

# CountrySide

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**Forum for the  
Future of Agriculture®**

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meet for an open dialogue

**Building the transatlantic partnership  
for a more resilient and sustainable, and  
climate-smart food and agriculture system**

Janez POTOČNIK, Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, Jason HAFEMEISTER



# Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Secretary General*

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*European public authorities seem to find it increasingly difficult to make themselves understood in the countryside. Is this because they have an urban minded authority?*

*Let us not generalise, as this is not the case for all nor for all institutions, but we are left to fear the damage done by the politicisation of a problem that should in reality be a matter of simple common sense.*

*The rural world today perceives Natura 2000 as a failure at best, a deception at worst, and the ambition of the "Green Deal", which aims to fine-tune this network, is therefore felt to be a policy that deprives the actors on the ground of their reality. There are enough sensible people to escape? the divide and understand that there is no room for top-down solutions.*

*There should be an urgent call for a vast consultation, beyond the good will of the decision-makers who maintain the dialogue, in order to stop the irreconcilable gap being created between the environmental world and the managers of rural areas who should be natural partners. We are observing too much agitation in the rural world resulting in the multiplication of generalised discontent and demonstrations.*

*The ELO urgently calls on all actors in this debate (rural stakeholders, NGOs and public authorities) to develop solutions together considering a positive balance between private interest and common good. This will enable all to take ownership of the objectives and generate the results that need to be achieved.*



Participants to the event on the transatlantic partnership



Mark TITTERINGTON, Robert BONNIE



Lukas VISEK



Maciej GOLUBIEWSKI

## Building the transatlantic partnership for a more resilient and sustainable, and climate-smart food and agriculture system

To continue the transatlantic dialogue on December 2022 the Forum hosted a program bringing together stakeholders on both sides of the Atlantic to discuss how the European Union and the United States can work together to build a more resilient, sustainable, and climate-smart food and agriculture system.

ForumforAg Secretariat

Janez POTOČNIK, Chair of ForumforAg 2022 and Chairman the Rise Foundation; Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel of the United Nations Programme (UNEP), welcomed participants, especially the delegation which had travelled from the US. Noting that the meeting was taking place on World Soil Day, he said that together, the EU and the US, “have enormous influence and the ability to affect change on the big strategic challenges of our time”. Calling for full scale system change, he asked participants to bear certain questions in mind during their discussions. What is needed to take innovation further and faster? Who should work together to make ideas and innovation systemic? How would greater EU-US collaboration help?

### Investment in innovation for sustainable agriculture and the Green Deal ambition

Robert BONNIE, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, USDA, speaking online, explained the US approach towards global food security and climate change. In his keynote address, he pointed to the alignment between good agricultural practices and the environment, delivering benefits for the economy, productivity and climate. The BIDEN administration is using a farmer-led voluntary approach based on incentives, market opportunities, partnerships and collaboration, rather than top-down regulation, to encourage the necessary conservation practices, while ensuring productivity is maintained. He pointed to the \$2.8 billion investment in partnerships for climate smart commodities, the Inflation Reduction Act and other programmes enabling the government to share costs with the agricultural sector. He emphasised

the need to “focus on outcomes versus certain prescriptions”, on the importance of the US-EU partnership and exchange of information between their policymakers and farming communities.

Lukas VISEK Member of Cabinet, Executive Vice-President, European Green Deal, European Commission, set out some of the institution’s recent initiatives in his keynote speech. It has proposed a European soil strategy and will table a first ever soil health law, creating a regulatory framework as exists for other natural resources, such as water and biodiversity. This will be accompanied by an enabling environment of research and promotion of soil friendly practices, eco-schemes rewarding farmers for their stewardship of public goods and development of new business models. The Commission’s recent proposal for carbon removal certification aims to extract and store millions of tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere to help achieve climate neutrality by 2050. He stressed the need “to get into the paradigm of delivering on more than one objective”, pointing to the ability of precision agriculture to save costs and inputs, while raising farmers’ incomes. Farmers alone cannot deliver the transition. This must take place along the entire food chain, including tackling the 20% of food wasted in the EU every year.

### Panel discussion

Kerstin ROSENOW, Head of Unit Research and innovation, DG AGRI, European Commission, spoke of the need “to bridge the gap between practice and science, technology and application” to make social, economic and environmental sustainability

a reality. The EU was increasing investment in agricultural research, using a bottom-up approach taking account of local conditions. This was bringing benefits in areas such as soil recovery and replacement of synthetic fertilisers.

Jeremy ROLLISON, Senior Director, EU Government Affairs, Microsoft, explained the company is helping its customers “do more with the data and tools and requirements that they have in front of them”. These involve tracking and reporting obligations, sharing lessons on carbon removal and application of precision farming. The company works in partnership with its customers as it develops cloud and software solutions. “I think the green transition will only be successful if there’s a successful digital transition alongside.”

