

Friends of the Countryside 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Poznań, Poland

## Adapting to New Times: Embracing Opportunities



Michael zu SALM-SALM, Seger VAN VOORST TOT VOORST



# Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Executive President*

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*We are living in ambiguous times, faced as we are with the vagaries of climate change and political incoherence. Politicians invoke climate change and the urgency of dealing with it to initiate legislative breakthroughs, but in reality they lack the courage to meet with those who will have to implement the solutions imposed. Even worse, the 'great architect' of this change does not think it necessary to stay in Brussels to finalise the structure of his work. Has he realised that by submitting to the sanction of the electorate when he has so far shown no real interest in meeting those affected by his plans and convincing them of their merits, he is once again bypassing dialogue and consultation. He is taking a gamble.*

*It is a great disillusionment for those who had confidence in the European project, for those who knew and worked with a European Commission that harboured great qualities, to see to what extent today, justified by the argument that we have no time, given the urgency of the situation, the search for constructive solutions applicable by the private sector and by society is no longer a priority. We once knew a public service that wanted the best for everyone!*

*Does this signal a change of world? Or, more simply, a decline in our political world? We may fear that politicians bound by the short term no longer have the time to confront their ideas with the doubts of citizens! We might also fear that it is easier to use all kinds of NGOs as sounding boards rather than to patiently build lasting solutions.*

*Europe can do better, must do better and must demonstrate it if it is to regain its aura... Nor can it hide behind legal motivations that do not correspond to the reality on the ground when citizens question it. The lessons of history are quickly forgotten, but great empires such as the Byzantine, died of this disease. I hope that our Europe will rediscover its intelligence and its ability to develop hopeful projects that are supported by a large movement of our population.*

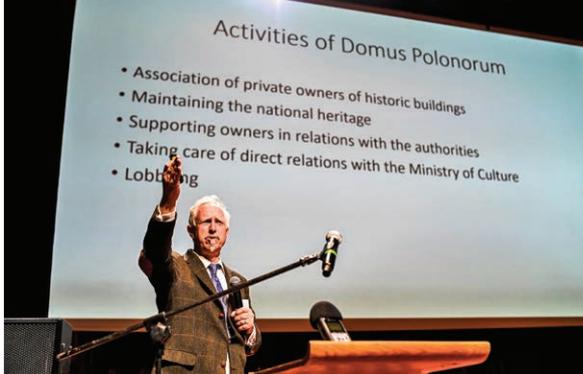
*It's up to you, politicians, to convince us and do better.*



Participants of the FCS General Assembly.



Grzegorz BRODZIAK



Paweł ESSE



Natalia MADAJCZYK

## Friends of the Countryside 26<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Poznań, Poland

# Adapting to New Times: Embracing Opportunities

*Over 150 Friends and Young Friends headed to the centre of Europe, to join the annual Friends of the Countryside General Assembly, this year in Poznań, Poland. Many Friends were certainly impressed by the development of the country, and most appreciated was the warm welcome received from our hosts and to meet up again amongst new and old Friends.*

Sophy SMITS VAN OYEN-MALTZOFF, FCS



Activities began with the informal Welcome Dinner where both Friends and the numerous Young Friends were delighted to gather in the Ulan Browar restaurant to savour local Polish beers as well as a traditional Polish buffet. The General Assembly the next day that took place in the grand *Zamek Cesarski* began with a group photo in the contemporary hall. It was followed by what all knew would be a moving and historic General Assembly as FCS President Michael zu SALM-SALM was stepping down after his two terms. He has been an exceptional president, much loved and appreciated by members. A cosmopolitan, diplomat and true European, wise and generous, with a quick sense of humour were some of the characteristics attributed to him. Knowledgeable in both history, current affairs and of course the countryside with a firm belief that nature is to be both used and protected.

As one presidency ended, another begins with the election of Seger VAN VOORST TOT VOORST, a member since 2005 and vice president since 2012. Members look forward to a dynamic and positive presidency. Gunther VON DER SCHULENBURG was elected as vice president and 5 new Board members were also elected: Charles COLTHURST for Ireland, Stephanie GICOT for Portugal, Jakob ROSENKRANZ for Denmark, Leo VON STOCKHAUSEN for Germany, and Sander WURFBAIN for the Netherlands. Marie Christine VON SCHONBORN presented news from the Young Friends announcing that she, too, would be stepping down as president and would be replaced by a duo-chairmanship with Anna ZAHEDI-LAMARCHE and Henrich VON CROY. She was thanked for her positive commitment to the role.

*Dear Friends,*

*It is a great honor to say a few words to Michael.*

*I would like to thank the FCS board and members for their confidence, but I must confess that I do so with diffidence as it will not be easy to succeed a man of Michael's stature. This also applies to his predecessors Giuseppe VISCONTI and Johan NORDENFALK, also men of stature to whom FCS owes a lot. (...)*

*Mr. President, dear Michael,*

*Since your name is zu SALM-SALM, you always emphasizes that you are from the stuttering lineage. The name, which is also the name of the fish salmon, always meant for you to swim against the tide and not to conform.*

*Meeting people, discussing with them and bringing them together is your lifeblood. You are a kind, wise, generous and deeply Christian man, with a wife who matches you perfectly in all these qualities. (...)*

*Making wine is your great passion. Wonderful Spätzle and Auslese, or on a hot day, the Grünschiefer. (...) You have a great sense of humour, you are always positive and know how to make complex matters fluid with a sound. (...) For you, using and protecting nature are always two sides of the same coin. Karl GROTEFELT calls you a true cosmopolitan but especially a true European! And you really are.*

*During your presidency of FCS, one of the biggest challenges for you was dealing with the consequences of Brexit for the Friends. Your greatest concern was that our British friends should continue to be European friends.*

*(...) amongst the many memories, an outstanding one is from 2017, the first Assembly after the Brexit vote. You gave a heartfelt and sincere speech at the Gala Dinner, in which you reminded everyone that landownership in Europe has been a constant feature throughout history, and how, in the case of your family estate, over eight hundred years have gone by, despite war, invasion, catastrophe and so on. If I remember correctly, you told us that during that time, the family had lost control of the land on 15 occasions, and on seven of these occasions they had to buy it back.*

*Your sensitivity to history, and your understanding of how the personal circumstances of families range across such a wide arc of emotions and stresses, is precious.*

*We have experienced many highs and only a few lows with you, but even in difficult times you were the undisputed leader of FCS. We will miss you as President, but fortunately we will continue to see you as Honorary President and Friend. (...)*

*I want to close with "Thank you so much. Many many many many many thanks for all".*

*Fragment of the speech given by Seger VAN VOORST TOT VOORST.*



Marre Christine VON SCHONBORN, Karl GROTFELT, Alicja DZIECIOL (winner of the Famigro Award)



Gunther VON DER SCHULENBURG (winner of the Belleuropa), Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

ELO President Thierry de L'ESCAILLE presented the comprehensive work of the European Landowners' Organization and stated the many obstacles that landowners face.

