

CountrySide

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

MAGAZINE

Biodiversity Conference - Money Talks

Closing the funding gap for nature restauration

Innovation opens new path for pollinator protection

at the 2025 European Bee Award

Regenomics offers new economic

insights for landowners





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Editorial

The aftermath of the confusion and poorly calibrated legislation resulting from a hastily implemented Green Deal, without any real consultation, continues to weigh heavily on the morale of rural stakeholders, if not to put a sword of Damocles over their heads!

EUDR, one of many regulatory projects, is a case in point: the text on the table is unenforceable in Europe, yet it is essential to establish genuine traceability for products from problematic areas.

To resolve the issue within a reasonable timeframe, at least the following three elements would need to be addressed:

1. Disproportionate burden on low-risk European landowners

European family forests and many agricultural holdings are not drivers of tropical deforestation. Yet the current EUDR framework imposes extensive administrative and compliance obligations on them, including geolocation, documentation and risk analysis, regardless of their negligible risk profile. This diverts time and resources away from climate adaptation, biodiversity measures and sustainable management.

2. Complexity and feasibility of implementation

The regulation requires a level of traceability and proof that many operators and authorities are not yet technically or administratively equipped to deliver, especially in the short

term. This risks creating legal uncertainty, bottlenecks in trade, and a focus on paperwork rather than real environmental outcomes.

3. Insufficiently targeted risk approach

The current approach does not sufficiently differentiate between:

- high-risk and low-risk regions,
- commodities and production systems with very different deforestation footprints,
- operators with demonstrably sustainable practices and those operating in problematic contexts.

We advocate for a more nuanced, risk-based system that directs the strictest controls and obligations to the highest-risk areas and sectors, while simplifying requirements for demonstrably low-risk operators.

Our call for postponement is therefore not an attempt to block solutions, but an attempt to gain the time needed to correct design flaws, strengthen the risk-based approach and ensure that the regulation is **effective, fair and workable in practice**.



Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

ELO Executive President

Biodiversity Conference – Money Talks: Closing the funding gap for nature restoration

Europe has the funds to save its biodiversity, yet practical deployment remains a challenge. On 2 December 2025, the ELO Biodiversity Conference in Brussels brought together experts from the financial sector, policy makers, scientists, land managers, investors, and representatives of civil society to confront this paradox. The central question was simple yet urgent: How can we finance biodiversity today? How can we turn biodiversity ambition into investable, scalable solutions?

Europe's biodiversity funding: The deployment gap

“Europe doesn't have a financial problem. It has a deployment problem,” stated Eva MAYERHOFER from the European Investment Bank (EIB), stressing that Europe has the capital but lacks the coherent frameworks needed to channel it effectively. She noted that policies and incentives still pull in different directions, creating uncertainty and slowing down action on the ground.

Jurgen TACK, ELO Secretary General reminded participants that, despite this theoretical availability of resources, landowners still face high upfront restoration costs, long-term maintenance burdens, complex administrative procedures, and public funding schemes that rarely cover the full costs, leaving them to carry most of the risk.

Innovative tools and solutions do exist, but scaling restoration requires mechanisms that deliver measurable ecological benefits and fair economic returns for landowners. Private investment can only work if it is supported by strong public funding, legal certainty, and fair benefit-sharing. As Mr TACK put it: “Without trust, there will be no scalable market; without clarity, no investment flow; and without landowners, no restoration at all.”

Aligning policies and finance for a nature-positive future

The first panel explored the financial tools needed to close the gap between ambition and implementation in nature restoration. Heather GRABBE (Bruegel) stressed that the way Member



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



Ludovica MASSIMO
Policy and Project intern, ELO

States choose to implement the Nature Restoration Law will be decisive. Opting only for the lowest-cost measures may allow them to meet the 2030 targets, but at the expense of far higher long-term costs and irreversible losses in carbon and biodiversity benefits.

Thomas FREISINGER (IUCN) highlighted that restoration efforts still rely heavily on public funding, particularly the LIFE programme, and that Member States show very different levels of dependence on EU resources. For him, no single instrument can replace another: tools must complement and reinforce each other rather than compete.

Representing the private sector, Jesús CARRASCO (Iberdrola) explained that companies increasingly view biodiversity not as a burden but as a genuine business opportunity. For Iberdrola, investing in nature means investing in resilience, social value creation, and long-term economic performance.