Shari ROGGE-FIDLER, CEO, Farm Foundation and practising farmer, described the organisation as a “do tank” trying to accelerate practical solutions for agriculture. It has four strategic priority areas: sustainability, digital agriculture, farmer health and trade. Her organisation recently launched the Global Forum on Farm Policy and Innovation with the Forum for the Future of Agriculture and other non-partisan, evidence-based bodies. She identified obstacles farmers face such as a decline in extension services and partners to provide advice and a shortage of labour.

Giulia RIEDO, Junior Policy Officer for agriculture and sustainable food, WWF EPO, noted that discussion on digital transition and technology in agriculture tended to focus on productivity and the economic side of sustainability. This needed to be broadened to “talking about how we are going to use our land and also shifting our



Session 1 participants



Session 2 participants

attention, not only on production, but also on the consumption side". The food industry has a key role to play in the transition since it influences what is sourced from farmers and offered to consumers.

Chris HARBOUR, Chief Strategy Officer, Indigo Agriculture, presented the voluntary carbon programme his company has developed using soil as the sequestration. This involves "educating the buyers, educating the growers, pulling that together and then actually issuing credits". The programme producing real, measurable and repeatable carbon credits now operates in 32 US states and expanded to India, South America and Europe. "These programmes really come down to financing vehicles that incentivise behaviour change and work with growers," he said, calling for a minimum price or support for farmers to expand its appeal.

#### Defining and delivering on sustainable trade objectives

Jason HAFEMEISTER, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, USDA, the first of two key speakers, identified productivity as the key for farmers to both provide food and protect the environment. An open, transparent, market-oriented and predictable trading system is essential. The system should not restrict trade in products from new technologies; should include objective health and safety standards which can't be used as protectionism; help build the market for climate smart production; and encourage global exchange of information and sharing of best practice. Trade is "the cornerstone of the approach to a sustainable system".

Maciej GOLUBIEWSKI, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner for Agriculture at the European Commission and second key speaker said the EU was "open for business in our agricultural model and export model and trade model". It is supporting a global transition towards more sustainable agri-food systems. The EU includes sustainable food systems provisions in its trade agreements as "a way to transfer those commitments that we have to how we deal with our partners". He acknowledged that while the EU and US agree on the need for open trade, the "question of how to get there on sustainability" is still under discussion. "There is understanding that we can work together on this," he concluded, adding:

*"There is a realisation that sustainability has to become part and parcel of free trade."*

#### Panel discussion on trade, sustainability and productivity

Marta ZULUAGA ZILBERMANN, VP Government Relations Europe, Middle East & Africa, Cargill, described the company's role as "to get food from where it is produced to where it is needed", working with farmers and customers in over 70 countries. Trade must remain open to allow companies to handle unforeseen events like the pandemic, adapt to climate change and meet global food needs. Through its RegenConnect regenerative agriculture programme, Cargill is helping farmers to reduce fertilisers and end tillage, providing compensation, incentives, verification and measurement services, technical support and trying to find markets to reward producers for their new practices.

Jeffrey NAWN, CEO/Founder at North Hill Group, approached the discussion as a regulatory practitioner. Trade policy regimes, environmental and food safety risk assessments are struggling to keep up with the pace of innovation. "What you find in agricultural innovation firms, is that we go where were loved. And right now, that's not Europe." Instead the firms go to Central and South America, Japan and the Philippines where workable regulatory systems for gene edited products are in place. Without harmonised systems or a common goal, he predicted the gains from new technologies could be lost. "The key question is not can we make agricultural products more sustainable...It is can we sell those products when we do?"

John CLARKE, Director for International affairs, DG AGRI, European Commission, described sustainability and productivity as "mutually reinforcing". Open trade is probably conducive to more sustainable production due to comparative advantage with each partner playing to its strengths. However, countries need to put in place "explicit deliberate policies to make their production more sustainable, as we are trying to do in the European Union".

Alan MATTHEWS, Professor Emeritus of European Agricultural Policy, Trinity College, Dublin, agreed open trade has advantages, but suggested there was a case for limiting

access to the EU for clearly unsustainable products. Governments tend to use regulation against the negative externalities of unsustainability and "the problem for international trade is when national regulations differ". Regulations do not need to be the same everywhere, but cooperation between administrations could help avoid friction. A forum is needed to discuss sustainability standards and he noted the EU had proposed the mandate of the FAO's Codex Alimentarius Commission be extended from health and hygiene to include these.

Ted MCKINNEY, Chief Executive, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), criticised the EU's precautionary principle and elements of the Green Deal, arguing that between the US and the EU "there is a very wide chasm that seems to be getting wider". Quoting a study by the USDA Economic Research Service critical of recent EU initiatives, he said: "If some elements of farm to fork advance, it will be a dramatic deterrent to trade generally".

