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The CAP deserved better

COP 30 in Brazil:

A call for more ambition, better integrated

National meeting of

the Wildlife Estates Label 2025



ELO



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Editorial

At the very moment the European Commission asks Member States to submit national plans for nature restoration and management, private landowners and the Wildlife Estates (WE) network offer a practical, proven opportunity. WE not only aligns with the legislation's objectives; it does so without blowing national budgets.

What's needed now is political courage to embrace WE's founding principles:

- Protection of biodiversity & habitats: ecosystems, landscapes, endangered species.
- Promotion of private land conservation: empowering landowners, farmers, and communities in nature management.
- Supporting sustainability: balance between ecological, financial, and social aspects of conservation.
- Encouraging participation: involve citizens, culture, and recreation to connect people with nature.

- Collaboration & adaptation: work with stakeholders, finance projects, and adjust to climate and societal changes.

An improved legislative framework that reflects field realities will enable private actors to deliver more, faster and at lower cost to taxpayers. Modernising the rules does not weaken environmental ambition; it makes it achievable. As the old adage goes, if you want things to remain the same, everything must change.

Fail to act, and we risk eroding precisely what we seek to preserve. Now is the time to scale what works and Wildlife Estates works.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE
ELO Executive President



Slicing the “C”, regressing the “A”, diluting the “P”: the CAP deserved better...



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When it comes to the impact of the Commission's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposal on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the devil is out there in the open for all to see – in the lip-service paid in addressing the most serious dual challenges of food security and climate change that global agriculture faces, in the abandonment of the market orientation that characterised the CAP for more than two decades, in the treatment of the CAP as a social policy for the “most-in-need”, in the absence of any analysis accompanying the proposal; the list could go on...

In this article ([accessible in full on LinkedIn](#)) I will focus on the big picture emerging from the CAP proposal – the increasing gap between the policies needed to address the challenges faced by EU agriculture and the solutions chosen by the von der Leyen Commission.

1. A more “impactful” CAP but in which direction?

The MFF CAP proposal looks like reform, screams it is a reform, but is far from a reform– it falls short in meeting every single objective of Article 39 of the Treaty that the CAP is meant to serve. It is a recipe for policy disaster.

With its proposal the Commission **will impact** (in a way that it did not even attempt to analyse) **land asset values close to 2 trillion euros.**^[i] The least this would merit is some sign that



the stakes and risks are at least understood. **Farm income** is not uniform in evolution, but its aggregate growth, always volatile in the case in farming, **has been on a clear upward path with, and because of, the exact opposite of the proposed policy design** – based on a constant budget and decoupled support as a safety net. While Member States are allowed to compensate for losses

of farm income with national aid (state aid rules have significantly been relaxed in recent years), this was not what Article 39 implied. Neither is the very different budgetary space each Member State has available for state aids a reflection of a policy whose focus is EU-wide.

The **second negative impact** would be on **productivity growth**. In our days such growth can only be sustainable, combining the economic and environmental aspects of daily farm activities. Yet **the abandonment of any common basic conditionality elements linked to land management**, leaving to Member States responsibility to introduce what they consider as pertinent, will not only remove any possibility to assess at EU level the “commonality” of policy impact, but **will reduce incentives** to promote a clear orientation towards simultaneously increasing yields and reducing environmental footprint, thus contradicting the fundamental basic EU priorities on climate-linked carbon farming – unlike the claim of the proposal's narrative.

The **third negative impact will be on upward pressure on food prices**. The Commission here repeats the mistake of the (forgotten) Farm-to-Fork strategy by considering that reducing supply (the combined effect of the above two impacts) will in some magical way not affect food prices because changes in consumer patterns will do the job of keeping prices low. This will simply not happen. **The continuation of the very positive initiatives of DG AGRI to address food inflation and food chain bottlenecks is thus undermined by the proposals that pit the reality of reducing supply against the hope of doing the same with demand** (and all this at EU level, disregarding the global impact stemming from a large exporter).



