

# CountrySide



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**1<sup>st</sup> Farming Biodiversity Summit:  
the role of agriculture  
in tomorrow's world**



# Editorial

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, *Secretary General*

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*At a time when the political world is launching its Green Deal, without giving a moment for a real consultation with the rural sector of European society, it seems to me to be the right moment to commend the courage of farmers and foresters as well as all those who keep the rural fabric alive. No other segment of the population has had to evolve so profoundly or so consistently since 1960. They have not been stingy with their efforts, nor have they lacked the capacity to question themselves, and they have never put democracy at stake! And yet they are the target of an avalanche of reproaches justifying the implementation of another policy. To quote Philippe DULAC, "The countryside, as in 1950, remains the crucible of values different from those of the city. It is simply that the proportion of those who hold them in the population has been divided by ten. This does not mean that Europe is getting better. On the contrary, the countryside was for a long time the keel of the ship. It no longer has the weight it needs to play its beneficial role."*

*Our decision-makers must avoid falling into the excesses offered by populist temptation, whether from the right or the left. There is more than just a nuance between adapting food production, forestry and the management of rural activities in what science invites us to take into account and of following the apostles of new political or philosophical dogmas.*

*The fear of rural people, who have always sought the path of common sense, is that urban decision-makers impose solutions that are idealised by the city but not sustainable in the countryside.*

*The Green Deal must be an opportunity to put in place, with the frank and convinced participation of the rural sector, the solutions necessary to the needs of the time, and fortunately, we see many of them emerging. However, we must not be content with being imposed upon by a class that declares itself to be knowledgeable of what needs to be done.*

*Mutual respect and democracy are worth the price. I believe in their resilience.*

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ELO Team in Santarém, Portugal



Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, Eduardo OLIVEIRA e SOUSA, Jurgen TACK

## 1<sup>st</sup> Farming Biodiversity Summit: the role of agriculture in tomorrow's world

*On May 27, the day after the regional FFA2021 meeting in Portugal, ELO and CAP (Confederation of Portuguese Farmers) organised the 1st Farming Biodiversity Summit in Santarém, Portugal. Many around Europe and beyond followed the conference in person or online making use of the FFA2021 virtual platform where users could visit digital exhibitions and network amongst other attendees.*

**Jurgen TACK, Scientific Director, ELO**

The meeting was organized under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. ELO and CAP received support from several partners for this event: CropLife International, Consulai, Travel Tomorrow and the conference's media partner Agroportal.

In their introductory remarks the hosts Thierry de l'ESCAILLE and Eduardo OLIVEIRA E SOUSA (CAP President) referred to the growing impact of biodiversity policies on agriculture. Furthermore, the intensification of agriculture during the past 50 years has certainly had an impact on biodiversity. While farming must adapt to this new situation it also gives several possibilities for farmers and landowners. Farmers will need to find a new balance with nature and society. Ecosystem services will become part of the daily agricultural business.

Antonio GUTERRES (UN Secretary General) acknowledged the farming dilemma and spoke about the interdependency of biodiversity and agriculture. He stressed agriculture would need to protect nature, restore ecosystems, and establish a balance in its relationship with the planet. The rewards, he said, will be tremendous, but he

made it clear that not only agriculture has to play a role.

With Maciej GOLUBIEWSKI (Head of Cabinet of EU Commissioner for Agriculture) the participants were able to get the latest update on the new Common Agricultural Policy. The CAP was being finalized in Brussels during the summit in Portugal.

The first session focused on scientific evidence. Xavier LE ROUX (Senior Scientist – INRAE) gave the participants several insights on the relationship between agriculture and biodiversity. Scientifically it is proven that agriculture, especially intensive agriculture, has a negative impact on biodiversity. Two main models in biodiversity conservation can be implemented: land sparing and land sharing. Land sharing refers to farming practices enabling biodiversity to be maintained within the agricultural landscape. Land sparing promotes high-yield agriculture requiring a smaller area of land to attain the same yields resulting in greater areas of untouched natural habitat. He stressed the need to include a third view: the need to include biodiversity having a key role within agricultural systems. The challenge here is to promote synergies while coping with trade-offs. In-

tegrating biodiversity in farming needs a firm understanding of the role of biodiversity in agriculture, but also results in the need for more technological and innovative farming practices.

The second session was more policy oriented. The Portuguese Minister for Agriculture spoke about the opportunities in the Green Deal and the more ambitious CAP in which biodiversity and climate change play an important role.

Former EU Commissioner for Agriculture Franz FISCHLER stated: *"We should bring our own house in order."* He indicated several areas where we must be innovative by introducing new measures to ensure diversified agriculture landscapes, focusing on major issues such as animal density on farmland (including manure management and risk of reducing biodiversity on meadows and pastures by intensifying cattle breeding).

Herbert DORFMANN (Member of the European Parliament) informed the audience about the status of the CAP negotiations while he denied the accusation of greenwashing the CAP. He stated most member states were much less ambitious on this

topic than the European Commission, but also hoped the CAP would be fair and would create a social agricultural policy.

Former EU Commissioner for Environment, Janez POTOČNIK, asked for immediate action. For many species the proposed focus on biodiversity is already too late. 80% of global land related biodiversity loss is caused by resource extraction and processing of biomass, often closely related to agriculture and forestry. He said none of the Aichi targets (biodiversity goals) have been met so it becomes essential to address drivers of biodiversity loss. He proposed 4 recommendations: (1) we should be aware of the impact on climate and biodiversity for every sector, and every consumer must understand how and why they can have an impact on nature; (2) we should plan together – policy makers must work with scientists and locals; growth is nature; (3) we need to foster economic urban agricultural and other policies to incentivize nature-based solutions and transitioning to a social bio-economy; and (4) we should value nature – we need an economic system to recognize nature's benefits.

