

CountrySide

European Landowners' Organization

N° 202

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2022 - BIMONTHLY - EN



ForumforAg 2022 Regional Event in Sweden

 Forum for the
Future of Agriculture™
Where agriculture & environment
meet for an open dialogue



Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Secretary General*

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2023 is just round the corner.

The past year has certainly been one of danger. The rural property sector was challenged worldwide by too many initiatives from the European Commission, the British government or even by many Latin American countries.

Making efforts to save the world is necessary, but not at any cost, and especially not by putting the rural world at odds. Let us do it, but with intelligence and nuance.

My wish for 2023 is that the decision-making and legislative processes in the different parts of the world will converge in such a way that humanity can be achieved.

For this reason, ELO members asked the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament to rethink the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Sustainable Use Regulation to better address climate challenges and better balance sustainable production and biodiversity protection, where unintended negative consequences are well thought through.

And globally, on the United Nations level and the entity of the UK, ELO asks "that the same elements of operating property" are respected in the best interests of all.

2023 will be no less challenging than the past year...but with the help and dedication of our sector, nothing is impossible.



Celebrating the 50th anniversary



Janez POTOČNIK



Ladislav MIKO



Tassos HANIOTIS

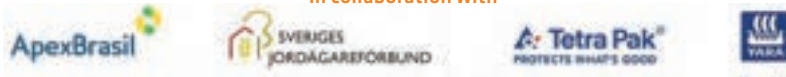
ForumforAg 2022 Regional Event in Sweden

On Thursday, December 1, the Forum moved to Sweden for our second regional event. More than 100 participants joined us for a truly international event marking the crossover from the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union to the upcoming Swedish Presidency in January 2023. Throughout the day, sessions discussed environmental targets and the CAP, biodiversity and climate mitigation, food system transformation and forestry.

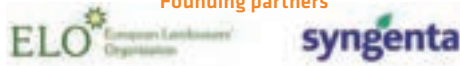
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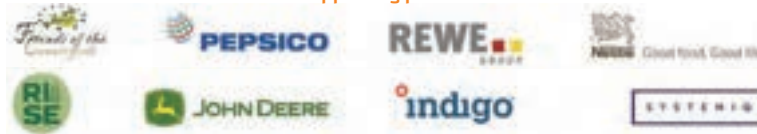
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Gunnar PALME, President, Swedish Landowners' Association, welcomed the participants of the ForumforAg. While the focus of the day-long event was agriculture, he said the location of the meeting meant forestry had also to be taken into account.

Janez POTOČNIK, Chair of ForumforAg 2022 and Chairman the RISE Foundation and Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) gave the opening address. He emphasised the crucial role natural resources play. They "provide the foundation for the goods, services and infrastructure that make up our current economic system". Mr POTOČNIK said that UNEP's next Global Resources Outlook in 2024 would redefine sectors as systems, focusing on those that provide associated human

needs like nutrition, mobility, shelter, essential consumer goods, water and energy. This would allow cross-sector innovation and a more future fit business model. He stressed the fundamental pressures driving the transformation. "Changing our relationship with natural resources, with nature, is ultimately an economic, security and resilience imperative."

Ladislav MIKO, Advisor to the Minister of Environment and special envoy of Czech Government for international negotiations Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, sent a video message from Montreal where he was leading the EU presidency representation at COP15 – the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The aim of COP 15, he explained, was to agree a global framework for biodiver-

sity after 2020, akin to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. The EU is looking to protect 30% of land and sea around the world and to put stronger emphasis on restoring biodiversity and protecting ecosystem services. "I want us to agree on a global biodiversity framework at the end of the year...because it can make life on this planet better for all of us," he said.

Food Security, National Strategic Plans, Environmental Targets

All speakers of the "Food security and National Strategic Plans – how to deliver environmental targets" panel agreed on the crucial role innovation must play to achieve the different goals.

Tassos HANIOTIS, former Director of Strategy,



Per FRANKELIUS, Algis GAIZUTIS, Åsa WOLGAST BROBERG, Mark TITTERINGTON, Tiffanie STEPHANI (on the screen)



Carl-Henrik LJUNG, Alexandre AMARAL, Jurgen TACK, Mark TITTERINGTON



Gabriel MÖRNER, Linda ERIKSSON, Pierre-Olivier DREGE, Tomas LUNDMARK, Ana ROCHA, Constantin KINSKY (on the screen)

Simplification and Policy Analysis, DG AGRI, European Commission, highlighted extreme uncertainty in three interlinked areas – agricultural and food markets, energy markets and emerging shifts in trade flows – in his keynote speech. The combination is pushing up prices and has the potential for very asymmetric impacts on regions and sectors.

Per FRANKELIUS, PhD, Associate Professor (Docent) in Business Administration at Linköping University, addressed in the opening speech the question: “How can we reach environmental and economic goals at the same time: A matter of tradition, initiation or innovation?”. He was confident both goals are achievable, pointing out how technological development had made agriculture two and a half times more productive now than in 1950.

Åsa WOLGAST BROBERG, Deputy Director, Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, department of Rural Affairs, presented details of Sweden’s national strategic plan for the CAP. This is worth about €6 billion, with 75% from the EU and 25% from the government. A chief aim is to simplify what had previously been very burdensome administration and finding “*a new way of doing the CAP in Sweden*”. The government is helping farmers and landowners to tackle the environmental and climate issues it cannot do itself.

Tiffanie STEPHANIE, Vice-President, European Government Relations and External Communications, Yara International - Region Europe, agreed that innovation was key “because ultimately there is no other way that we can also progress towards better practices and transform the agri-food system together”. Yara is changing the way it produces fertilisers, improving how they are used and has developed a decarbonisation roadmap for its various plants.

Algis GAIZUTIS, Chairman at Forest and Land Owners Association of Lithuania, called for “*less bureaucracy and more competence*” in regulating the sector to enable landowners to be economically viable and deliver the food required. In Lithuania, there is discussion of following Sweden’s example and excluding some activities from the CAP.

