

CountrySide

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A photograph of Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, speaking at a podium. She is wearing a light blue blazer over a dark blue collared shirt. Her hands are raised in a gesture of emphasis. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a large assembly hall.

The European Green Deal: how should it look to land managers?

Presentation of the European Green Deal
by Ursula von der LEYEN, President of the EC



Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Secretary General*

Contents

- 3** The European Green Deal
how should it look to land managers?
-
- 6** Change must come
-
- 8** Soil health a central issue for a greener Europe
-
- 9** Valbelviso Estate winning the Belleuropa Award
-
- 10** ELO organizes the visit of the American Secretary of State for Agriculture to a blue-white farm in Wallonia
-
- 11** Three questions to Sonny PERDUE, US Secretary of State
- “Building Alliances” was the CIC’s motto during their attendance at this year’s Dallas Safari Club Convention “Heritage” in Dallas, United States.
- Diary dates
-
- 12** UNISECO Agro-ecological Knowledge Hub
- AGFOSY – developing agroforestry practices
-
- 13** Land Mobility - Project kick-off meeting
- New Erasmus+ project: FARCURA (Fostering inclusion through Social Farming).
-
- 14** Why built heritage can help save the world
-
- 15** Circular Agronomics: innovative solutions for carbon and nutrient management

The Green deal – a question of means!

The last few weeks have seen the release of an ambitious spate of policies, targets, and proposed regulations come from the newly seated European Commission, as well as agitation from the European Parliament on its own priorities. In the end, not a few of these will come to rest on the shoulders of land managers through the Green Deal, the 'Farm to Fork Strategy as well as the hoped-for finalization of the Common Agricultural Policy.

What appears to be missing is a concerted effort to find the funding for all these policies. Given the hard negotiations on the Europe’s budget, as well as its lack of reform under the new Commission, it does not appear as if these ambitions will be fully funded. Although the pronouncement of \$1 trillion euros towards climate neutrality has delivered many headlines, it appears that much of this promise is either built out of existing commitment or leveraging relatively small EU funds. As it stands, it is unclear whether such leverage can be created, and – if it can – whether the Member States will go along with it.

Without a serious alignment of goals and finances, we remain worried that the European institutions will use prohibition rather than funded incentives to achieve its goals – regulation, after all is much cheaper than investment. If the desired effect is a greener, climate neutral, more biodiversity-positive Europe, the EU would do better to use the carrot than the stick.



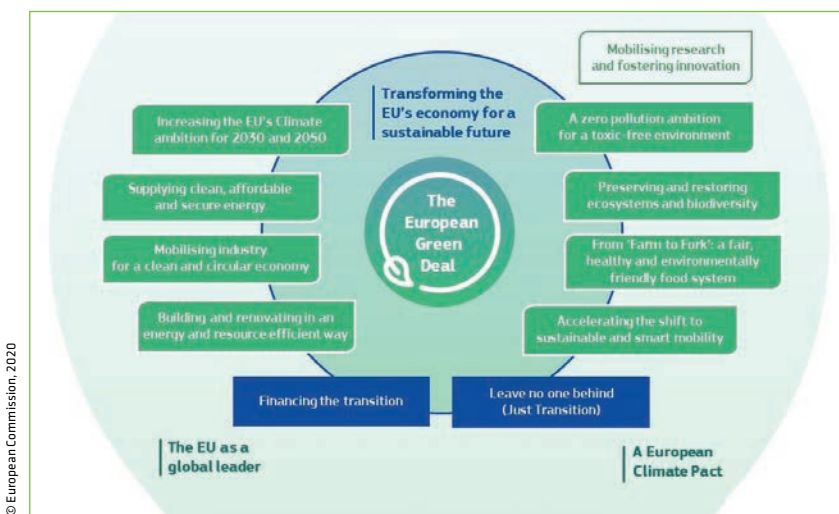
The European Green Deal¹

how should it look to land managers?

This communication from the European Commission to the other European Institutions was the first major statement of the newly formed Commission under its new President Ursula von der LEYEN. It is a wonderful example of both the strengths and the weaknesses of the European Union and its democratic institutions.

