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CountrySide

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MAGAZINE

Forum Regional Conference visits Copenhagen prior
to Danish Presidency of the EU Council

Who Deserves Agricultural Support?

Rethinking Fairness for a Resilient CAP

Feeding and Fueling Europe: Can Agriculture Power
Europe's Clean Energy Future?





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Editorial

At a time when Europe is deciding on budgetary interventions in an increasing number of sectors, and is facing its first post-Covid recovery repayments in 2028, it does not take a genius to see a certain lack of motivation for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Without an increase in the EU budget by Member States, which is highly unlikely, the share of the budget that will be dedicated to annual repayments will be around 20%.

Nevertheless, favouring the option of a single fund for the entire European budget, by abolishing, among other things, the CAP and rural development funds, is not an acceptable option for us: the CAP is the only common policy whose budget is financed by the EU and which is enshrined as such in the Treaty of Rome.

Despite the EBAF debates, all this reflects a lack of vision and, worse still, ambition for our agricultural policy. The question "What do we want?" must be asked and defined precisely in order to better answer the question "How do we get there?".

The debate needs to be raised to make it easier for citizens to understand. Today, citizens often have a biased view, reduced to an opposition between conventional farmers, users of plant

protection products, and farmers who are more concerned about the environment. However, contrary to what many NGOs would have us believe, these two dimensions are not incompatible.

There can be no sustainable agriculture without the economic sustainability of farms! There can be no sustainable agriculture if we create competition, whether between farmers or through the creeping renationalisation between Member States.

When considering our budget, it is essential to return to our priorities: we live in an increasingly uncertain world and guaranteeing food supplies for the European Union can no longer be taken for granted as it once was. They must not now weaken professional agriculture by making choices similar to the hasty abandonment of nuclear power in the energy sector.

The choice is either to take back control of our destiny or to abandon our food independence after having abandoned our energy independence!

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE
ELO Executive President



Forum Regional Conference visits Copenhagen prior to Danish Presidency of the EU Council

Each year, as well as the main Annual Conference in Brussels, the Forum for the Future of Agriculture organises regional conferences and online events to discuss agriculture and the environment at a national level across Europe. On June 3, the Forum organised an event in Copenhagen, in relation to the upcoming Danish Presidency of the EU Council.

Denmark's Bold Approach to Agricultural Transformation

Mark TITTERINGTON, Co-Founder Director, Forum for the Future of Agriculture, opened the conference, mentioning Denmark's Green Tripartite Agreement, signed in 2024 (a multi-stakeholder agreement involving government, agricultural organizations, and environmental groups). Mark then introduced a session where Jeppe BRUUS, Minister for the Green Transition, Denmark, took the stage to describe the context for the multi-stakeholder Agreement, the goals, key elements, and how it is being implemented. Along with Denmark's previous climate action, the Agreement is designed to build a "robust economy".

Panel Session 1: Driving Agri-Food System Transformation in Denmark

The first panel discussion delved into key aspects of Denmark's agri-food system transformation, reflecting on successes, challenges, and opportunities for different approaches. For



From left to right: Mark TITTERINGTON, Oskar BJÖRLING, Anne-Sophie GAMBORG, Niels Peter NØRRING, Hanne SØNDERGAARD



Liz WILSON

Hanne SØNDERGAARD, Executive Vice President / Chief Agriculture, Sustainability and Communications Officer at Arla Foods, a key strength of Denmark's journey so far was the recognition that all stakeholders needed to be at the table. A further strength was that major agribusinesses were already implementing science-based climate targets. Niels Peter NØRRING, Director of Climate and EU Policy at the Danish Agriculture and Food Council, agreed that while the underlying process could be replicated across Europe, the specific Agreement itself should not be simply copied, given the diverse agricultural landscapes between countries. The perspective of a farmer and landowner came from Anne-Sophie GAMBORG, Owner of Møllerup Gods, Djursland. She emphasized that farmers respond positively to voluntary schemes when they can clearly see the triple bottom-line benefits: economic viability, social aspects, and ecological outcomes. Oskar BJÖRLING, Portfolio Manager for Syngenta Nordics, and the son of a farmer, emphasized the crucial role of innovation in agricultural transformation. He highlighted a broad spectrum of advancements, from digitalization, to biological, genetic, and chemical breakthroughs, as well as new business models and systemic innovations.

Panel Session 2: Driving Agri-Food System Transformation across the EU

The panelists considered key elements of the EU's Vision for Agriculture, the challenges and opportunities in implementing it, and the role of various stakeholders including the private sector, farmers, and policymakers.