2. It's not just about "how much", but what you do with it that matters – where is the "C"?

There was a time **in the past** when the CAP was based on price support, in an EU with less Member States, but still **with diversity** in its agriculture, as is the case today. At that time, the same support (intervention) price applied to all, despite huge differences in the domestic price of the supported commodity (be it cereals, beef, dairy, fruit or vegetables). These differences were turning even larger if one were to take into account artificially converted exchange rates ("green ECUs"). Yet, despite this reality, **nobody claimed** at the time **that the CAP was not a Common policy for a very simple reason – the commonality in the basic, fundamental principles of its policy design.**

3. Agriculture needs a boost in its forward-looking transformation – yet it gets a reversal

The relevant question to pose is whether the Commission still considers EU agriculture as a contributor to the world food system and its needs or not in terms of its policy design. The recently published 2025-2034 OECD-FAO Outlook once more reconfirm in unambiguous terms the challenges that global agriculture already faces and will increasingly do so in the years ahead - namely the need to increase productivity and do so sustainably.[ii]

Whether the CAP strengthens its orientation towards better addressing this need will be judged by policy choices, not claims. Unfortunately, the new orientation presents a clear reversal with respect to previous choices.

4. Where is the "P"?

Whichever transition path for the future of the CAP is chosen, whichever redistribution key for the budget and for farms is chosen, area-based payments could support the necessary path to deliver CAP objectives. They will become sufficient only when distributed on the basis of criteria that reflect the opportunity costs of land, labour and environment.[iii]

The necessary **data** to do so **exist** to a large extent, at least to the extent that is required **to start a process of CAP evolution towards a policy reflecting both the need to address the challenge of sustainable productivity growth and the reality that farm decisions jointly determine their economic and their environmental output – why should policy split them?** The **political will** to do so **is absent**, and the CAP proposal is the best reflection of this.

Member States get what they want, the freedom to essentially run their agricultural policy as they please, with the Commission abandoning the leadership role it had in all previous reforms of the CAP. Whether EU agriculture gets what it needs will be at the core of the policy debate in the months to come.

[i] The latest (2023) Eurostat figures indicate an average price of 11800 euros per hectare in the EU, with 157 million hectares allocated to agriculture. Of course, price range significantly between and within Member States.

[ii] https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-fao-agricultural-outlook-2025-2034_601276cd-en/full-report.html

[iii] More on my LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/tassos-haniotis>



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Nature credits explained



Delphine DUPEUX
Director of EU Biodiversity Policy
and Parliamentary Affairs, ELO



Dr. Jurgén TACK
ELO Secretary-General

1. What are nature credits?

Nature credits turn tangible environmental improvements into something measurable and tradable. When a landowner restores a wetland, manages woodlands for biodiversity, or improves soil and habitats, those actions can be scientifically assessed and certified. Companies seeking to demonstrate a positive environmental impact can then purchase “credits” linked to that work.

Unlike carbon credits, which focus solely on reducing emissions, nature credits capture a broader range of ecosystem benefits: clean water, pollinator habitats, richer biodiversity, and resilient landscapes.

2. Why do landowners matter?

Biodiversity lives on private land. Fields, forests, wetlands and riverbanks are where nature truly resides. This makes private land managers not just participants - but the foundation - of any credible nature credit system. Without active stewards, there are no credits to generate.

For landowners, nature credits represent an opportunity to be financially recognised for the conservation work many already undertake. They could become a new, market-based income stream that complements farming, forestry or hunting revenues while maintaining the integrity of rural landscapes.

3. What kind of work qualifies?

Nature credits can reward a wide variety of conservation practices, such as:

- Habitat restoration: wetlands, reedbeds, or natural ponds.
- Pollinator support: wildflower margins, hedgerow planting and management.
- Woodland management: mixed-age stands, deadwood retention, creating glades.
- Soil health: regenerative methods enhancing biodiversity underground.
- Species protection: nesting areas, grassland restoration, amphibian-friendly ponds.

The essential condition is that improvements must be measurable, verifiable, and lasting.

4. How does it work in practice?

The process typically follows these steps:

1. **Plan the project** – define the conservation action (e.g. wetland restoration or woodland diversification).
2. **Assessment or certification** – frameworks such as the Wildlife Estates Label can verify biodiversity value and good management.
3. **Implementation** – carry out the work on the ground.
4. **Monitoring and verification** – independent experts confirm ecological benefits after a set period.

5. Credit issuance – certified results are converted into tradable credits.

Some certification systems also allow early investment to cover initial project costs, ensuring that even smaller landowners can participate.

5. What could it be worth?

The market for nature credits is still young, so prices vary widely depending on ecosystem type, location and buyer demand. Yet the trend is clear: businesses face increasing regulatory and reputational pressure to prove environmental responsibility.

As the only actors capable of generating genuine, verifiable improvements on the ground, landowners are in a strong position. In the long term, this demand should translate into real value—for both rural livelihoods and conservation outcomes.