Allan BUCKWELL

*a personal reaction from a newly re-positioned
(against my better judgement) European outsider*



The European Green Deal Communication, Figure 1

The document is a strength of the EU because it shows how its political system can, in a timely way, produce a well-rounded, well-argued statement of policy intent which reacts to and takes forward the strong public concerns about the climate emergency and the biodiversity emergency which exploded into public debate during 2019. The paper seeks a new growth strategy which has no net GHG emissions (by 2050) and decouples growth from natural resource use. Who would argue with these objectives? There is strong reference to the need to improve European economy and society with respect both to the environment and health and well-being. The document recognises that this needs transformative policies in many areas – two of which particularly impact on the countryside: they are the need for a new ‘Farm to Fork Strategy’ for our food system, and to ‘Preserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystems’. It rightly claims that these challenges are best tackled in a coordinated way across the EU Member States, rather than piecemeal by the Member States. This in turn lends weight for the EU to seek to take the lead in set-

ting global sustainability standards for climate, environment and resource management. Neither the USA nor China show any signs of wanting to perform, or being capable of performing, this role. It implicitly emphasises that the necessary transformations - of energy, transport, buildings, industry and the food system - will involve pain for some groups in society. The current euphemism for managing this pain is to speak of a ‘just transition’, i.e. the need to help disadvantaged or left-behind sectors to adjust. This will certainly include many businesses in the rural areas. It also wisely flags that if the EU really does take the lead on climate and restoring biodiversity then this may require appropriate border adjustments to ensure that Europe does not simply offshore environmental damage and see its domestic sectors out-competed by polluting imports – again this has strong resonance with food producing interests.

A paper which deals with the whole economic system and its climate and environmental effects in 23-pages is inevitably light on detail. However, there are

some telling indications of what the New Deal should mean for the EU food and land management systems. These are to be fleshed-out in the next round of policy statements from the Commission this spring in the form of a ‘Farm to Fork’ food strategy and a new Strategy for Biodiversity as well as spelling out the EU’s new net Zero Climate ambitions in readiness for COP26 this November.

The ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy is apparently going to set out how to achieve a sustainable food system which must of course contribute to the Net Zero 2050 climate target. There are indications that the Commission thinking already embraces the suggestion that agricultural GHG emissions cannot be brought to zero by 2050 (perhaps never?). To make a contribution to net zero GHG emissions the agriculture and land use (the jargon for the latter is LULUCF²) sectors together will require action on food consumption not just production by reducing agricultural emissions. EU consumption of some foods and food waste have to fall in order to release agricultural land which can be managed for carbon sequestration through afforestation, bioenergy production and peat restoration³. The environmental case for reduced consumption of some carbohydrates, fats and protein is more than just GHG related, it concerns nutrients, ammonia pollution, and biodiversity degradation too – but importantly, over-consumption of food (beyond dietary guidelines) is severely damaging to health too. These aspects will, of course, cause consternation amongst farmers.

There will be a great deal in the ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy about putting agricultural production onto a sustainable basis. No one is likely to quarrel with this; the problem is defining what it means. The New Green Deal goes no further than listing likely contributions from: precision agriculture, organic farming, agro-ecology, agro-forestry and strict animal welfare standards. So far so good, but there is no



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The European Green Deal calls for developing a sustainable food strategy.

4

mention of the new innovations in genomics which could help internalise resistance to climate and disease stress and raise productivity. There is explicit reference to reducing the use of and risk of chemical pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics. Of course, there is much which can be done about this by exploiting precision farming, digital technologies, big data, robotics and breeding techniques. This flags the real debates which lies ahead. If combatting climate change means that agricultural land in some regions of Europe has to be converted to carbon sequestration, does this mean that productivity on the remaining agricultural land has to be raised – or can and should it be intensified? The balances between consumption and production, and between land use for agriculture and other uses is plainly going to change. There is much analysis and discussion required to work out how much change and how to incentivise it to happen. This will certainly need a new green deal – because only farmers and foresters can make it happen and they have to stay in business.

So, why did I say the New Green Deal shows the strengths and weaknesses of the EU? The strengths are that the debate on the above complexities has now been constructively opened. The weakness concerns our (actually your) beloved Common Agricultural Policy! From the mid-1990s to 2013 this policy seemed to be drifting slowly from being a commodity production support policy to a balanced policy for rural development in which paying farmers for the public environmental services they provide was a growing element. Since 2013 this evolution seems to have shuddered to a halt. The sustainability rhetoric is strong, but the delivery is weak to non-existent! The current reform tries to arrest and reverse this, but by the dubious means of transferring responsibility for making it happen to the Member States – most of whom are not convinced of the need to change. The CAP has proved stubbornly resistant to real change. Is there the political will in the Commission to take a step back from the present pre-Green Deal proposals for CAP reform for the period 2022 to 2027 made by the previous Com-

mission? Will the Parliament or Council encourage such a new look? The operation of the CAP for the next seven years is the most important instrument to bring real and needed change to the EU food system. Whether EU institutions and stakeholders are able to make this happen is the real test of how European and how Green the deal is for this system.

1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – the European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final, 11 December 2019.

2 Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry.

