

# CountrySide

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## Regional Forum for the Future of Agriculture: Long-term sustainability in farming and forestry

Jari LEPPÄ

*Finnish Minister for Agriculture and Forestry*



# Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Secretary General*

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## Private Nature Conservation

*How do we combat climate change and protect our biodiversity? It is clear to me that the methods of the 20th century have not been entirely successful. NGOs and national authorities have done their best but we can see from continued habitat degradation and declines in biodiversity that their efforts have not been sufficient.*

*More than half of the European countryside - no matter where you are - is in private hands. This makes our members not just stakeholders but, in the words of the European Commission's Natura 2000 Action Plan, primary partners. For far too long, our efforts have not been given the recognition and support that other actors so readily receive.*

*Fortunately, things are changing. In Flanders, private landowners are now on equal footing with other organizations when it comes to acquiring subsidies and being able to purchase land for conservation. These are important first steps, and we hope that other Member States will soon follow suit.*

*However, financial and legislative frameworks are not enough. We need to change the mentalities of citizens, governments and other stakeholders so that they fully recognize not just our contribution, but our right to be there. This is one of the founding reasons for our Wildlife Estates Label which recognises landowners as the front-runners for responsible land management, and as the key actors in reversing biodiversity loss and landscape degradation. 1,500,000 hectares of privately owned land have received the label to date; the project is a vital part of the private commitment to European biodiversity, the fight against climate change, and to future generations.*





## Regional Forum for the Future of Agriculture: Long-term sustainability in farming and forestry



Each year, the Forum for the Future of Agriculture hosts two regional events in order to better understand local issues, discuss the concerns of land managers and further the concept of combined food and environmental security. The latest regional event took place in Helsinki, Finland on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Robert de GRAEFF, ELO; Jessica WILLIAMS, ELO

Participants at the Regional Forum for the Future of Agriculture in Helsinki (Finland) concluded that if Europe is serious about its ambitions, especially those related to climate change and biodiversity, then it needs to properly fund the CAP. These ambitions mean that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set out by the UN, must be put at the heart of the food systems agenda. At a time of political uncertainty on the world stage, and increasingly within the European Union itself, as it grapples with the final shape of the CAP reform and its Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), prioritising these goals becomes more important than ever.

Jari LEPPÄ, the Finnish Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, described the local specificities of Finnish agriculture, with

its long winters and short summers, saying that these conditions “do not prevent the Finnish from wanting clean, safe and affordable food”. The Minister went on to note some of the major global and local concerns, with a particular emphasis on climate change, saying that the negative externalities of livestock must be taken more seriously, especially as extreme weather events pose a threat to food security.

To demonstrate the changes needed, and the different ways that Finnish farms are adapting, Markus EEROLA described how he is developing a circular economy on his organic Knehtilä family farm by applying “Palopuro agroecological symbiosis”. This is a cooperative food production system based on energy and nutrient self-sufficiency which produces food in an envi-

ronmentally-friendly and affordable way. “The symbiotic process recycles nutrients, promotes crop growth and reduces stress on waterways,” he explained, offering it as a model for other food producing communities around the world. He also explained that by bringing tourists and urban visitors to his farm, he is able to sell his products locally for better prices and helps visitors to understand the realities of modern farming.

### International Trade, Food Security and Climate Change

“I used to keep a scrapbook of the serious impacts of climate change around the world, but I can no longer keep up. It would take an army of scribes to keep up now” said David VINER, Principle Adviser on Climate Change for Mott Macdon-



ald, setting the stage for the session and clearly outlining the real costs of not dealing with climate change for businesses. Further costs for the agricultural sector were outlined by Mikhail ORLOV, President of Ambika Group, who noted that Europe's political has turned inwards and away from the rapidly advancing economies to its east and south and that this would soon mean that these countries would overtake them. He worried that Europe's political class was populated with "bureaucrats who talked about small percentages of change, rather than politicians with vision." In contrast, Xavier LEPRINCE of Syngenta offered a real, climate-resistant vision that showcased the importance of new seed-breeding techniques, working closer with farmers and helping them protect biodiversity.

#### Scandinavia and the Future of the CAP

Minister LEPPÄ also spoke of his country's ambitions for the CAP, saying that he was committed to fight against the cuts in the budget, especially at a time where the Finnish agricultural sector is still recovering from the Russian embargo. He further stated that the budget was vital if the CAP was going to deliver on its environmental performance. However, as Allan BUCKWELL of the RISE Foundation noted, "I would hate to be the Commissioner because anything you say is wrong to someone". Prof. BUCKWELL went on to deliver a strong critique of the environmental performance of the CAP and urged Member States to use the new Strategic Plans to do more than was possible under 'greening'. However, Valeriu STERIU, Romanian MP, warned that it was not only up to farmers, as most Europeans still waste far too much food. Giv-

en the discussion in the room, it remains doubtful that the reform could be finalized before the end of the current Commission and Parliament's terms, according to Austria's Ambassador to Finland Maximilian HENNIG.