Integrating climate mitigation and biodiversity regeneration in food system transformation

An expert panel representing landowners, industry and government research discussed

ways to integrate climate mitigation and biodiversity regeneration in food system transformation. Ideas raised ranged from technical innovation, economic incentives and more effective communication on agriculture’s contribution to the transformation.

Carl-Henrik LJUNG, Market Manager Sweden, Syngenta, began the discussion by explaining that transformation of the food system was an important element of the company’s work. This focuses largely on crop protection to reduce CO₂ emissions and achieve maximum yield per hectare. Alexandre AMARAL, Researcher and Advisor to Embrapa’s Board of Directors, followed giving examples of innovative techniques being developed in Brazil in partnership with the private sector. These include biological nitrogen and use of microbes to save phosphorus in the soil.

Jurgen TACK, Scientific Director, European Landowners’ Organisation, emphasised the importance of economic incentives to drive the transformation needed. Innovative technical solutions on their own are not enough. The development of carbon farming also demonstrates how payments can be made for ecosystem services.

Summing up the observations, the moderator, Mark TITTERINGTON, Senior Advisor, Strategy & Partnerships, ForumforAg, noted: “*There’s something about empowerment and trust here that we need to foster.*”

What is the type of forest we need following climate change scenarios?

The final session, moderated by Ana ROCHA, Director EU Agriculture & Forestry policies, ELO, focused on forestry and took place the day after the European Commission had presented a proposed EU certification framework for carbon removals.

Keynote speaker Prof. Tomas LUNDMARK, Professor (chair) of Silviculture, Forest Ecology and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå, Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Forestry and Agriculture, began by saying forests bring climate benefits in two different ways. One removes carbon from the atmosphere. The other provides services and products. The first compensates for emissions from sources like oil and cement. The second supplies wood to replace those products. As the EU considers certifying carbon removals, he urged landowners to be involved in

the debate. “If you want to influence this in some way, it’s time now.”

Threats to forests

Pierre-Olivier DRÈGE, ELO President, Fondation François Sommer (France) was the first of the respondents. He identified climate change as one of the main threats since forests suffer from the new conditions it brings. He rejected criticism of overcropping forests, pointing instead to the dangers of fire and disease if trees are not properly managed and are eventually felled by nature.

Linda ERIKSSON, Forest Director at the Swedish Forest Industries Federation, called for policy makers “to see the whole picture”. She criticised the European Commission for focussing on forests as sinks “and not so much on the part that could help with substitution using wood and bioenergy”.

Constantin KINSKY, Vice President and Member of the Board of the Private Forests Chamber in the Czech Republic (SVOL), identified “human behaviour” as the main threat to forests. Criticising the view that “not doing anything is the right thing”, he called for “a mindset change” among regulators, politicians and policymakers “to move from prescription to motivation”.

Gabriel MÖRNER, Swedish Landowners’ Association, stressed the wide diversity of Europe’s forests and shared criticism of politicians trying to impose policy from above. They could perhaps set broad strategies and provide support services such as education, but should trust foresters to tend their own properties. Accountability and management should “*be part of the landowners’ responsibility*”.

During the day there were also presentations about the outcomes of the ForumforAg Regenerative Agriculture workshop series and of the Forestry workshop series: How to bridge the gap between civil society and the forest value chain.

To read the full summary and to watch the recording of the full discussion: www.forumforagriculture.com



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Stockholm Declaration

European Landowners and Managers call on the EU to rethink the Nature Restoration Regulation [COM (2022) 304 final] and Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Regulation [COM (2022) 305 final].

We, landowners and managers of farmland and forests from across Europe, are the custodians of our rural land and natural resources, and we are at the forefront of the effects of climate change. Therefore, we fully subscribe to the goals of climate neutrality and the safeguarding of ecosystems. As a daily activity, we aim to combine the production of food, timber and other resources in a sustainable way, with the protection of our environment, and with our responsibility as employers and entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Against this backdrop, we consider the proposals for the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Sustainable Use Regulation, in their current form, as impractical and hard to understand in relation to the aims of carbon neutrality and green growth proposed by the EU Green Deal. **Specifically, we believe that the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Sustainable Use Regulation does:**

.... not offer adequate solutions to the irreversible changes caused by climate change

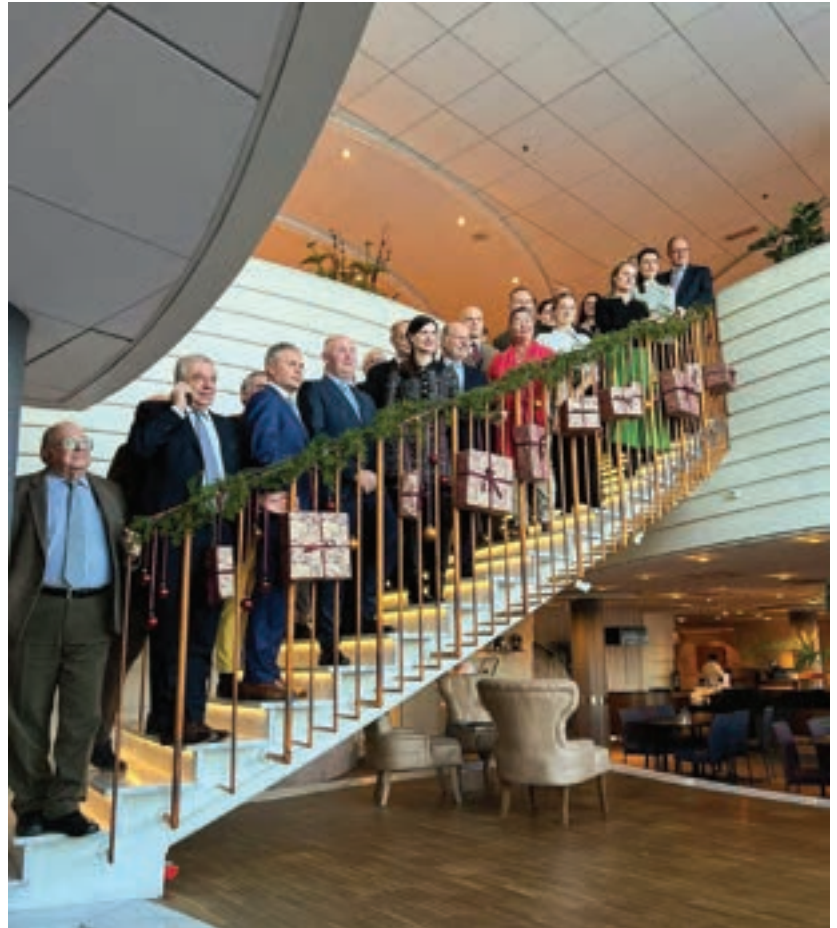
Climate change is changing our ecosystems and challenges how we manage our natural resources. If we only keep restoring to the situation of decades ago, at least the last 70 years as mentioned in the proposal, we will actively contribute to biodiversity loss. Resilient ecosystems imply that we adapt to the new normal, to the more frequent extreme weather events that bring uncertainty and difficulties that we are not yet totally measuring. If we are serious about having healthy ecosystems, we need to move beyond protection and restoration alone and focus on adaptation and resilience.