The EU's Vision for Agriculture: a Bottom-up Approach

Martin van DRIEL, Policy Officer, Unit Policy Perspectives, DG AGRI, speaking online live from Brussels, emphasized the Vision's bottom-up approach – different to previous strategies – and the involvement of various Directorates. There are four key priorities: creating an attractive agricultural sector; building resilience to geopolitical and climate shocks; ensuring farming goes hand-in-hand with nature; and fostering vibrant rural areas. Concrete actions and changes to legislation are already under way, he said, such as changing the Common



From left to right: Mark TITTERINGTON, Blaž KURNIK, Kiki KUIPER, Simone HØJTE, Jurgen TACK

Agricultural Policy funding approach to be more targeted; development of carbon farming and nature credits as market incentives; bioeconomy and water strategies; and faster approval processes for bio-pesticides.

The recognition of farming as a strategic sector for food security and landscape stewardship was welcomed by Jurgen TACK, Secretary General, European Landowners' Organization. However, the focus of subsidies on small farmers was "a major mistake", he said. The idea that "public support should go especially those who need it the most is politically very convenient, but economically and ethnically flawed... it is not the small farmer who was able to deliver most to productivity, nor to deliver most towards sustainability. We are not going to reach those very big goals just by promoting small land ownership, small farmers."

Coming from the Copenhagen climate think-tank CONCITO, Simone HØJTE described the Vision as "a patchwork of aspirations." It needs to be much more inspiring, she said, and to connect with climate targets. Climate policy, she said, must not be developed in a vacuum but in discussions with all players.

Resilience to climate change is key, said Blaž KURNIK, Head of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation, European Environment Agency. Europe is the fastest warming continent with the highest impact of climate change; agriculture is the sector with the most exposure to climate change. He also highlighted the challenge of fostering a systemic approach to agriculture, noting that decision-making is often fragmented across different ministries, making complex solutions difficult to implement simply.

Speaking as someone who works "right in the middle of the supply chain", sourcing crops, producing compound feed, and feeding animals, Kiki KUIPER of Cargill emphasized that collaboration across the entire supply chain is essential for creating a more sustainable food system. Companies throughout the supply chain have established their own emission reduction targets but reaching them requires shared innovation and R&D efforts. The key challenge is the need to move toward common European frameworks.

Panel Session 3: Putting Agri-Food System Transformation in the Geopolitical Context

How can agriculture and food systems be strengthened in the face of today's geopolitical landscape and critical challenges like climate change, trade, sustainability, resilience, and the war in Ukraine?

Tassos HANIOTIS, Special Advisor for Sustainable Productivity, Forum for the Future of Agriculture, and Senior Guest Research Scholar at IIASA, identified three primary geopolitical threats facing agriculture: the "old budget" (complicated by EU enlargement, with Ukraine as a key factor), trade (which he acknowledged provides immense benefits despite current questioning), and climate change. He proposed three key actions: Preserving trade openness within the EU. Embracing openness to science to identify and implement solutions. Focusing on harmonizing metrics for environmental footprints.

Perspectives from Europe, Ukraine and Canada

Brian VINTER, Vice Dean at Aarhus University, Denmark, stressed that resilience is key. The agri-food system must shift from single-product optimization to a more resilient, systemic approach, integrating energy, water, and food, to transform current challenges into advantages for the European food system.

Andrii DYKUN, Chairman of the Ukrainian Agri Council, highlighted the remarkable resilience of Ukraine and its farmers: Ukraine is now exporting the same volume of grain as before the war, with some sectors, like dairy, even producing more last year.

Tyler MCCANN, CEO of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, joining live online from Ottawa, explained Canada's unavoidable dependency on the US. Europe, however, hasn't always been a willing partner for international cooperation, sometimes setting trade terms that others must follow rather than collaborating on common solutions.

Building a Sustainable Future

Summarising the regional conference, Hanne SØNDERGAARD of Arla Foods reflected on several key takeaways: food must be seen as critical infrastructure; the complexity of the challenges needs to be recognized; and incentives should be performance-driven.



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Who Deserves Agricultural Support? Rethinking Fairness for a Resilient CAP



Dr. Jurgen TACK
Secretary-General, ELO

As representative of Europe's private landowners and professional farming families, I welcome the Commission's renewed attention to agriculture's future. COM(2025) 75 rightly recognises farming as essential for food security, vibrant rural communities, and landscape stewardship. Yet, its assumption that support should prioritise those "most in need" is politically convenient but economically and ethically flawed, risking a shift of agricultural policy into a social welfare tool.