In response, Mr CLARKE described the American study as "very selective" with "some inherent limitations". The EU and US share the same objective of more climate friendly agriculture, but differ in how to achieve the target. "I think our approach is perfectly legitimate, is based on science, is not protectionist and is not discriminatory," he said. Mr GOLUBIEWSKI also pointed out that farm to fork is a political, aspirational strategy containing flexibility and safeguards, not a legislative document.

#### Closing session

Alain-Dominique QUINTART, Head of Government & Public Affairs EAME, Syngenta, summarised some of the key points to emerge from the two panels. Innovation is key and smart agriculture can help tackle climate change. Free trade is critical, new business models can be created and enabling conditions need to be further developed. Sustainability and productivity are mutually enforcing. "That's the motto of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture."

To watch the recording of the full discussion: [www.forumforag.com](http://www.forumforag.com)



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# The UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal

*Between December 7 and 19, 2022 more than 20,000 delegates from governments around the world gathered in Montreal, Canada, to discuss and agree on a new set of goals to guide global action for biodiversity to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.*

Jurgen TACK, ELO Scientific Director

“The world is watching you,” delegates were reminded throughout the two-week meeting. And indeed, after the failure of the Climate Conference in Egypt just a couple of weeks before, the whole world was watching the outcome of this meeting.

**“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”**

*George Bernard SHAW*

The meeting, officially called the ‘15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15)’, adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) addressing the key drivers of nature loss to secure our own health and well-being alongside that of the planet. Approximately 25% of species in all assessed animal and plant groups are now threatened. Overall, the global rate of species extinction has increased to many hundreds of times

higher than previously seen on our planet over the last 10 million years. Among the most important causes are changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution, and invasive alien species. Because of the magnitude of the present loss of biodiversity, there is a need for a transformative change at all levels including an urgent reassessment of economic activities. Facilitating this transformative process was the main objective of the 2022 UN Biodiversity Conference. After a failed climate COP in Egypt, the meeting in Montreal encountered high expectations from civil society and broad attention from the media.

Most important outcomes of this COP 15 were:

- Adoption of an equitable and comprehensive framework matched by the resources needed for implementation
- Clear targets to address overexploitation, pollution, fragmentation, and unsustainable agricultural practices
- A plan that safeguards the rights of indigenous peoples and recognises their contributions as stewards of nature



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- Finance for biodiversity and alignment of financial flows with nature to drive finances toward sustainable investments and away from environmentally harmful ones

While the world is applauding the outcomes of the Montreal meeting, we must admit that the meeting also missed a few opportunities:

- financial commitments towards developing countries should have been higher;
- there should have been a time-bound trajectory for the aim of halting species extinction;
- the target for the sustainable management of productive areas should apply beyond primary industries
- meaningful decisions on biodiversity and climate change
- mainstreaming biodiversity.

Overall, the adoption of the GBF package was seen as a well-balanced compromise bringing the world a step closer to living in harmony with nature.

One major question remains: is the Global Biodiversity Framework able to transform biodiversity governance, halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity, and will it be able to align human activities and population growth with the much-needed biological processes on our planet?

The European Landowners' Organization recognises the need for change and sees many opportunities for private landowners to participate in the process. At the same time ELO warns to not undermine the three pillars of sustainability: ecology, economy, and the social aspects as all three pillars are needed to come to long lasting solutions implemented by all relevant stakeholders.



Open letter addressed to the members  
of the European Parliament on February 15<sup>th</sup>

## **On the draft report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on nature restoration (COM (2022)0304 – C9-0208/2022 – 2022/0195(COD))**

Climate change is impacting the European ecosystems to a degree we still not fully understand but important decisions have to be made today. We are aware that, in face of the multiple crises, there is the temptation to prioritize short-term gains at the expense of sustainable solutions. A long-term approach is however of crucial importance to cope with the more regular extreme events we will face. With this new regulation, we need to look beyond the traditional view on protection and restoration. Ecologic, social and economic sustainability can only be reached when focusing on the provision of ecosystem services in function of climate change and biodiversity loss.

As long as short term quantitative targets remain the main objective of nature related policies, we will miss opportunities to make significant qualitative improvements. Important results are expected on a short-term basis, without any clarity on the adequate definitions, indicators and even aims in the long term. Without clear reference to key instruments and means available it is difficult, not to say impossible, to design workable methodologies in each Member State. The question of means is crucial, particularly as the EU's proposal covers 20% of the ALL Union's area, and not only degraded land, as stated in the Kunming-Montreal Framework - to which the EU is a signatory - where action is needed in 30% of degraded areas by 2030. The complexity and required deadlines as they are proposed seem to be the perfect recipe for an incomplete top-down approach that will lead to more questions and frustrations as targets will, again, not be reached. On top we face the uncertainties that climate change is and will continue to create.