3 These are the clear conclusions of the UK Committee on Climate change, see their recent report on Policies for Agriculture and Land use towards the UK target of Net Zero emissions by 2050 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/01/23/major-shift-in-uk-land-use-needed-to-deliver-net-zero-emissions/>



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³ 6R, 7R, 8R tractors



Janez POTOČNIK

Change must come



Janez POTOČNIK; Chair FFA2020, Chairman RISE Foundation

6

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have not been kind to humanity; from the promise and liberation of the end of the Cold War to the earthquakes disrupting our politics and the rise of the climate crisis, we seem to be at a crossroads. Either we commit ourselves to a serious program of real, visible change, or popular revolt mixed with rising sea levels will claim us. For the first time in the thousands of years of our collective history, we have reached a critical point where our failures can no longer be solved or contained locally. If we allow our failures to continue unchecked, the first hit will be those worst off in the developing world and in indigenous communities. We are still only beginning to fully understand the intercoupling of our social, economic, and environmental problems, and the moment for us to change is right now.

Despite the fact that we are fully aware that we must change, we appear to be more eager to discuss our programs and write long reports than we are in actual, material change. Behind us lies a lost decade, where politicians and businesses missed a crucial opportunity to seriously

engage with decarbonizing the economy, delivering a circular economy, and fulfilling the promises made in the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. With every passing year, the urgency of accelerating the pace of change becomes more pressing, and it becomes more socially and economically difficult to make the necessary adjustments. Each nation, from the global South to the stewards of the Arctic, will need to be involved – something that cannot be achieved without serious, well-funded global alliances. Therefore, we should speed up the pace of change dramatically. Fortunately, we stand at the brink of a shift in leadership around the world; a new European Commission, Council and Parliament began their work, major elections are either ongoing or coming up fast, and the political engagement seen around the world has been heartening. A rise in participation in European elections, massive youth demonstrations on the climate crisis, and the next generation of politicians taking the helm. The most important question facing them is how they will deliver on sustainability; not just economically, but also socially, and certainly environmentally. What

changes will they make, and how far will they be willing to push in order to achieve the radical solutions we now need?

However, I remain optimistic. We are not lost; changes are happening all around us – nature conservation itself is now far broader than we conceived it not that long ago. We have seen it move beyond (national) parks or protected areas; the more we understand of biodiversity, the more we grasp how crucial its variety is. From rooftop beehives in urban centres to field margins on farmland and investment in sustainable forestry, we are changing the face of conservation; no longer distinct from humanity, but all around us at all times. Excellent, well-researched papers on the needed transition exist, and they do not just point to the what and how, but also that vast rewards are there, waiting for those with the courage to act.

It cannot just be up to those in charge to accelerate the changes we need. As citizens and consumers, we all have a role to play; not just in how we approach our own diet, meat consumption and above all waste, but what we demand from those who pro-



duce it. Systemic change can happen, but only if we demand it, and literally put our money where our mouth is. More and more of us are choosing a different diet and demanding higher standards in terms of how our food is produced, and whether the welfare of the planet and its people has been respected in that process. We are beginning to demand a rethink of the food system business model, which has relied for too long on squeezing ever lower prices out of a limited group of producers.

Land, soil, and water management, of course, remains at the core of the systemic changes we need and will remain so. Here too, we will need to see a vastly accelerated pace of change. One that must be delivered by those who make their living from it, but not without their support either. Right now, we are seeing a new generation of farmers, conservationists, foresters and many others take over and reconfigure the way food has been produced for two or three generations. Aware of negative consequences like water and air pollution, nitrogen management, and the co-dependency of farming and biodiversity, they are taking hold of their responsibility. Vertical farms, food forests, urban food production; these are only a small fraction of the change that is coming to the way we deliver on a sustainable food system. The job of the decision-makers should be to support those who do not just talk about it, but deliver on their

promised change, and to spread their good ideas as wide as they can.

The question remains as to whether the current CAP proposal will be robust enough to deliver real change. Even though the Commission surely prepared it with the best of intentions, it will likely fall short of addressing the challenges linked to climate, biodiversity, and the broader environment. By focussing on incomes support (even if further conditions apply), the current proposal maintains the status quo rather than providing the much-needed boost towards systemic change. If we are to deliver on the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and halt global heating, then surely we must be aware that this is the last financial proposal which can realistically affect the outcomes related to European agriculture.

There is no doubt that the appetite and will to change is growing around the world. Indeed, more and more of us are demanding a systemic shift away from the economic, social and environmental models that have so thoroughly failed to keep up with science and social demands. Furthermore, we cannot make these changes without new partnerships, by reaching beyond your natural 'allies' – here too the FFA is acting on its purpose, with a new partnership structure that allows for all sides to develop their own solutions. There is no choice

but to change and to do so rapidly. That is why we will dedicate FFA2020 to theme of 'accelerating change'. We have eleven years left to transform the world. Eleven years until, according to the 2018 IPCC report, we will go inexorably past 1.5 degrees global warming and enter the age of climate breakdown. That is a short window of time to deliver on the change we need, so all our efforts must now go to accelerating everything, all at once, right now.