Agriculture is not a welfare system; it is a strategic business sector. Public funds should reward farmers who deliver measurable public goods through professional, sustainable practices. Need alone should not determine subsidy allocation unless coupled with performance.

Aligning with EBAF's Strategic Concerns

Recent discussions at the European Board on Agriculture and Food (EBAF) echo these concerns. Consensus on general principles should not hide disagreement over proposals like targeting subsidies primarily towards the "most in need."

"In other sectors, public funding rewards clear outcomes such as innovation and sustainability. Agriculture must follow the same logic. CAP funds should prioritise measurable results: food production, biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration, rural employment, and technological advancement."

Breaking the Binary: Small vs. Large Farms

Farm size is not a reliable indicator of environmental responsibility or efficiency. Capping payments solely based on scale penalises precisely those who can deliver the greatest public value. Larger, professional farms often possess the scale, resources, and capacity necessary for meaningful innovation and

sustainability. Administrative simplification should benefit all farmers, ensuring that those best positioned to deliver EU goals are treated as valued partners, not as obstacles.

Recognising Landowners' Contribution

Narrow eligibility criteria overlook landowners' critical contributions. Landowners frequently facilitate sustainable agriculture through long-term leases, conservation management, and rural infrastructure investments. Restrictive policies undermine this vital stewardship and resilience.

The Commission rightly highlights profitability, professionalisation, generational renewal, and innovative financing tools such as nature and carbon credits. These commendable steps, however, will fall short if support remains rooted in redistribution based on perceived need rather than performance and impact.

Investing in Solutions

The Commission's goals - innovation, generational renewal, and market resilience - require targeted investment rather than fragmented redistribution based solely on need. A future CAP must support entrepreneurial farmers, regardless of size, to implement scalable solutions such as carbon farming, regenerative agriculture, digital technologies, and renewable energy.

We urge the Commission and Member States to resist the temptation to turn agricultural policy into a social safety net. Instead, let us reward the delivery of tangible public goods through competitive, professional farming. Let us strengthen Europe's food sovereignty by investing in success.

In doing so, we will not only secure the livelihoods of those who farm today, but also attract the next generation of farmers and land managers.



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Deep Dive on the Danish Green Transition – ELO General Assembly in Copenhagen



Kyia KANANI
Policy Assistant, ELO

Denmark last year introduced the first agricultural emission tax in Europe, a compelling benchmark in Europe's green transition. Against this backdrop, and ahead of the Denmark rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU for the second half of 2025, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) General Assembly convened in Copenhagen to examine the links between agriculture, climate policy, and rural innovation. The exchange with Minister Jeppe BRUUS outlined Denmark's environmental strategy, while discussions addressed EU policy gaps, trade tensions, soil health, carbon credits, and forestry regulations highlighting the need for inclusive, evidence-based climate action.

Guest Speaker: Jeppe BRUUS, Minister for Green Transition, Denmark

A highlight of the ELO General Assembly (GA) was the key-note address by Jeppe BRUUS, Denmark's Minister for Green Transition. He outlined Denmark's ambitious climate strategy, notably their 70% emissions reduction target by 2030 - currently at 54%, exceeding their mid-term goal. Minister BRUUS emphasized integrating environmental goals with economic policy. He gave the example of negotiating with concrete producers to reduce emissions through co-financed CSR efforts, avoiding punitive measures that might drive businesses abroad. Top priorities include water quality improvement, peatland restoration, and a 40% increase in forested areas for biodiversity.



From left to right Thierry de l'ESCAILLE and Jeppe BRUUS

He explained Denmark's success in building consensus on green policy. He highlighted that other sectors' early environmental commitments set a standard that made it easier to bring agriculture on board. Furthermore he emphasized that Denmark's landmark agricultural emissions tax, the first of its kind in Europe, also has a 60% discount for farmers investing in green practices, showcasing the Danish goal of developing a cooperative model for environmental consensus.

A key point was that all tax revenue is reinvested in agriculture and environmental initiatives. Denmark also created a fund to help swap robust land from retiring farmers with more polluting farms with active farmers, directly encouraging more sustainable practices. The country's 2045 net-zero target underpins this long-term vision.