Followed the conference on "Adapting to New Times: Embracing Opportunities" introduced by ELO director for Member States Affairs Emmanuelle MIKOSZ, who was so thrilled that the GA was taking place in her home country. She welcomed speakers Grzegorz BRODZIAK, Chairman of the Board, Goodvalley Agro, Paweł ESSE, President, Domus Polonorum and Natalia MADAJCZK, Head of Unit for interdisciplinary projects, Project Coordination and Urban Regeneration Office, Poznan City Hall. It was an opportunity for a deep dive into Polish agriculture, environment, needed public-private partnerships, and last but not least, the priorities of the forthcoming Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU

(January-June 2025): strengthen EU relations with the US, admission of Ukraine and Moldova to the EU Community (Poland hosts the majority of refugees), reconstruction of Ukraine, and energy transition.

The conference ended with the Famigro Award and Belleuropa ceremonies. The Famigro Award is presented annually to the winner during the FCS General Assembly. It aims to award the most successful and innovative rural business by a young (18 to 40) European rural entrepreneur and includes an entrepreneurship prize of €5,000. The prize is generously sponsored by FCS Board member Karl GROTFELT to whom we are immensely grateful for his support!

The award was won by Alicja DZIECIOL of Silvibio from Scotland for producing an innovative biobased soil additive [*more information on page 8 of this edition*]. This year the jury received many impressive

applications and were happy to award 2<sup>nd</sup> place, the Diploma for Outstanding Development, to We Wilder, in Romania. They have created a stable, free-roaming bison population in the Southwestern Carpathians by changing the incentive systems of the rural communities that protect wildlife. We Wilder have already created a local ecotourism economic network: 4 old stone houses turned into guest houses, MuMA Hut, educational experiences that integrate wild nature and local culture, gastronomic events organised with locals that promote food from agriculture. These services create extra demand for local produce, as well as dairy and meat products. We Wilder is WWF's first social enterprise cooperative. They have come to believe that the socio-economic wellbeing of rural communities is the key to restoring nature. A model adaptable to other biodiversity-rich areas. For more information, visit: [www.wewilder.com](http://www.wewilder.com)



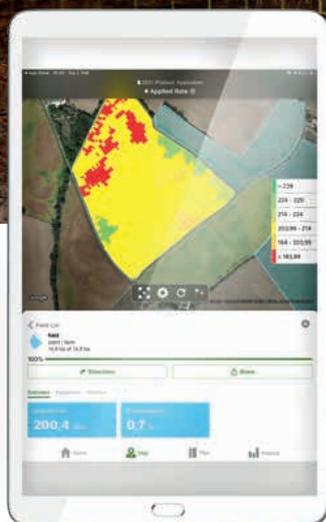


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Visit at the Baborówko equestrian estate

The Belleuropa Award that honours exceptional work of a Wildlife Estate was won by FCS VP Gunther VON DER SCHULENBURG.

That afternoon, the Young Friends held a special workshop on Sustainable Transformation for Estates. YF's sat in a large circle and were encouraged to interact, share and discuss with each other - the effect of this dynamic and enterprising group was magical! The second part of the workshop was joined by a dozen Friends. The idea was to film the interaction between small groups of Friends and Young Friends on sharing and discussing positive life values.

Saturday was the day for estate visits and thanks to the exceptional spirit of Friendship and true team spirit, members thoroughly enjoyed them. The first group visited the renovated Pałac Dąbrowski of Count Krzysztof MANKOWSKI who had gathered artefacts from his family and introduced 3D glasses. The owner sadly passed away earlier this year. This was followed by a visit to the extremely well-managed dairy farm owned by Janusz PAUL who explained how the farm was run. A lively discussion followed regarding him managing the place with his children. The group went on to meet a couple of young arable farmers, Przemyslaw LASKOWSKI and his wife who explained how they had managed to acquire 1800 ha of land and what are the plans for the future.

The second group visited the amazing Baborowko estate owned by the SWIECICKI family where horses are bred and sold on a multi-hectare farm which also includes a farm tourism hotel and business events as well as international equestrian shows such as the Cavaliada Tour. The group then went on the visit to the Rembowski estate, owned by Tomasz REMBOWSKI who owns

a processing plant for natural pressed juices using traditional methods.

The third group was made up of over 45 Young Friends who began the visit in Poznan. After a drive northward, they were greeted at the fish farm of Krzysztof KOWALSKI, president of the Young Opinion CIC hunting group, and his family. In their gardens surrounded by the fishponds, they treated the Young Friends to a royal Polish lunch made by local "Klub Gospodyń wiejskich" (the farmer's wives' association). Those interested could try some fishing in the ponds. The lunch was followed by a visit to the new farmhouse where Krzysztof and his father proudly explained their management of the 400-hectare fishing area. With a great interest from the group, the time was almost too short to answer all their questions.

All 3 groups then gathered at Palac Brodnica owned by Jerzy MANKOWSKI who warmly welcomed the groups to a most delicious Polish buffet dinner. As the former President of the "Polish Landowners Organisation" he explained the status quo of the restitution of the estates, as Poland remains the only country still without a proper law on that issue.

Approximately 40 Friends joined the Short Post Tour beginning with a visit to the beautiful town of Wroclaw with multi-coloured buildings, a network of rivers, and a huge central square with an impressive mediaeval building where members enjoyed special beer and lunch. That afternoon the group headed for Czarny Las, a rustic lake-side hotel.