... imperil rural businesses and weaken competitiveness

Landowners and managers are important employers in rural areas. In Europe, 9.2 million jobs are provided by agriculture and half a million people are employed in forestry and logging activities (2018)¹. Similarly, many regional supply chains depend on our ability to manage our land for sustainable production. Through its restrictions, the Nature Restoration Law and the Sustainable Use Regulation threaten our businesses and therefore millions of jobs in rural areas.

...leaves unresolved financing issues

The nature restoration proposal, in particular, leaves unanswered the question of



Participants of the ELO GA

financing. Without adequate compensation and incentives, the measures will have an immediate negative impact on land managers, as the real costs surpass the potential benefits. To ensure long-term fair financial compensation, voluntary contract-based schemes are needed, together with the proper valuation of ecosystem services.

...disregard Europe's diverse landscapes

Considering the heterogeneity of European landscapes, we need more bottom-up approaches instead of a European "one size fits all" solution. Both files pretend to establish a master plan for nature in Europe where there is none. It is important that both principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are respected.

... compromise food and energy security

In our view, it is a fundamental mistake simply to restrict European production

of food and renewable raw materials. We need to reduce food waste and the emissions intensity of food produced, as well as address the questions of diet. Production restrictions applied on their own jeopardise European security of supply in a time of serious market disruptions and unpredictable global supply chains. They also weaken our ability to contribute to food and energy affordability. While food availability, at the moment, is not at stake in the EU, food affordability for low-income households is increasingly a concern. Furthermore, EU agricultural production will be impacted by the EU's strategic dependences on a number of key inputs².

... can lead to negative impacts on biodiversity and the relocation of EU environmental footprint

While some species need protected areas to thrive, there are many species whose preferred habitats are man-made



Helene HOLSTEIN, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation; Pierre-Olivier DREGE, ELO President, Lars OLSSON, Director, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

ELO General Assembly in Sweden

More than 50 people, representing 21 European countries, took part in the ELO General Assembly held the last days of November in Stockholm. The event was co-organized by the Sveriges Jordägareförbund, member organization of ELO from Sweden as this country shall take over the EU Council Presidency from January 1.

The participants had the opportunity to exchange with the representatives of the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Division for Forests, Environment and Research and Division for Food Production and Agriculture on the priorities of the Swedish Presidency for the EU ahead of their official presentation.

Followed the presentation of ELO's actions and activities by Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, ELO Secretary General, and the "tour de table", which allowed all member organizations to present the latest developments and the most pressing questions from their organizations and countries, which included among others the CAP National Strategic Plans, Soil Strategy, and the state of play of the EU Forest strategy.

The unanimous vote at the GA adopted the **Stockholm Declaration**.

The next GA will take place from May 31-June 1 in Spain.

The ELO Secretariat take this opportunity to warmly thank you the Swedish Landowners Association, especially Anders GRAHN and Eva WEIJBER, for their continuous support to organize that event.

ELO's main message for the Swedish Presidency regarding its priorities affecting land management, farming and forestry

The ELO calls on the Swedish Presidency to:

1. **Unlock the potential of land-based sectors for an EU Green Deal**
2. **Address food and energy security issues**
3. **Stimulate a vibrant, diverse and multifunctional forest sector**
4. **Focus on incentives for nature restoration and other Biodiversity targets**
5. **Integrate responsibly the 2030 Farm to Fork targets in EU legislation**
6. **Striving for competitive sustainable food systems**
7. **Support a strong CAP that remains the best tool for land managers**
8. **Future-proof our European rural areas**

and managed habitats, like sustainably managed forests. The restriction of production³, when not accompanied by more efficient use, inevitably leads to relocations of production to parts of the world that do not have the same environmental standards, thus leading to carbon leakage and to the export of environmental problems. In addition, restrictions in the production of renewable raw materials lead to substitution by more energy-intensive materials, with a bigger environmental footprint. Here we note that a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is not yet in place.

... undermine the trust of practitioners

A top-down approach is likely to impede the willingness to cooperate on the part of landowners. Landowners and managers of farmland and forests from across Europe have shown their support for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network on the condition that social and economic activities can be combined with ecological objectives. During the last 30 years, the social and economic component of this agreement was/is systematically undermined. The EU Nature Restoration Law will add to this negative feeling, likely frustrating the goals stated in the EU nature policies.

Therefore, we call on the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament to rethink the EU Nature Restoration Law and the Sustainable Use Regulation to better address climate challenges and better balance sustainable production and biodiversity protection, where unintended negative consequences are well thought through.

This declaration was adopted by representatives of Landowners in different European Countries, in Stockholm on the 30th of November 2022 during the ELO GA.