6. Key challenges

Despite the promise, several challenges remain:

- Time lags: ecological benefits often take years to verify.
- Costs and complexity: certification and monitoring require expertise.
- Scale: smaller holdings may need support or cooperation to achieve viable project size.
- Standardisation: no two habitats are identical, complicating credit comparison.

Nature credits are not a quick fix - but with the right governance, they could become a lasting pillar of private conservation finance.

7. Keep it local

A critical policy debate concerns where credits should be sourced. Should European companies be allowed to offset their impact by buying cheaper credits abroad?

From a landowner's perspective, the answer should be clear: European nature recovery must be financed in Europe. Investing locally ensures that corporate funds flow into rural areas

as where biodiversity is actually under pressure - and where communities depend on healthy ecosystems for their future.

8. What can landowners do now?

Interested in exploring the potential of nature credits? Start with these simple steps:

- Take stock of the biodiversity assets already present on your land—hedgerows, ponds, woodlands, grasslands.
- Seek certification through recognised labels such as the Wildlife Estates Label to gain credibility and benchmarking.
- Start with a pilot project, focusing on one measurable habitat or species improvement.
- Collaborate with local estates, farmers or hunting associations to pool resources and increase scale.
- Stay informed about market developments, national frameworks and buyers emerging in Europe.

9. Why does it matter for Private Land Conservation?

For decades, private landowners have maintained Europe's landscapes - often at their own cost. Nature credits could finally turn that stewardship into a financially viable model. They will not replace food or timber production, but they can complement them - becoming another form of "harvest": biodiversity instead of barley, pollinators instead of pulpwood.

Properly implemented, nature credits could:

- Reward long-term stewardship, not just new projects.
- Strengthen rural economies by valuing the services land provides.
- Empower private conservation, reducing dependence on complex subsidy schemes.
- Bridge private and public funding, allowing corporate investment to flow directly into European landscapes.

10. The road ahead

Nature credits remain at an early stage. For them to deliver real results, policy and market frameworks must:

- Recognise landowners as key partners, not mere service providers.
- Provide start-up funding or blended finance to bridge early project costs.
- Ensure long-term credibility through transparent monitoring.
- Keep benefits local, preventing biodiversity responsibility from being outsourced abroad.

If these conditions are met, nature credits could become one of the most practical tools to fund conservation on private land - aligning economic sustainability with ecological recovery.

Europe's countryside has always provided food, timber, and game. With nature credits, it can also deliver measurable biodiversity and ecosystem value. The question is no longer whether landowners are part of the solution—they are the solution. What remains is ensuring they are rewarded fairly for it.

For landowners, nature credits represent an opportunity to be financially recognised for the conservation work many already undertake.



Meerhout Estate of Alan PHILLIPS

© Valerie VANDENABELE

COP 30 in Brazil: a call for more ambition, better integrated



Michael SAYER
FCS Special Adviser

"Society is a contract, ... a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet unborn" (Edmund BURKE).

Climate policy, like policy in many other areas, is increasingly at risk from populism and identity politics. This trend is systemically corrosive of the rational basis of all and any policy, in whatever field. It thus becomes a threat to constitutional norms. The reason is that the quest for votes proceeds by weaponizing the subject of every incomprehension, every ignorance, every court decision, every complaint or fear as a threat to the individual persona, typically as part of an 'international' or 'European' or 'elitist' conspiracy. Thereby the other is portrayed as the fundamental threat to the self. Yet climate science has not changed. Tragically, the consequence of the failure to invest adequately in the switch to clean energy is to place future generations with the others. This paper proceeds on the principle, practical as well as ethical, that policy must be timely, and must have a rational and intergenerational basis.



Current levels of emissions

Global greenhouse gas emissions reached 57.1 Gt CO₂eq in 2023, a record high. The biggest emitters being China (16 Gt), the US (6 Gt), India (4.1 Gt), the EU (3.2 Gt), Russia (2.7 Gt) and Brazil (1.3 Gt). Seven G20 members, including China and India, have not yet peaked emissions. Despite the Methane Pledge, significant reductions have only been made by Australia and Turkmenistan.

Current national pledges (NDCs) fall short: unconditional pledges would reduce 2030 emissions by just 10%, whereas 42% is needed for a 1.5°C trajectory. On current policies, the world faces a 97% chance of exceeding 2°C and a likely warming of 3.1°C.

The Production Gap underscores the problem: fossil fuel production plans exceed levels compatible with 1.5°C by 120% by 2030. Several countries, notably India, are still expanding coal.