Poland is home to the much venerated and holy site of Czestochowa and the Jasna Gora monastery which houses the miraculous Black Madonna. The group was given an exclusive tour of the precious library as well as the monastery. That evening, on the initiative of Michael zu SALM-SALM, the group held a very enlightening round table discussion about the position of Poland today as a neighbour to Ukraine, vis à vis to Russia and its position in Europe. Many questions were raised...only the future will tell what the answers are. *[red.: some outcomes of that discussion are presented on page 10 and 11 of that edition].*

Next, the Friends headed south through the Eagle's Nest National Park to visit Mirow castle, a mediaeval castle in the process of being magnificently restored by Jarosław LASECKI and his family. A hilly walk brought the group to neighbouring Bobolice castle, a beautifully completed



Visit at the Paul Polska dairy farm



Visit at the fish farm of KOWALSKI family

restoration that took about 15 years. His daughter Anna Maria LASECKA who manages the castle, hotel and restaurant gave us a very informed tour. We were then joined by Beata LASECKA and treated to the most delicious Polish beetroot soup with more Polish specialties.

On the way to Krakow, Friends visited the Ojcowski National Park, Poland's smallest and lush park guided by the knowledgeable Jakub BARAN, deputy director of the park. He led the group to the Pstrag Ojcowski trout farm co-owned by Agnieszka SENDOR and her mother, recipients of many European awards, who explained the fishing process. The group was treated to the most delicious recently smoked trout. That evening the post tour group arrived in the magnificently unique Kraków, a UNESCO city.

The next morning the group was treated to an informative walking tour of the centre of Krakow timed beautifully to witness the opening of the altarpiece of Notre Dame and then the noon bugle. Golf carts sped the group to see Wawel Castle and the Jewish quarter. That afternoon the group headed out of Krakow to visit the Benedictine Tyniec monastery and enjoyed a slow boat ride back. The next day Friends visited the extraordinarily rich collection of Izabela CZARTORYSKA at the eponymous museum

that wanted to preserve Polish culture. This collection expanded to include works of art from Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, most famous of all the purchase in 1800 of Leonardo's *Lady with the Hermine*.

Goodbyes were said as this visit came to an end while a small group headed south to Szczawnica in the Carpathian mountains to the recently opened and excellent Pieniny Grand hotel, owned by the MANKOWSKI family. Boating in the gorge, rooftop dining, mineral waters, visit to the 15th C. wooden church at Dębno; walks, wood painting of local motifs and the discovery of local delicious food products are some of the pleasures you can enjoy while being in that region.

The FCS give special thanks to all estate owners who so kindly opened their gates to welcome us so warmly.

**The General Assembly for 2024 will take place in the beautiful Tuscan town Siena - from May 30 to June 2, as well as a Pre Tour from May 26 to May 30.**



Alexander von SCHOENBORN, a member of the Friends of the Countryside for over 20 years, passed away in the 83rd year of his life on August 7th, 2023. Alexander von SCHÖNBORN managed his estate passionately and was devoted to his family. His particular interest was forestry and the impact it had on his region. During his lifetime, Alexander von SCHÖNBORN in addition successfully lead many regional voluntary activities and dedicated himself particularly to the development of young people. As his family is originally from West Bohemia in Czech Republic, he kept in close touch with the citizens of Maxov and Vseruby. He was posthumously named an honorary citizen of Maxov and Vseruby with a square named in his memory. The Friends of the Countryside express their sincere condolences to his wife Sissi and 4 children, Marie-Christine (ex-Young Friend president), Franz-George (YF member), Marie-Isabelle and Friedrich-Karl.

# Winner of the 2023 Famigro Award : SilviBio

## A Novel Approach for Forestry

*SilviBio is dedicated to helping foresters grow more trees, more sustainably. Here, they are doing this by designing biodegradable and sustainable products that help foresters increase yields while decreasing water, fertiliser and peat use. To date, SilviBio has ongoing projects across the UK and Germany.*

Philip SHELTON and Alicja DZIECIOL, SilviBio

Within Germany, SilviBio is collaborating with a forest nursery and landowners to trial a novel direct seeding approach to establishing forests. Traditionally, German foresters plant tree seedlings due to their better establishment rates when compared with directly sowing seeds. Here, this difference is due to seedlings being more reliable in water scarce conditions than seeds. To address this, their project seeks to use SilviBio's moisture retaining soil additive, Water Steward, in order to hold more moisture in the soil which may improve seed germination rates. If successful, this approach would allow foresters to directly sow tree seed at their desired forest site, thereby simplifying the forest establishment process and saving money. This direct seeding approach could also open up the possibility of reforesting sites that were otherwise inaccessible.

Within the UK, SilviBio is developing their moisture retaining peat free growing media additive, PeatNoMore, with their forest nursery partners. Although there is growing pressure across the EU to reduce or ban peat use for horticulture, the UK has already banned peat for all professional growers by 2030 and offers us a glimpse into what a peat-free future looks like. However, the transition to off peat is not so easy or clear-cut for growers used to peat. One of the key differences between peat and peat-free substrates is the latter's potential water retaining issues which can result in increased water requirements and fertiliser runoff. Here, PeatNoMore helps resolve this issue by increasing how much water peat-free media can retain, which enables growers to use less water and fertiliser. Currently, SilviBio has already seen promising results from lab and glasshouse trials and are now trialling PeatNoMore at two forest nurseries to assess its performance in real world conditions.

Related, SilviBio is also developing a sustainable and biodegradable plug adhesive to help peat-free media better retain its shape when transplanted from mini cells to larger cells. Here, peat free media does not retain its shape and structure as well



© Cristina RODRIGUEZ GIL

as peat, which can cause losses during transplanting due to the young plant's inability to hold the media together. Thus, SilviBio's plug adhesive seeks to directly resolve this challenge without harming plant growth, and they plan to have a trial ready plug adhesive next year.

In part due to PeatNoMore's early promise and results, SilviBio has British and EU partners who are planning trials to mix PeatNoMore with the grower's preferred peat-free growing media to grow trees, food and flowers. With these trials, SilviBio plans to demonstrate the versatility of PeatNoMore, how it can work with a variety of peat-free growing media mixes and its value for growers looking to reap a more sustainable harvest and future.