In the third session Jurgen TACK tried to find out what we can do in Europe to halt the loss of biodiversity and to mitigate climate change. In the first contribution to this session Humberto DELGADO ROSA (Director, Natural Capital, DG for Environment, European Commission) said: *"It's not an issue that agriculture destroys biodiversity, it's an issue that certain agricultural practices and trends are not compatible with biodiversity"*. He stated the targets of the EU biodiversity strategy cannot be reached without the support of farmers: *"Farmers are the guardians of the land, and indeed are the asset managers, so they have a vital role in preserving biodiversity"*. He informed the public on the targets in the EU biodiversity



Antonio GUTERRES

strategy linked to farmland: bringing back a high diversity landscape features (put back 10% in agricultural land); having a quarter of agricultural farm under organic farming by 2030; targets to reduce risk and use of pesticides by 50% and reduce nutrient loss by 50%.

Arnold PUECH D'ALISSAC (Board member, FNSEA) spoke about multifunctionality and how farming has tried to implement it more. He made specific reference to the way France was already trying to value the organic and/or high environmental value of its farmers.

Geraldine KUTAS (Director General, CropLife Europe) believes that innovation is key when tackling the decline in biodiversity. She also warned that food is an essential sector, and we can't gamble with food security.

Luc BAS (Director, IUCN European Regional Office) emphasized the key role of farmers and landowners and said that the CAP needs to become greener and must put nature at its heart. He asked to make sure processes would be practical and explained that farmers etc. are not just producers but custodians. He asked for an equal level playing field on the accounting of natural capital.

Mark TITTERINGTON (Senior Adviser, Strategy & Partnerships, Forum for the Future of Agriculture) explained the AgriLife label under development by ELO. It will recognize best practices implemented by farmers and will provide knowledge to support policy processes. It will also be the best way to empower farmers and landowners.

Álvaro AMARO (Member of the European Parliament) closed the meeting together with Marcelo REBELO DE SOUSA (President of the Republic of Portugal). Álvaro AMARO said farmers can't be the only ones to bear the brunt of reforming production. He raised the question of how we can give farmers the means to be more effective and efficient in using their resources, in producing with fewer inputs and to have sustainable agriculture with as little impact as possible.

Marcelo REBELO DE SOUSA emphasised the role of biodiversity in agriculture and the important role farmers had to play.



Humberto DELGADO ROSA, Arnold PUECH d'ALISSAC, Géraldine KUTAS, Luc BAS  
Álvaro AMARO, Mark TITTERINGTON, Jurgen TACK

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# Drawing synergies between the 1<sup>st</sup> Farming Biodiversity Summit and European projects related to agricultural sustainability and biodiversity

*On May 27, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) Projects Team organised a Solutions Workshop coinciding with ELO's Farming Biodiversity Summit and the FFA2021 Regional Hybrid Event that took place in Santarém, Portugal, the day before.*

Julian CORTES, ELO



The Solutions Workshop aimed at drawing synergies between the 1<sup>st</sup> Farming Biodiversity Summit and European projects related to agricultural sustainability and biodiversity by discussing concrete solutions that have been and will be developed to support biodiversity.

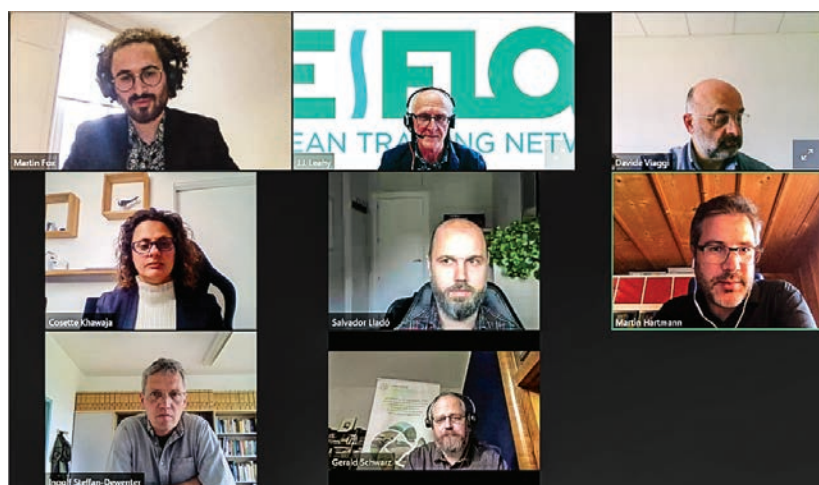
The Solutions Workshop was opened by moderator Martin FOX (ELO), who welcomed the audience through an interactive poll. The eight projects being showcased were then presented. Links between all the projects and biodiversity were brought to light as each project has unique aims and results that contribute to overall environmental and agriculture sustainability that directly impact the state of biodiversity in agriculture.

Following the presentation of each project, a representative from each project was invited to take the floor and elaborate on their project's aims, results, outputs, and linkages to biodiversity.

Cosette KHAWAJA (WIP) presented on behalf of BIOPLAT-EU, a project aimed at promoting the uptake of sustainable bioenergy in Europe using marginal, underutilised, and contaminated lands for non-food biomass production via a web-based platform that serves as a decision support tool. This project, Cosette KHAWAJA remarked, is about providing an opportunity to make use of underutilised lands and through the growth of biomass, can aid in restoring biodiversity to these areas.

Professor J.J. LEAHY (UL) presented on behalf of two projects: BIOWILL and REFLOW. BIOWILL is a project aimed at achieving a zero-waste system for biopolymer production through the use of salicin extraction from willow trees. The REFLOW project focuses on phosphorus recovery, addressing the technical and socio-economic challenges associated with phosphorus recovery and its recycling into fertilizer products.