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Soil health a central issue for a greener Europe

Soil organisms contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services, vital in supporting every individual and our planet. Food production depends on this “hidden” biodiversity to maintain fertile soils. However, a large fraction of soil organisms and functions remains unidentified.

Delphine DUPEUX, ELO

The *European Landowners' Organisation* with the 2019 European Biodiversity Conference addressed the specificities linked to soil management and biodiversity. Thanks to the support of two MEPs, Franc BOGOVIČ and Alvaro AMARO, the conference was a frank success with more than 120 participants.

Alain SCRIBAN, ELO Special Advisor explained that land managers are highly dependent on the good quality and health of their land. They are key players to achieve sustainable management for EU natural resources. An increased understanding of the role play of (soil) biodiversity and global ecosystems is needed. All the more so as we now know that climate change will impact the performance of multiple ecosystem functions and their services. With the new environmental strategic ambition

of the European Commission, we will have to analyse the highly complex relations between soil biodiversity and agriculture.

The statement of Anne BURRILL on behalf of Joanna DRAKE, Deputy-Director General, DG Environment at the European Commission reflected the same vision. She referred to the need to act now and in partnership to ensure we have a healthy biodiversity above the ground as well as below in order to achieve a sustainable future. She explained that the European Green Deal will aim to protect and restore nature, better integrate biodiversity objectives across sectoral policies and enable a transformative change by improving governance.

The Keynote speaker, Professor Gerard GOVERS from the University of Leuven made the point that below ground life is not getting enough attention compared to above ground. He was then able to enlighten us on how interconnected biodiversity is above and below the ground as activities on the surface have direct consequences on what goes on beneath. Whilst he acknowledged Organic farming methods to be better for biodiversity compared to intensive and monoculture techniques, he argued that the debate should also be discussed on a landscape scale.

Galina PEYCHEVA-MITEVA, farmer in Bulgaria and Christine MUELLER from DG Climate at European Commission addressed the crucial role of soil in carbon sequestration and in fighting climate change. Carbon farming with the appropriate financial incentives and integrated in the CAP is key in order to achieve the 2030 climate package. Soil management, when properly done, is the solution to address these general concerns. Minimising soil disruption and crop rotation can give steady results without compromising economic viability.

The subsequent panel discussions revolved around the European political agenda linked to the new Biodiversity Strategy and possible new ambitious targets with the Green Deal.

Celia NYSSENS from the European Environmental Bureau and Andrea VETTORI

from DG Environment both raised the importance of the new Farm to Fork strategy¹ for sustainable food as a way of rethinking the way we are producing food. Well-funded farm and advisory services should play a big part in achieving the targets. A. VETTORI emphasised the need to also look at the ecosystem restoration plan for climate change mitigation, adaptation and much more. Ronald VARGAS, FAO Secretary of the Global Soil Partnership deplored that little has been invested in soil health. Quality is an important criterion and we have to find the right balance. He explained that it is difficult to comment on the state of biodiversity in the soil when there is little data. We only know about 2.5 percent of the organisms that are in the soil, and even less about the role they play in the soil itself.

Finally, the conference through Yara's speaker Koen VAN KEER, promoted sustainable innovative agricultural techniques that also protect the environment and promote sustainable economic development. New practices and technologies, such as bio stimulants were presented. Maaïke PERNELL highlighted their increasing role in the “toolbox” of agricultural techniques available for farmers, landowners and land managers.

Alvaro AMARO, MEP concluded with a positive note explaining he will ensure, as member of the agriculture committee, that the next CAP, whatever final form it takes, will positively impact our farms on the continent and take care of our ecosystems and “green spaces”. In general, he will promote synergies between the political sphere and private actors, which may have the virtue of involving more and more new players into the greening of our rural areas.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

Valbelviso Estate winning the Belleuropa Award

José M^o GÓMEZ-ACEBO ROSAS, ELO



Alain SCRIBAN, Franc BOGOVIĆ, Giampiero PESENTI, Piero MANZONI, José M^o GÓMEZ-ACEBO ROSAS

Each year, the Belleuropa Award honors a member of the Wildlife Estates Label for the exceptional work that they have undertaken in maintaining, protecting and improving the biodiversity of its land. The 2019 winning candidate was Valbelviso (Italy), which occupies a well conserved alpine territory, with forests, pastures,

meadows and high-altitude open areas with a dense water network, rocky areas and glaciers.