#### Sustainable management of natural resources

Pentti TÖRMÄ, Editor-in-chief of Käytännön Maamies, moderated the final panel of the day which focused on the sustainable management of natural resources, and the role of landowners in combatting climate change and biodiversity loss.

Forty percent of carbon in the atmosphere comes from land-use change and carbon losses from the soil, according to Ilkka HERLIN, Board member of Baltic Sea Action Group. He added this will only increase if societies do not switch from conventional farming to 'carbon farming'. Carbon farming can cover small changes in land management like introducing no-till cropping, reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and agroforestry practices. Fredrik von LIMBURG STIRUM, who was voted Baltic Sea Farmer of the year in 2017 and whose estate, Koskis Gård, was awarded a *Wildlife Estates* label in recognition of his biodiversity enhancing management practices, added that tourism will be more important than food production in Finland in future, and that it is essential that the landscapes and the ecosystem services of the land are developed. Jürgen TACK, Director of the Flemish Landowners Organization, described the financial incentives that are given to NGOs in Flanders, to purchase and manage land for conservation purposes. However, advances have been made, primarily

by networks such as *Wildlife Estates*, and new legislation entitles private landowners access to the same subsidies. This is a recognition that nature is best preserved through sustainable land-use within a viable economic and social framework. Key-note speaker, Robert FLIES, former advisor to the director in DG Environment at the European Commission, highlighted the importance of effective communication with the general public as a crucial element in combatting climate change and biodiversity loss.

**The Next FFA Regional will take place in Kiev on Thursday 11 October.**



#### Two new *Wildlife Estates* labels awarded in Finland

During the FFA gala dinner two new WE labels were awarded: to Fredrik von LIMBURG STIRUM, for the Koskis Gård Estate; and to Karl FAZER for the Hahkiala Estate; both in recognition for their exceptional work to protect and conserve biodiversity for future generations.

**For more information please visit [www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu)**

Josef Hofer (1801–1877), Detail from, "View of Palais Rasumofsky from the garden pavilion," after 1837  
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## CAP, Climate and Forestry - the ELO General Assembly in Austria

*Twice a year, the General Assembly of the ELO meets in the country next in line to take up the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This time, it was Austria's turn and the ELO delegation was warmly welcomed by our local members, Land&Forst Betriebe Österreich.*

Robert de GRAEFF; ELO

The ongoing reform of Europe's Common Agricultural Policy dominated the discussion, especially as the full proposals had just been released by the European Commission. ELO Secretary General Thierry de l'ESCAILLE expressed concern over whether or not the high ambitions in the proposal could be met in practice, especially as many European ministries may not have the administrative capacities to design and implement the plans. ELO members agreed and added that the proposals to limit CAP payments per farm, especially if more money is allocated to environmental perfor-

mance, would be counter to the wishes of society and would limit payments for public goods.

During its meeting with Johannes FANKHAUSER of the Austrian Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, the members had a chance to share their concerns, highlighting that the new national plans should not be used as a first step to a re-nationalised agriculture that goes against the Single Market and against the spirit of the European project.

Climate change also played a prominent role during the General Assembly, with all ELO members reporting both (severe) droughts and changing weather patterns in their countries. As a consequence, many are facing higher water prices or further restrictions on its use. Mr. FANKHAUSER discussed the Austrian priorities for the presidency and noted that they are not happy with the cuts in the CAP budget as "More for less does not work". After his presentation, Dr. Franz SINABELL of the Austrian Institute of Economic Research gave an overview of Austrian agriculture and forestry and demonstrated the drastic projected consequences of a changing climate for agriculture and forestry.

With forestry forming an important part of Austria's rural economy, the ELO arranged two visits to the countryside to explore the potential and changing nature of the industry. During the first trip

to the Esterhazy estate of Lackenbach (and member of the *Wildlife Estates*), the forest management team demonstrated how their estate successfully combines forestry, tourism and Natura 2000, with the management of large carnivores such as wolves being of particular interest to the members.

In order to increase the ties between all land private land managers, ELO and the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) co-hosted a gala dinner to celebrate the importance of well-managed land. This was emphasized during the second visit which showcased innovative agriculture and forestry management practices on the Montecuccoli Estate, where, in order to diversify his business, ELO and CEPF board member Felix MONTECUCCOLI, has recently entered the Christmas tree market as well as setting aside a forest *Waldruhe* plot where people can bury the urns of their loved ones to provide them with a tranquil resting and remembrance place. ELO and CEPF look forward to working together more closely and creating more opportunities to meet.