Eva MAYERHOFER (EIB) outlined several ways to better mobilise private capital, from parametric insurance models to better-targeted guarantees and forest-bond-inspired financing structures.

Together, the panellists stressed that while promising solutions exist, they will only succeed if public authorities, investors, and landowners move in the same direction, supported by clarity, trust, and stable long-term frameworks.

Investing in nature: From metrics to markets

The second panel focused on practical, market-driven approaches to making nature investable and creating income for land managers through natural capital and biodiversity credits. Martin STUCHTEY (Landbanking Group) described how technology and fintech can give every hectare an “ecological passport,” measuring biodiversity, carbon, water, and soil, and linking it to financial instruments. This allows businesses to in-

vest in nature as critical infrastructure, with outcomes-based rewards for land stewards, and opens possibilities for insurance, loans, and landscape funds.

Caroline PRINGLE (Natural-Prosperity) emphasised designing natural capital metrics from the landowner perspective, ensuring they are practical, holistic, and affordable. Her five-year pilot model provides upfront capital to land managers and guarantees them 50% of verified returns, de-risking both investors and landowners while supporting integrated land management.

Heli SIITARI (MTK) highlighted the importance of building trust through robust metrics and verification systems. Finland's habitat-value hectare system, supported by intermediaries like forest management associations, helps landowners engage with nature credit markets. Public-private funding and continuous communication with landowners are essential for success.

Alexandra HOLMLUND (Qarlbo Biodiversity) shared experience with biodiversity credit pilots in production forests, showing how modular, measurable interventions-conservation, restoration, and integrated forest management- can generate returns and scale across geographies. She noted the challenges of market adoption due to past failures in carbon markets but emphasised the potential for resilience and intrinsic value markets.

Overall, the panel highlighted that scalable, credible nature markets require robust metrics, pilots to prove concepts, fi-



nancial infrastructure, and enabling policy frameworks, combining innovation with practical, on-the-ground application.

Nature as an asset, not a cost

Overall, biodiversity finance is transitioning from fragmented efforts to structured, investable nature-based solutions. Success will depend on policy clarity, market infrastructure, and long-term partnerships that treat nature as an economic asset rather than a cost centre.

With a full room, engaging debates, and exceptional speakers, the conference was a clear success. Europe may finally be moving toward a future where nature is not a cost centre, but an essential asset - one deserving of stable, predictable, and large-scale investment.





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Innovation opens new paths for pollinator protection at the 2025 European Bee Award

Innovation met tradition at the European Parliament in Brussels this December as the European Bee Award celebrated its twelfth edition, spotlighting practical solutions to one of Europe's most pressing environmental challenges: the decline of pollinators. Hosted by MEP Paulo DO NASCIMENTO CABRAL, the ceremony brought together policymakers, farmers, beekeepers, scientists, and industry representatives to recognize projects that bridge agriculture, biodiversity, and technological ingenuity.

Jointly organised by ELO and John Deere, the European Bee Award has, since 2014, honoured initiatives that deliver tangible benefits for bees and other pollinators. This year's focus was on innovative technological solutions, reflecting a growing understanding that modern farming tools and ecological protection can evolve together rather than stand in opposition.

The 2025 top prize went to EcoCut, a German project developed by Fischer MASCHINENBAU. EcoCut addresses a long overlooked yet significant threat to insects: mowing operations. Its solution is deceptively simple. An air blowing system mounted ahead of mowing equipment gently moves bees and other insects away from danger before blades pass through. Field tests, including a dedicated experiment using bee combs, showed that the system can protect up to 90 percent of bees present during mowing.



European Bee Award winners (EcoCut) together with jury representatives.
From left to the right: MEP Paulo do Nascimento Cabral (EPP), Prof. Dr. Reiner Beutel (EcoCut), Matthias Reber (EcoCut), Gilles Dryancour (John Deere, Member of the Jury), Dieter Reber (EcoCut), Thierry de l'Escaille (ELO, Member of the Jury), Prof. Dr. Michael Garratt (University of Reading, President of the Jury).



Laura TICOIU
Policy Officer, ELO

For the EcoCut team, the award validates a philosophy rooted in practicality. The system requires no reduction in working speed and does not place additional burdens on farmers or contractors. Instead, it demonstrates how small design changes can yield substantial ecological gains. As Dieter REBER of EcoCut explained during the ceremony, the project was driven by the belief that efficiency and nature friendly practices do not need to be mutually exclusive.