Climate science in 2025: a dangerous threshold

Atmospheric carbon reached a level of **430 parts per million in May 2025**, compared with 400 ppm in May 2013, and the pre-industrial level of 280 ppm. This is the highest level for 14 million years. On 2 February, the temperature at the North Pole was 20 degrees above average.

It is estimated that the world's net forest carbon sink, which was -10 Gt CO₂/a. in 2001 and approximately -8 Gt CO₂/s. in 2023 is now approximately -5 Gt CO₂/a (World Resources Institute). This is due to forest clearance and wildfires: in particular, the Canadian forest has flipped from sink to source (an area of forest larger than Austria burned this summer), but it

has been the worst year on record for fires in Spain.

Before climate change, such events would have been expected every 500 years but, on warming of +1.3 degrees so far, can now be expected every 15 years. Warming of +3 degrees would be catastrophic here. (Centre of Environmental Policy, Imperial College, London).

International Court of Justice

The recent ICJ opinion notes that not only under the Climate Change Convention but also under customary international law, states have a duty to prevent activities from causing significant harm to the climate system, and that breach may potentially entail full reparation.

The contribution of land management: AFOLU

One way to analyse the potential for land use is to look at Agriculture, Forestry and Land-Use Change as a single sector. The EU has an AFOLU emissions gap, being the difference between agricultural emissions and carbon sequestration. In 2015, this was 386-319=67 MtCO₂eq; in 2019: 429-234 = 195 MtCO₂eq; in 2020: 384-194=190 MtCO₂eq; in 2023: 365-198=167 Mt CO₂eq. While agricultural emissions have slightly declined from 386 Mt CO₂eq in 2020 to 365 Mt-CO₂eq in 2023, the carbon sink has declined from an average of -335 Mt CO₂eq in the period 1991-2013 to -198 Mt CO₂eq in 2023, the principal causes being the maturation (and therefore slower growth) of forest stands, increase in harvest, loss of stored carbon through forest fires and disease, and a reduced rate of afforestation.

Forestry

It is estimated that EU consumption leading to the production of cattle, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, soya and wood has the potential to drive deforestation rising to 248,000 ha annually by 2030.

Afforestation remains an important measure, especially for countries with significant areas of marginal land and/or less than 25 per cent forest cover.

Much peatland is degraded and restoration has the potential to reduce long-term carbon emissions and significantly in-

crease long-term sequestration by re-wetting, although there will be initial increases in methane emissions.

Trading in sequestered carbon should be based on land-use change (including afforestation) or a well-maintained forest inventory, with five-yearly verification, the buyer having the responsibility to renew or replace. The methodologies available are currently inadequate

to encompass shorter-term generic management practices, although these could be supported outside a trading system.

EU figures indicate that nearly two-thirds of cereals grown in the EU are used for livestock, with one third for human consumption, and 3 per cent for biofuels.

Agriculture

EU figures indicate that nearly two-thirds of cereals grown in the EU are used for livestock, with one third for human consumption, and 3 per cent for biofuels.

Emissions from cattle in the EU are declining in most countries, driven principally by a decrease in numbers (between 2022 and 2023, -480 Kt CO₂eq in France, - 301 Kt CO₂eq in Ireland, -298 Kt CO₂eq in Spain, -149 Kt CO₂eq in Germany, with significant increases only in Poland, 218 Kt CO₂eq and The Netherlands, 103 Kt CO₂eq (Annual European Union Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1990-2023 and inventory document 2025). Policy measures, however, risk being caught between a desire to reduce emissions at the margins, implying intensification, and achieving reductions through lower numbers of cattle integrated with extensive grazing and land-use management.

Denmark will introduce a marginal tax on agricultural emissions at Danish kroner 120 (€16) /tCO₂eq from 2030, rising to DKK 300 (€39)/tCO₂eq from 2035, with a 60 per cent discount applied to farms meeting a given reduction target. This will be combined with investment in afforestation and peatland restoration, including from arable land. This would include restoring natural hydrology over 60,500 ha of agricultural land with extensification of a further 38,000 ha, out of a total of 171,000 ha of cultivated peatlands. Livestock measures include measures affecting digestion and better manure management, and there will be encouragement of plant-based foods. The intention is to achieve a reduction in emissions from the AFOLU sector of between 55 and 65 per cent on 1990 levels by 2030, or 6 to 8 Mt CO₂eq.

Mitigation: COP 30 and nationally determined contributions

Although the Paris target of limiting warming to +1.5 degrees has not been abandoned, it is now likely that the world is headed for over +2 degrees of warming. Projected production



Press conference on the Pre-COP30, marking 30 days until COP30.