The whole environment is made up of natural habitats with no human settlements. No form of agriculture is practiced and the husbandry of domestic animals, such as free grazing cattle and sheep, typical of the lo-

cal culture, is present in very low densities.

A large area of the estate is protected by the Natura 2000 network. Many valuable and endangered species, both flora and fauna, are found on this estate, thanks to the valuable natural habitats. Hunting activities, concentrated over a few months each year, are conducted with a strong commitment to reducing disturbance and the impact on all species present in the area. The management collaborates with parks and universities for conservation and scientific studies and management programs. The award was presented to the estate's owner Giampiero PESENTI by Piero MANZONI, representing the Néorurale association.

The Belleuropa Ceremony took place at the European Parliament on December 10th as a grand finale for the European Biodiversity Conference, which discussed how the European Union environmental policies affect users.

For more information please visit:
www.wildlife-estates.eu

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June 8-12, 2020
Brussels, Belgium

ELO organizes the visit of the American Secretary of State for Agriculture to a blue-white farm in Wallonia

The 26th of January 2020 will be remembered by the inhabitants of Fozz and especially by Eric COHEUR and his family who received the visit of the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Sonny PERDUE, accompanied by Federal and Walloon ministers, Denis DUCARME and Willy BORSUS, and the United States Ambassador to Belgium Ronald GIDWITZ on their Belgian Blue-White farm.

Delphine DUPEUX, ELO

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) co-organised this farm visit as well as a round table with the United States' Department of Agriculture (USDA) before Secretary Sonny PERDUE met with officials from the new European Commission in Brussels, and continued his visit to the old continent in the Netherlands and Italy.

For an hour, the Wallonian farmer showed the delegation his site and explained the work done with the cattle breed. The Secretary of State informed the group that he himself had grown up on a farm and was impressed with the facilities on the small-holding and its management. It was also an opportunity to question Federal and Walloon Belgian ministers for Agriculture with regard to the future of the sector. Eric COHEUR stated that if the right decisions are not made very quickly, Walloon breeding will disappear. Indeed, in recent years, the price paid by the consumer has increased slightly while the price paid to the producer has fallen sharply.

In a closed-door meeting, several farmers and experts were invited in a round table to debate with the Secretary of State about the opportunities and constraints of 21st-century family farming in Belgium and the European Union.

The ELO, through its Scientific Director Jurgen TACK, referred to its relation with the *Transatlantic Policy Network* of which it is a



member and introduced the Forum for the Future of the Agriculture confirming the presence of Ted MCKINNEY, US Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. He explained that ELO objectives are based on the three pillars of sustainability those being environmental, social and economic. He reminded us that without profitability, it is very difficult to ask farmers to deliver social and environmental benefits. It is particularly relevant when considering the comments by Alexander DEGIANSKI (Romanian farmer) who emphasized the differences between small and larger farms and their capacity to stay competitive. Dik KRUIJTTHO (Dutch farmer) mentioned the initiative he took together with eight fellow farmers to form a cooperative in which

land, machines and knowledge are shared. He also made a plea for the financial sector to better support the agricultural sector with "bullet loans" for the acquisition of agricultural land.

The Secretary of State for Agriculture, Sonny PERDUE stated that there are more similarities between American and European agriculture than differences. He therefore advocates strengthening exchanges between the two continents, learning from each other and thus increasing the agricultural production necessary to supply the world. Christoph BÜREN, former ELO President and current VIVESCIA President, acknowledged this aspect as he confirmed that the US and EU are the best place to answer the growing demand for food at a global level.

Michael zu SALM-SALM expressed the importance of the transmission to the next generation since his farm is 800 years old. He stated that the US is the EU's main trading partner today and asks about the US trade situation. Sonny PERDUE recognizes that family farming is essential to ensure the sector stays sustainable. He underlined the current trade deficit of USD 10 billion. The EU exports high-end food products while the US mainly exports agricultural commodities. The US wants trade to increase on agricultural products or compensate with the exports of other products.

He also advocates for scientifically-driven agriculture. Let's put science back in the centre! He argues to reduce the technological handicap that Europe is building from its specific policies on GMOs, health, animal welfare, biodiversity and to resolutely opt for a level playing field with the US.

Let's increase our food supply
without
reducing theirs

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Three questions to Sonny PERDUE, US Secretary of State

CountrySide Magazine (CSM): What is the contribution of family-owned farms in US agriculture? What percentage do they represent of total agriculture?

Sonny PERDUE: Family farmers are the backbone of American agriculture and contribute substantially to America's economic productivity by producing a safe and affordable food supply and supporting quality jobs in rural America. More than 95 percent of U.S. farms are family-owned and operated.