Key Policy and Strategic Priorities

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, ELO Executive President and Jurgen TACK, ELO Secretary General moderated an exchange among others about raising concerns of the EU's slow biotech approval process seen as an obstacle to modern, sustainable agriculture. It was followed by an exchange on the tense EU-Mercosur free trade agreement, arguing that while meat imports may rise only marginally, Brazil's advanced sugar production technologies pose real competition.

Other issues included the future role of the pilot EU Land Observatory which should be launched in a few weeks time. Soil Health and Nature Credits were also high on the agenda, stressing that CAP reforms should reward farmers contributing to productivity and sustainability – as they are the ones who deserve it.

Wildlife Estates Label

Among ELO's priority actions an emphasis was given to the Wildlife Estate Label (WE) which has been gaining popularity as a tool to recognize conservation on private land. Being a voluntary network of exemplary estates committed to sustainable land use and wildlife management practices, it covers more than 2 million hectares with over 580 estates spanning 19 countries and continues to grow steadily.

The next ELO GA will take place in Brussels on December 2, followed by the first edition of the conference on "Innovative by Nature" on December 3.

Wolves at a Crossroad: Conservation and Coexistence Challenges in the EU



Delphine DUPEUX
Director of Parliament Relations Intergroup,
ELO

Europe's wolves are back - and their return is sparking one of the most dynamic and complex conservation debates in recent History. Once nearly extinct, wolf populations have made a remarkable comeback, thanks to decades of strict protection under the EU Habitats Directive. Their resurgence is now testing the limits of coexistence in many rural regions. This ignites urgent questions about how to balance biodiversity goals with the realities of agriculture.

A Shift in EU Policy: Flexibility over Rigidity

On 9 April 2025, the European Parliament's "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" intergroup hosted a high-profile online event - Downlisting the Wolf: A Way Forward for the EU - co-organized with the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE). Over 250 stakeholders, including lawmakers, scientists, farmers, and conservationists, gathered to discuss the key policy proposal to adjust the wolf's protection status from "strictly protected" to "protected" under the Bern Convention.

The European Commission argues that this policy recalibration will enable member states to adopt more flexible, region-specific management tools without abandoning the EU's overarching conservation obligations. MEPs Juan Ignacio ZOIDO and Herbert DORFMANN strongly endorsed the proposal. They stress that national authorities need practical tools to address growing human-wildlife conflicts, especially in pastoral areas.

Flexibility with Responsibility

Andrea VETTORI, head of biodiversity at DG Environment, reiterated that maintaining a favourable conservation status remains a legal requirement. However, he emphasized that flexibility is essential to meet diverse regional realities. John LINNELL, senior researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, described the move as a "new phase in wolf conservation" - one that calls for adaptive management, ongoing monitoring, and shared responsibility across governance levels.

From the agricultural sector, Copa-Cogeca's Niall CURLEY advocated for science-based, balanced policies that both protect nature and secure rural livelihoods, including proper compensation mechanisms.

The Debate is Far from Settled

Not all voices support the downlisting. Friedrich WULF of Friends of the Earth Europe questioned the scientific rationale for loosening protections, warning that some wolf populations remain in an unfavourable state. He cautioned that unmanaged flexibility could backfire, leading to increased conflict and undermining conservation gains. He urged member states to reinforce non-lethal prevention strategies and retain strict protections where ecologically justified.





ELO's Leadership on Practical Coexistence

ELO has emerged as a pivotal actor in this policy landscape. Dr. Jurgen TACK, who moderated the Intergroup event, emphasized the need for a clear, science-driven definition of conservation success to avoid unnecessary polarization and foster constructive dialogue. As a partner in the Horizon Europe COCO (Coexisting with Carnivores) project, which promotes tailored coexistence strategies in rural landscapes across Europe, ELO is increasing its implication to find adequate solutions.

Dr. Jurgen TACK, who moderated the Intergroup event, emphasized the need for a clear, science-driven definition of conservation success to avoid unnecessary polarization and foster constructive dialogue.

Further cementing its role, ELO co-chairs the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores, a crucial forum for stakeholder engagement and policy alignment. Recently, ELO took part in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos platform meeting in Ioannina, Greece, which tackled regional challenges in southeastern Europe. Furthermore, ELO was invited in the framework of the EU Platform to the International Wolf Ecology and Manage-

ment Conference (2–6 June, Lunteren, Netherlands), where it co-hosted workshops on cross-border cooperation and the development of regional platforms.