Directly linked to soil microbial diversity are the MICROSERVICES and SOILGUARD projects. MICROSERVICES, presented by



Dr. Martin HARTMANN (ETH Zürich), is focused on understanding microbial functions in the soil to develop a knowledge base on the impacts of soil biodiversity on ecosystem multifunctionality and agricultural productivity. The project aims to predict the impacts of climate change on this diversity. SOILGUARD, presented by Dr. Salvador LLADÓ FERNÁNDEZ (LEITAT), similarly deals with soil management practices by researching and developing knowledge on the potential of soil biodiversity as a key nature-based solution to improve the resilience of soils and farms.

Dr. Ingolf STEFFAN-DWEENTER (University of Würzburg) introduced the SAFEGUARD project, which although is still in its early phase, targets the loss of wild pollinators and attempts to reverse this loss by incorporating pollinators into natural capital by assessing the ecosystem services pollinators provide.

Next, Dr. Davide VIAGGI (UNIBO) spoke on behalf of CONSOLE, a project aimed at promoting the delivery of Agri-Environmental Climate Public Goods in agriculture and forestry. This will help foster contractual frameworks for farmers that help them produce public goods including goods connected to biodiversity. Through a result-based

solution, payments are awarded to farmers based on the results they achieve, promoting innovative and sustainable practices.

Finally, Dr. Gerald SCHWARZ (THÜNEN) discussed the UNISECO project, which deals with the dilemma of food and biomass production whilst focusing on agro-ecological approaches which strengthen the sustainability of European farming systems, contributing to sustainable food security. Practices such as intercropping can be adopted and have positive impacts on biodiversity. Such practices are promoted through different knowledge networks, technologies and cooperation between various stakeholders.

Following the fruitful and engaging panel discussion and Q&A session, moderator Martin FOX made concluding remarks and presented on upcoming events ELO will be holding. The recording of the Solutions Workshop as well as information on each of these projects and more can be accessed through the ELO website.

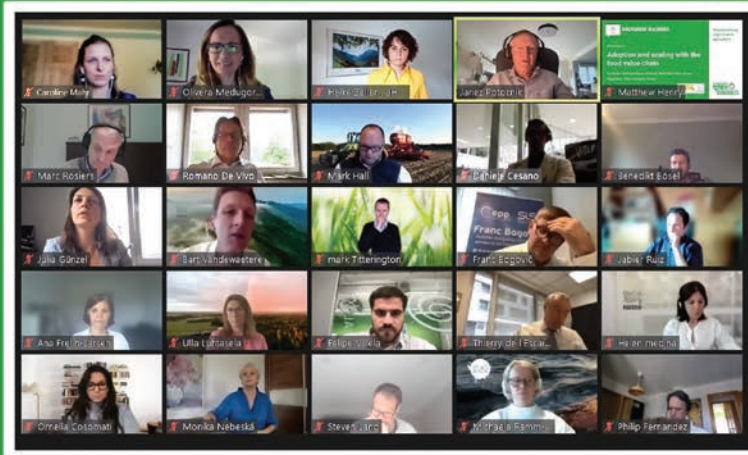
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## INDEPENDENT DIALOGUES



## Mainstreaming regenerative agriculture



# UN Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogue: Mainstreaming regenerative agriculture

*On June 30, 77 experts and stakeholders from the food supply chain gathered to debate on regenerative agriculture and its implementation. The conversation revolved on its definition and scope, its measurements, and the means to its expansion. Co-organized by the Forum for the Future of Agriculture and Nestlé, the main findings of the discussions were officially submitted to the UN Food Systems Summit.*

Caroline MAHR-VAN EVERDINGEN, ELO & Elodie CHAMPSEIX, ELO

### Findings

Currently, there is no precise definition for regenerative agriculture that is recognized and approved by the entire food chain, academia, or public authorities. As a concept, regenerative agriculture focuses on how to 'restore and enhance the capacity of soil health and biodiversity'. Regenerative agricultural practices look at the positive impact on the natural assets, as well as the social and economic dimensions of agriculture.

Understanding the baseline from which the farmer can start applying regenerative practices is crucial to measuring progress. Regenerative agriculture is a holistic approach to farming that considers the bio-physical environment of the soil, but also the broader efficiency of land use. It looks at multiple ranges of public goods production, and involves practices looking at soil protecting and regenerating systems, biodiversity-friendly operations, integration of better water management systems, restoring soil life, and more. As knowledge about regenerative agriculture continues

to grow, farmers and the value chain are learning that practices must be flexible to take into consideration the region-specific, and climate-specific context of the land. Only with a strong legislative framework, orchestrated efforts upstream and downstream of the food value chain will farmers be able to adapt and change practices. But if the legislators, buyers, and processors do not recognise the need for change, it will fail, just like past attempts, to widely implement nature-friendly agricultural systems.

There was a large consensus on the need for a common language among all stakeholders of the food system to agree on terminology and to avoid greenwashing. One clear finding is that regenerative agriculture happens at local/regional level. Trying to set strict, rigid standards for larger scales can only fail, due to the complexity and variety of systems. Further, farmers need to be placed at the centre of the food systems, by listening to their needs, supporting them with proper advisory systems that would come from independent bodies. The latter seems to be a key trigger to support the transition towards sustain-

able practices at scale.

Possible solutions could include organising independent payable grassroots advice and developing new tools to help farmers to understand the impact of their practices on climate, environment, and health. Ensuring long-term relationships among the food chain actors will build trust and give the farming community the long-term security they need to be able to be economically viable. Most importantly, regenerative agriculture needs to be easy to understand for farmers and lower levels of administration by building the reporting and data collection systems into the existing ones rather than creating new reporting grids. This would help them communicate their work and raise public awareness while transferring their knowledge; it would accelerate the consumers' education, motivate them to make better choices, provided the food distributors reflect the farmers' efforts and processors equalise prices.