Landowners and land managers will be most affected by the implementation of this plan. We can only succeed in the ambitious targets if the responsibility of each stakeholder is clear, understood and agreed on from the beginning. We need to build on previous discussions and learn from past mistakes, particularly if the ones asked to act are not involved from the start and the support system is absent. Even with a coherent and effective legal framework, this level of ambition will require an unprecedented mobilization of resources. Finding innovative mechanisms seems more than necessary. The ELO regrets the lack of focus on incentives and the absence of private land conservation tools, even though the Commission has spent considerable resources on studying and confirming their effectiveness and their role in providing crucial test cases and pilot projects for biodiversity improvements. A certain level of autonomy and flexibility is a fundamental value of landowners and land managers that influences their willingness to engage in conservation agreements or programs. A set of relevant tools has been identified as beneficial for both conservation organizations and individual landowners in Europe, and it will be a crucial loss if this potential is not fully elaborated at this key moment.

All of the measures being proposed will ultimately impinge on individual, usually, single-family farmers or foresters, land managers who are already impacted by multisectoral crises. They are willing to contribute but the only recipe for success is to include them as real partners.

To that end, we suggest the following three action points, with corresponding changes to the text presented in Annex to this letter:

- (1) A safeguard clause should be included in many measures to take into account the importance of the effects of climate change on ecosystems and allow for the consideration of economic and social impacts and beyond.
- (2) Align with the global restoration goal; set the restoration target for degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems
- (3) Make sure to protect property rights and use existing tools to boost private land conservation

For more information contact Delphine DUPEUX at [delphine.dupeux@elo.org](mailto:delphine.dupeux@elo.org)

# Climate-ready EU forests

*Jurgen TACK, Scientific director of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), welcomed participants to the European Biodiversity Conference on Climate-ready EU forests. He underlined the urgency of addressing forest climate-readiness in both a technical and political manner. In other words: forest resilience to climate change and its active contribution to tackle climate change.*

Pauline PIRLOT, ELO

Simone SCHMIEDTBAUER, member of the European Parliament (EPP), Vice-Chair of the Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside, and Vice-Chair of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, gave an opening word. She explained that *'forests suffer from and are part of the solutions to climate change at the same time'*. On that basis, she emphasised the need to raise awareness of forest potential to tackle climate change while being vulnerable to it and identify the right compensation and incentive for landowners and managers to take an active role in this discussion. Without their expertise, she explained, EU framework on forests will not *'reflect reality on the ground'*.

Roby BIWER, member of the Commission for Environment, Climate change and Energy and the Commission for Natural Resources of the Committee of the Regions, completed the opening address. He drew attention to forest vulnerabilities originating from climate change, such as drought, fire, pests, and strong winds. These not only threaten forests, but also their biodiversity and biomass useable for energy purposes. He suggested regionally tailored approaches to forest management and increasing EU forest funding to support forest owners and managers to adapt their practices. Indeed, *'they are the ones implementing the regulations at local, national, and European levels'*.

Keynote speaker Gert-Jan NABUURS, professor of European Forest Resources at Wageningen University and Research, and IPCC Coordinating lead author, explored the relation between European forest productivity, their resilience, and their capacity to reduce or remove CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. He explained that European forest cover has increased since the 1980s and yet, harvest is growing slightly faster than forest increment, and forests suffer from climate change. Therefore, forest sinks are shrinking. In this context, Gert-Jan NABUURS introduced the concept of climate-smart forestry. He presented, as a potential solution to multifactor pressures on forests, aims at more stable forest productivity, fostering forest adaptation, and enhancing carbon absorption. The rapidly changing policy arena, he said, is addressing opposing forces pulling forests into different directions. He insisted *'Member states have to open up, they have to accept the role of Brussels'*, as *'Brussels will not go away'*. He was confident that active collaboration between foresters and Brussels will lead to constructive endeavours and will overcome mutual misunderstandings.

## What strategies to adapt EU forests to climate change?

A first expert panel, moderated by Emmanuelle MIKOSZ of ELO, represented the European Commission. It spelled out EU engagement on forest management and climate change mitigation.

Argyro ZERVA, leader of the forestry team of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural development, began by outlining the priorities of the European



Lynx

Commission when it comes to forests. She underlined that even if forest restoration constitutes a first step towards forest resilience, concomitant developments must also be carried out. Among other things, she underpinned the need for research and innovation and forest monitoring, as tools of forest growth and sustainability. The Commission is developing such a framework, underpinning the EU Forest Strategy. Indeed, *"good policy needs good data. We need better and comparable data of forest management"*. Member states should also develop strategic plans for forests based on monitoring data collected, she added. Argyro ZERVA concluded that the Commission and stakeholders should work hand in hand. *"We are working to make [the Commission governance process] more inclusive and allow for open participation in all matters related to forest and policies in this area. We are building a new group that will work in interaction with stakeholders and civil society, which will become operational by 2030"*.