Why This Matters Now

What's unfolding is not just a debate about wolves - it's a test case for how the EU manages ecological recovery in a densely populated, multi-use landscape. Can Europe create policies that are at once science-based, socially acceptable, and regionally adaptable?

This moment marks a turning point. Engaging with these developments isn't just important - it's essential for anyone interested in environmental governance, biodiversity strategy, or the socio-ecological fabric of rural Europe.



"Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" Intergroup



ELO
European Landowners' Organisation

**Intergroup
secretariat**

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Farming for Pollinators Yields Economic and Ecological Gains



Leonor Cesar das Neves,
Policy Officer, ELO

Pollinators support around 75% of major crops, especially fruits and vegetables - but their populations are in alarming decline. This growing crisis was at the heart of the *Safeguard Science-Policy Conference 2025*, held on April 2nd. The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and ELO convened leading voices from science, farming, business, and policy. The conference explored how pollinator-friendly farming practices can unlock both ecological resilience and economic opportunity.

Pollinators as Economic Cornerstones

The opening session of the conference sent a clear message: protecting pollinators goes far beyond saving bees. Tom BREEZE (University of Reading) presented data showing pollinators support around 75% of major crops, especially fruits and vegetables. Their global agricultural value lies between \$235–\$577 billion annually. Yet populations are in sharp decline, threatened by land-use changes, pesticides, and climate change. BREEZE stressed that relying solely on managed honeybees is unsustainable. The solution lies in protecting a broader range of pollinator species and the habitats they rely on - an issue with far-reaching implications for food security and environmental resilience.

Pollinator Loss Is a Business Risk

Georgios KLEFTODIMOS (CIHEAM Montpellier) focused on farmers' dilemma: conservation often lacks a short-term economic return. Although EU agri-environment schemes support habitat restoration and pesticide reduction, engagement remains limited. For crops less reliant on pollinators, returns of conservation of bees are unclear. Evelyn UNDERWOOD (IEEP) moderated a panel bringing together actors from across the food chain. Athanasios MANDIS (Innocent Drinks) explained that 86% of their ingredients depend on pollinators - making their decline a business risk. Casey WOODWARD (AgriSound) argued that digital tools for monitoring pollinator activity can offer farmers and buyers actionable insights. However, technology and policy must align to make sustainable practices attractive, especially for small and medium-sized farms.

Incentives, Markets, and Wild Pollinators

The conversation moved to structural challenges. Franc BOGOVIČ (former MEP and apple grower) underlined that many farmers wish to adopt greener methods, but current markets rarely reward them. While European consumers spend 12% of income on food, only a fraction reaches farmers. Shifting just a small portion of retail prices to sustainability could unlock funding. Andreas ZIERMANN (Lake Constance Foundation) presented a successful model: German retailer REWE worked with 500+ farmers on pollinator-friendly measures, funded through the supply chain. One key takeaway: wild pollinators - often overlooked - are vital for biodiversity and resilient agriculture. More data, economic incentives, and policy support are needed to mainstream such approaches across Europe.

Nature's Benefits in Practice

The second session, "Safeguarding Nature's Benefits," emphasised biodiversity as a public good. Corina MAURER (Agroscope, Switzerland) showed how flower-rich habitats increase



From left to right Athanasios MANDIS, Franc BOGOVIČ,
Andreas ZIERMANN, Casey WOODWARD, Alicia CLEMENTS

wild bee populations and species richness. Andree CAPPELARI (University of Padua) explained that semi-natural habitats - like calcareous grasslands - support both pollinators and ecosystem services such as soil fertility and water retention. Fields with only cereal crops scored poorly on both counts. In the panel that followed, Lorenzo CIMATTI (Granlatte & Granarolo) shared their award-winning collaboration with CONAPI, Europe's largest beekeeping cooperative. By encouraging farmers to sow nectar-rich flowers, the project won the 2024 ELO Bee Award. It demonstrated how supply chains can help scale biodiversity-friendly practices.

From Meadows to Policy Reform

Alicia CLEMENTS (Birr Castle Bee Estate, Ireland) offered a farm-level perspective. Over four years, her team expanded from wildflower meadows to managing trees, hedgerows, and nesting areas for native bees. Unexpected nest sites - like decaying wood - revealed the value of diverse landscapes. Andreas GUMBERT (European Commission, DG Environment) highlighted the EU Nature Restoration Regulation, which mandates national pollinator recovery plans. Although no specific EU budget line is dedicated to pollinators, funds from CAP, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and LIFE can support efforts. Ireland's Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) was

cited as an innovative model that pays farmers based on the biodiversity quality of their land - offering results-based rewards.