**The major current challenge is socio-economic.** How can we integrate these practices, while continuing the business and be

profitable? Current processed food sourced from Regenerative farms are mostly premium products; the challenge for many processing companies is to make those products mainstream. To do so, costs of production need to be reflected and somehow shared among the value chain in order to secure farmers in this transition.

Hence, local systems need to change holistically if they are to be mainstreamed. Trying to set strict, rigid standards for larger scales can only fail, due to systems' complexity and variety.

## Recommendations

**Data collection and centralisation** are at the centre of the success of implementing Regenerative agriculture. One way would be in establishing European, National, and Regional food Councils that can be a centralized body for advising all and creating protocols to guide food systems transitions including data measurement and certification. Also, building coalitions around specific outcomes objectives such as resolving the many certification schemes in harmonizing requirements, outcomes, or moving toward healthier diets would support knowledge exchange and education of stakeholders, and would allow stronger communication campaigns being picked up by the various bodies engaged in the process.

**Step up the dissemination of expertise, both information, advice, and best practices through the creation of Communities of Practice.** Much knowledge has been built up and introduced to farmers, but processors, retailers, and consumers must be educated as well. Public authorities could create an investment fund for com-

munication and awareness-raising.

**Public and private collaboration** should be more strongly supported and reinforced; this should become a backbone in organising farmers in communities of practices, promoting the ambassador role of first movers. Other actors of the food value chain would also benefit from closer collaboration in public-private partnerships. This would help to close the gaps and misinterpretations of today's farming systems.

**Subsidy schemes**, farmers' incentives (price premiums), sustainability outcome (carbon) markets, and differential taxation systems could mitigate true transition costs and pricing; products produced by nature should be less taxed than processed ones. Further, regenerative agricultural practices could be used as the backbone of carbon farming standards delivering carbon certificates to buyers and processors, as an indicator to show applied practices' impact.

The evolution of farmers' profession over the past forty years calls for a crucial adaptation of their **training**; redefining the focus of already-existing public-private training systems would enable farmers to progress on sustainable practices. Agronomic schools and universities should systematically integrate those practices in their educational programs, for the next generation of agronomists, farmers, advisors to be ready to solve today's and tomorrow's challenges.

There is a need to speed up radical rethinking of our food policy framework, towards an integrated food system policy that is able to rebalance forces. Redefining consumption from owning to using; redefining production from mass sales to providing efficient functionalities; redefining

core economic incentives such as taxation and subsidies. It would also mean making integrated wellbeing, including natural capital accounting, the objective across all policies; measuring sustainability with a lifecycle perspective, and looking at innovation in categories of economic ecosystems that provide societal functions, rather than in categories of production sectors.

## Areas of Divergence

The conversations around Regenerative agriculture revolved mostly around the topics of its utility, its measurements, and its scalability. Due to the stakeholder diversity around the table, these topics were debated with different perspectives, leading to divergences of interpretations and recommendations between speakers, between sub-groups, and even within the consistency between agreed expectations and recommendations. This last point in particular highlights the complexity and the broadness of its stakes.

One important divergence highlighted through the debates was the extent of the economic benefits within the definition of Regenerative agriculture. This economic contention revealed two distinct approaches on the function of Regenerative agriculture itself. Some participants envision it as a means to enhance revenues and reduce environmental impacts due to innovation in products (biochemicals), processes (precision agriculture), and systems (carbon farming, recycling of raw materials, circular economy). Another school of thought would rather have environmental outcomes prevailing and take this opportunity to rethink the entire production model with very limited external inputs, minimal tillage, recycling of organic ma-



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## INDEPENDENT DIALOGUES



*Regenerative agriculture is more than just farming practices; it's about the entire food value chain. If only the farmers adapt and change practices, but the legislators, buyers, and processors don't recognize the need for change, it will fail, just like we have experienced it in the past with other attempts to implement widely nature-friendly agricultural systems.*

**Janez Potočnik**  
Chair FFA2021 and  
Chairman of RISE Foundation

CURATOR




### Mainstreaming regenerative agriculture





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terial, and lots of manpower. Further debates and compromises on this point are highly expected to reach towards an alignment, at least on whether basic criteria should be limited to soil health, or embrace biodiversity and water use at large.

The ambiguity of the role of economic incentive is reflected naturally while debating on measurements. Most of the criteria mentioned in order to measure assessment were oriented towards environmental measurement and social impacts, as participants stressed also the well-being and integration of the social dimension within the process. But as revenues, streams strength and diversity were mentioned as a strict necessity, surprisingly the comparison with conventional agriculture economic benefits was not exposed nor required to be evaluated by participants.

These imbalances of economic benefit expectations regarding Regenerative agriculture uncovers the question of the legitimacy and necessity of the transition for farmers to Regenerative agriculture. Yet, this point is even more vital as all participants acknowledged that, due to their position, farmers are the first field actors at the bottom of the food supply chain, bearing structural costs and risk uncertainties. Hence current transition cost and risk absorption for the Regenerative agricultural modern trying to integrate conventional market systems are to be borne mostly by farmers.

Although the question of enhancing the

farmers' voice within the food chain was another central agreement between participants, supported by the proposition of partnerships across the food supply chain, the collaboration between farmers and food processing companies or buyers was not approached for the question of the transition cost. Yet, the direction of empowering and securing farmers' revenue streams during this challenging period is crucial, as it can range from 5 to 10 years for soil restoration.

This specific point on soil protecting practices was largely cited as an example of a basic requirement for criteria and progress measurement, revealing again disparities and conflicts across directions between the agronomic reality and sometimes negative effects of certain practices on other functions of the soil, and the current requirements defined by buyers and others. Indeed, while participants acknowledged the relevance of soil health in terms of diversity and carbon retention, they also promoted soil functions such as nitrogen leaching and primary production, two expectations lacking complementarity but that would need to be approached simultaneously due to the variation of soil qualities. More generally, when it came to incentive systems and monitoring of results, there was no agreement on whether the system should be outcome-focused, or action-based.