CSM: The way we do agriculture has an impact on the environment and the EU chooses to protect some areas through its Natura 2000 network. When agricultural land is designated as a protected area, the farmer is not compensated for the loss of productivity. In the US, the system of easement seems to be widely applied. How is it perceived by US farmers?

Sonny PERDUE: America's farmers and ranchers are excellent stewards of the land, and many families have worked their land for generations. The U.S. gov-

ernment provides voluntary ways for farmland to be conserved. Our system, while focused on conservation, is geared to allow farmers to do what is best for their land and their farms. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program is one of multiple conservation based on voluntary programs to help farmers and ranchers preserve their agricultural land and restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible lands.

CSM: If we take into account the differences between farms in the US and the

EU, the constraints are relatively higher in the EU. Do you consider it is an obstacle for a fair free trade without any intervention at a governmental level?

Sonny PERDUE: While the US and EU have different views on intervening on behalf of their consumers and farmers, both parties can benefit from free and fair trade, especially when it comes to agriculture. The EU has a greater population than the United States and 2/3 is arable land, as a result we see a huge opportunity to export high quality US products that the European consumer desires. Non-tariff barriers, however, make it difficult for both parties to benefit from fair trade. Non-tariff barriers can decrease market opportunities for US exports and provide unfair competitive advantages to EU products. We seek to eliminate or reduce non-tariff barriers that decrease opportunities for US exports and provide a competitive advantage to products of the EU, so we can stop leaving billions of dollars in potential trade on the table.

“Building Alliances” was the CIC’s motto during their attendance at this year’s Dallas Safari Club Convention “Heritage” in Dallas, United States.

CIC Team



For decades, Dallas Safari Club's annual convention, which took place January 9-12, 2020 at the Kay Bailey Hutcheson Convention Center and Omni Hotel, Dallas, United States, not only set the standard for sporting enthusiasts from around the world, but organized seminars to cover everything from field medicine and deer genetics, to anti-poaching efforts in Africa and around the world.

The CIC (The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation) was represented by George AMAN, President of the CIC, and Tamás MARGHESCU, Director General of the CIC. The CIC has a close working relation with DSC, and the CIC's presence at the Convention further strengthened its goals; representing hunters worldwide and building alliances, one of the top priorities of the organization. George AMAN was invited to speak at the reception of Con-

gressional Sportsmen Foundation, organized at the Dallas Safari Club Convention, where he expressed his gratitude to Dallas Safari Club for providing the CIC with a platform at the Convention to network with the American constituency. One of the most significant constraints of the hunting community is the inability to make available the required financial resources for intensified communication from hunters to the public. He highlighted in this context the “1 euro per hunter” (red. each hunter contributes one euro to the campaign) initiative of the CIC, which was launched last year. The threats to hunting are global in nature. The President underlined that communication and international cooperation are the keys to succeed in the battle hunters are facing nowadays.

For more information please visit:
www.cic-wildlife.org

Diary dates

17 March, Brussels

2020 European Tree of the Year Award Ceremony, hosted by MEP Ludek NIEDERMAYER and MEP Michal WIEZIK
www.treeoftheyear.org

26 March, Brussels

6th European Congress of Young Farmers
<https://euyoungfarmers.eu>

FFA 30 March - 1 April, Brussels

3 days around the FFA
www.forumforagriculture.com

16 April, Brussels

FARMID project final conference, hosted by MEP Franc BOGOVIČ
www.farmid.bc-naklo.si

FFA 15 June, Berlin

FFA regional event
www.forumforagriculture.com

16 June, Berlin

ELO General Assembly
www.elo.org

UNISECO Agro-ecological Knowledge Hub



Daniel MONTELEONE, ELO

On November 12th to 15th 2019, UNISECO held its General Meeting in Basel, Switzerland. The objectives of the meeting were to review progress made by the project in its first year as well as prepare forthcoming activities for the following year, including a review of multi-actor engagement, dissemination activities, targets and the tools of the Agro-ecological Knowledge Hub.

During the meeting, Stakeholder Champions were invited to participate in workshops along with the Consortium, where they heard presentations from FAO, commented on case studies and the best way of reaching target audiences, as well as shaping the UNISECO Knowledge Hub.

On the second day, group discussions of key sustainability issues of the case study farming systems, key barriers and governance issues for the promotion of agro-ecological farming, including perennial, arable, and livestock systems. There was also a visit to one of



the largest sprout farms in Switzerland. Partners were able to explore the factory and see environmentally-friendly vegetable production. In addition, a tour of the exterior of the farm showed how farmers have begun to diversify their crops.

The third day consisted of scenario development workshop and discussions

of the case studies while the final day wrapped things up and made plans for the next meeting. To review the case studies, learn more about agro-ecology, network with experts, or simply discover more about the project, please visit us on our website at uniseco-project.eu

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This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 773901.