Peter LOFFLER, policy officer at the Directorate-General for Climate Action, made a strong statement: forests are going to change, either by design or by disaster. He firmly believes we must intervene in the structure of forests to be prepared for extreme events and minimise their impact. Climate change challenges the traditional perspectives on forests and forestry, he added. There-





Organisers, speakers and moderators of the conference

fore, the EU develops a policy framework to support forest adaptation. Peter Löffler underpinned EU agenda-setting, policies, fundings, and data and expertise exchange. These endeavours reflect that *'forest adaptation [...] needs to be done at every policy level, by all sectors and actors'*.

#### How to move concretely into action?

The second panel, moderated by Luc BAS, Head Coordinator, Network and Strategy at the European Environmental Agency, explored concrete actions to enhance forest climate readiness.

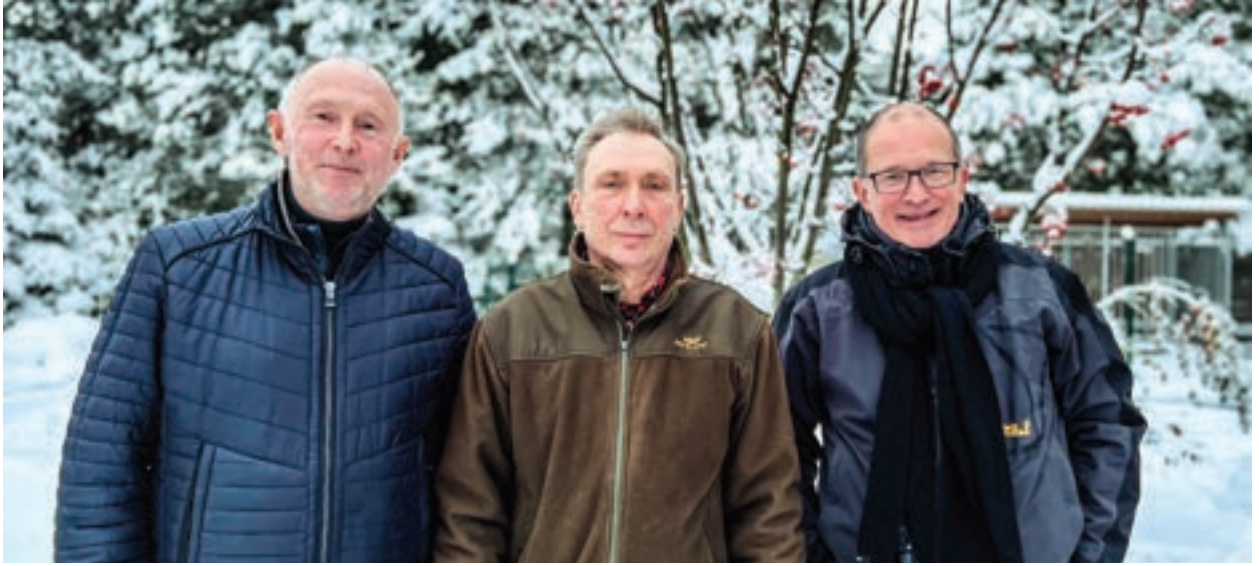
Els MARTENS, from the Jane GOODALL Institute, wishes to *'inspire hope to action'*. The Jane GOODALL Institute believes that forest planting, youth empowerment, and advocacy are complementary approaches for encouraging actions for climate resilient forests and biodiversity. Els MARTENS emphasised the role of younger generations *'for the future of forests at EU and international levels'*, as they are the citizens of today and of tomorrow. Voluntary carbon offsets should also be available for companies unable to reduce their emissions, underlining the international dimension of the forest-climate nexus.

Constantin KINSKY, Vice-president and member of the board of the Private Forests Chamber in the Czech Republic (SVOL) began his contribution with provoking thoughts: climate change explains only 30% of the world's state of forests today. *'Bad policies generate disasters'*, he pointed out. Condemning the idea that *'we should let nature sort itself'*, he strongly recommended four mindset shifts, revisiting time, space, scale, and forestry approach. He added that *'we need to manage forests by goals and not by process, [...] we need not decide what forests should look like [...] but what service the forests should provide'*. Overall, *'we need to be humble. To plan that we cannot plan'*.

Silvia MELEGARI, Secretary General of the European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry, called for policy makers to include the (sawmill) industry in the policy-making process. She stressed for the future needs of wood products worldwide, particularly in the construction sector. *'Wood is a climate-friendly material'* and should therefore be considered as part of the solution to achieve the Green Deal.

Jurgen TACK concluded that *'we can't afford to make any more mistakes. The valuation of Ecosystem services should be part of the future of our economy and be part of EU's long-term strategic planning'*.





Algis GAIŽUTIS, Kazimieras SIAULYS, Jurgen TACK

## International conference “Agricultural resilience during the period of 2023-2027 Rural Development Program and under the conditions of the war in Ukraine”

Vilnius, Lithuania, December 9, 2022

On Friday December 9, the international conference on “Agricultural resilience during the period of 2023-2027 Rural Development Program and under the conditions of the war in Ukraine” took place. The main topics covered were:

- Physical availability of food is not enough to ensure security. Economic and physical access to it is key. Food inflation is a big challenge.