Future-Proofing Biodiversity with Youth and Innovation

Pier Luigi REMOLI (Associazione Giovani Imprenditori Agricoli) represented a new generation of farmers motivated by sustainability. Yet they face challenges: high land prices, limited access to credit, and growing climate risks. Gumbert pointed to a €48 billion annual funding gap for EU biodiversity restoration. Bridging it requires public-private coordination, with tools like nature credits. However, these must be credible and regulated to avoid greenwashing. CLEMENTS echoed the need for transparency. Farmers must trust that sustainability schemes deliver real outcomes. Administrative burden also remains a barrier. Simplifying CAP procedures in the 2027 reform is on the agenda - but must not come at the cost of environmental ambition. This event was part of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture Annual Conference activities.



Apply to the 2025 Call for Projects of the François Sommer Foundation

Funding applied research for wildlife conservation in France, Europe, and Africa

The François Sommer Foundation has launched its 2025 Call for Projects, inviting new proposals dedicated to the **conservation and restoration of wildlife and its natural habitats**. With a total budget of **500,000 euros**, the Foundation seeks to support **applied research and research-action projects** that deliver practical, replicable, and impactful solutions for biodiversity.

This annual call is open to a wide range of applicants, including **associations, federations, conservatories, companies, and research institutions**. The eligible projects must focus on the **conservation or rehabilitation of wildlife and its ecosystems**, with actions to be implemented in **France, Europe, or Africa**.

Applications for the 2025 Call for Projects are open until **1 September 2025**. For institutions and professionals working on forward-thinking conservation strategies, this represents a unique opportunity to gain financial backing and visibility for impactful initiatives.

Apply at: fondationfrancoissommer.org/appele-a-projets-fondation-francois-sommer



Soil in Focus: Turning Soil Science into Real-World Solutions

On 31 March 2025, the SOILGUARD Final Conference brought together researchers, policymakers, land managers, and industry leaders in Brussels to reflect on four years of EU-funded research. Their shared mission: to turn soil biodiversity knowledge into practical, climate-resilient solutions for land users across Europe. The results revealed both the complexity of soils and the potential to align productivity with sustainability. A call emerged for closer collaboration, stronger science-policy links, and better tools for farmers.

Tailored Soils, Tailored Strategies

SOILGUARD delivered a clear message: soil is not a one-size-fits-all solution for local climate, land use, and terrain shape underground biodiversity. Research confirmed what many land managers already knew - soil conditions vary and matter. Management strategies must reflect regional realities, not universal formulas.

Soil Biodiversity and Yields: No Trade-offs

Contrary to common fears, SOILGUARD showed that protecting soil biodiversity does not reduce crop productivity. On the contrary, biodiverse soils support healthier yields over time. This gives farmers hope that they can achieve both short-term output and long-term resilience.

Climate Pressure and the Need for Resilience

Climate change adds urgency. Rising temperatures and prolonged droughts are accelerating biodiversity loss, especially in



From left to right: Diedrich DE GHELLINCK, Geert MAGONA VAN DER MEER, Tamás KRISZTIN, Ana ROCHA. Online: Nataliya ZINYCH



Ranya CHEHHAR
Project Officer, ELO



Eleonore RAYNAL-PEČENÝ
Communication officer, ELO

croplands. Future land-use strategies must be climate-adaptive from the start, with resilience built into both policy and practice.

The Human Element: Perceptions Vary

People across Europe perceive soil's role in well-being differently. These views must inform both science and policy. Engaging a wide range of land users is essential to develop effective, regionally appropriate solutions.

A Tool for Farmers: The SoilGuardians App

A key output of the project is the SoilGuardians App - a decision-support tool for farmers. It allows users to evaluate how their management choices affect soil biodiversity and ecosystem functions, helping them make informed, sustainable decisions.

Improving Soil Monitoring: Indicators that Matter

Speakers from DG AGRI, DG ENV, and NaBU called for improved soil health monitoring. It's time to go beyond carbon content. Harmonised, flexible indicators - backed by fair, trusted data-sharing with farmers - are vital for success.

Policy That Works: Put the Horse Before the Cart

"Put the horse in front of the cart," said Tassos HANIOTIS, stressing that evidence must guide policymaking - not the contrary. As Sophie HÉLAINE of DG AGRI added, "We need to know what works, how to assess it, and how to incentivise it."