1 Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics- 2020 edition Eurostat

2 <https://epthinktank.eu/2022/05/20/future-shocks-2022-safeguarding-eu-and-global-food-security/>

3 according to calculations by the German state-funded Thünen Institute, implementing the goals set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy, which the Nature Restoration Law aims to achieve, would reduce German timber production by up to 48 percent



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Outcomes and unfinished business from COP27

Michael SAYER, ELO Special Adviser

COP27 at Sharm el-Sheikh made only one major step forward, which was to agree in principle a mechanism for loss and damage. This (when the modalities have been agreed) would see vulnerable devel-

oping countries receive assistance from developed countries (the Global North) who have historically been responsible for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions. The principle was long resisted, but conceded after a change of position at Sharm el-Sheikh by the EU. Nevertheless, the principle of helping developed countries, whether through the Green Climate Fund or the loss and damage mechanism, is a no-brainer. Climate change is likely to break every political border on the planet in the lifetime of many people alive today, and there is already a situation where it makes little sense, in general terms, to distinguish between political, economic and environmental refugees. Clearly it makes sense for the Global North to invest while there is still a valuable resource to protect.

So much for the positive news.

However, there was no strengthening of the decision at COP26 at Glasgow last year for the 'phase-down' of coal, let alone to bring other fossil fuels within the principle (as proposed by India).

Nor was there anything in the text on the need for emissions to peak in 2025, as the International Energy Agency suggests is possible. And yet the carbon budget to keep warming to 1.5 degrees is almost exhausted: deep cuts are needed between 2025 and 2030 in CO2 emissions, with the elimination of fossil fuels and deforestation by about 2035.

Further states agreed to the pledge made at Glasgow in 2021 to cut methane emis-

sions by 30 per cent by 2030, but still not including India, China or Russia.

The UK government gave a particularly chequered performance. The King had (as Prince of Wales) been invited but TRUSS, appointed Prime Minister two days before Queen Elizabeth II died, was reluctant for him to attend. She would go herself. Before the COP came, she was no longer Prime Minister. SUNAK demoted Alok SHARMA, the British Chairman of COP26 from Cabinet rank and would not go. Under fire from SHARMA, he went after all, but a few weeks later his government (GOVE was the minister responsible) gave permission to open a new coal mine.

Underlying the disappointment with COP27 is the fact that the first global stocktake after Paris was due for COP28. This is where many countries had expected the level of ambition to be addressed in the context of revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), some of which only expect to reach Net Zero on 2060 (China) or 2070 (India). However, at Glasgow countries were urged to bring forward their NDCs by COP27.

There is a further issue that because National Inventories, and hence NDCs, report emissions at source, countries can still, in effect, 'off-shore' emissions, which then fall outside their NDCs and maintain unsustainable production and consumption at home. Tighter climate policies in more ambitious countries could accentuate this problem, which is the reason for the EU's projected Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

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Turning to land management, there remain significant questions in both the forestry and agriculture sectors, which the EU will now treat as a single land-based sector for climate policy (as long recommended by ELO).

In forestry, these issues relate to the interaction of harvest, rotation length, reforestation and new afforestation. By way of example, the managed forests of British Columbia reached a tipping point in 2002 where, as a result of a combination of attack by pine beetle and spruce budworm, wildfires and harvesting practice, they became a source of carbon emissions rather than a net annual sink. Because trees were being harvested before they had reached their maximum size, extending rotations and/or reducing harvests was seen as more than doubling the net ecosystem carbon balance by 2100 compared with what reforestation would achieve, because of the increased rate at which older, more mature trees absorb carbon. This issue lies at the centre of the current debate over old growth forests and will not be resolved without careful and regular forest inventories. (The ELO continues to impress on the European Commission that drone surveys are not an adequate substitute for traditional inventories in managed forest.)

In agriculture, the biggest challenge is the weight of methane emissions from cattle (principally from enteric fermentation but also from manure management). Applying a 20-year Global Warming Potential (GWP), this would account for 68 per cent of EU agricultural emissions in 2019. Moreover,

two-thirds of cereals grown in the EU are used for livestock feed (European Commission figure). It is therefore difficult to see how agriculture will make a significant contribution to Net Zero without a reduction in the number of cattle. The policy debate, both in EU and UK, has so far treated this as too hot to handle.

Clearly, the price of beef and dairy products could be expected to rise. However, there are clear implications for intensive livestock systems, for diet, and for the reallocation of arable land to other crops. This might result from a switch to a more plant-based diet, from a reduction in food loss, from reducing emissions intensity, or from introducing longer cropping rotations which might improve natural fertility and reduce nitrous oxide emissions from fertiliser use. Biofuels too are likely to have a larger role in the arable rotation and might absorb wheat crops that only reach animal feed quality due to weather conditions. Less fundamental measures could be taken which have no implications for reallocation, and green cover crops could become a useful subsidiary measure to reduce fertiliser use for spring sown crops.

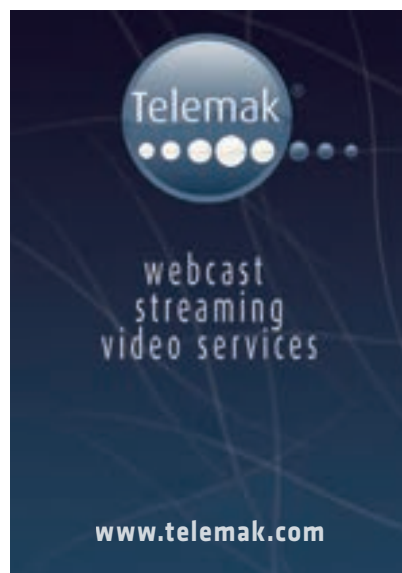
Decisions on agriculture at the COP under the Koronivia work programme set up in 2017 seem to be going nowhere fast. Meanwhile, agricultural Business as Usual is consistent at best with limiting warming to 2 degrees. A range of policies could improve this. It has been calculated that switching to plant-rich diets would be consistent with a 50 per cent chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, while an increase in yields by

50 per cent, reducing food loss by 50 per cent, and reducing emissions intensity by 40 per cent all offer an intermediate range of benefits. A combination of all these policies, even to the level of 50 per cent effectiveness, would give a 67 per cent chance of meeting the 1.5 degrees target.