© Rafa Neddermeyer / COP30 Brazil Amazon / PR.



levels of fossil fuels and certain infrastructure investments (new airports, runways) are not compatible with the +1.5 degrees target. The last-minute watering down of the Glasgow pledge from 'phase out' to 'phase down' coal in 2021 has been part of this.

It should be remembered that because of the atmospheric lifetimes of Greenhouse Gases, atmospheric stabilisation will not be achieved until 50 years after Net Zero is achieved in terms of emissions.

At COP 30, to be held at Belém, Brazil, in November, the stocktake at which parties to the Paris Agreement revise their Nationally Determined Contributions should be completed. Logically this should include, as a matter of urgency, plans for the phase-down (phase-out) of coal.

The EU still expects to reduce emissions by 55 per cent by 2030, with a reduction of between 66 and 72 per cent by 2035 and is working on a 90 per cent reduction by 2040. (The revised NDC details are awaited as at early October.)

China has pledged a 7 to 10 per cent reduction on its 2020 levels of emissions by 2035, and an expansion of wind and solar energy by six times its 2020 levels during the same period, increasing the level of non-fossil fuels in domestic energy consumption to over 30 per cent. It also plans to increase forest stocks by 6 billion cubic metres above 2005 levels to 24 billion cubic metres of timber. Together, this is expected to deliver an annual reduction of -1.4 billion tonnes CO₂. This is too little to save the +1.5 degrees target, but the good news would be that Chinese emissions would have peaked.

Canada, which in 2021 committed to reduce emissions by 40 to 45 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, had achieved only a reduction of 8.5 per cent in 2024, and trends indicate that the reduction will only be 20 to 25 per cent by 2030. This arises

partly from increases in emissions from oil and gas cancelling out progress in electricity generation and in the climate-proofing of buildings, and partly from the increase in wildfires.

Meanwhile the new government has abolished the carbon tax on consumers.

Australia, which has offered to hold COP 31 in 2026, intends to reduce emissions by between 62 and 70 per cent on 2005 levels by 2035. Brazil, the host nation, has committed to a reduction of between 59 and 67 per cent by 2035.

Japan's offer is currently awaited.

It remains the case that these commitments will still be inadequate to keep temperature rise to +2 degrees, unless greater efforts can successfully be made to reach Net Zero in the years 2035-2050.

Concluding recommendation

The EU remains a forum where rational, intergenerational and transboundary policies can be developed and implemented. This is a critical moment in which it needs to strengthen its broad objectives, while continuing the internal dialogue on the detailed design of some of the more ambitious measures that will be needed to achieve them. If climate change mitigation falls significantly short in the next ten years, adaptation costs are likely to become unmanageable, and to fall overwhelmingly on local and private actors without the necessary resources to meet them.

Read the full article on ELO website
www.elo.org/publications/cop-30/

National meeting of the Wildlife Estates Label 2025



Sonsoles ARMENDARIZ MILANS DEL BOSCH
WE Project Officer - Regional Coordinator Spain



On Monday, 8 September 2025, the Wildlife Estates (WE) Steering Committee met at the Fondation François Sommer in Paris to review the label's challenges and priorities. European delegates shared recent achievements, while the Scientific Committee, now chaired by Professor Klaus HACKLÄNDER, led a focused discussion on methodology and future biodiversity objectives.

The Wildlife Estates steering committee met in Paris at the Fondation François Sommer on Monday 8 September to discuss about the challenges the label is facing, the big majority of our European delegates assist and could present their last achievements, the Scientific committee with his new elected chairman Professor Klaus HACKLÄNDER was present as well, so interesting discussions took place regarding our methodology and biodiversity issues towards the future.

Today, the WE network spans nearly 100 territories in France and 600 across Europe, representing over 2 million hectares—the largest network of private landowners in Europe—where biodiversity and rural economies progress side by side.

This message resonates strongly in France, where private owners hold around 75% of forests and 85% of agricultural land. By valuing exemplary management, the WE Label shows that conservation outcomes improve when daily stewards of the land are empowered, recognised and connected through a shared framework.

Field visits on Wednesday, 10 September, in Seine-et-Marne brought these principles to life. More than 50 participants from across Europe discovered the Châtillon-La-Borde forest (Peugeot Frères) and the Maison Suisse (Foundation for Nature Conservation), two candidates for the label.