The next General Assembly will take place in **Bucharest (Romania) from 26 to 28 November 2018.**

**The ELO would like to thank Felix MONTECUCCOLI, President of Land&Forst Betriebe Österreich, and his team, as well as the CEPF team, for their hard work in putting this event together.**

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# Putting on a “Thinking CAP” to assess agriculture and inclusive growth in the EU

*From the tulip farmer of the Netherlands, who exports flowers to the capitals of the world, to the Romanian widow who sells vegetables to her neighbors at a friendly price, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) casts its net far and wide.*

*The CAP's annual budget, of roughly €50 billion a year, finances over 40 million transactions every year, benefiting about seven million farmers and making up about 46 percent of farm income in the EU.*

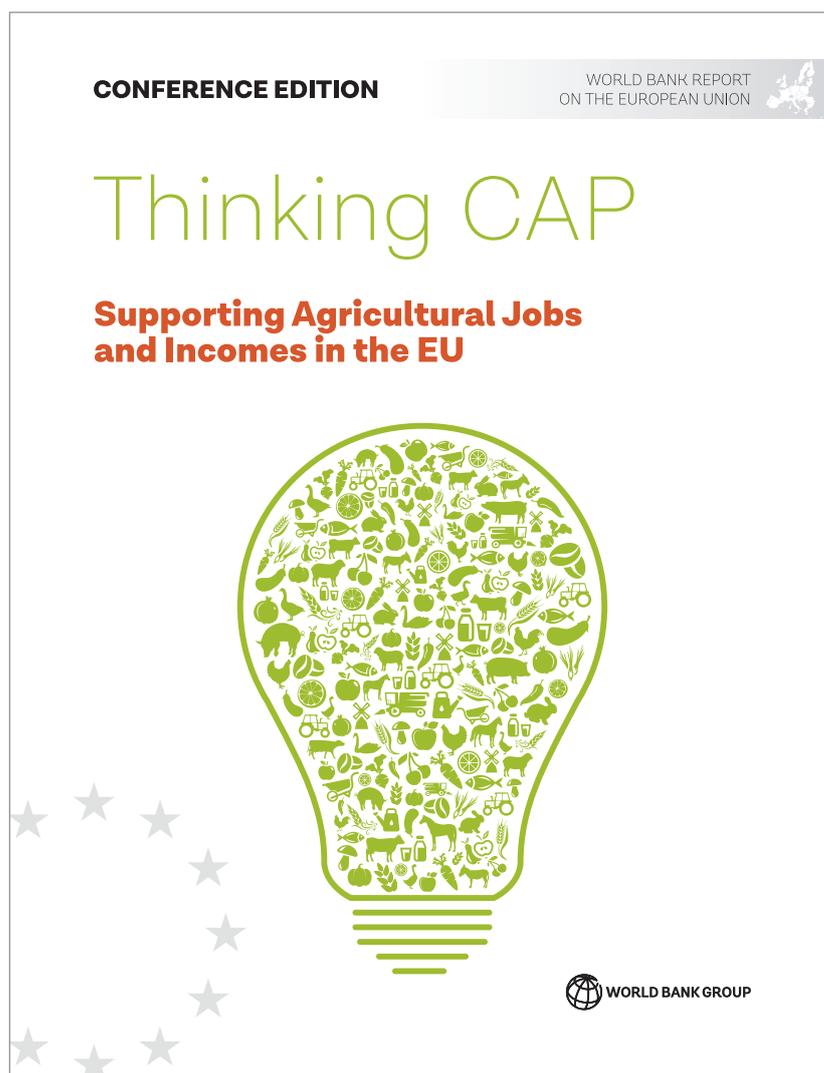
Rogier J. E. Van Den BRINK, World Bank

**B**ut why bother with agriculture, if its share in GDP becomes minimal over time and it continues to shed labour? Are the poor not better off in the fast-growing cities? Does agriculture not constrain the opportunities for growth and consequently the reduction of poverty?

It depends, argues a recent World Bank report on the European Union. Internationally, the key role agriculture plays in the structural transformation from farm to factory is well-established. While agriculture is typically not a sector which drives overall economic growth, the type of growth it generates is often inclusive: it reduces poverty better than growth originating in the other sectors. In about half of the member states, agricultural areas are no longer synonymous with poverty.

These countries (a mix of both older and newer member states) created the basic conditions which make agriculture profitable, by building roads to bring products to market, securing property rights so owners can make long-term investments in their land; organizing adequate advisory services to ensure that modern, efficient farming techniques are used; and providing access to health and education so the farmers, and their children, had the wherewithal to be successful in farming or in finding work outside of agriculture. In addition, farmers themselves organized to strengthen their bargaining power, improve their access to credit, acquire better information about new markets and technologies and ensure that the government support was effective.

When these conditions are met, the CAP's decoupled payments and support for rural investments are associated with the reduction of poverty in agricultural areas and the maintenance of productive jobs for the families who chose to remain engaged in agriculture. Today, profitable and productive farming is a catalyst in many rural communities for driving people on to better jobs, higher wages and an improved quality of life. Across the EU, but in partic-



ular in the newer member states, the gap between agricultural incomes and those of other sectors is narrowing.

However, it's not all good news. In the other half of EU member states, agriculture continues to be associated with poverty. The report characterizes these countries as “incomplete transformers.” In these member states, the CAP has its work cut out, while governments need to do more

to create the basic conditions which make agriculture profitable. This means aligning other programs, both national and European, to help create these conditions. Because if the sector's overall profitability is lacking, CAP subsidies risk being wasted on unsustainable “boutique” projects.

In addition, the CAP's coupled subsidies show little or no association with the positive trends on productivity and poverty.