The Takeaway: Soil is the Starting Point

The conference concluded with a call to reinforce cooperation among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. With the right knowledge, tools, and trust, Europe can move from insight to impact - ensuring that healthy soils support thriving landscapes now and into the future.

This event was part of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture Annual Conference activities.

SOILGUARD

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union Horizon 2020 under the Grant Agreement number SEP-200673565, SOILGUARD project under the topic Sustainable Food Security.

An Afternoon at Biowanze Factory: Where Policy Meets Practice

After our wide ranging discussions in the Parliament on biofuels (see article p 14), ELO and ePURE - the European renewable ethanol association - organized a field visit to Biowanze, one of Europe's leading producers of renewable ethanol. Joined by Members of the European Parliament and sector leaders, participants saw firsthand how certified, locally sourced raw materials are transformed into sustainable energy.



Biowanze, member of the Südzucker Group, operates under strict sustainability standards, using agricultural raw materials mainly of local origin, brought by boat along the Meuse river. This approach supports both the environment and the rural economy, sourcing directly from local farmers, training and recruiting personnel in the local community.

The facility produces much more than ethanol. It delivers foodstuffs, natural fertilisers, green electricity, and animal feed - contributing to Europe's protein supply and reducing dependence on soya imports. Wheat bran not used in the ethanol process is recovered and used in a biomass boiler that powers a high-efficiency cogeneration system. The surplus electricity supports the nearby Wanze sugar refinery, a CO₂ liquefaction site, and the public grid.

The visit provided a unique opportunity for real-time dialogue between policymakers, landowners, and industry experts. Discussions addressed regulatory challenges, innovation, and



Delphine DUPEUX
Director of Parliament Relations Intergroup,
ELO

the practical realities of achieving the EU's green objectives. Experiences like this ensure that policy is informed by practice.

The day demonstrated that sustainability is not only an ambition but a reality when stakeholders work together. The visit to Biowanze highlighted the importance of partnership and field-based engagement in shaping Europe's renewable future.



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Feeding and Fueling Europe: Can Agriculture Power Europe's Clean Energy Future?



Laura TICOIU,
Policy Officer, ELO

Can Europe grow its own energy without threatening food production or overburdening its farmers? That question took center stage at the "Biofuels: Growing Sustainable Energy" event, hosted by MEP Elsi KATAINEN on June 5th, 2025 at the European Parliament. Stakeholders from across the agriculture, energy, and policy sectors gathered to discuss how biofuels can support the EU's energy transition, strengthen rural economies, and protect food sovereignty. The takeaway? With clear rules, cooperation, and innovation, Europe can deliver both food and fuel. And it can do it sustainably.



An Urgent Need for Renewable Fuels

Europe's energy and agriculture sectors stand at a strategic crossroads. As the EU races to meet its 2050 climate neutrality goals, the demand for renewable transport fuels is set to triple. Biofuels, particularly those derived from crops, residues, and intermediate biomass, are positioned to play a crucial role. But the sector faces major regulatory headwinds.

Fragmented Policy Holds Back Progress

Speakers at the "Biofuels: Growing Sustainable Energy" event voiced mounting frustration over policy inconsistencies. Crop-based biofuels, long a backbone of EU renewable energy strategy, are now increasingly sidelined by the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III), the Energy Taxation Directive, and SAF rules in aviation and maritime sectors. Critics warn that this patchwork of rules could stall investment, undermine farm income, and leave Europe dependent on less sustainable imports.

Taxing the Solution Like the Problem

"We're treating the solution like the problem," argued David CARPINTERO of ePURE. "Crop-based ethanol is taxed like fossil fuel. That makes no sense and it's killing confidence in the market."

Innovation Reduces the Carbon Footprint

From the agricultural side, stakeholders urged policymakers to trust European farmers and their commitment to sustainability. Corteva Agriscience and John Deere both emphasized that innovation in seed breeding and precision agriculture has dramatically reduced the carbon footprint of biomass crops over

the past decade. These advances, they argue, allow farmers to produce both food and fuel - often using the same land more efficiently.

Diverse Solutions for Agriculture

Deanna KOVAR of John Deere underscored the need for diverse solutions: "Electrification has its place, but not in heavy-duty agriculture. We need sustainable liquid fuels too."

Calls for greater inter-DG cooperation were loud and clear. While DG AGRI and DG ENER maintain there is no "turf war," stakeholders pushed for holistic impact assessments and more stable, long-term policy frameworks. As Ana RODRIGUEZ MANSILLA of ASAJA noted, "If farmers don't see income security, they'll walk away from biofuels entirely."