On site, they observed concrete actions: restoration of ponds to support aquatic and amphibian habitats; hedge planting to reinforce ecological corridors; and systematic naturalist and ecological monitoring to guide adaptive management. Each project reflects active partnerships—owners, hunters, managers and naturalists working together—so that evidence, experience and stewardship translate into durable gains for wildlife.

Looking ahead, the WE community's mandate is clear: raise the bar for measurable results, deepen collaboration and scale what works. Paris 2025 confirmed both the momentum—and the method—to do exactly that.

On Tuesday, 9 September, over 115 participants gathered in the Auditorium Jacqueline Sommer for a high-level symposium bringing together public decision-makers, private environmental stakeholders, researchers and certified landowners.

The exchanges centred on three priorities:

- (1) Recognising the leadership of private landowners in European biodiversity;
- (2) Strengthening science-based management through the WE methodology;
- (3) Accelerating cooperation between authorities, managers, hunters and conservation experts.



Partners panel at the Auditorium Jacqueline Sommer with Thierry de L'ESCAILLE, Philippe JUSTEAU, Alban DE LOISY et Olivier THIBAUT moderated by Pierre DUBREUIL.

Empowering small forest owners to achieve EU Forest Strategy goals



Pierre LE MAÎTRE
EU Project and Policy Officer, ELO

Forests provide a wide range of vital ecosystem services, including biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, water regulation and recreational opportunities. Multifunctional forest management aims to safeguard these services while allowing for sustainable economic use, such as timber production. However, achieving this balance is becoming increasingly difficult due to pressures from climate change, land-use change, economic fragmentation and complex regulatory environments. Small forest owners are particularly exposed to these challenges, often lacking the resources and support needed to manage their land effectively. The Small4Good (S4G) project addresses these risks by developing practical, incentive-based solutions. By promoting regionally adapted strategies, developing digital and AI tools and supporting innovative funding mechanisms like Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), S4G helps smallholders contribute to the objectives of the EU Forest Strategy through sustainable, multifunctional forest management.

The ambition of the EU Forest Strategy regarding multifunctional forests and Payment for Ecosystem Services

Launched in 2023 by the European Commission, the EU Forest Strategy aims to achieve the biodiversity and climate neutrality goals outlined in the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. This strategy seeks to enhance both the quantity and quality of multifunctional forests in the European Union. It also aims to develop financial incentives for forest owners and managers to adopt environmentally friendly practices through Payment for Ecosystem Services. However, the forests' ability to provide ecosystem services is threatened by various challenges, such as urbanisation, climate change and the growing demand for wood.

The central role of forest owners

Around 60% of Europe's forests are privately owned by approximately 16 million owners, many of whom are smallholders. These owners play a central role in the provision of biodiversity and ecosystem services (BES). Yet, many forest owners remain inactive due to limited knowledge, fragmented ownership, low profitability, complex regulations and a lack of financial support. The success of the EU Forest Strategy depends on transforming these forest owners into active managers and stewards of Europe's forest ecosystems. Before imposing obligations or penalties, it is essential to provide forest owners with supportive funds, policy and a legislative framework. To address these challenges, ELO plays a pivotal role in representing forest owners, promotes sustainable forest management and advocates for enabling conditions that support multifunctional forestry. Through its active participation in EU-funded projects like Small4Good (S4G), ELO is helping to turn strategy into action.



Small4Good: Sustainable multifunctional management by small forest owners

Small4Good aims to empower small forest owners to protect biodiversity and enhance ecosystem services through multifunctional, locally adapted forest management approaches. These models are financially supported by Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes, such as biodiversity offsetting and carbon sequestration, and are further strengthened by the use of digital and AI-based tools to boost management capacity and encourage active engagement among smallholders.

Firstly, the project analyses the broader context in which small forest owners operate, identifying their motivations as well as the barriers they face. Based on these insights, Small4Good develops stakeholder-driven and attractive business models that promote multifunctional forest use while supporting the goals of the EU Forestry Strategy. These models are tested in real-world conditions through Living Labs, established in four European regions: North (Norway), East (Romania), Central (Germany and Switzerland) and South (Spain). This implementation is supported by regionally tailored silvicultural and operational solutions. Digital tools and artificial intelligence are also explored for their potential to support the practical application of these models and to better engage forest owners.

How is ELO involved?