For the successful transformers in the newer Member States, it seems that most of the basic conditions for agriculture are in place and agriculture can be a sector which provides reasonably attractive jobs. The decoupled Pillar I payments are important for smooth incomes and increase on-farm investment by otherwise risk-averse farmers. In the absence of these CAP payments, this aversion to risk could lead farmers to underinvest in their farm.

For the successful transformers in the older Member States, the rationale for the decoupled payments becomes weaker as incomes and land prices rise. The Pillar II support can provide important investments, both of a private and a collective nature.

Finally, during the field visits made in the context of the report, while fully acknowledging the necessity for controls and audits, farmers often complained about the amount and the type of red tape involved. This was because many of the conditions which farmers were required to meet were focused on compliance with processes and the ex-ante assessments of farm and project plans, not the achievement of ex-post results. As efficient farmers need to be able to continuously adjust their farming to the changes in the weather and the market, farmers would rather be held accountable for the ultimate result, rather than whether or not their plans and proposals were done in exactly the way the bureaucracy wanted them to be done. For instance, even very experienced and educated farmers often had to pay for particular consultants approved by the bureaucracy to draw up the project proposals. Given the rapid advances in data collection, remote sensing and digital agriculture, it is becoming more and more possible to respond positively to farmers' requests for more flexibility in return for more accountability with respect to results.

In conclusion, the CAP can be a powerful and far-reaching instrument for reducing poverty and boosting incomes, if it is part of a process of successful structural transformation. In this way, Europe's experience is consistent with international experience. At the same time, the EU and its main instrument for agricultural development - the CAP - is providing valuable insights into the most effective use of agricultural subsidies for the rest of the world.

**For more information:**  
[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)



## Pollinator Friendly Farming: What's possible now?

The Intergroup meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> May was dedicated to the recent public consultation on the EU initiative for pollinators and the recently published Roadmap of the European Commission. Presided by Karl-Heinz FLORENZ, it focused on the link between farming activities, the preservation of habitat types which are favorable to pollinating insects and how land managers can support pollinators.

Humberto DELGADO ROSA, Director for Natural Capital, European Commission, together with Dr Mike GARRATT, Senior Research Fellow, University of Reading, UK set the scene for the debate. All participants agreed that agricultural land and practices can play a vital role in enhancing the health and presence of bees, butterflies and other pollinators. As their work is vital for so many crops, there is a natural synergy between land managers and these species; they help solve each other's problems.

The panelists debated how to promote better ways of living together, especially how the EU should promote (among other measures) the inclusion of multifunctional field margins in the agricultural landscape. These could create a number of biodiversity benefits, improve soil structure and water resources and, crucially, provide habitats and year-round feeding spaces for pollinators.

The panel agreed that through financial incentives and by creating more awareness of these measures, including as part of the ongoing CAP reform, as well as through national action plans and farm advisory services, governments could help land managers to do more.

Delphine DUPEUX, ELO



## WANTED: The Belgian Tree of Year 2018

Do you know a tree with a story? The Tree of the Year Contest is looking for new candidates from Flanders and Brussels! These trees don't need to be the largest, or the oldest, or the most beautiful, but they should be important to you!

Nominations are now open for the Flemish Tree of the Year - which could even go on to become the next European Tree of the Year!

Everyone can participate: individually, as a community, as part of a club, or any other group that is proud of a particular tree. All you need to do to enter is to send us a photograph of the tree and explain why this tree is so unique. All trees situated in Flanders and Brussels are eligible and entries should be submitted before **15<sup>th</sup> July 2018**.

You can submit your tree at [www.boomvanhetjaar.be](http://www.boomvanhetjaar.be) and we will announce the regional winners in August 2018 on the same website.

Good luck and may the trees be with you!

Anne-Sophie MULIER, ELO

## Farm Data and How to Use it: Big data, Privacy and Future Farming

*Precision farming and data technology represent enormous opportunities for the future of farming. However, issues such as property rights, data management and privacy must be carefully considered and managed if it is to reach its full potential. During the ELO's innovation conference, which took place this March, farmers and experts discussed both the advantages of digital farming and issues around data rights.*

Heinrich von CROY, ELO



Vik VANDECAVEYE, Anthea MCINTYRE, Mikko JÄÄSKELÄINEN, Robert de GRAEFF

The Innovation Conference was opened by the MEP Anthea MCINTYRE, who strongly believes that innovation on a global scale can help solve problems such as food waste, the growing world population and competition on rural land. She noted that she, and her farming constituents, had personally benefitted from applying data technology.

With this in mind, all panellists agreed on the standpoint that farmers own their

data. There were different suggestions regarding what can happen with data, and what value it holds but the initial ownership is always the farmer, who should have the best understanding of the data he or she possesses, the value it holds, and the benefits brought about by sharing it.

Robert de GRAEFF, Senior Policy advisor at ELO, expressed his organisation's support of innovation and new technology; not just to produce more, but to do more for the environment by using less inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides and fungicides. There are a few underlying questions that need to be answered before these new technologies can be fully embraced, including issues around data privacy, ownership (with regards to landowners and land tenants), and data accessibility. He underlined the need for free education and farm support to make sure that all farmers could use new technologies. However, he reminded the audience that these techniques will not work without rural broadband infrastructure, something that is still lacking in many areas.

