence in the integrity of our scientific community.

The INS aims to ensure that such irregularities can never happen again. It plans to create a National Bioethics Commission, to establish a sanctions procedure and to upgrade training in ethics and scientific integrity for researchers.

There are currently 28 other clinical trials related to COVID-19 (4 vaccines and 24 treatments) in progress in Peru. All conform to international ethical and scientific standards.

**Cesar Cabezas-Sanchez, Yamilee Hurtado-Roca, Victor Suárez-Moreno** National Institute of Health (INS), Lima, Peru.  
vsuarez@ins.gob.pe

## Europe's reformed agricultural policy disappoints

Last month, the European Union's parliament, council and commission reached a compromise on reforms to the bloc's Common Agricultural Policy. Commission vice-president Frans Timmermans hailed the deal as “a real shift in how we practice agriculture in Europe”. In our view, this €270-billion (US\$318-billion) deal is unlikely to achieve the desired improvements in climate impact and ecosystems over the period 2023–27.

Almost all the conditions on which subsidies depend have been watered down. In particular, the requirements to rotate crops and protect carbon-rich soils and landscape features are particularly unambitious. The Eco-schemes instrument, intended to encourage farmers to provide more environmental services, leaves too much up to member states to decide, and there is little scope for the commission to intervene if they fall behind. Disappointingly, most of the budget will be spent on ‘business as usual’ instead of on future-proofing.

The size of the EU single market means that this failure to properly reform the policy will have global implications. It is now up to member states to ensure that they support the commission in realizing its Green Deal ambitions.

**Jeroen J. L. Candel** Wageningen University, the Netherlands.  
jeroen.candel@wur.nl

**Sebastian Lakner** University of Rostock, Germany.

**Guy Pe'er** German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research, Leipzig, Germany.

The authors declare competing interests; see [go.nature.com/2uf3yg3](https://go.nature.com/2uf3yg3)