Food waste, which runs at 30 per cent in developed countries, would in particular seem a cost-free way to reduce agricultural emissions, and bring its own opportunities for land reallocation.

Although unlikely to feature in COP decisions any time soon, there is one other subject now beginning to be raised in the climate policy debate. As the human population passes 8 billion, the Earth's natural resources are gradually being consumed. Current models for growth offer no answer to this, since not all resources can be substituted by renewables. Moreover, growth continues to drive fossil fuel emissions (China has become a classic example). Hence the term degrowth. Clearly this concept, which is far from being defined, relates also to population (in many countries of the Global North, population 'degrowth' is already expected) and to natural capital. How are these to be factored into future accounting models?

As we all prepare for the global stock take at COP28 in Dubai next year, can we expect at last a commitment to phase out fossil fuels? Or shall we have to wait for COP30, which will be held in the Amazon, if Lula's invitation is accepted. By then, even if emissions have peaked, the carbon budget for 1.5 degrees will be almost exhausted.





Project Veitshöchheimer Hempmix by the Bavarian State Institute for Viticulture and Horticulture (LWG) receives the Land management practices prize from ELO Secretary General Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

And the European Bee Award winners are...

A wildflower mixture for biogas production and a beehive monitoring system. The IV edition of the European Bee Award announced the winners with a ceremony at the European Parliament on 6th December. After two editions with covid restrictions this edition showed again the every year growing interest and importance of the initiative established by the ELO and the European Agricultural Machinery Industry Association (CEMA). The ELO and CEMA were delighted to provide the prizes of €4000 to this year's winners in two categories:



Category 'Land management practices': The Veitshöchheimer Hempmix

The 'Veitshöchheimer Hempmix', is a wildflower mixture for the production of biogas, combining productivity and biodiversity. Several annual, biennial and perennial wildflowers producing biomass and offering rich floral resources were combined in this seed mix to secure biomass yields and species-richness for at least five years. The 'Hempmix' flowers from May until the harvest in late July. On average, it provides 45% of the methane per hectare yield of conventional maize. After harvesting, the wildflowers start flowering again in August, and supply floral resources until autumn. The 'Hempmix' attracts many insects, as well as birds and mammals for foraging and breeding, and numerous bee species collect nectar and pollen from the plants. The honey can be harvested but also used as winter food. The 'Veitshöchheimer

Hempmix' represents a tool for conventional farmers to increase the biodiversity on their fields without the necessity to take them out of production and is met with great interest by practitioners and citizens alike. The 'Hempmix' was developed by the Bavarian State Institute for Viticulture and Horticulture in Germany.

Category 'Innovative and technological solutions': IT Beekeeping by AmoHive

The winning project 'IT Beekeeping by AmoHive' developed a hive model that monitors hive activity using an electronic scale, temperature sensors, GPS and a solar panel. An algorithm processes the data, adapts the hive settings if needed and notifies the beekeeper when to intervene. The algorithm monitors the power, ability and efficiency of each hive in the

apiary and monitors the honey production on an hourly basis. The data of all AmoHive hives is sent to a central server for long-term analyses and can be followed in real time by the beekeeper through an app. Based on this app and the data gathered over the past years AmoHive created an interactive educational course in which children can follow hive activity at any time, in different seasons; when they fly out, how they prepare for winter, when and how to harvest the honey... The AmoHive software and hives were already implemented in 10 apiaries in Canada, Poland, Germany and Ukraine, where they achieved to use digital innovation to improve agricultural production and educate the young generation, "the beekeepers of the future". More information can be found on their website: www.amohive.com

A **Special Mention** of the Jury was awarded to Birr Castle Bee Project by the Irish



Project IT Beekeeping by AmoHive receives the Innovative and technological solutions prize from CEMA Honorary President Gilles DRYANCOUR



Project Birr Castle Bee Project by the Birr Castle Estate receives the Special Mention of the Jury from Bettina DOESER, Head of Unit at the European Commission



Birr Castle Estate. In 2019 Birr Castle Estate responded to the desperate plight of Irish bees and their drastically declining habitats by implementing the Birr Castle Bee Habitat Project. They implemented ambitious changes in their land and forest management across the estate's 900 hectares in order to create, protect, and enhance bee habitat wherever possible. Sometimes all that was needed was an improved awareness of why and how bees utilised an area or landscape element which they covered with visiting days and small scale education-

al programs. *"The changes had an impact greater than we could have ever anticipated, the future is a little brighter now for bees at Birr."* For more information on the Birr Castle Estate: www.birrcastle.com

The European Bee Award has been acknowledging projects of great commitment to enhance pollinators' wellbeing and bee-friendly farming practices since it was established in 2014. The host of the ceremony MEP Franc BOGOVIČ (EPP, Slovenia) stated the importance saying that *"Food security in the EU has been taken for grant-*

ed, but there can be no food without pollinators. Many new European policy measures are pollinators friendly for this reason, but we need them in an environment in which farmers can produce food and have their income, too. We can do this; it goes hand in hand with improving their sustainability and their production."

Bettina DOESER, Head of Unit at the European Commission, thanked the 27 projects who engaged in this years' edition *"You are already doing what we aim to do on a broader scale with the European Commission's strategic initiatives. We thank you for your work and ask you to continue to be the practitioners and founders of good practices and management for pollinators"*.

In 2022, the European Bee Award competition received 27 applications from 16 different European countries. The ceremony gathered beekeepers, European and national policy makers, land managers, academia and representatives of the agri-food sector who exchanged best practices, while getting inspired by new ideas on how to protect bees and enhance biodiversity in Europe.