- In the multi-crisis world we live in, farmers need support to keep on producing safe and nutritious food and tools to mitigate the effects of the greatest threat, which is climate change.
- We need to always keep in mind while proposing new policies that while farmers are the ones providing supply within the food chain, the consumer is the one making the final choice, hence the one defining demand.
- The Green Deal brought forward several strategies impacting landowners and land use, without a comprehensive analysis on its combined pressures.
- Little attention has been paid to the push to reduce both the intensity of agricultural production and reduce agricultural impacts and its consequences on rural areas and the EU's role in its own and global food security.
- Land managers are prepared to contemplate a new vision for the food system and land use, provided the conditions for them to have viable businesses are respected.

During the dinner, ELO's Scientific director Jurgen TACK agreed with Dr. Arūnas SVITOJUS, President of the Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, and Kęstutis NAVICKAS, Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania on an ELO membership for the Chamber of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania.

On Saturday, a visit to one of Lithuania's private landowners, Kazimieras SIAULYS, active in forestry was organised by ELO's member organisation Forest and Landowners Association of Lithuania. Together with Algis GAIŽUTIS, Chairman of the Board and ELO Vice-president, Jurgen TACK was able to discuss the many problems Lithuanian foresters have related to EU regulations: the new EU forestry strategy, increasing demands because of the EU biodiversity strategy 2030, the threat of large carnivores in the area, ...

The visit confirmed the common problems as well as the common views between the Forest and Landowners Association of Lithuania and ELO. Certainly, a reason to further cooperation and enforce each other's work.

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Jurgen TACK, Kęstutis NAVICKAS, Arūnas SVITOJUS



## 2023 FAMIGRO Award for Rural Entrepreneurship

The GROTENFELT Family represents more than 350 years of diversified land-owning in Finland.

Famigro is a private company belonging to the family and was founded by Karl GROTENFELT in 1985. In 2013, he created the Famigro Award, which is granted annually to a young (18 to 40) European countryside entrepreneur that has made or is making a special contribution to the rural economy, community and environment.



Young Friends of the Countryside (YFCS), as well as the European Landowners' Organization (ELO).

The winner receives 5,000€, an article published in the Countryside Magazine and the opportunity to join the FCS & YFCS General Assembly in June 2023.

The 2023 Edition is now open, and applications must be sent before March 1, 2023. The application form is available on the ELO, FCS and YFCS websites as well as the details and conditions of applying.

Our applicants and winners in recent years come from a wide range of industries and countries aiming achieve great things with their unique ideas. From an innovative model of tourism in Germany, which combines workation, coworking, co-living, and special projects focusing on rural development, to a Regenerative Farming community composed by entrepreneurs, dedicated growers, students, and academics in Spain.

Previous winners include  
 Gut Waltersteig GbR ([klvp@gutwaltersteig.de](mailto:klvp@gutwaltersteig.de)),  
 La Junquera (<https://lajunquera.com/>)  
 Coconat (<https://coconat-space.com/>),  
 Coucoo (<https://www.coucoo.com/>),  
 Wildernest Tiny House (<https://wildernest.be/build-your-tiny-house/>), Wignac  
 Cidre Naturel (<https://www.wignac.com/>).

For more information please contact: [info@yfcs.eu](mailto:info@yfcs.eu)



## Pilot Testing – HERIT MOOC

*Daniel MONTELEONE, ELO*

Our project HERIT, aimed at mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on European heritage houses through the development of digital tools and training is reaching its final milestones! Having created 10 case studies in 5 different EU languages and a 30-page Summary of EU practices, we now introduce the final part of the project: the development of a Massive Open Online Course or "MOOC".

This course is designed for anyone interested in the heritage of historic houses but will be of special interest to professionals from the public or private sector, owners or managers of historic houses who wish to drive an innovative change for improvement in their company including managers of privately owned historic houses who want to discover and learn new techniques to manage, promote and market their wealth effectively, new private heritage owners who want to start managing and promoting their heritage, managers who do not know how to promote their heritage digitally, and managers who have a lack of knowledge in digital tools.

The course consists of 4 modules, aimed at strengthening commercial and digital skills, enhancing the development of cultural heritage management competences and digital communication tools, and encouraging the implementation of innovative solutions in the field of cultural tourism.

The course has a total duration of 4 weeks and requires a dedication of approximately 3-5 hours per week. Once you have completed all the modules, you will receive a certificate of course completion.