As a result, a clear purpose of Regenerative agriculture and the relevance of its economic outcomes would greatly contribute to the facility of its implementation

for farmers and the selection of coherent measures.

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# The future of cereals in Spain: producing while conserving

Emilio NAVARRO MARTÍNEZ, Agricultural Engineer and Entrepreneur, Spain

Cereals have been cultivated since the dawn of agriculture and have evolved with technology and agricultural development up to the present day, improving their quality and yield per hectare and adapting to an ever-increasing global demand. The world produces around 2,725 million tonnes of cereals each year (USDA harvest 2020 data), of which around 1.1 billion mt of maize, 760 million mt of wheat, 510 million mt of rice and almost 155 million mt of barley. World stocks (what is held for safety) are almost 900 million mt, although they vary according to the harvest and consumption in the world. The major cereal producers are the USA, Russia, China, India, the EU, Argentina, Brazil and Canada, but other countries such as Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Australia, among others, are increasing their production.

The EU produces around 290 million mt of cereals, of which 115 million mt of soft wheat, 65 million mt of maize and around 60 million mt of barley. Of durum wheat, around 40 million mt are produced worldwide, of which almost 8 million mt originate from the EU.

Spain is a country of just over 50 million hectares, of which only about 20 million ha are arable. Our annual cereal production ranges between 12 and 25 million mt, depending on the climatic year; and as our annual consumption of cereals, other grains and by-products is 35 million mt, we are a purely importing country, although we normally export durum wheat, and in good harvest years we also export barley and oats. We import not only cereals, but also protein flours (especially soya), protein crops, oilseeds and their derivatives, mainly for the manufacture of animal feed. By way of comparison, a neighbouring country such as France produces between 30 and 40 million tonnes of wheat alone per year.

In Spain, cereal production in Castile-Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Andalusia and Aragon stands out, especially in rainfed areas, since in irrigable areas there is a rapid change in cultivation towards woody crops - olives, almonds and citrus fruits - which are more profitable than cereals.



The author at the end of May 2021 in an organic sunflower crop in Paradas (Seville)

## Prospects for the cultivation of cereals and other grains in Spain

As we have already noted, Spain is a country that produces less grain than it needs, so it has to import it. Being a net importer means that our prices to farmers tend to be somewhat better than those of the major producing countries, as logistics and transport costs are considerable, and will be even more so in the future with the rise in oil prices and the increase in the cost of

world transport. However, the low yields we obtain (no more than 2,500kg/ha on average) compared to other countries around us mean that profitability is very low at current prices, which is why some farmers are switching to woody crops or trying to grow higher quality grains at better prices (durum wheat, soft durum wheat, spelt, barley for malt, etc.), or even switching to organic farming.

The production of cereals and other grains (oilseeds, protein crops, legumes, etc.) continues to be a basic pillar for the welfare and food security of the population of any developed country, so Spain must continue to produce as much as possible, looking for specific high quality grains adapted to our climate that allow us to obtain the highest possible price for the farmer. There are many companies and public bodies working to improve cereals and other extensive arable crops in Spain, in order to increase production and improve quality in all areas.

Our CAP subsidies are, unfortunately, low per hectare compared to those of other EU countries, as they were defined according to the average yields of the different areas of Spain, which are generally low when compared to Germany, France, Belgium, etc.



High-quality wheat produced in Andalusia in 2021

### The future: new farming techniques and added value

Pressure from environmental organisations, public opinion and the European Commission in the face of biodiversity loss, climate change and increasing pollution is leading to increased support for more sustainable agriculture that is less damaging to the natural environment, such as organic farming. The aim is to produce good quality cereals in a profitable way, while conserving the environment and natural biodiversity.

Spain has large areas where cereals and other grains are already being grown organically, increasingly on larger farms and with more technified farmers, achieving good yields and a magnificent adaptation in large areas of the drylands of Spain. The growth in the consumption of organic products seems unstoppable, both in our country and globally, which is driving an increase in the demand for specific grains and qualities. This increase in demand is being transferred to the fields in just a few years, producing what the market needs. Spanish organic cereals and grains are becoming more and more prestigious and secure in the EU and beyond, which for many buyers is more important than price.

But it is not all organic farming for conservation production: innovative techniques are also being used in the conventional cultivation of cereals and other extensive grains in Spain, such as conservation agriculture (combating erosion), sustainable agriculture (minimum inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides in the crop), integrated agriculture (intelligent control of pests,



Malting barley in Manzanares (Ciudad Real) at the end of May 2021

diseases and weeds in crops), regenerative agriculture (restoring degraded areas to their former glory), etc.

All these techniques, in addition to improving the profitability and added value of our cereal crops and other grains, also have a minimal impact on the landscape, the environment and natural biodiversity and help to mitigate climate change and are fundamental in the fight against water, soil and air pollution in Spain.