AGFOSY – developing agroforestry practices



Daniel MONTELEONE, ELO

On November 7th and 8th 2019 AGFOSY held its 3rd general project meeting in Zvolen, Slovakia. Each project partner presented Case Studies from their respective areas, with ELO having multiple case studies from both Flemish and Walloon regions. These case studies will help provide a history of agroforestry in their respective countries; how it has been developed; and where it's future lies. This will then help to form training modules and videos which will be accessible to farmers and landowners across Europe who wish to develop agroforestry practices on their land, which ELO has already made great progress on. The meeting also included visits to multiple farms that participate in agroforestry.

Next, the project partners discussed the

upcoming intellectual outputs including educational brochures and training which will help people who are interested in starting agroforestry on their own properties. Numerous practices, strategies, and systems will be included.

The second day consisted of multiple field visits, including an organic cattle farm in Turova, a Gavrurky wood pasture, and juniper pastures in Kráľová. These three different locations showcased

some of the various agroforestry methods used across Slovakia.

The next meeting will be held in May 2020 in Sopron, Hungary.

@AGFOSY_ERASMUS
 @Agfosy
www.agroforestrysystems.eu

Project No: 2018-1CZ-KA202-048153





Land Mobility Project kick-off meeting




Daniel MONTELEONE, ELO

On December 10th and 11th 2019 the Land Mobility Project held its kick-off meeting in Dublin, Ireland. The Land Mobility project seeks to provide a service to facilitate workable arrangements and is based on a successful pilot program in Ireland. The fundamentals of the service are to provide information, to outline and explore options, to act as an honest broker, to provide a confidential service facilitating land mobility and to work with farmers' existing professional advisers. Essentially it allows older farmers and landowners seeking to retire to work with younger farmers looking to enter the field of agriculture.

The purpose of the service is to facilitate collaborative arrangements tailored to suit any specific situation. These arrangements may be as simple or as complex as desired. They must be workable for all parties involved and can be within or outside the family or a combination of both. In many cases it is envisaged that the arrangements will evolve over time, to help develop dynamic, progressive, and profitable farm operations. The "Honest Broker" element is particularly important in that all parties will be fully respected and in particular the rights of the landowner. As this program expands across the EU it will be helpful for ELO members seeking to retire and help new generations of farmers.

Partners met in person for the first time and introduced themselves and presented the agenda and aims for the meeting. The grant agreement and partnership agreements were agreed upon and the projects timeline, milestones, outputs were explained.

The second day consisted roles and responsibilities and communication strategy. The meeting closed with presentations by Michael CREED, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and The Marine, and Austin FINN, Land Mobility Manager. The project will run for two years.

 @Landmobility
 Land Mobility
 <http://land-mobility.eu/>



New Erasmus+ project: **FARCURA** (Fostering inclusion through Social Farming).

Juliette OLIVIER, ELO

This 2-year project, operating across Ireland, Slovenia, Germany, Portugal and Belgium, aims at equipping stakeholders with the necessary knowledge, skill-sets and competencies to develop and enhance social farming. For that, the project will identify innovative models of social farming thereby allowing the information to be shared to farmers through a training course.

The Kick-off meeting took place early January 2020 in Thurles, Ireland and was hosted by the Limerick Institute of Technology. The project partners discussed the report on state of the art innovative models of social farming across Europe. On the second day, the project consortium went on a site visit to the Doon Social Farm which aims to combine social farming placements with a horticultural training programme. It targets early school leavers and people who are not in employment or education.

 @FARCURA_ERASMUS

 @Farcura



Project No: 2019-1-IE01-KA202-051446



Why built heritage can help save the world

Modern buildings are made up of thousands of different materials, making them difficult to renovate. The author of this article suggests taking a cue from our built heritage and allocating resources from the production of materials and buildings to service, repair and renovate.



Johan WESTH HAGE, Project Manager, Historic Houses Denmark



to aging and reflect the different methods of maintenance through time.

Newer buildings consist of hundreds or thousands of different materials, often inseparable, with questionable environmental properties and with no history of durability or maintenance. Older houses, from before 1950, consist of only a few materials - wood, brick, lime, wrought iron etc. Materials that are long-lasting, healthy and non-toxic, but to a greater or lesser extent require regular maintenance.

We must demand that new materials have similar properties. That they can be replaced and maintained and are healthy and durable. We need to create economic structures that promote flexible, reusable and long-lasting construction and that allow for the ongoing maintenance needed when working with wood or bricks.