To learn more about this award please visit:

- www.europeanlandowners.org
- www.cema-agri.org
- [#EUBeeAward](https://twitter.com/EUBeeAward)



The winners of the 2022 European Bee Award with Jury President Michael GARRATT, ELO Secretary General Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, Croatian MP Marin MILETIĆ, Head of Unit European Commission Bettina DOESER and MEP Franc BOGOVIČ

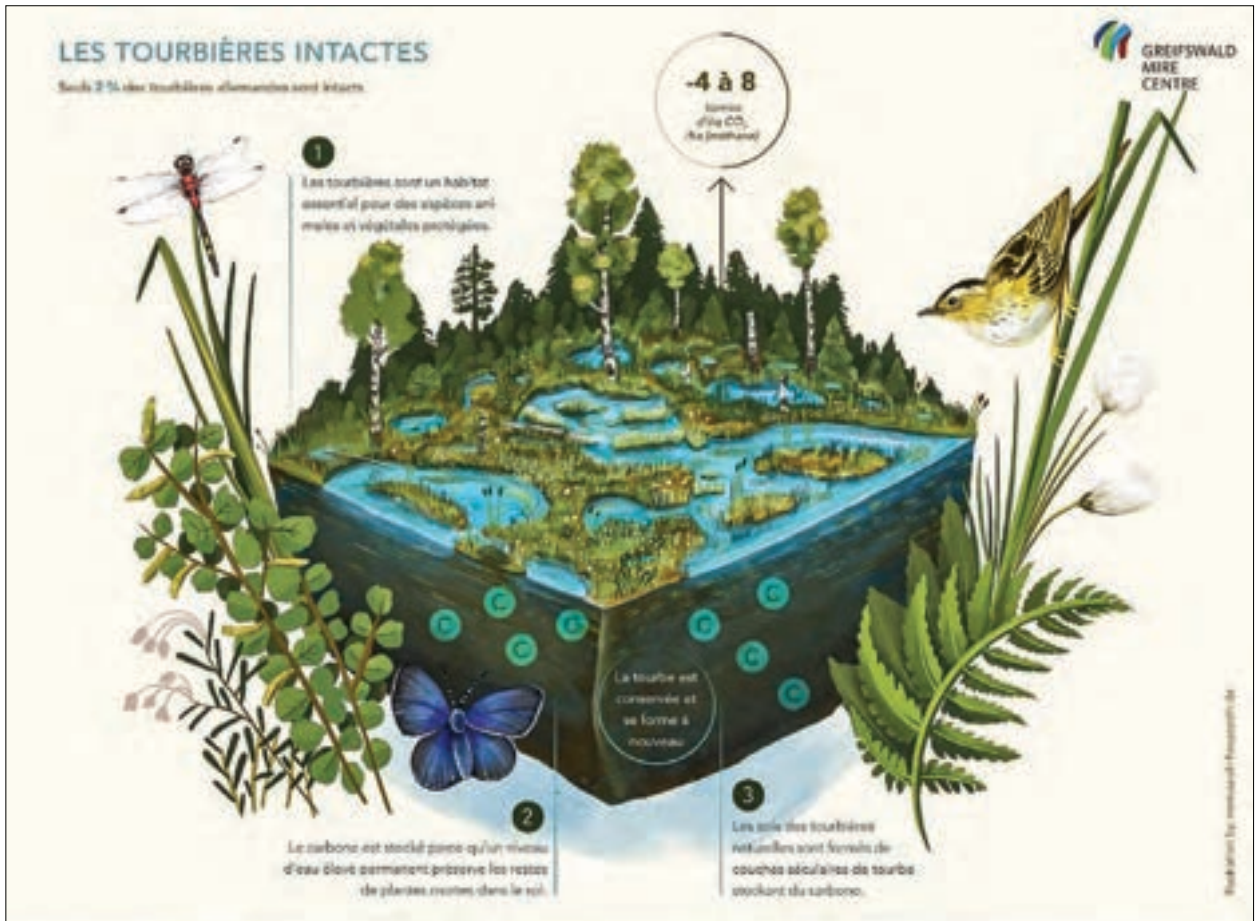


Illustration of a healthy peat bog - Credits: Greifswald Mire Center

Storing carbon in peatlands through sustainable agriculture.

Peatland restoration is an important part of achieving the revised LULUCF target of 310 MtCO₂e_q net removal by 2030 in Europe, and to achieve climate neutrality thereafter. Healthy peatlands are incredible potential carbon stores and sinks. However, when drained or degraded, they begin to emit carbon and contribute to global warming, while threatening biodiversity and water quality. The Carbon Connects project, funded by the European Interreg North West Europe programme, of which the ELO is part, builds on these findings and aims to reduce the carbon footprint of degraded peatlands. This will be carried out by introducing new bio-based business models developed in collaboration with farmers and unlocking funding opportunities from private investors.

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Clara DIEBOLT, AC3A & Anna DE BOECK, ELO



Europe has 241,812 km² of diverse peatlands, which, when drained, will turn from sinks into huge, unstoppable emitters of carbon. Currently, an estimated 50% of the EU's peatlands are degraded. Therefore, the Carbon Connects project has brought together European partners and farmers convinced of the need to restore peatlands in north-western Europe to combat carbon emissions. The aim of the project is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by draining practices, while proposing new viable and sustainable economic models for

using peatlands that support farmers. Led by partners from Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK, the Carbon Connects project has been able to manage and innovate 10 pilot sites in north-western Europe.

A toolbox to help farmers adopt new practices

Thanks to the experiences of the pilot sites, these innovative practices have been catalogued in a toolbox called "Carbon

toolbox" available on the Carbon Connects website (<https://sites.google.com/view/c-toolbox/>). It aims to encourage the adoption of new practices and collaborative learning among farmers. The Carbon Toolbox also facilitates interaction between farmers, experts, business and government organisations and NGOs through a European Peatland Management Network, which all stakeholders involved in peatlands can join.

Developed thanks to lessons learned from 5 European projects, this tool focuses largely on future sectors such as reed and sphag-

num moss cultivation. A practice that has also been used extensively during the Carbon Connects project. In addition, the tool also provides an overview of all major pilot sites in north-west Europe where sustainable peatland management is being applied.

Estimate your peatland carbon emissions

To help farmers and peatland managers make informed decisions, the Carbon Connects project partners have developed a carbon emissions calculator. By taking into account water levels, peat depth, surface area, vegetation type, fertilisation and cultivation practices, on-farm greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂, CH₄, N₂O) before and after rewetting can be evaluated, enabling carbon sequestration scenarios as part of a peat restoration plan.