Vik VANDECAVEYE, CEMA Chairman of Agricultural 4.0 working group/CNH Industrial, Mikko JÄÄSKELÄINEN, Yara Partnership Manager and Colin CHABALLIER, la Ferme Digitale in France, focused on the importance of data sharing and the benefits that technological advances in this

area can bring. They agreed that the farmer should always be in charge of who gets to see the data, how it is used and that the benefits should be clear. The pooling of data would allow for greater knowledge as well as benefits such as improved consulting advice and improvements to systems through peer-learning, noted Mr VANDECAVEYE and Mr JÄÄSKELÄINEN. Mr CHABALLIER pointed out that data sharing is a key part of improving the future of farming. It will allow us to create the technology of tomorrow and make it available today.

Peter DESMET, LifeWatch team at the Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO), also supported publicizing data, as other people were able to turn the raw data into insight, and useful information. Yet, Ragnar LOFTSEDT, Professor of Risk Management at King's College London, mentioned that there is an important difference between data dumping and evidence-based transparency. Data dumping consists of publicly sharing data and information, which can have negative effects as people may misunderstand it. Evidence-based transparency is data made public but with added context, so others can understand better.

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**ELO**  
**Farm Data and How to Use it:**  
Big Data, Privacy and Future Farming  
Hosted by: Anthea McIntyre MEP  
14:30 to 16:30

**AGENDA**

Welcome and Opening Remarks  
• Anthea McIntyre MEP

**Big Data, Privacy and Ownership in Digital Farming**  
• Vik VanDecaveye, Chairman of Agricultural 4.0 working group - CEMA AGRI  
• Robert de Graeff, Senior Policy Advisor - European Landowners' Organization  
• Mikko Jääskeläinen, Partnership Manager, Professional Farmers - YFA  
• Digital Farming

**Digital Applications in the Field**  
Management: Colin Chaballier, La Ferme Digitale, France  
Management: Ragnar Loftstedt, Professor of Risk Management, King's College London  
Management: Peter Desmet, LifeWatch team at the Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO)

# Rural development and heritage preservation – the final conference of the REVAB project



The final conference of the ReUse and Valorisation of Agricultural Buildings (REVAB) project took place on 23rd April in the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels, marking the end of its 30-month cycle which started in November 2015.

Liam MCDONNELL, ELO

Final conference, under the auspices of



Georgios MATHIOUDAKIS, Rodolphe de LOOZ-CORSWAREM, Vladimir URUTCHEV, Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, Ghislain d'URSEL, Jurgen TACK

The final conference of the ReUse and Valorisation of Agricultural Buildings (REVAB) project took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> April in the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels, marking the end of its 30-month cycle which started in November 2015. The purpose of REVAB project has been to develop a free and open access training system on entrepreneurial approaches to the reuse of existing agricultural buildings and to encourage rural entrepreneurs, rural real estate owners, and young farmers to think about possibilities for reusing existing agricultural infrastructure; an issue made all the more relevant considering that 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The project facilitates learning through the use of ICT (information and communications technology), including online educational games.

As the sun shone in Brussels, the conference was opened by Sławomir SOSNOWSKI, Member of the Committee of the Regions and Marshal of the Lubelskie Region in Poland. Mr. SOSNOWSKI stated that we are at a generational crossroads where the future must harness the past and that we need to find new uses for culturally important infrastructure.

Part 1 of the conference showcased the REVAB case studies. These are real-

life examples from people all over Europe who have undertaken a reuse project of their own. They ranged from the conversion of an old barn into a family-run restaurant in Germany, to the conversion of an abandoned garage into a drugstore in Bulgaria. Each reuse project has its own unique traits, but a recurring theme that wove them together was an agreement that repurposing agricultural buildings provided extra value to the local community and helped stabilise incomes. There was a poster session during the coffee break which gave attendees the chance to read more about the case studies at their ease.

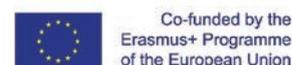
It is no secret that rural areas have endured significant challenges recently and that the future will not be plain sailing for rural areas as they redefine themselves in an increasingly urbanised world. The economic crisis of 2008 disproportionately affected rural areas in the European Union. In an increasingly urbanised world, rural areas are sometimes looked over. Yet, it is rural areas that provide the food and often the energy that is vital for cities to thrive. Rural areas also hold a wealth of historic and cultural significance.

In Part 2 of the conference, the panel discussed future perspectives for farming and rural areas in Europe and the place

of building reuse within this. The panel agreed that problems in the provision of services to rural communities, such as high-speed internet, make it difficult to attract investment. Rodolphe de LOOZ-CORSWAREM, President of the European Historic Houses Association, passionately pleaded that rural areas should receive more funding and political attention to attract city dwellers and tourists alike who are “fed up of the cities” to come to the countryside. Jurgen TACK, General Director of *Landelijk Vlaanderen*, added to this by stating that long-term economic thinking is needed to provide security for strategic investment in rural development. Vladimir URUTCHEV, Member of the European Parliament, and Georgios MATHIOUDAKIS, DG AGRI, European Commission, both agreed but stated that rural development must be willing to combine the digital revolution with heritage preservation. All the panellists concurred that combining rehabilitation of traditional infrastructure with technological investment would lead to a more vibrant rural economy and higher quality of life for rural inhabitants. Moderator Ghislain d'URSEL, owner of *Kasteel Hex*, ended the discussion by concluding that the countryside must adapt to the modern world, and use modern methods to preserve cultural heritage.