With the above in mind, SilviBio is seeking to establish an EU production site and lab in the next 5 years. Here, their plan is

to not only more readily supply their EU partners but also enable them to better engage and collaborate with said (current and future) EU partners. Currently, the biggest impediment to achieving SilviBio mission is, unfortunately, Brexit and the difficulties it has created in collaborating and doing business with key EU based foresters, horticulturalists and other key stakeholders.

We at SilviBio feel very privileged to be recognised for our work of growing more trees more sustainably. This award will help us further pursue international opportunities. Together, we can help make a greener Europe, from the Caledonian Forest in Scotland to the Białowieża Forest in Poland.

For more information: [www.silvbio.com](http://www.silvbio.com)

# ILOS ENERGY: Harvesting the sun for a livable future

*July as the hottest month in recorded history (and probably the past 10,000 years+) acts as another stern reminder for the acuteness, intensity, and truly global reach of the climate crisis.*

David LOEFFLER, ILOS

**ILOS**

It is virtually undisputed scientific consensus that significant carbon emission reduction must be at the core of any effort aiming to curtail the accelerating deterioration of nature and our ecosystems. If we want to steer future generations onto a climate trajectory with living conditions even remotely comparable to ours, we must begin to implement tangible measures at scale now.

With a view to these generational challenges, the European Commission's 2030 Target Climate Plan formulates that a "balanced, realistic, and prudent pathway to climate neutrality by 2050 requires an emissions reduction target of 55% (vs 1990 levels) by 2030", emphasizing the energy system's central role and specifically encouraging local investments in renewables, both from the public and private sphere.

It is precisely at the junction of taking a long-term investment horizon along with the willingness and proven ability to adapt to technological challenges where we at ILOS see landowners uniquely positioned to co-pilot the transition from fossil fuels towards renewable energies.

## Repurposing your land - harvesting the sun while gaining so much

Not surprisingly, landowners hold one of the bottleneck inputs required to establishing a decentralized renewable energy system. We can think of a plethora of ways in which the holders of this scarce resource, land, will be compensated should they decide to partner with developers of photovoltaic parks.

In our view, there is immense reputational value to be derived from making one's land available for society's benefit by providing emission-free electricity, which in turn is nearly certain to increase landowners' acceptance among politicians and by society alike. Besides making a real and measurable contribution expressible in tons of saved greenhouse gases, merely the perception of parts of society perceived of as rather traditional actively addressing climate change can reverber-

ate positively through the entire political system and quite literally improve the climate of the political discourse.

There is almost no need to highlight the fact that besides ranging among the better public relation efforts money can buy, renewable energy production in the typical landowner's portfolio will result in increased diversification of cash-flows and yield more stable returns on investment (think of energy prices in 2022 in Germany, for instance).

While the advantages of entering the renewable energy space outweigh the downside by multiples, we acknowledge that there are significant practical hurdles to be overcome to play an active role in the green energy revolution. This is where ILOS New Energy comes into play.

## ILOS New Energy - tackling the renewable energy challenge is in our DNA

ILOS was founded in 2019 by Michael WINTER and Nikolaus KRANE with the aspiration to build a legacy in the renewable energy landscape to contribute to the transformation of the European energy sector. With a handpicked team of experienced industry players, ILOS is actively developing solar parks in eight European countries, aiming to run a pan-European PV power plant operation (IPP) with significant capacity.

With land being one of the key constraint resources for our business model, we are always keen to expand our network to craft robust partnerships along the value chain, naturally with a focus on long-term land leases crucial to our endeavor, but always open a variety of possible cooperation models.

Demonstrating a considerable track record of cooperating with various types of investors, we understand that each landowner's situation is marked by its unique needs and challenges. Our team of experienced experts will tailor customized solutions delivering to your specific needs, ranging from "lease-and-forget" to various bespoke co-invest options.

Since limitations to grid access and energy harvesting periods with innate fluctuations are well-known challenges to the solar industry, the scope of our offering expands beyond pure play photovoltaics: H2-storage and 24/7 Energy solutions are increasingly in demand and technologically achievable. Moreover, we have significant expertise in wind park development and are happy to assist you here as well.

To be sure: Green electricity production is the precondition for any technology and therefore the base of value creation.

*For more information, please visit [www.ilos-energy.com](http://www.ilos-energy.com) or contact me at [loeffler@ilos-energy.com](mailto:loeffler@ilos-energy.com) or by phone: +49 151 14120716*

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## How Do We Defend Europe without the Americans?

*Russia's war on Ukraine was the stark backdrop to the Friends of the Countryside (FCS) tour of Poland in June.*



Leon MANGASARIAN, member of the Friends of the Countryside

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**O**ur guide in Cracow was a sherpa as a sideline. Tomasz, a former Polish special forces soldier, served in Afghanistan and fought against Russia in Ukraine during the first weeks of the Kremlin's invasion. He then worked as an instructor for Ukrainian soldiers and helped feed and house thousands of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. He's now organising private shipments of military equipment to Ukraine.

The Ukraine conflict inspired outgoing FCS President Michael Prinz zu SALM to organise a political discussion during the post-tour at a lakeside hotel in Wozniki-Czarny Las. To start the discussion, I set out a few historical markers on European security – and raised defense-policy questions that need answers.

Europe's old centre of gravity is changing. During the Cold War, West Germany was the centre of NATO and U.S. efforts to defend Europe. France and the United Kingdom played a special role as the only two European powers with nuclear weapons.

Today, the centre of gravity for Europe's defense has moved far to the east. As Andrew MICHTA notes in an excellent recent essay: "*NATO's eastern flank runs today along the borders of Finland, the Baltic states, Poland and Romania.*"<sup>1</sup>

The idea of European strategic autonomy from the U.S. exists since at least the 1950s. But, as the Americans would say, it's the dog that won't hunt. National interests keep getting in the way of true European defense cooperation. The most recent example is the German-led European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) air defense system. Some 17 countries have signed up for the system using German, American and Israeli missiles. But it is opposed by France because it does not use French weapons.<sup>2</sup> Today, when mainly western European leaders talk about strategic autonomy, the governments in Poland, the Baltics and other eastern flank nations get nervous because they view true security as being part of the transatlantic alliance with the U.S. and Canada.