Alongside the main winner, the jury awarded a special mention to Apiluz, a French initiative based in the Champagne Ardenne region. Apiluz brings together farmers, beekeepers, cooperatives, and the Symbiose association to tackle the summer nectar gap, a period when flowering resources for pollinators become scarce. The project encourages farmers to leave three metre wide unmown strips in alfalfa fields from June to August, allowing plants to flower and provide vital forage.

Since its launch in 2021, Apiluz has mobilised more than 2,400 farmers across seven departments, creating over 1,850 kilometres of flowering strips. Annual monitoring shows these areas host significantly higher numbers of pollinators and beneficial insects, proving that modest adjustments in land management can transform agricultural landscapes.

Speakers at the ceremony underscored the broader significance of these initiatives. Jury President Professor Michael GARRATT praised the diversity and creativity of applications, while Thierry DE L'ESCAILLE, ELO Executive President, emphasised that the European Bee Award continues to demonstrate how simple, well designed practices can make a meaningful difference on the ground. Gilles DRYANCOUR, Vice President for Corporate Affairs at John Deere and a member of the jury, echoed this view, noting that technological progress in agriculture must empower farmers while protecting nature. Together, their messages reinforced the award's central theme: innovation and environmental responsibility are strongest when they move forward hand in hand.



European landowners meet in Brussels to defend stability, land and nature



Wallerand VAN OUTRYVE D'YDEWALLE
Policy and Project Officer -
ForumforAg Speaker Coordinator

On 2 December 2025, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) held its General Assembly at the Maison Grand Place in Brussels, gathering 50 members, national associations and EU partners. The meeting addressed the future of the CAP, regulatory complexity, and ELO's evolving governance. Contributions from MEP Christine SCHNEIDER and Belgian organisations highlighted shared concerns over policy direction. Members reaffirmed their commitment to supporting nature and rural development, while calling for greater clarity, coherence, and recognition of landowners' role in the European Green Deal.

Thierry DE L'ESCAILLE, ELO Executive President, opened the session by underlining the importance of preserving the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as a dedicated strategic instrument. He warned that the proposed "single fund" in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) could weaken the CAP, particularly Pillar II rural development, and reduce parliamentary oversight.



ELO Secretary General Jurgen TACK presented ELO's recent work on key regulatory files, including carbon removal, soil monitoring and nature credits, and highlighted the deadlock within the European Board on Agriculture and Food. He called for future policies that reward measurable environmental and economic results while avoiding overly restrictive eligibility rules.

MEP Christine SCHNEIDER supported maintaining a clear CAP structure in the next MFF and cautioned against fragmented funding, regulatory overload and overlapping EU obligations affecting landowners and family businesses.

Andriy DYKUN, Chair of the Ukrainian Agrarian Council, described the severe challenges facing Ukrainian landowners during the war and called for stronger cooperation with European partners.

The Assembly concluded by reaffirming the need for coherent long-term policies and fair recognition of landowners' contribution to Europe's environmental and rural objectives as ELO prepares its input for the next MFF.



Podcast – Bridging the gap: Financing the agricultural transition

In the latest episode of the Food Systems Podcast, Jurgen TACK, Secretary General of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), discusses the Forum for the Future of Agriculture's recent report on financing the transition to a more resilient and sustainable agri-food system. Speaking with host Rose O'DONOVAN, TACK outlines the challenge of aligning environmental objectives with economic viability for farmers.

The report stresses the need for long-term policy consistency. Farmers often make investments over several decades and cannot adapt easily to rapidly changing rules. While reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) remains central, Jurgen TACK argues that private finance must complement public funds. He points to the potential of nature credits and improved markets for ecosystem services as promising tools. The ELO's Wildlife Estate Label, now covering almost three million hectares, offers one model that recognises and supports biodiversity efforts.

TACK also raises concerns about proposals to merge the CAP budget into a wider "single fund", which could undermine the stability of agricultural support. Addressing the estimated €62 billion investment gap requires structural change. Rather than replacing missing funds, the focus should be on creating new models where environmental services are valued economically, reliably and transparently.