This tool is available at this link: <https://bit.ly/CC-SET>

Towards better financial support for farmers

Many peatland farmers in north-west Europe are reluctant to switch to new practices due to a lack of financial opportunities, compensation mechanisms and market certainty. The products of sustainably managed peatlands should also be better valued economically to support the transition to sustainable peatland management.

In this context, a report was recently published by Carbon Connects partners, led by AC3A, on the basis and methodology for a carbon credit scheme for peatlands in north-western Europe. The aim of this methodology is to mobilise new private resources through carbon credits for projects on rewetting, restoration and sustainable management and agricultural practices in drained and degraded peatlands.

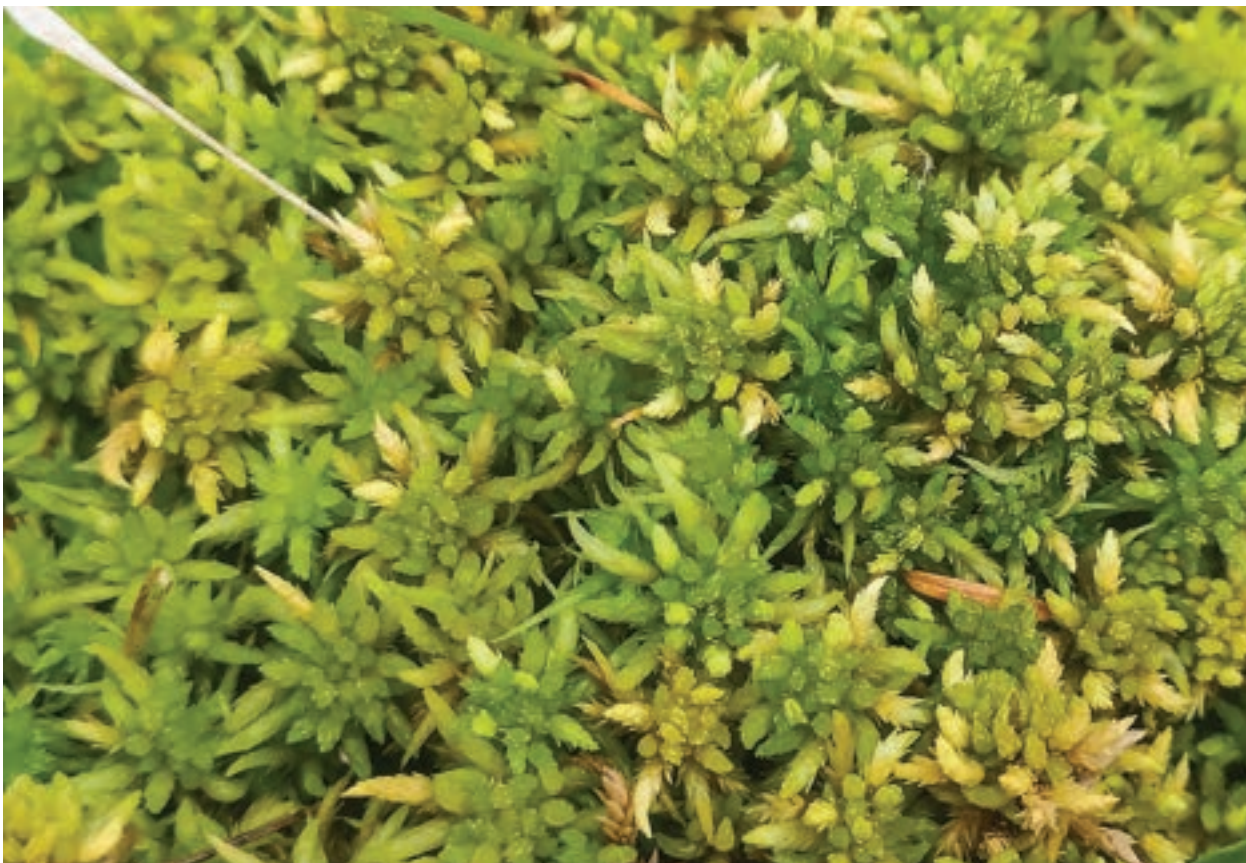
Private companies could now invest in peatland restoration as part of their CSR policies or meet their carbon offset targets, but they lack connections, financial mechanisms or a sufficiently reliable framework for certifying carbon credits. This is an issue that the Carbon Connects project aims to analyse since 2021 with a new phase of activities. Upto December 2023, Carbon Connects

partners' efforts will focus on providing new financial incentives to facilitate peatland restoration. This involves assessing the needs of private companies in the field of CSR and carbon offsetting and connecting funders and potential project leaders.

Bringing farmers and funders together

To ensure that restoration projects can be carried out while maintaining a sustainable and viable agricultural activity on the impacted land, incentives and compensatory funding is necessary.

The Carbon Connects project partners are currently developing several tools to facilitate the linking of farmers and private investors to activate funding for peatland restoration. From Germany to Ireland, via France, the Carbon Connects partners will organise fifty meetings between farmers and private financiers to give a more concrete start to the implementation of payments for environmental services. The aim is to unlock €400,000 of private investment in peatland restoration in north-western Europe, while supporting farmers and landowners, and in the longer term to be able to propose new financing methods on a larger scale.



Sphagnum moss, an emblematic plant of peat bogs, can retain up to 20 times its weight in water. Credits: Clara DIEBOLT



Social farming project: “FarmElder”

Julian CORTES, ELO

FarmElder is an Erasmus+ funded project, coordinated by the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) that began in January of 2022. The project aims to demonstrate the ways in which social farming can meet some of the key needs of Europe’s growing elderly populations.

Some of the key needs identified in primary research were the fact that Europe’s population is ageing rapidly; however, the current care home/nursing home models do not meet the needs of many elderly people. There is therefore need to develop meaningful activities that facilitate healthy ageing. The lack of intergenerational connection and social infrastructure that supports elderly people means that elderly populations can be excluded from society.