### Positive conclusions

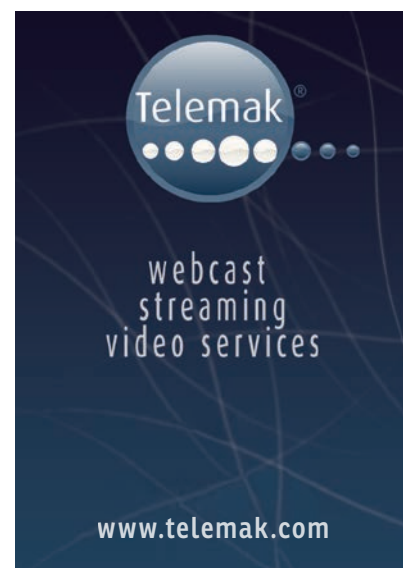
It is considered that we have entered a new era of high prices for cereals and other grains and by-products at world level: it is a fact that there is a growing demand from countries in clear exponential development, such as China, India, Southeast Asian countries and Africa, all of which are

highly populated and have a growing (and unstoppable) demand for food in terms of quantity and above all in terms of quality. High cereal prices may be here to stay this year, in the opinion of many experts: yields can continue to improve, technology will help but, let us not deceive ourselves, the world's arable hectares are what they are, there are not many more, and if there are, they will be cultivated in areas of forests, tundra and deserts, which seems increasingly difficult due to pressure from public opinion and civil society in the face of an increasingly uncertain future due to climate change and the loss of wooded areas and biodiversity on a global scale. It is true that the Chicago grain futures market (CBOT) moves more than 25 times the physical grain of futures options, i.e. it is a financial rather than an agricultural market. However, reality is imposed on all markets when a major producing country has a bad harvest (this past season it happened with Ukraine and Russia), and demand is so close to supply that any adverse weather event in one of the major producers can trigger the markets, the so-called "Weather Market".

As a good farmer friend from Zamora used to say: we have to be "optimistic" about the future of cereal and other extensive grain production in Spain. We have a harsh climate, very varied soils, normally low yields and many problems, none of them unsolvable. But we also have great quality in the grains we produce, we are leaders in organic farming, we have a country with the richest biodiversity in the EU, we know how to grow crops respecting the environment, the soil, water and air, nature, and we will continue to do so with hard work and enthusiasm in the cereal-growing areas of our great country, thinking of future generations and their well-being.



Durum wheat grown using conservation agriculture techniques in Hornachuelos (Córdoba)



# Dynamics of agriculture for a lively countryside



Flora WINDEBANK, ELO

This event opened with an introduction about Intergroup by its President, MEP Alvaro AMARO. It was followed by MEP Paolo de CASTRO highlighting that the objectives of the Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy must engage in diverse activities with a multifunctional approach.

Tassos HANIOTIS, Director DG AGRI, as the keynote speaker focused on how farmers can benefit from the digital transition. He also looked at the need for effective knowledge exchange and the need to make rural areas more attractive. On young farmers, he said that as farmers of the future, they are the ones who will be more open to the demands and pressures of how food is produced and ready to adapt. He hoped to see a greater focus on counterfactual thinking to observe the concrete weaknesses of policies, and synchronisation of policies within the EU.

MEP Jeremy DECERLE then discussed how to reinvigorate farming and the agricultural world, suggesting this could be done via a higher level of consistency with public policies. He expressed concern on demographics in rural areas: only 5% of farmers are under 30 in Europe and more than 50% are over 50. He also wanted the CAP, the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies to prioritise having more men and women in the field. His speech finished by saying that we should insist on the advantages and the qualities of those working in agriculture, rather than blaming them.

Doris LETTINA, European Council of Young Farmers, discussed the issues facing young farmers, including access to land, finance and income, and knowledge. She emphasised the importance of mentoring and peer-to-peer systems for ensuring knowledge exchange. A similar topic was touched on by Zeno PIATTI, ELO member from Austria, who explained that competition is difficult for young farmers, and - along with their position in the value chain and financial difficulties - is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to attract them. The educational aspect of the future generation was discussed by Mona-Anitta RIIHIMAKI, Hame University, who explained the need for a variety of ways to achieve a degree. She explained that the name of the degree was vital, and that young people's values were playing a large role in their studies.

On the question of whether enough is being done at the EU level to develop education, Tassos HANIOTIS said that the younger generation is more capable of working in a multidisciplinary way and that the type of tools older farmers had should be made available to them. He emphasised that the strongest asset the EU has is its diversity. Doris LETTINA also noted that lifelong and interdisciplinary learning is vital and that in order to innovate, it is important to discover new knowledge not just from agriculture but from technology, economics and other disciplines. Zeno PIATTI added that this must be able to be translated into farms; he also offered suggestions to improve the concentration of power such as actively initiating producer organisations, making the countryside and rural areas more appealing for investment in SMEs, and having a political agreement that products from nature do have a price.

On the same subject, the panelists agreed that the price transparency could help; as often they are covering the costs. They have also underlined that farmers needed to tell their stories about their solutions to climate change and the story behind production.

MEP Alvaro AMARO closed the discussion on an optimistic note; he felt positive for farming's future and highlighted the need to prioritise training, better communication networks, technological progress, access to a wider range of information, new digital skills and better knowledge of ecosystems - all of which needed young farmers to be brought into the field in order to be effective.

For more information:  
[www.biodiversityhuntingcountryside.eu](http://www.biodiversityhuntingcountryside.eu)

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**ELO**  
INTERGROUP ON "BIODIVERSITY, HUNTING, COUNTRYSIDE"

22 JUNE 2021  
16:00-18:00 CET  
Online

**DYNAMICS OF AGRICULTURE FOR A LIVELY COUNTRYSIDE**  
Hosted by MEP Álvaro Amaro

**WELCOMING**  
MEP Álvaro Amaro, President of the Intergroup & Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**  
MEP Jeremy Decerle, Vice-president of the Intergroup & Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development  
MEP Paolo De Castro, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

**KEYNOTE**  
Tassos Haniotis, Director DG AGRI, European Commission

**PANEL DISCUSSION**  
Doris Lettina, Vice-President, European Council of Young Farmers  
Zeno Piatti, Vice-President, Landforst Betriebe Österreich  
Dr. Mona-Anitta Riihimäki, Dean School of Bioeconomy, Hame University of Applied Sciences

**MODERATOR**  
Mark Titterington, ELO Special Advisor

**INTERPRETATION: EN-FR**

# Workshop on the newest JRC report on Agricultural Land Market Regulations in the EU Member States

On June 10 ELO, together with the Wageningen University, KU Leuven and the European Commission, organized an online workshop to discuss the newest report on data and information on agricultural land market regulations across EU Member States, published on April 27.