ELO leads the activities related to the dissemination, communication and exploitation of the project. This includes managing communication efforts, producing targeted materials for EU policymakers and forest owners, organising events and increasing the visibility of the Living Labs as examples of innovation and success. For example, our Forestry Project Team recently developed a dedicated section of the Small4Good website that presents in detail each Living Lab. This section explains how each Lab operates, the specific challenges it tackles, and the types of innovations it introduces to forest management, aiming to inform and inspire a wide audience, including landowners, policymakers and other stakeholders. Finally, in addition to its role in communication, our team will also soon contribute to the analysis of various institutional settings, constraints and new business models (including PES) across the European Union.

More info at www.small4good.eu

1 - COM(2021) 572 final

2 - SWD(2023) 285 final

3 - European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2022 on a new Forest Strategy for 2030 - Sustainable Forest Management in Europe (2022/2016(INI))

Innovation conference: one toolbox, one Market – access to innovation for EU farmers



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Europe's farmers face a paradox: they are expected to produce more sustainably with fewer tools at hand. Climate change, fragmented policies, and growing global competition make innovation not just desirable but essential. On 13 October 2025, the European Landowners' Organization and CropLife Europe, with the support of the European People's Party (EPP), gathered policymakers, scientists, farmers, and industry leaders at the European Parliament to explore how biocontrol and new genomic techniques (NGTs) can build a more sustainable, resilient, and competitive European agriculture. And what are the hurdles still preventing them from getting into the farmers' toolbox.

Europe's farmers stand at a crossroads. Their ability to remain competitive, productive, and climate-resilient will depend on whether Europe can turn scientific progress into practical solutions.

At the Innovation Conference – “One toolbox, one market: access to innovation for EU farmers,” hosted by MEP Stefan KÖHLER, experts from across Europe came together to debate how biocontrol and NGTs can deliver on this promise – if regulation allows it.

In his opening remark, MEP Stefan KÖHLER, EPP set the scene:

“We have at our disposal scientific tools that can make our agriculture more resilient, more sustainable, and more productive. As policymakers, we need to legislate for the present, but also for the future. The European Parliament is working on an own initiative report on biocontrol. The report is not just a formality, but a political signal. Its goal is clear - to give the Commission our perspective and input on how to best speed up authorization procedures and reduce the deadlock on applications.”

Alain THIBAULT, Chairman of Agriodor, captured the challenge faced by many SMEs: “We use natural plant scents to protect crops, but it takes up to ten years to bring a biocontrol product to market. Innovation can't survive such delays.” For THIBAULT and others, Europe's lengthy and fragmented approval procedures are discouraging investment and slowing farmers' access to greener solutions.

Klaus BEREND from DG SANTE confirmed that the European Commission is aware of the problem. The upcoming “Omnibus” proposal, he said, will include a clear definition of biocontrol, reinforce mutual recognition between Member States, and strengthen EFSA's capacity to handle applications more swiftly. “I am confident that we will present a nice package to the Parliament and the Council. The topic of biocontrol itself is generally supported politically, though we expect some controversy in the definition area” BEREND concluded.

For Olivier DE MATOS, Director General of CropLife Europe, simplifying the process is essential. “Automatic mutual recognition, provisional authorisations, and a EU wide future proof definition of biocontrol would help bring innovation faster to farmers. To be competitive, they need complementary solutions in the toolbox,” he said.

When the discussion shifted to New Genomic Techniques (NGTs), the consensus was equally strong: Europe must break the deadlock. Jose Maria CASTILLA (ASAJA) stressed the urgency. While other regions advance rapidly, European farmers risk being left behind. “Give us the same tools as our competitors,” CASTILLA said. “That's real sustainability.”

On mandatory labelling and traceability, Garlich VON ESSEN (Euroseeds) noted: “the question should be why do we want it for category 1 NGT plants, when EFSA has concluded that they are equivalent to the conventionally bred ones? It doesn't bring any concrete benefit and the burden will mostly be felt by smaller players”. Kristiina DIGRYTE (Permanent Representation of Estonia to the EU) echoed the same concern: “We are not ready to handle NGT 1 labelling and traceability because we don't have methods to analyse the final products. Should this be required, there will be no NGT crops available in Europe.”

From the scientific side, Hilde NELISSEN of VIB-Ghent University reminded the audience that innovation in plant breeding is incremental: “We are improving tolerance, resistance, and quality step by step – each one matters.”