The FarmElder project will therefore show the way social farming activities can address these problematics. The project has partners from Ireland, Portugal, Germany, Slovenia and Belgium that will work together to examine the issues facing elderly people and study social farming interventions in their countries that are emerging to address these needs. The project will produce 14 case studies, as well as reports on the challenges facing elderly people in each of the participating countries. These will provide valuable information regarding the various models that exist to adapt social farming to the needs of the elderly.

FarmElder will also produce a series of video stories. These will highlight some of the most inspiring case studies on social farming for the elderly through a series of short films. The videos will capture the innovative ways partner countries are using social farming to address the needs of the elderly.

Based on the findings from the reports and case studies, the project partners are working on a series of modules to make learning content on social farming with elderly people available online.

In order to follow the project results and outputs, be sure to take a look at the project website: www.farmelder.eu



STAY Kick-Off Meeting

Sergio PEDREGOSA, ELO

The STAY project held its kick-off meeting in Naklo, Slovenia on December 15th and 16th. The event, hosted by the project’s partner Biotehniški Center Naklo, was spread over two days. The first day was dedicated to sharing the results of several initial analysis of the situation regarding rural tourism and agrotourism in the partners’ countries of origin. It was also discussed the best way to develop the different working packages that compose the project. In order to give a broader overview, ELO delivered a presentation of the status of the touristic activities related to agriculture at a European level. During the second day, the partners visited a farm engaged in agrotourism.

The project aims at promoting agrotourism by providing tourist establishments and entrepreneurs with a learning platform which contains materials related to agrotourism. The platform also includes a selection of case studies of best practices and factsheets of agrotourism in five different countries (Italy, Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, and Slovenia). All the contents are free of charge and are open to anyone who feels they would benefit from them.

ELO is responsible for the communication tasks, including the management of the social networks of the project. These activities strive to reach a bigger audience so that the platform can be useful for as many interested stakeholders as possible.

If you are a touristic accommodation interested in exploring the agrotourism business and have more information about the project, do not hesitate to contact Micaela COSGROVE, at micaela.cosgrove@elo.org.

Young Friends of the Countryside Field Trip to London. Emerging Technology for Food Security

With the world's increasing population and changing conditions in agriculture by climate change, the future of farming is a hotly debated topic. An innovative approach to solve the demand for food are aeroponics farms and hydroponics farms. During a field trip in November, 20 members of the Young Friends of the Countryside (YF) gathered in London to observe two examples of each.



Marie-Christine SCHONBORN, YFCS



Crate to Plate is an aeroponics farm where plants are grown without soil and the nutrients are delivered in a form of fine mist. Being based in London, their belief is that leafy greens should be grown sustainably and locally, as well as consumed locally. In particular, they are passionate about the concept of "15-minute-cities", meaning that everyone should have access to fresh products within 15 minutes from their homes. They aim to deliver food within 24 hours of harvest. A great advantage for *Crate to Plate* is that the leafy greens can be grown to size, which means that especially fine food companies can place exact orders for the meals they wish to create. *Crate to Plate* grows lettuces, such as red oak, leafy greens and herbs. Each of their 12.2m long containers can achieve the same production as an acre of farmland by using 95 % less water compared to conventional farming. The environment is being controlled by a customizable web control and monitoring system. Aspects to be monitored include temperature, humidity, LED lighting, delivery of water and airflow.

Both technologies aim to bring sustainable, local production of vegetables, such as lettuce, to urban communities. By rigorously controlling the environment of the plants, the use of pesticides can be ruled out and a high nutrient level of the plants is ensured at the same time. As a result, consumers can buy food with a high level of nutrients which has not been shipped from many miles away. Equally, both technologies ensure that not just up to two harvest take place per year, but many more. Lastly, with the help of the controlled environment, the carbon footprint can be controlled rigorously.

As a hydroponics farm, *Zero Carbon Farming* uses a nutrient solution in water in order to grow their plants. They are also based in London, 33 metres underground in a disused air raid shelter. Located close to the Covent Garden Market, which is less than a mile down the road, their original aim was to supply them. Now, they supply well-known retail brands such as Waitrose, M&S and Tesco with salad mixes, for example, as well as cafés. *Zero Carbon Farming* operates on 100% renewable energy, uses up to 90% less water than conventional agriculture. Furthermore, they are B Corp certified and are the first Controlled Environment Farm in the UK to receive it. Interestingly, they also provide services to other markets by extracting the flavours and fragrances from the crops as they see potential for application within the cosmetics, fragrance and healthcare industries. Furthermore, they also provide consultancy services by giving their technological expertise to other parties to ensure that you can achieve the optimal environmental conditions anywhere – from a bunker on the top of a mountain!

Overall, the fieldtrip proved to be a most interesting experience and highlighted the innovative ways in which traditional farming is being reinvented. In the future, this might be an interesting additional and sustainable source of food, helping farmers to meet the increasing demands being placed on them.

EDITION 2022

FAMIGRO AWARD

PRESENTED BY THE YOUNG FRIENDS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

<p>ABOUT</p> <p>The Famigro Award is presented by the Young Friends of the Countryside in 2022 and will be awarded to the most innovative entrepreneur(s). A project that will contribute to the evolution of our rural countryside, while embracing their environmental & social responsibilities.</p>	<p>WHY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,000 • 4 days of recognition • Exposure on our website & online channels • Free ticket to our General Assembly in Plymouth in June 2023 	<p>WHO?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are an 18-40 year old entrepreneur and a European citizen, please contact info@yfcsc.org for more details <p style="text-align: right;">Deadline: 1. March 2022</p>
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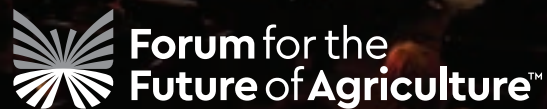
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CountrySide
is a publication of the ELO
in English and French
5 Euros

Publisher :
Thierry de l'Escaille
Chief editor :
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Text editor :
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