Renovation jobs cannot be sent to China

Renovation in place of construction will produce plenty of sustainable jobs for consultants, craftsmen and manufacturers. Attractive jobs that are difficult to relocate. But it requires us to let go of our eternal pursuit and celebration of all things new and instead embrace maintenance as a quality.

Although we cannot just imitate the past in the construction field, we can learn a lot from our historic houses. And we can reap many benefits by looking at our built heritage without returning to a bygone era or zealously copying historic buildings or building processes. Investment in automation and streamlining can help lift the big task of maintaining our buildings if we factor in these processes from the very start.

14

We are waking up to a new reality of limited resources and an overarching agenda of curbing CO₂ emissions. What we produce must be cheaper to repair, service, upgrade, transform or reuse than it is to replace. This is a radically different logic from the way the market works today, and requires a different mindset.

Construction and use of buildings account for approximately 40 percent of global CO₂ emissions. Half comes from the manufacturing of materials, construction processes and maintenance. This means that we must work to preserve what we have and to build much less. And build houses to last and endure. We need houses where the replacement of large quantities of material is not needed - only regular maintenance.

See maintenance as a quality – not a flaw

In many ways, we have become accustomed to seeing maintenance as a prob-


lem. Having to repair or maintain is a burden because our time is limited and labor is expensive. And so we find ourselves in a situation where it is cheaper and easier to discard than to repair. In fact, we are simply passing on costs to the environment.


The necessity for things to be kept and looked after is not a flaw. It is an independent quality that increases the lifespan of the product. The fact that something is "maintenance-free" simply means that it cannot be maintained, only replaced, and is therefore not sustainable. This includes plastic windows or most of the plate-covering and composite materials we use in construction today.

Historic houses are built of fewer materials


We can learn a lot from historic houses that have stood for hundreds of years and still stand. With all the patina and imperfections resulting from materials that respond

 European Historic Houses Association

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Circular Agronomics: innovative solutions for carbon and nutrient management

The Circular Agronomics project – funded under the EU's Horizon 2020 programme – is running between 2018 and 2022. It aims to provide a set of practical solutions to improve the current management of Carbon (C), Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K) by analysing different agricultural, livestock and food-processing practices. The RISE Foundation is part of a consortium of 19 partners from academia, industry, and other organisations.



Veneta PANEVA, RISE Foundation

The challenge and project objectives

A good management of carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in agriculture is crucial to maintain a fertile and healthy soil and allow adequate plant growth and development. However, high leakages due to the way nutrients are being used in the EU are resulting in large health and environmental costs.

This is why the project is focused on:

- making European agriculture an integral part of a Circular Economy;
- increasing resource efficiency; and
- addressing environmental challenges such as greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions, and eutrophication of water bodies.



Taking soil core samples in Lungau, Austria

Overall, the project aims to enable a transition towards smart, sustainable, resilient and inclusive economies that are part of circular and zero-waste societies.

The project's approach to a circular economy

To achieve its objectives, the project will test a wide range of measures across six case studies at the regional and territorial levels, representing a variety of biogeographic scenarios and environmental challenges typical of the EU agricultural sector. Nitrogen and phosphorus flows, stocks and emissions within agricultural, livestock and food processing settings are being assessed for:

- **Catalonia, Spain** where organic fertiliser is produced as a means to reduce GHG and NH₃ emissions through solar drying technology and precision feeding on a dairy farm. In addition, the project will valorise pig manure for organic fertiliser and bioenergy production, and assess changes in soil organic carbon and phosphorus accumulations in soils.

- **Brandenburg, Germany** where the use of organic fertiliser and the nutrient efficiency of wheat are enhanced through application technologies, vacuum degasification, and selection of genotypes.
- **Lungau, Austria** where nutrient cycles at dairy farms are being closed, new feeding strategies being developed, and the gaseous emissions are being measured. This is achieved through sampling and assessment of soil, forage and manure on the project's participating farms and a Life Cycle Assessment for each farm.
- **Emilia-Romagna, Italy** where nutrient use efficiency is increased and GHG and NH₃ emissions are reduced through microfiltered digestate to subsurface drip irrigation and conservation agriculture. Conservation tillage and cover crops, digestate treatment (microfiltration) are subjected to drip line fertigation.
- **Gelderland, the Netherlands** where a further closing of nitrogen and phosphorus cycles in intensively managed grasslands is being achieved by making use of novel fertilisers and above- and belowground biodiversity, as well as by investigating the relationship between earthworms and phosphorus availability of plant growth.
- **South Moravia, Czechia** where the carbon content of soils is being improved through the recovery of carbon-rich compounds from food production.

Keep up-to-date and follow Circular Agronomics online



Visit the project website at www.circularagronomics.eu



Subscribe to the project newsletter at bit.ly/CircAgNews



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