**If you'd like to join the Pilot Test, visit our website: <https://herit-erasmus.eu/> to learn more! We can't wait to see you at our final conference May 23<sup>rd</sup>!**



## Newest Wildlife Estates labels in the Walloon Region

*A special evening to celebrate the most recent Wildlife Estates (WE) labels in Belgium took place on February 22. We invite you to read the official speech delivered by Pascal LAMBERT, Inspector General at the Department of Nature and Forests, Belgium. We take once this opportunity to congratulate once again the estate owners who received WE labels!*

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"Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to see so many of you here this evening, and to have been invited to participate in this Wildlife Estates Awards evening.

I am pleased to see so many of you here tonight, because it confirms the awareness of the importance of biodiversity in our activities.

And I am happy to be here with you because, having taken up my duties as Inspector General of the Department of Nature and Forests of Wallonia a few months ago, I now have the opportunity to meet owners who work every day to maintain and develop this biodiversity.

This Wildlife Estates label highlights landowners who have chosen to practice sustainable management of their land and forests.

Landowners who have understood that agri-environmental measures, for exam-

ple, are not limiters of agricultural productivity, but rather the guarantors of quality agriculture that respects its environment.

In the era of major climate change and pandemics that we must face, such agriculture with a more attentive ear to the environment, can play a key role in restoring the ecological network and in maintaining the beauty and richness of our landscapes. With benefits for the flora and fauna, but also for the well-being of everyone.

In terms of hunting, the Wildlife Estates spirit should highlight managers who also work to restore wildlife habitat in general and small game in particular.

Many of you devote a great deal of energy and money to promoting the development of small game through careful management. Hunting in general, and small game hunting in particular, is going through difficult times.

As you know, there is currently a controversy surrounding the grey partridge in

Wallonia. We are aware that a species that can no longer be harvested may no longer arouse as much interest on the part of hunters/managers.

This is why I encourage you to put forward an irreproachable ethic in the field of small game hunting management in order to restore certain populations and encourage the maintenance of others. Let's not forget that developments favourable to small game are also favourable to hundreds of other species.

In addition to the actions undertaken on the ground, I invite you to communicate as much as possible to the outside world to encourage the exchange of positive experiences and to popularise them among the general public. This communication and these exchanges are still very topical with the label we are talking about this evening, because I know that part of the evaluation of the Walloon territories applying for this distinction also judges this communication and the involvement of local actors.

The evaluation grid for the label also takes into account the competence of the property managers. It is clear that these skills are present in both agricultural and forestry management. When an owner does not have enough time or expertise to manage an estate alone, they can rely on associations or consultancy firms to support them in this task. Additional tools set up by the Walloon Region are also available to managers. I am thinking for example of structures such as Natagriwal.

Almost 10 years ago, the Walloon Region entrusted the management of this label to the non-profit organisation "Fondation wallonne pour la Conservation des Habitats". We can confirm today that this decision was appropriate in view of the work carried out so far by this Foundation.

The figures that be presented bear witness to this dynamism and to the enthusiasm of owners to manage their properties increasingly by leaving a large place for nature, with a constant search for improvements in biodiversity.

I can only encourage you to continue moving in this direction.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the role played by ELO and Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, in the overall coordination of the European label.

I would like to thank the Walloon Foundation for Habitat Conservation, its President Juan DE HEMPTINNE AND its Secretary General Patrick MIEL for coordinating the label on behalf of the Walloon Region and for their work in favour of Nature, as did Baron Edgar KESTELOOT, who founded the foundation and is known for his inspiring career in the protection of Nature.

I wish you all a wonderful evening."



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## Wildlife Estates Label – the latest news from Spain

Carlos OTERO, ELO



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Imperial eagle

The Secretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs of the Partido Popular of Madrid, Eva GALLEGO, met with the Association of Hunting Landowners (APROCA Madrid), the Foundation of Friends of the Imperial Eagle and the Iberian Lynx and the Wildlife Estates Association to learn through them about the problems of private estates in our community, recognising them as pillars for the maintenance in our region of the different wild species, both game and protected.

The three entities, which represent nearly one hundred and fifty private landowners in our Community, explained their problems and concerns

in the region to the Partido Popular of Madrid, emphasising the value of their work in favour of the conservation of our biodiversity and stressing that it is not only the agricultural, livestock, forestry or hunting activities that are important. The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere in which the participants were able to meet and discuss the importance of the work carried out in the region, emphasising the fact that many of the most emblematic protected species of our community, including the Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard and Black Stork, which are found within them, receive effective conservation measures, which attests to their involvement in the tasks of defending nature and biodiversity in these areas.

The meeting culminated with the Secretary for the Environment and Rural Affairs receiving the proposals of the three organisations with the promise that they would be studied in detail by the regional executive.

**If you'd like to join the Pilot Test, visit our website:**

<https://herit-erasmus.eu/>

**to learn more! We can't wait to see you at our final conference May 23<sup>rd</sup>!**



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Great Bustards

# 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 hope our ambassadors inspire you! For more details, their stories are available on the **ENPLC website**.