Emmanuelle MIKOSZ, ELO

**AGRICULTURAL LAND MARKET REGULATIONS IN THE EU MEMBER STATES**

**Online Workshop**  
June 10, 2021, 10:00-12:00 CEST

**10:00-10:03** Opening and housekeeping rules by Jurgen Tack, ELO Scientific Director  
**10:03-10:10** Welcome address by Thierry de l'Escaille, ELO Secretary General  
**10:10-10:25** Motivation, challenges and expectations for the 2020-21 JRC study on "Agricultural land market regulations in the EU Member States", by Pavel Ciaian (JRC, EC)  
**10:25-11:05** Presentation of the study by the authors (40 min):  
 • "Agricultural land market regulations in the EU Member States", by Liesbet Vranken (KU Leuven) and Ewa Tabeau-Kowalska (WEcR)  
**11:05-11:15** Comments by discussant: Ricard Ramon i Sumoy (DG AGRI)  
**11:15-11:45** Round Table discussion, moderated by Jurgen Tack, ELO (30 min)  
 • Topics: (1) New MS vs. Old MS, (2) Liberal vs. Restrictive Approaches, (3) National Laws vs. 4 EU Freedoms, and (4) Next Steps  
**11:45-12:00** QA with the audience, moderated by Jurgen Tack, ELO (15 min)  
**12:00** Closing

Deliverable 3: Final Report on Data and information on agricultural land market regulations across EU MS  
 "Agricultural land market regulations in the EU Member States"  
 Under the Agriculture II Framework Contract 935680-2018-408-NL  
 Liesbet Vranken, Ewa Tabeau, Peter Roelbling with contributions from country experts and associates  
 27 April 2021

ELO  
European Commission  
WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH  
KU LEUVEN

In his welcoming address Thierry de l'ESCAILLE (ELO Secretary General) underlined that land markets and property rights have been and are at the cornerstone of ELO activities. The four EU freedoms are critical for a profitable rural economy, and the fundamental principle remains to secure property rights and the opportunity to transfer them to the next generation. He underlined how important it is to respect EU legislation even if land markets regulations are a MS national competence, and therefore welcomed the report published in April. He also emphasized that access to agricultural land rights must strike a balance between environmental, economic and social equity.

Pavel CIAIAN (JRC) provided a background on the report's motivation, challenges and expectations. The study was funded by JRC and the European Commission and executed by the Wageningen Economic Research. It's forthcoming as a JRC report and belongs to a wider work carried out by the EU Commission covering both the analyses of MS land regulatory framework and the capitalization of CAP subsidies, and is part of the numerous previous studies carried out to analyse these crucial topics. With land being a key factor for generations with numerous benefits, many countries around

the world introduced measures to protect some of its economic and social benefits. Looking at the EU, two key policy interventions remain, land market regulations and the CAP. Since they are connected, they should not be taken separately and their impacts need to be analysed jointly, as the CAP affects land markets, provides subsidies to the farming sector and has various environmental measures that aim to incentivize adoption.

Liesbet VRANKEN (KU Leuven) and Ewa TABEAU-KOWALSKA (WEcR), co-authors of the study, presented its key observations and most important findings. Those included figures on the rental value of the land with major differences between the new and old EU member states; variations in measures to protect tenants and landowners or land fragmentation. When asked whether there is a link between land prices and the take-up rate of certain measures, Liesbet VRANKEN explained that in her view land prices are determined by the quantity of land rather than by regulations; for example, prices are higher in the Netherlands because the country is densely populated, there is a lot of demand, and a strong and modern agricultural sector drives up prices. But other factors are also important, such as capital intensity, which

also plays a major role. Asked about the complexity of the matter Ewa TABEAU-KOWALSKA shared her point of view believing that it is obvious there is over-regulation of land markets. This remains a serious issue when facing the question, who will the farmer of the future be? Regulation of land markets are one of many factors that influence the future in agriculture. In many countries, it's not possible to acquire land easily, yet the free movement of farmers across Europe will bring in knowledge that is desperately needed, also to face the rising climate issues.

Ricard RAMON I SUMOY (DG AGRI) emphasized the importance of this study, especially to have a better understanding of what's going on across the EU using common methodologies via comparing parameters. DG AGRI will encourage further discussion with stakeholders and is planning to organize a workshop on the topic this Autumn.

Michael SAYER (ELO special advisor on Land Market Regulations), reminded the study done by the organization on access to land and politics of scale. Land law has an important role in enabling the capitalization of the rural economy by the private sector rather than the state. The need for land market regulations is to free up the business structure of the countryside and protect the people who can contribute in a way that's going to allow for a better life for them, as they're not tied to the land, but also as they make a contribution towards net zero emissions.

The workshop was concluded by an in-depth discussion with the audience, moderated by Jurgen TACK (ELO Scientific Director). With 27 different national frameworks there are a number of problems concerning the EU freedoms, specifically free movement of capital where land is a form of capital. We have to be careful not to overregulate the market; liberalized contracts show they are able to stabilize the land market. We need to make sure the access to land is there not just for existing landowners and farmers, but also for future ones.

For more information please visit: [www.elo.org](http://www.elo.org)








## Innovative nutrient recovery from secondary sources – Production of high-added value FERTILISERS from animal MANURE


Marie-Christine BERGER, ELO

The FERTIMANURE project is comprised of 20 partners from 7 EU countries, Argentina, and Chile, which includes universities, research centres, cluster organisations, public bodies, SMEs, and NGOs. They are all involved in the manure research sector and cover all aspects of the value chain. FERTIMANURE will develop, integrate, test, and validate novel Nutrient Management Strategies to efficiently recover mineral nutrients and other relevant products with agronomic value from animal manure. The project aims to achieve a zero-waste manure management approach and obtain reliable and safe fertilisers able to compete in the European fertiliser market.