The REVAB project highlighted the fact that innovation and efficient management of built resources can flourish in rural areas if entrepreneurs are provided with the right type of training and incentives.

For more information, please visit [www.revab-erasmus.eu](http://www.revab-erasmus.eu)  
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Project n°: 2015-1-BE01-KA202-013183

# A case for joined-up thinking in Ireland

*The Public Service Obligation levy (PSO) holds the key to our salmon's survival, increasing land owners' incomes, flooding problems, gorse and other invasive plant infestations, rural economic activities and much more. It also solves the problem of what to do with our plastic and other combustible wastes.*

Nicholas GRUBB, farmer

The PSO is a levy which is added on to every citizens' electric bill each month in the Republic of Ireland. It is now to be increased from €400 to €500m a year. This sum is then used to promote change in electric generation by subsidizing wind power and other renewables, designed to lower the country's output of greenhouse gases, as part of the Paris Climate Accord adopted in 2015.

A considerable part of the money raised by the PSO goes to wood biomass. This was originally meant to lead to the development of a Scandinavian-style native biomass industry, with hundreds of district heating schemes and Combined Heat and Power units, (CHP) in large centres, each operating at an efficiency of up to 80%. This never happened, because in order to save jobs in key politically sensitive constituencies in which there were old, highly inefficient peat / turf burning stations, operating at just 30% efficiency, a lot of biomass was urgently needed. Peat / turf is considered to be a fossil fuel like coal and no longer permissible. This led to a political blind eye being turned to the importation of biomass from the

Americas and South East Asia, in a gross abuse of the spirit of the Paris Accord. Similar abuses occurred in Northern Ireland with the "Cash for Ash" scheme and in England at Drax.

On top of this, Ireland now has another issue: what to do with the vast amounts of combustible wastes, especially plastics, that are produced each year, and which, up to now, have been shipped to China and elsewhere. It is quite clear, from an environmental point of view, that this waste should be incinerated locally, being burned in the very same CHP plants mentioned above. Successful incineration, as is done in Northern Europe, is best achieved with a base load of carboniferous material such as wood biomass. Furthermore, these plastics and other combustible wastes contain a great deal of energy.

## Wild Atlantic Salmon

There are several major issues facing Ireland's wild Atlantic salmon stocks. Firstly, the degree of overtopping of the spawning and rearing streams by ram-

nant growth of light-excluding Alder and Willow, as well as the salmon cage operations which are located off shore.

However, both of these problems could be solved, by a sensible reallocation of approximately a hundred million euro of the PSO, at approximately ten times benefit to the general economy and environment. This would include hundreds of millions of euro in angling tourism, and the alleviation of flooding, which is being caused by the mass downstream migration of sands and silts, freed to move by the destruction of the root systems of the Ranunculus Crowsfoot weed, which previously bound them in place.

In the case of the biomass, Ireland needs to be cyclically harvesting at least 2000 km a year of the 20,000 km of spawning / rearing stream overtopping, over a ten-year cycle. There also needs to be coppicing of 300,000km of hedgerow, bundling vast amounts of forest waste, invasive species, willow grown on the worked-out peat bogs and much more. All at a great benefit to the adjacent land owners and more importantly Ireland's native wildlife. A whole





industry would evolve, be it harvesting, bundling, transportation and building and maintaining the district heating and CHP plants. None of this activity can stand alone economically, but it all makes perfect sense when taken as a whole.

Understanding the underlying ecology of the overcovering of 90% of our spawning and rearing streams, one must look back in history to the 1950's and 60's; a period of rural electrification, bottled gas, the peat / turf briquette and myxomatosis of an estimated population of 40 million rabbits. These changes occurred in sync with the massive expansion of sea gill netting in Ireland, and it was this last factor which was blamed for diminishing salmon stocks. However, when this practice was banned, the expected greatly increased returns never occurred. Now everyone is wondering why?

We then need a further large allocation of resources to put in place incentives for tidal power generation. Fish farms should pump their water needs in at the high quartile of the tide, and let the waste water back out in turbine mode at the low quartile, fully processed for parasites and pathogens. These parasites, in particular the sea lice are now accepted as being highly damaging to the wild stocks. This model would keep the employment *in situ*, while solving all the environmental challenges.

Furthermore, it is the firm belief of the author that biomass produced on-farm should be credited to the individual farm or the national carbon account. Why is this not happening?

Another problem we have in the riparian environment is excess run-off of phosphates and nitrates. One way to deal with these is by the installation and operation of wetlands designed to maxim-

ise carbon-capture. Those engaging in this should again be claiming carbon credits. Fencing off all our streams so they become near sterile tunnels of shifting sands and silts, is not the way to deal with this issue. Much pioneering work has been done in Ireland on this already ([www.vesienviro.com](http://www.vesienviro.com)) and this should now be rolled out on a grand scale and again Carbon credits applied.