Meet our ambassadors, they are Private Land Conservation Superheroes!

## AMBASSADOR #7 -

**Lisa KOPSIEKER, scientist researching policy opportunities for nature conservation**

Lisa learned that even in existing policies there are considerable opportunities to support nature conservation that could be more widely used.

As a German citizen who grew up in East Africa and studied conservation science in the UK, she has a broader perspective on Europe's conservation sector and policies.



## AMBASSADOR #5 -

**Barbora KUKRECHTOVÁ, the butterfly kingdom of Radiměř in Czech Republic**

Barbora's home, the butterfly kingdom of Radiměř, is a project initiated by ČSOP Arion. By conservational grazing and mowing, they protect this piece of paradise and its biodiversity. They work hard to save the rare Large Blue, one of the rarest butterflies in Europe.



## AMBASSADOR #6 -

**Jordi PIETX, Land Stewardship Expert, Spain**

Jordi has been a Private Land Conservation Ambassador his entire career. Inspired by his experience with land stewardship and private conservation initiatives in the US, he pioneered the concept in Catalonia. He is now active at the European level to boost this powerful practice.



We are honoured to have them on board and will share more stories pretty soon. Stay tuned.

- [www.enplc.eu](http://www.enplc.eu)
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- @life-enplc T



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# TRANSFARM

## Summary Report ready for publication.

*TRANSFARM is an Erasmus+ project aiming at promoting the sustainable and traditional farming practice of transhumance by providing rural entrepreneurs and farmers with free training resources. Transhumance can be defined as the farming system in which livestock moves from fixed summer pastures to winter grazing areas, and the other way around. This term, and many others related to the topic, can be found in a glossary available on the TRANSFARM website.*

Sergio PEDREGOSA PERIS, ELO



Transhumance goats in Western Norway.

The project strives to foster the practice of transhumance across Europe as a solution to some challenges related to land use and rural communities, such as rural depopulation, carbon footprint caused by the agricultural sector, and access to locally produced food.

The Summary Report, one of the main results from the TRANSFARM project, is set to be published in the upcoming weeks. It was developed by the project partners and delivers an overview of the status of transhumance on a European level, in the partners' countries of origin, and in some selected third nations, such as Hungary and Italy. The Summary Report contains information regarding the history of transhumance, the type of livestock, the areas in which this farming practice is still present, as well as the different types and characteristics according to their geographical distribution, etc.

In parallel, the first newsletter of the project is also about to be launched. It is devoted to presenting TRANSFARM, the international partners of the project, explaining the latest developments, the Transnational Meetings, and detailing the next steps that will be undertaken by the partners. The newsletter is accessible by signing up on the project's website.

Further along in the project, the training materials developed will be accessible on an online learning platform and through an e-reference book too, which will also contain the Summary Report, as well as the National Reports and a database with a compilation of transhumance success stories. The National Reports provide an analysis of the current situation of transhumance practices in the partners' countries of origin. The project's case studies showcase essential key factors to succeed in transhumance provided by farmers engaged in such farming practices.

ELO is responsible for the dissemination and communication of the project. The goal is to reach as many stakeholders as possible, thus boosting the utility of the platform developed within the project.

The TRANSFARM project started in December 2021 and will go on until May 2024. The project is composed of seven partners from six different countries (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Norway, Slovakia, and Spain), some of which have already successfully collaborated with ELO in several projects. The project is also supported by three associated partners coming from Norway, Poland, and France.

**To be kept informed on the progress of the project, we invite you to check the website: [www.transfarm-erasmus.eu/](http://www.transfarm-erasmus.eu/).**

**For more information about TRANSFARM, do not hesitate to contact ELO projects communications officer Sergio PEDREGOSA, at [sergio.pedregosa@elo.org](mailto:sergio.pedregosa@elo.org).**

Let's increase our food supply  
without  
reducing theirs

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**Forum for the  
Future of Agriculture™**

# Annual Conference

Tuesday, March 28, 2023  
Square, Brussels

Since 2008, the Forum for the Future of Agriculture (ForumforAg) has been the premiere meeting place in Brussels to debate sustainable agriculture and environmental challenges. The Forum is where agriculture and environment meet for an open dialogue.

Our Annual Conference will be held on March 28, 2023, consisting of live broadcasts, moderated panel discussions and dialogues, interactive interventions, networking opportunities and exhibitions, all live in Brussels and online.

## ***Fixing tomorrow, today*** Five key themes

**Can we afford not to pay the price of change in today's geo-political and economic reality?**

**How to build a more resilient & sustainable food and agriculture system: what have we learnt from the energy crisis that enables us to overcome the challenges and exploit the opportunities?**

**How can Nature Based Solutions drive resilience and sustainability in the AGRI-food system and how do we better align incentives to accelerate change?**

**How can we act better: the case for improving biodiversity, soil health and water resilience?**

**How can we help better: food, migration, climate change?**



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