Closing the event, Macy MERRIMAN (independent consultant) and Jurgen TACK (ELO) summarised that innovation does not happen in isolation. It takes scientific development, political will and cooperation between stakeholders to make it accessible: “Europe has a tremendous opportunity to lead – but it must walk the talk. The rest of the world is already moving forward”, Macy MERRIMAN concluded. “If there is a common denominator between biocontrol and NGTs, I think that denominator is related to the fact that farmers and landowners need trusted, practical, and predictable pathways. For us, innovation is not a threat but a means to reconcile productivity and conservation. Let us give our farmers a toolbox which is both effective and accessible so that the next generation of land managers can keep Europe productive, resilient and rich in nature”, Jurgen TACK added.

For ELO and its partners, the message is clear: to be a leader of sustainability, Europe must give its farmers a toolbox that is both safe and usable, allowing innovation to flourish at home – not abroad.



ELO events in december: Biodiversity Conference, European Bee Award & “Innovators by Nature” conference



Delphine DUPEUX
Director of EU Biodiversity Policy and
Parliamentary Affairs, ELO



Biodiversity Conference - Money Talks: Closing the Funding Gap for Nature Restoration

*Maison Grand Place,
Grand place 19,
1000 Brussels
2 December 2025
14:00 - 17:00*

Join us in Brussels on 2 December at 14:00 for a deep dive into one of Europe's most pressing challenges: closing the biodiversity financing gap. How can we make nature restoration not just a moral imperative, but an economic opportunity? With private landowners managing much of Europe's landscapes, their engagement is vital—but it must make financial sense. Explore how innovative tools—results-based payments, tax incentives, blended finance, and credible biodiversity credits—can turn restoration into a reward.

Register via www.elo.org.



European Bee Award ceremony 2025

Laura ȚICOIU
Policy Officer, ELO

*European Parliament |
2 December 2025 19:00 to 20:30*

The ELO together with John Deere, invites you to the 2025 European Bee Award Ceremony - an evening celebrating the champions of pollinator protection and biodiversity across Europe - in the European Parliament.

This event brings together farmers, conservationists, researchers, and innovators to recognize and honor those making a real difference for nature and sustainable agriculture. Attendees will enjoy inspiring stories, networking opportunities, and insights into the latest initiatives supporting pollinators and biodiversity.

Register via www.elo.org





INNOVATORS BY NATURE – Be part of the future of nature-driven innovation

ACE Events, Brussels

3 December 2025 | 9:30-18:00



Beatrice CROCE
Project and Policy Officer - Biodiversity and Carbon Credits, ELO



Anne MARCHADIER
Business Development Director, ELO

Innovators by Nature is a high-level gathering of Europe's most visionary landowners, investors, policymakers, and environmental entrepreneurs. Hosted in Brussels, the event showcases scalable business models at the crossroads of nature, enterprise, and innovation.

The programme will explore some of today's most promising opportunities: **carbon farming** and wetland restoration, rewilding, **biodiversity credits**, and nature tourism, sustainable **agricultural production**, premium markets, eco-housing and **rural development**, as well as renewable energy and **digital infrastructure**.

This event will bring together a diverse community of landowners, innovators, and decision-makers shaping the future of nature-driven business.

Join us on 3 December 2025 at ACE Events in Brussels, for a day of forward-looking discussions. Together, we can chart a future where innovation and nature grow hand in hand.



Register via www.elo.org or by scanning the QR code.

For partnership opportunities, please contact
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Keynote partners:



Session partners:

Calling landowners: help shape wildlife–pastoral coexistence



Eleonore RAYNAL-PEČENÝ
Communication officer, ELO

The CoCo (Cocreating Coexistence) project, funded by the European Union, is a new initiative dedicated to fostering harmony between wildlife and livestock across Europe's diverse landscapes. By promoting dialogue and developing practical solutions, CoCo seeks to ensure that pastoralism remains both viable for landowners and compatible with biodiversity conservation.

COCO SURVEY

Help shape coexistence between wildlife and livestock

We are collecting input from 1,000 landowners across France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden as part of the CoCo project. Take part in this survey and help shape policies that support both livestock farming and wildlife conservation across Europe's diverse landscapes.

At the heart of this effort is a large-scale survey reaching out to 1,000 landowners across 12 countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. The aim is to gather first-hand insights from those working closest with the land, whose daily experience is key to understanding the challenges and opportunities of coexistence.

The results of the survey will be instrumental in shaping tools, recommendations and policies that support landowners in managing conflicts while maintaining resilient and wildlife-friendly pastoral systems.



Your voice matters. By sharing your perspective, you will contribute directly to solutions that balance tradition, livelihood and nature. The CoCo project invites you to take part in this unique initiative and help pave the way towards a sustainable, shared future for both people and wildlife in the European countryside.

Let's increase our food supply
without
reducing theirs

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