Nicholas GRUBB was brought up on the banks of a tributary of the River Suir (pronounced "Sure") in County Tipperary. It was one of Ireland's most productive river systems.

He studied Geography, and later Agriculture, the latter at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester in the UK. His main activity in farming was the introduction of the Limousin breed to Ireland in the mid-seventies. For thirty years, he and his wife Barbara, ran the herd book and PR for the breed. In 2002, he was hired by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation, (ICBF) which had just been formed under the directorship of Dr. Brian WICKHAM from New Zealand. The reason he was taken on by ICBF, was declared by Dr. WICKAM, to be because: "Nicholas is very good at thinking outside the box and rattling cages". He then left cattle breeding and entered cider apple production.

Nicholas and Barbara now live at Dromana ([www.dromanahouse.com](http://www.dromanahouse.com)) on the banks of the famous Blackwater River, where Barbara's family hold extensive commercial salmon netting rights going back to 1215. This massively important salmon river is now but a shadow of its former self and in this opinion piece below Nicholas explains why and what could be done about it.



multifunctional Farming for the sustainability of European Agricultural Landscapes

Project Nº: 2016-1-SK01-KA202-022502

## 4<sup>th</sup> Transnational Meeting of FEAL

Servane MORAND, ELO



The 4<sup>th</sup> transnational meeting of the FEAL project took place in May in Perugia, Italy at the headquarters of the Middle Tiber Valley Local Action Group (LAG).

The FEAL project aims to create a training system for farmers based on modules and case studies about conceptualizing and implementing sustainable/multifunctional farming practices within European Agricultural Landscapes (EAL).

During the meeting, the partners presented the selected case studies and discussed the development of the training modules. The e-Atlas on European Agricultural Landscapes, which is already available online, was also part of the discussion. The partners discussed updates that it needs, such as adding missing definitions.

The second day gave the team the chance to take part in two field visits, one of which was a visit to Silvestri Mill which was built over a thousand years ago by Benedictines and which overlooks the Tiber River. It has been owned by the Silvestri family for 8 generations and is managed in a sustainable way. Six different types of organic flour are milled using energy

that is harnessed from the river. The team also went to Torre Colombaia which is one of the case studies of the FEAL project. It is an organic farm that is dedicated to agritourism which serves produce from the farm to the guests.

On the third day, the partners were invited to a farmers' open day at the University of Perugia and the FEAL project was presented in the framework of a seminar on "Agricultural landscapes: European cultural heritage and farmers' roles".

Website: [feal-future.org](http://feal-future.org)  
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Enhancing COoperation amongst FARMing entrepreneurs

Project Nº: 2016-1-021-KA202-0-16870

## 4<sup>th</sup> Transnational Meeting of COFARM

Maeve HOWE, ELO

The fourth meeting between the partners of the COFARM project took place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> April. It was held in the offices of The Association of Private Farmers in Prague, Czechia.

At this stage, case studies from all the partner countries (Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain) have been produced and they will shortly be available online in seven languages. We are now moving onto the next stage of the project which is to create a set of training modules on farmer-to-farmer cooperation. These materials will be completed over the summer of 2018 and will be added to the website later in the year.

We had the opportunity to visit a farm and dairy processing plant on the outskirts of Prague on day two of the meeting. The farm itself has grown considerably since the Nĕmec family bought it in 1992. While it started out as a dairy farm, it is now all under tillage and the

family now buys in milk from local farmers and processes it in the on-farm plant. Up until 2010, the Nĕmec's dairy was focused only on the production of "Balkan" cheese which they sold to the dominant milk processor in Czechia. However, in 2011, the economic downturn affected the milk sector very badly and the processor stopped buying their cheese from one day to the next. A new strategy was developed to sell directly to the end consumer and the dairy expanded its range of products to include milk, yoghurt, and several types of cheese. To do this, "Milk from the Farm" was set up which is a cooperation between the Nĕmec family and neighbouring farmer and friend, Mr. MILLER. Together, they set up an online delivery business to sell products directly to consumers in the surrounding area.

In addition to the dairy products, they also pack meat on-site and fruit and vegetables are added to the selection in the summer months. The way the two families cooperate is quite simple. Each of the two farmers individually manage the deliveries on either side of the Vltava river. Today, the delivery business supplies products from around 22 suppliers, including farmers, bakeries, wineries and small family breweries.

The COFARM project team will meet next in Florence in September to evaluate the development of the training modules.