This brings us first to Poland and Finland: Warsaw is already one of the biggest spenders in NATO on defense. Poland plans to raise military spending to 4 percent of GDP and build a 300,000-member armed forces with the largest armor capabilities in Europe. New NATO member Finland never made the mistake of slashing its military after the Cold War and fields a fully-mobilized army of 280,000 soldiers.

And then there are the countries that President Barack OBAMA dubbed the free riders of Europe. Nations depending on the U.S. military while neglecting their own armed forces. Exhibit number one is Germany, a country whose military is so reduced by defense cuts that it couldn't defend its own territory, let alone that of NATO allies. Berlin's defense spending still lags far below the alliance target of 2 percent of GDP. So far, much of Germany's talk about transforming its military has been limited to just that. There's little sign that the general public understands the urgency posed by events in Ukraine or is willing to accept

social welfare and subsidy cuts to channel more money to the armed forces. Chancellor SCHOLZ is failing to provide robust leadership in the crisis. Seizing, on the deep unpopularity of his government, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is now the second strongest party in nationwide opinion polls, after the opposition Christian Democrats and ahead of SCHOLZ's Social Democrats. The AfD is anti-American, anti-EU, pro-Russian, anti-immigrant and anti-Euro.

#### What does this mean?

#### What are the coming challenges?

The 25 years of history from the 1989 opening of the Berlin Wall to the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and first invasion of Ukraine were among the happiest in European history. Indeed, the long peace in Europe from 1945 to 2014, was an exception. A holiday from history. Yet over Europe's past 1,000 years, wars have been the norm – not the exception.

#### A friendly prediction:

**The next 25 years will not nearly be as happy in Europe as the preceding quarter century.**

At a minimum, defense spending everywhere will have to rise, leading to conflicts over guns vs. butter. At worst, armed conflicts may spread in eastern Europe, re-erupt in the Balkans, or even spread to NATO. More likely, Russia, China and other autocracies will challenge the EU and NATO states with intensified cyber warfare, disinformation, social media subversion and the grooming of useful idiots aimed at breaking institutions and norms holding Western states together.

One country that has got the message is Poland. Warsaw is buying almost 1,500 tanks from the U.S. and South Korea. It is

buying American F-35 combat aircraft. Its defense minister says it aims to have the most powerful land forces in Europe. Think about this: Poland is on a war footing while some parts of Europe have still not awakened to the threat.

Will NATO's 31 member states (32 when Sweden finally joins) hold together? Or will growing differences of threat perception between east and west and north and south, erode alliance unity? Will NATO shift to more "coalitions of the willing" among its members with a sort of core-NATO willing to do more and go further? Will the Intermarium states – the lands between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas form their own, tighter alliance aimed at Russia?

How do we prevent nuclear blackmail of Europe by Russia? Russian leaders, like the seemingly deranged Dmitry MEDVEDEV, have repeatedly warned Europe of nuclear Armageddon since last year. The U.S., U.K. and France are NATO's three nuclear members, but only the U.S. has clearly said that its nuclear umbrella protects other NATO states. If the American nuclear shield is weakened there will be profound consequences. Countries like Poland may then consider building their own nuclear weapons to deter the Kremlin.

How do we protect Ukraine? Do we put Ukraine on a very fast track to NATO membership? Or do we first use the Israeli model and make it a military porcupine, armed to the teeth, with military guarantees from major NATO states?

This leads to a question that most European leaders are trying to avoid: Will the U.S. remain a European power? American soldiers fought their way into Europe in two world wars. After 1945, U.S. President Harry TRUMAN made the decision to keep American forces in Europe both to maintain the peace and to ensure that GIs wouldn't

have to fight their way into Europe for a third time.

This is a question of survival for Europe because the U.S. contributes 70 percent of defense spending in the alliance. Put bluntly: without the U.S., NATO is all but dead in the water. There has already been one near-death experience. U.S. President Donald TRUMP came closer to quitting NATO than many people realise.<sup>3</sup>

So, here is the most crucial question facing Europe today: **How do we defend Europe without the Americans?**

I say this with great sorrow as an American who lives in Europe. We Americans were crazy enough to elect TRUMP in 2016 and might elect him or a similar anti-NATO, anti-European Republican nativist in 2024. What is Europe's "Plan B" if the Americans suddenly pull out? Herculean efforts would be needed not just to radically expand Europe's armed forces but also its intelligence services, civil defense, hardening of all critical infrastructure, heavy airlift capabilities – you name it. But rather than face up to this possible geopolitical Kraftakt, or show of strength, most European leaders prefer to evade it and stick to business as usual. This is a stunning dereliction of duty: the primary purpose of the state is to protect its citizens.

Poland, our host of the 2023 FCS General Assembly and tour, is one of the countries giving real answers to this question. Poland is set to play a bigger role in European geopolitics in the coming decades.

Equally important, the rest of Europe is going to have to listen far more to Poland and the eastern and the northern EU and NATO states. The era when the late French President Jacques CHIRAC could tell central and eastern European countries to "shut up" is truly over.

Europe needs to draw on its heritage and relearn the ancient Roman adage: *"If you want peace, prepare for war."*

*Leon MANGASARIAN is a tree farmer in eastern Germany's Brandenburg state and in Georgia, USA. He worked as a news agency reporter and editor for Bloomberg News, Deutsche-Press Agentur and UPI in Berlin, Bonn, Brussels and Kyiv.*

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Andrew A. MICHTA, The United States Needs its own Strategic 'Turning Point' in Europe, Atlantic Council, Aug. 1, 2023.
- 2 Leila ABBOD, Laura PITEL, Henry FOY, France Summons Allies in Challenge to German-led Air Defence Plan," Financial Times, June 19, 2023.
- 3 John BOLTON, The Room Where it Happened, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2020, pp. 133-147.



# The Polish ‘Miracle’ Beginning or End?

*In June, I had the privilege of welcoming members from the FCS in Poland. The sightseeing and local experiences swiftly transformed into a platform for discussing the past and future of my homeland.*

Tomasz GÓRNY - Co-founder & CEO at YourCityGuides.com.

The quotation marks around the word ‘Miracle’ in the headline serve a purpose. While it might appear surreal from an external perspective, the past 34 years of Polish socioeconomic development were not a miracle in the conventional sense.