Food and Fuel: A Shared Future

The event closed with consensus around a core principle: Europe doesn't need to choose between food or fuel. It needs smart, soil-focused, innovation-driven policy that empowers farmers to deliver both sustainably. In the words of moderator Jurgen TACK: "It's not food or fuel. It's food and fuel. And it's about how we farm."

Co-hosted with

renew
europe.



BIOFUELS IN THE EU

DECARBONISING TRANSPORT REMAINS A MAJOR CHALLENGE REQUIRING ALL AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS



Dagmar DOLEJSI,
Project Officer, ELO

DID YOU KNOW?

The transport sector accounts for about



of global energy-related **CO₂** emissions.

The **EU** aims to cut transport emissions by



90%

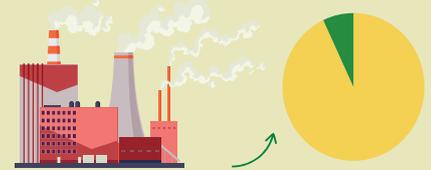
by

2050

compared to

1990

Yet as of **2021**, **93%** of road and rail transport energy still came from **fossil fuels**¹



EU-PRODUCED BIOFUELS BRING A RANGE OF BENEFITS

Lowering emissions

Strengthening **energy independence**



Supporting **European farmers**



with an alternative source of income.

Biodiesel use emits between **65%** to **90%**



less CO₂ than fossil diesel²

with every **Kg** of use reducing emissions by approximately **3 Kg**³

Biodiesel is an essential tool in the EU's strategy to cut total CO₂ emissions by

55 % by **2030**



and achieve

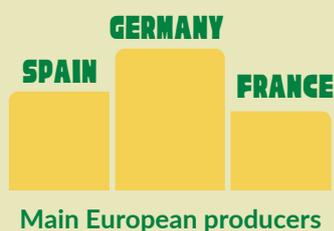
carbon neutrality in transport by 2050



BIOFUEL PRODUCTION IN THE EU

According to Eurostat data, the total production capacity of pure biodiesels in the **EU**

In 2023 was approximately **21.5 million tons per year**⁴



WHAT'S NEXT FOR BIOFUELS

Biofuels are key to the **EU** clean energy transition, supporting **climate goals**, **energy security**, and **rural economies**.

However, as highlighted by the European Court of Auditors in Special Report 29/2023, the lack of a long-term strategy and policy certainty undermines investment and slows progress.

A stable, performance-based framework is needed to ensure sustainability and drive innovation



Reference: [1] T&E: State of European Transport 2024; [2] JEC Well-To-Wheels Report v5, JRC, 2020; [3] Economic and Social Aspects of Applying Biodiesel Fuel in Road Transport, M. Skočibušić et al., 2010; [4] Eurostat DOI: https://doi.org/10.2908/NRG_INF_LBPC. More on ELO website.

Protect Pollinators, Preserve Biodiversity: Apply Now for the 2025 European Bee Award



Eleonore RAYNAL-PECENY,
Communication Officer, ELO



As pollinators decline at an alarming rate worldwide, protecting biodiversity and the ecosystem services it supports has become more urgent than ever. ELO, in partnership with John Deere, reaffirms its commitment by launching the 2025 edition of the European Bee Award.

Apply now!



Learn more!



A Prize for Ecological Innovation

Created to reward efforts in favour of pollinators and sustainable agriculture, the award is open to farmers, researchers, universities, landowners, and public or private organisations. It highlights projects that combine innovation with a positive impact on biodiversity across Europe.

Focusing on Technological Solutions

The 2025 edition will pay special attention to “innovative technological solutions.” Projects using new or existing technologies to reduce agriculture’s negative impact on pollinators will be strongly valued. This may include optimising the timing of treatments or improving harvesting methods.

Awards that Inspire

One main prize of €4,000 will be awarded, along with a diploma and promotion through ELO and John Deere’s communication channels. A special jury mention will also spotlight a small-scale or particularly innovative project to encourage its replication across Europe.

Applications Open Until 6 September

The jury, chaired by Dr Michael GARATT, will bring together experts from the EU, academia, and NGOs. They will select projects with measurable impact on pollinators, biodiversity, and ecosystem services in agriculture. Applications are open until 6 September 2025. Winners are expected to attend the Award Ceremony in Brussels.

Let’s increase our food supply
without
reducing theirs

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