Website: [cofarm-erasmus.eu](http://cofarm-erasmus.eu)  
 Twitter: COFARM\_ERASMUS  
 Facebook: CoFarm



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## Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship (FCE) 2018

Marie-Christine SCHÖNBORN, YFCS

The Young Friends of the Countryside's Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship (FCE) took place in Scotland on the weekend of 16th to 18th March. On the Friday, the Young Friends met up in Edinburgh before heading to St. Andrews on Saturday morning for the conference part of the FCE. The Young Friends were very fortunate to get to listen to some inspiring speakers during the conference. Firstly, Lord JOICEY explained his idea of bringing life back into the countryside by supporting local entrepreneurs. The Young Friends were very interested in his idea and a lively discussion took place after his presentation. Then Ana ROCHA, Senior Policy Officer at ELO, explained current misconceptions about the Common Agricultural Policy and updated the YFCS members on the status of the negotiations. Following on from Ana's presentation, Geoffroy DE CANNIÈRE, YFCS board member, urged the audience to look out for rural start-ups and entrepreneurial projects concerning the countryside. He

spoke about the Famigro Award, a yearly prize awarded by the Young Friends for entrepreneurial projects, and introduced the winners from the last two years, CLODRE WIGNAC and TINY HOUSE. Applications for the 2018 edition of the Famigro Award are open from now until the end of the year.

In the afternoon, the Young Friends were welcomed by Edward BAXTER, who presented Gilmore Estate to the Young Friends. He spoke about how he integrates sustainable projects that support the environment on his estate and talked about the power of 'we' versus 'I'. Having himself joined forces with five other estates, he outlined how this type of collaboration can have a positive impact on the Scottish countryside. He also spoke about how social media can be a helpful tool for landowners.

In the evening, the Young Friends had a gala dinner in Edinburgh Castle. Shortly

beforehand, the group had the chance to look at the crown jewels of Scotland, known as the Honours of Scotland, and the Stone of Scone. They got a guided tour of Edinburgh Castle on the Sunday before the FCE was officially closed.

The Young Friends would like to thank their generous host, Edward BAXTER and speakers, Lord James JOICEY and Ana ROCHA, for sharing their ideas with us and for having given their time to the Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship.

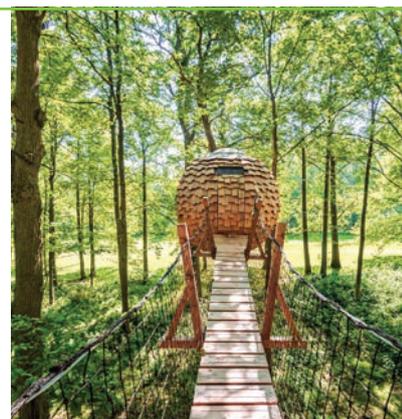
We would also like to thank Francesco KINSKY DAL BORGO and Alberto HERMOSEL, Administration and Communication Assistant at the ELO, for their outstanding support and organisation of the FCE. Without them, the event could not have taken place and we are extremely grateful for their initiative and dedication to the Young Friends.

### Apply for the Famigro Award!

The 2017 edition of the Famigro Award was awarded to Coucou ([www.coucou.com](http://www.coucou.com)). This tourism business has proven successful in three different locations in France and the founders are now looking to expand with more cabins in new locations.

The concept behind Coucou fulfills the aims of the Famigro Award very well as a successful new venture in the countryside that creates employment in the local community and at the same time supports biodiversity.

Applications for the 2018 Famigro Award should be sent to [geoffroydecanniere@gmail.com](mailto:geoffroydecanniere@gmail.com) before the end of 2018. For more information, please visit [www.yfcs.eu/famigro/](http://www.yfcs.eu/famigro/).





# 2018 EUROPEAN BEE AWARDS

Encouraging the protection of pollinators in the farmed environment

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Jury special mention (diploma of recognition)

CONTACT : [communication@elo.org](mailto:communication@elo.org)

[www.europeanlandowners.org/award/bee-award](http://www.europeanlandowners.org/award/bee-award)

**ELO**  European Landowners' Organization



## Diary dates



**26 June, European Parliament, Brussels**

"Wild Board in Europe: Trends and challenges" - conference organized within the framework of the Intergroup on Hunting and Biodiversity; and launching event of ELO's new publication on wild boar population trends in Europe.

[www.europeanlandowners.org](http://www.europeanlandowners.org)

**5 - 6 July, Greece**

AgriDemo consortium meeting  
<https://agridemo-h2020.eu/>

**10 -11 July, Seville, Spain**

Water2REturn consortium general meeting  
<https://water2return.eu/>

**27 - 31 July, la Foire de Libramont, Belgium**

FORBIO Information day  
[www.forbio-project.eu](http://www.forbio-project.eu)



**4 - 5 September, Bückeberg, Germany**

Wildlife Estates Annual Conference: we are pleased to invite all interested parties to join us

For more information or to register: [coordination@elo.org](mailto:coordination@elo.org)  
[www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu)

**13 - 14 September, Graz, Austria**

FARMID consortium meeting  
[www.farmid.bc-naklo.si](http://www.farmid.bc-naklo.si)

**24 - 25 September, Florence, Italy**

CO-FARM consortium meeting  
[www.cofarm-erasmus.eu](http://www.cofarm-erasmus.eu)

**FFA 11 October, Kiev, Ukraine**

Forum for the Future of Agriculture regional event  
[www.forumforagriculture.com](http://www.forumforagriculture.com)

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**ELO**   
European Landowners' Organization

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