I was born six years prior to the first free election. By the time I completed high school, Poland had already joined NATO, and during my second year of law school, I became a citizen of the European Union. I have witnessed three decades of unparalleled growth while being raised by parents who were teachers and managed a small business after hours. Undoubtedly, I can affirm that the Polish ‘miracle’ signifies Polish ‘hard work’.

The 1990s launched our post-communist journey with rapid transitions, economic liberalisation, and revitalised state-owned enterprises. Privatisation and agrarian rejuvenation laid the foundation for resilience. In the 2000s, EU integration prompted structural reforms, reshaping labor markets, infrastructure, and agricultural policies. The 2010s brought sectoral modernisation, diverse energy sources, and prioritised education, amidst shifting political landscapes that tested resilience and renewed dedication to progress.

In each of these transformative decades, Poland evolved from a nation grappling with the legacy of communism into a vibrant and dynamic player on the global stage. The reforms we championed, the challenges we confronted, and the strides we made stand testament to the unwavering Polish ‘hard work’ that truly underpins our ‘Miracle’.

As we step into a new decade of development, the upcoming Polish election set for October 2023 possesses the potential to significantly mold the nation’s course. The incumbent Law and Justice (PiS) party, seeking a third consecutive term, is engaged in a vigorous competition against the opposition Civic Coalition (KO).

PiS has drawn criticism for its economic policies, often labeled as populist and detrimental to the country’s long-term growth prospects. Additionally, the party has faced allegations of undermining

democratic institutions and eroding the rule of law.

Should PiS secure re-election, it is likely to persist with its current policies, potentially exacerbating harm to the Polish economy and challenging the nation’s democratic progress.

In contrast, the KO has pledged to champion pro-growth and pro-business policies, with a simultaneous commitment to reinforcing democratic institutions and the rule of law. A KO victory could herald a fresh chapter characterised by economic revitalisation and enhanced democratic advancements in Poland.

However, specific obstacles to Poland’s progress go beyond the scope of the election. The emigration of skilled individuals seems to be the primary issue of concern.

Poland has been contending with an enduring brain drain challenge, as individuals possessing high skills and education have been departing the country in search of improved opportunities abroad, driven by factors such as low wages, restricted prospects, and a perceived lack of global impact. By 2017, it was approximated that around 580,000 well-educated Poles were

living in different EU member states, although this number has been declining with the expansion of Poland’s economy and the increase in foreign investment. Conversely, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Poland saw a surge in skilled Ukrainian professionals entering the country, providing some alleviation to the brain drain challenge.

Reflecting on Poland’s remarkable journey, it is evident that the country’s strength endures despite shifts in political landscape. The Polish ‘miracle’ is not merely a coincidence; it is a result of dedicated hard work and an entrepreneurial spirit. Poland’s resilience, commitment to progress, and appreciation for freedom have consistently driven its growth. Be it amidst change or stability, Poland’s promise offers an intriguing prospect for those seeking meaningful ventures and shared achievements.

*Tomasz GÓRNY - Co-founder & CEO at YourCityGuides.com. With 12 years of experience in the tourism industry and a tour guide license, Tomasz combines his educational background as a lawyer to excel in business and investment consultancy.*



FCS group in Wrocław, Poland

## The Forum on the road



Mark TITTERINGTON, Co-Founder and Director of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture and Darin LAHOOD, US Congressman of Illinois

### Recognition for Congressman LAHOOD

In June, Mark TITTERINGTON, Co-Founder and Director of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture, was back in Washington D.C. to present U.S. Congressman Darin LAHOOD of Illinois with one of our prestigious neck-ties, which are reserved for those key speakers and contributors to the Forum's program. This presentation was made in recognition of the Congressman's role in hosting the Friends of the Countryside delegation who visited Washington in February. Congressman LAHOOD hosted a reception on Capitol Hill as well as a tour of Congress for our group.



### ForumforAg partnership with GFFPI grows

The Global Forum for Farm Policy & Innovation, (GFFPI) which was created by the Forum for the Future of Agriculture together with our partners the U.S. based Farm Foundation, Canadian



Shari ROGGE-FIDLER, Tyler McCANN, Aidan CONNOLLY, Mark TITTERINGTON, Richard HEATH

Agri-Food Policy Institute and the Australian Farm Institute, continues its strong development in 2023. In June, Mark TITTERINGTON, the Forum's Co-Founder and Director, joined the Farm Foundation's Annual Summit in Chicago, where he hosted a session with Aidan CONNOLLY, President and CEO of AgTech Capital, and author of *The Future of Agriculture*. They discussed topics ranging from the digitisation of agriculture, to gene-editing, financial incentives for eco-system services, and the role of global and regional policy and regulation in enabling a more resilient and sustainable agriculture.



Mark then joined the other partners in GFFPI at the Australian Farm Institute's Conference in Adelaide, at the start of July, as well as making a series of field visits to grain and livestock producers in South Australia. Commenting on the visits, Mark said, *"I'm always energised by the passion and can-do attitude of farmers and land managers wherever I go and this was equally true of those I met and discussed with in Australia. Like everywhere else, they are trying to build and sustain profitable businesses whilst responding to the sustainability challenges. I was particularly struck by just how important data is in their decision making as well as having access to the right tools and infrastructure, such as rural broadband, and the right market incentives to do the job. It's equally true that access to skilled labor, following the Covid pandemic, is a very acute challenge for them as well"*

To learn more about the AFI Conference, you can listen to Mark's podcast interview with their Chief Executive, Richard HEATH, at [www.forumforag.com/podcast/](http://www.forumforag.com/podcast/)

*Both of these events have laid the groundwork for a major GFFPI workshop, which is expected to take place in the autumn at the OECD in Paris, on the role that trade plays in developing sustainable agriculture around the world.*

For more information: [www.forumforag.com](http://www.forumforag.com)

# Life European Networks for private land conservation (ENPLC)

*ENPLC intend to build a community of European land conservation practitioners who work together on testing and upscaling the most promising tools for private land conservation, advocating for better financial incentives, engaging citizens, and raising public awareness.*

*ENPLC is an EU-wide network, a union between landowners and conservationists.*

Marie ORBAN & Anne-Sophie MULIER, ELO

At ENPLC, we believe individual action leads to a domino effect. We invite you to read the inspiring stories of our ambassadors on the **ENPLC website**.