The FERTIMANURE project partners met on April 28 and 29 for the 3rd project meeting which was held virtually. As with the previous meeting in October 2020 it was held virtually, due to the ongoing travel restrictions across the EU. Members from the advisory board joined, introduced themselves to the consortium and gave advice on the ongoing project activities. The meeting provided an opportunity for partners to discuss the progress of the project. All work packages were discussed with particular emphasis on WP2 (nutrient recovery from animal manure) where updates on the pilot plants were given. Two new initiatives related to the project were highlighted namely a policy group on nutrient recycling comprising of four H2020 projects and a Community Group in the Biorefine Cluster Europe, called 'Closing the Nutrient Cycles'. More information will be provided at the next meeting in October.

ELO is the leader on the social impact assessment as well as the assessment of the current legislation framework of bio-based fertilisers.

-  <https://www.fertimanure.eu/en/>
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-  FERTIMANURE

 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 862849.



## HERIT - Heritage Efficient management through Relevant IT use

Daniel MONTELEONE, ELO

The HERIT project held its two-part kickoff meeting virtually on June 26 and July 6. This Erasmus+ project, led by the European Landowners' Organization, will run for two years and operates with partners from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Italy, and Spain.

The main objective of HERIT is to provide the needed training to private-owners and their employees to help overcome the COVID-19 crisis impacts by developing and professionally managing digital activities related to communication and cultural heritage and foster the development, commercialisation, and promotion of tourism connected to cultural heritage.

On the first day of the kickoff meeting, all the partners introduced themselves and gave presentations on their backgrounds. This was followed by an introduction of the project, including the scope, goals, objectives, timeline and challenges. Also included in the day's activities was the unveiling of the logo, the communication plan, outreach, and the various social media platforms that HERIT will be involved with. Finally, presentations were given on project management (by OnProjects) and heritage digital information (coordinated by UPV).

The second day of the kickoff meeting (10 days later), really got into the heart of the issue. All partners gave PowerPoint presentations about digital innovation and innovative tourism management of privately owned historic houses and then European Heritage Houses (EHH) led a discussion on the National guide structure.

If you'd like to learn more about the project, be sure to follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project N° 2020-1-BE01-KA226-VET-082730



# Solving problems with tech in the countryside

Marie-Christine SCHÖNBORN, YFCS President



In the beginning of August, the Young Friends of the Countryside's 4<sup>th</sup> webinar took place, featuring the tech start-ups who won the 'Diploma of Recognition' given by the FAMIGRO Award Committee by the Young Friends. The Famigro Award is a yearly prize of €5,000 given to the best European rural start-up, generously sponsored by Karl GROTFELT. As this year the applications were outstanding, the board of the Young Friends of the Countryside asked the start-ups who were in the final round for the Famigro Award to present their business models to the Young Friends. This webinar featured exclusively two tech start-ups, who, with their revolutionary technologies, promise to change the countryside significantly. Moderated by HEINRICH REUSS XXIX, Head of Ambassadors at the Young Friends, the start-ups LETTUSGROW and IN OVO were presented to and discussed with the audience.

Charlie GUY, the Co-Founder of LETTUSGROW introduced us to aeroponics, which, in combination with a software platform, aims to reduce the environmental impact of fresh produce. With their product, an aeroponic farm, they have developed a repeatable and scalable vertical farm solution, with which indoor and vertical farms can be introduced. Charlie GUY argued that farming can become accessible to anyone and is not merely restricted to the land itself. It is aimed that with their product, farmers can also diversify their offerings, not solely depending on the weather anymore. A lively discussion took place after his presentation, also addressing the technology and the algorithms backing his business model. Overall, Charlie GUY introduced us to a most impressive business model and start-up, which was reflected by a very engaged and extremely interested audience.


The second speaker, Wouter BRUINS then introduced the audience to his technology start-up IN OVO, which is aiming to stop the killing of male chicks with a specifically developed technology. IN OVO itself started as a MSc research project in 2011, with the company having been built in 2013. IN OVO has developed a machine, which can gender type eggs. This means that farms are enabled to hatch solely females and to avoid chick culling. IN OVO works with the entire production channel, including hatcheries, growers and farmers and aims to end chick culling eventually on a world-wide basis. Wouter BRUINS also provided us a fascinating insight into how he started pursuing the topic long before it actually started to become news in national newspapers. The audience was fascinated by his very clear business

model and was very impressed by his visionary approach.

Finally, Charlie GUY and Wouter BRUINS both answered final questions of the audience, including on how to successfully start a company. The answers provided proved to be most interesting, albeit being very different, giving an insight into how start-ups can be launched in different circumstances.

The Young Friends of the Countryside would very much like to thank the speakers Charlie GUY and Wouter BRUINS for their time and for answering all the questions the Young Friends had! We wish them all the best in their endeavours and are very much convinced that we are going to hear a lot more from them!

 <https://yfcs.eu/>

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## Diary dates

### 3 - 11 September, Marseille

IUCN World Conservation Congress; with ELO active participation on September 6  
[www.iucncongress2020.org](http://www.iucncongress2020.org)

### 9 September, Scotland, online

Wildlife Estates annual congress  
[www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu)

### 23 September, New York

The UN Food Systems Summit 2021  
[www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit](http://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit)

### 30 September, Brussels

FARCURA Final Conference  
<https://farcura.eu/>

### 7 - 10 October, Cordoba, Spain

24th Friends of the Countryside General Assembly  
[www.friendsofthecountryside.org](http://www.friendsofthecountryside.org)

### 14 - 15 October, Brussels, virtual event

Farm to Fork Conference - Building sustainable food systems together  
<https://ec.europa.eu>

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European Landowners' Organization

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