Meet our ambassadors: they are Private Land Conservation Superheroes!

## AMBASSADOR #11 -

**Sander WURFBAIN, De Houberg estate in The Netherlands**

“A legacy for future generations”, this is the mission of Sander WURFBAIN’s conservation and creation of De Houberg estate. For Sander and his wife Margriet VAN MOURIK, the goal is crystal clear: to run a farm that thrives in harmony with nature, restores soil quality, and provides a picturesque gathering place for unforgettable family reunions.



Sander WURFBAIN and Margriet VAN MOURIK at De Houberg Estate.

Under the esteemed umbrella of Natura2000, their efforts are dedicated to fostering a more diverse forest. While willow and alder currently dominate the landscape, Sander and Margriet envision a future where oak and even beech trees flourish, enhancing the beauty and biodiversity of the estate.

## AMBASSADORS #12 & 13 -

**Caroline VAN DER LANDE-VOGELS and Floris VAN DER LANDE**

“You can feel the love of nature at De Hoevens, it gives you strength and peace. We are part of nature so let’s be kind to it.”

Caroline VAN DER LANDE-VOGELS and Floris VAN DER LANDE are the passionate owners of De Hoevens. They have embraced a sustainable approach to maintain the estate, step by step, leaving a positive impact on the environment. Their innovative mindset and human-centric approach have captivated many.

But what truly sparks curiosity is their natural cemetery. At De Hoevens, they offer a sustainable, nature-inspired alternative to traditional burials. It is simple. People make their return to the Earth in a way that celebrates how they lived their lives.

**AMBASSADORS #14 & #15 - Viesturs LĀRMANIS and Inese GMIZO-LĀRMANE, owners of the Nature farm BEKAS, in Latvia.**

This farm boasts impressive biodiversity with 11 EU-protected meadow and water habitats covering almost every square meter of the farm. In fact, the Bekas farm has the highest density of different specially protected habitats on the territory of a single continuous farm in the entire EU. Additionally, they host over 50 protected and endangered species of plants, animals, and fungi.



Photo: K. Kalns

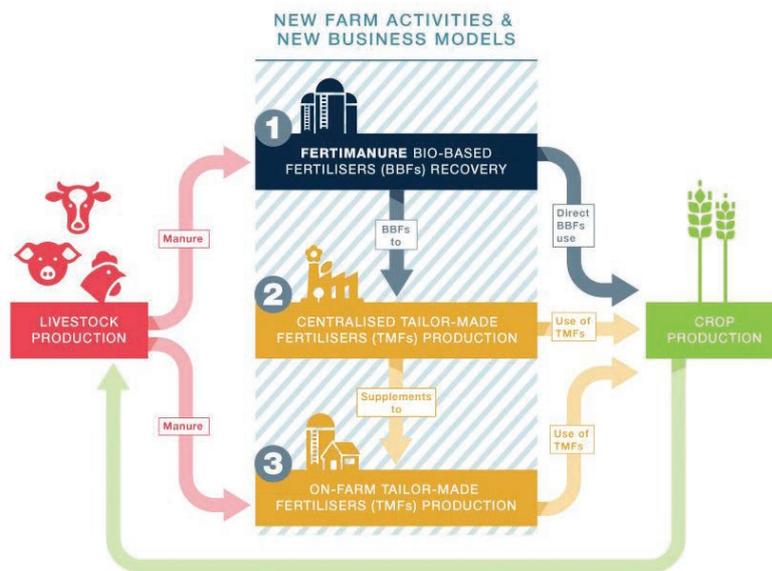
We are honoured to have them on board. You will find more details on our website.

[www.enplc.eu](http://www.enplc.eu)  
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This project has received funding from the European Union’s LIFE programme under grant agreement LIFE19 PRE/NL/000003

## FERTIMANURE CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY



## Fertimanure Pilot Plants have great success!

Micaela COSGROVE, ELO

The FERTIMANURE project aims to tackle the challenges associated with manure management in the agricultural sector by providing innovative solutions. Their mission is to develop and validate nutrient management strategies that efficiently recover and reuse valuable nutrients from manure, ultimately creating reliable and safe fertilisers that can compete in the EU fertiliser market.

One of the critical focuses of FERTIMANURE is to improve the agronomic use of recycled nutrients from livestock manure, establishing a connection between crop production and livestock rearing regarding nutrient flows.

To achieve their objectives, FERTIMANURE has implemented five integrated on-farm experimental pilots across several European countries with significant livestock production, including Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. These pilots will focus on technological advancements and nutrient management approaches.

On the technological front, FERTIMANURE will explore innovative methods for nutrient recovery, aiming to develop efficient on-farm processes for nutrient extraction. The project will experiment with various techniques to recover valuable nutrients from manure.

Regarding nutrient management, FERTIMANURE will employ three strategies tailored to different farming systems. Strategy #1 involves on-farm production and utilisation of bio-based fertilisers (BBF). Strategy #2 focuses on on-farm BBF production and centralised production of tailor-made fertilisers (TMF). Finally, Strategy #3 centres around on-farm TMF production and utilisation.

Through these comprehensive efforts, the FERTIMANURE project seeks to revolutionise manure management practices, addressing the pressing challenges faced by farmers and contributing to sustainable agricultural practices within the European Union.

After the successful completion of the on-farm experimental pilots in the FERTIMANURE project, significant progress has been made in advancing manure management practices. These

pilot projects, conducted across multiple European countries renowned for their livestock production, have generated valuable research outcomes.

With the completion of the pilot projects, the focus now shifts towards developing business strategies, policy reports, and socio-economic impact assessments based on the research findings. The project team will analyse the data collected during the pilots and draw meaningful insights to inform the future implementation of nutrient management strategies and fertiliser production processes.

Over the coming months, the dedicated team behind FERTIMANURE will diligently work to compile comprehensive reports highlighting the commercial potential of the developed technologies, propose policy recommendations for sustainable manure management, and evaluate the socio-economic implications of implementing these innovative approaches.

Furthermore, as a culmination of the project, a final public conference is scheduled for April 2024. This conference will be an important platform for sharing the project's achievements, disseminating key findings, and fostering meaningful discussions among stakeholders, experts, and industry professionals. The conference aims to raise awareness, promote knowledge exchange, and encourage wider adoption of sustainable manure management practices in the agricultural sector.

The FERTIMANURE project's dedication to research, innovation, and collaboration underscores its commitment to addressing the challenges associated with manure management. The project aims to impact the agricultural landscape by fostering sustainable practices and contributing to the EU's environmental and agricultural objectives through the forthcoming business strategies, policy reports, socio-economic impact assessments, and the final public conference.

**We invite you to check out the website to see recent news, publications and to sign up to the newsletter.**

 [www.fertimanure.eu](http://www.fertimanure.eu)



Autumn is in the air at the Welcoming Estates!  
Discover one near you or make it your #AutumnGetaway!

Follow WEW on Instagram and Facebook for the latest developments.  
more information on: [www.welcomingestateswebsite.com](http://www.welcomingestateswebsite.com)  
welcoming.estates.website

## Diary dates

### 27 September, Brussels

ALL-Ready Final Conference (living labs)  
[www.all-ready-project.eu](http://www.all-ready-project.eu)

### 29 September

International Day of Awareness of food and Waste  
<https://www.fao.org/platform-food-loss-waste/flw-events/international-day-food-loss-and-waste/en>

### 10 October, online

"Biodiversity, hunting, countryside" Intergroup on EU agricultural soils: advancing conservation, regenerative agriculture, and soil health  
[www.biodiversityhuntingcountryside.eu](http://www.biodiversityhuntingcountryside.eu)

### 9-12 October, European Union

European Week of Regions and Cities 2023  
<https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/programme/2023/sessions>

### 15 October

International Day of Rural Women  
[www.un.org/en/observances/rural-women-day](http://www.un.org/en/observances/rural-women-day)

### 16 October

World Food Day  
[www.fao.org/world-food-day/env](http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/env)



Let's increase our food supply  
without  
reducing theirs

the good growth plan

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**ELO**  
European Landowners' Organization

### CountrySide

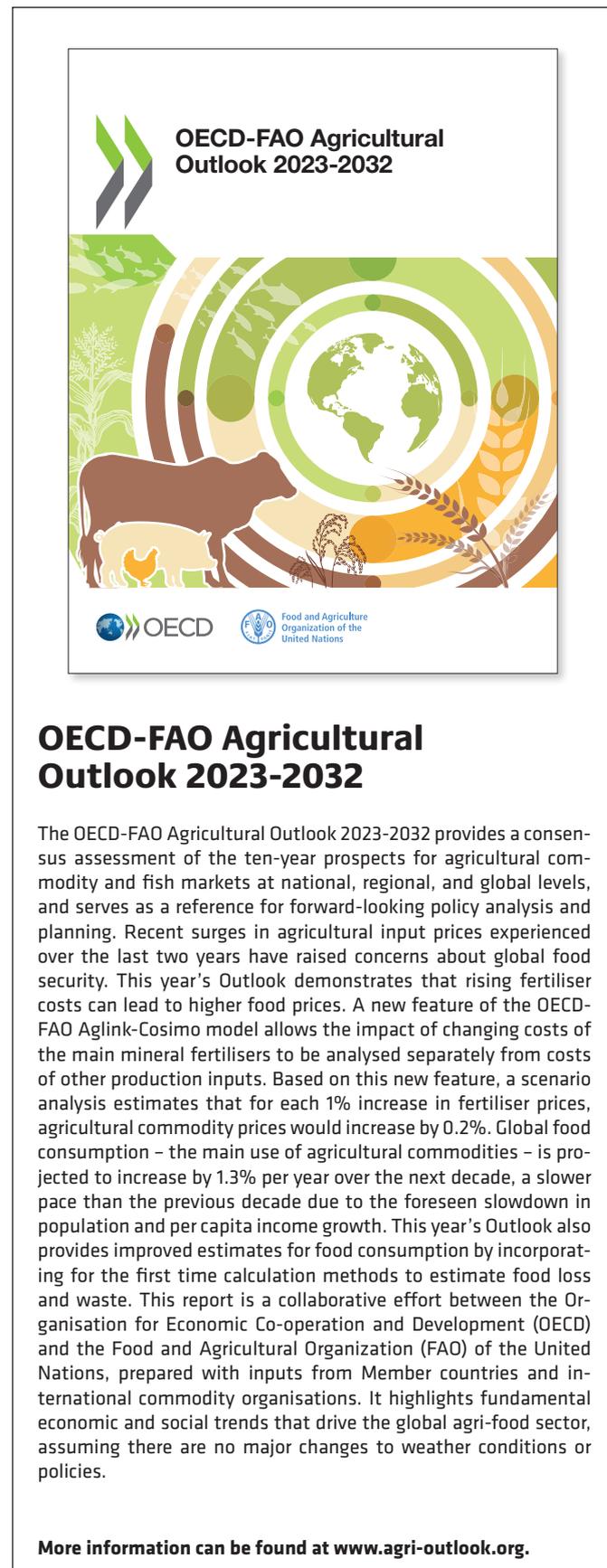
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## OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032

## OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032

The OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032 provides a consensus assessment of the ten-year prospects for agricultural commodity and fish markets at national, regional, and global levels, and serves as a reference for forward-looking policy analysis and planning. Recent surges in agricultural input prices experienced over the last two years have raised concerns about global food security. This year's Outlook demonstrates that rising fertiliser costs can lead to higher food prices. A new feature of the OECD-FAO Aglink-Cosimo model allows the impact of changing costs of the main mineral fertilisers to be analysed separately from costs of other production inputs. Based on this new feature, a scenario analysis estimates that for each 1% increase in fertiliser prices, agricultural commodity prices would increase by 0.2%. Global food consumption – the main use of agricultural commodities – is projected to increase by 1.3% per year over the next decade, a slower pace than the previous decade due to the foreseen slowdown in population and per capita income growth. This year's Outlook also provides improved estimates for food consumption by incorporating for the first time calculation methods to estimate food loss and waste. This report is a collaborative effort between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, prepared with inputs from Member countries and international commodity organisations. It highlights fundamental economic and social trends that drive the global agri-food sector, assuming there are no major changes to weather conditions or policies.

**More information can be found at [www.agri-outlook.org](http://www.agri-outlook.org).**

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