Reforming the CAP: Finding the balance between economic viability and environmental ambition

On 4 November 2025, the European Parliament hosted a policy conference on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, co-chaired by MEPs Herbert DORFMANN and Juan Ignacio ZOIDO. The discussion brought together EU decision-makers and sector representatives to assess how the CAP can remain economically viable while responding to environmental and structural challenges. Against the backdrop of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework and proposed changes to CAP governance, exchanges focused on income stability, competitiveness, environmental delivery and the need for a predictable policy framework capable of supporting long-term investment in European agriculture.

On 4 November 2025, the European Parliament hosted a high-level conference co-chaired by MEPs Herbert DORFMANN (Italy, EPP) and Juan Ignacio ZOIDO (Spain, EPP). The event gathered policymakers, experts and stakeholders to reflect on the evolving role of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in supporting both economic resilience and environmental ambition.

In his opening remarks, DORFMANN stressed that the CAP remains one of the EU's most integrated policy instruments and should retain its distinct structure. He expressed concern over proposals within the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that could merge CAP funding with cohesion policy, potentially diluting its agricultural focus and reducing long-term planning stability. For DORFMANN, protecting the two-pillar architecture is essential to ensure that targeted rural and environmental objectives continue to be addressed.

ZOIDO echoed this position, noting that farmers face increasing costs, regulatory uncertainty and external pressures. He argued that simplification should not come at the cost of effectiveness and called for reform that enhances farm viability, fosters generational renewal, and reduces bureaucratic complexity.

The Commission's perspective on future reform

Catherine GESLAIN-LANÉELLE, Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis at DG AGRI, delivered the keynote address. She underlined that the current CAP Strategic Plans provide a flexible yet complex framework for Member States. Acknowl-



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edging budgetary pressures and delivery challenges, she called for stronger cooperation between EU institutions and national authorities to maintain alignment with both environmental goals and competitiveness.

GESLAIN-LANÉELLE indicated that the Commission would closely monitor the implications of the proposed MFF structure, particularly the risk of weakening rural development support. She also highlighted the need to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and streamline the CAP's administrative processes.

Towards evidence-based and inclusive reform

Opening the expert panel, Tassos HANIOTIS (ForumforAg / IIASA) urged policymakers to move beyond polarised debates and focus on outcomes. He suggested that the CAP must evolve towards supporting sustainable productivity, using clear metrics to measure success. HANIOTIS warned that ignoring data and long-term trends risks undermining both credibility and impact.

Elli TSIFOROU, Secretary General of COPA-COGECA, defended the CAP's current structure, especially the need for a strong first pillar to support farm income. She voiced concern that ongoing reforms risk alienating farmers and called for more inclusive policymaking.

David BALDOCK of IEEP highlighted the need for stronger environmental integration, including clearer links between payments and performance. He called for improvements in monitoring and transparency to ensure that green objectives are delivered.

Théo PAQUET of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) underlined areas of common ground between farming and environmental interests. He advocated for more ambitious eco-schemes, better-defined indicators and more robust enforcement at Member State level.

Cédric BENOIST (AGPB) closed the first part of the panel by insisting that farmers must be given the tools and confidence to adapt. He warned that any reform which undermines economic viability will also undermine support for the broader green transition.

Clarifying the Commission's approach

In response to panellists' concerns, GESLAIN-LANÉELLE defended the Commission's engagement process, referencing consultations, civil dialogue groups and the strategic dialogue, which she said had meaningfully contributed to shaping the proposed CAP vision. She emphasised that the Commission was not merely applying a technical reorganisation of funds but aiming to preserve core policy objectives.

She pushed back against the perception that current proposals ignored farmers' efforts, especially regarding the recognition of environmentally beneficial practices. Measures such as soil protection, water conservation and biodiversity stewardship should, she argued, count towards environmental targets. She also noted that the Commission intends to maintain a level of oversight in the approval of Member States' plans to ensure consistency and impact.



Balancing conditions and incentives

The Commission reiterated its intention to move away from overly rigid conditionality, acknowledging that complexity had previously hindered effectiveness. A shift towards incentives, where appropriate, could better support behavioural change. At the same time, concerns remain about the capacity of Member States to implement these new frameworks effectively, particularly under tight budgets and limited administrative resources.

ELO's closing reflections

Jurgen TACK, Secretary General of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), offered a frank conclusion. He welcomed the dialogue but warned that the sustainability of the CAP cannot be achieved without ensuring farm profitability. "Profitable farming is a precondition for every environmental ambition we share," he stated. Jurgen TACK called for a stable regulatory environment, predictable investment tools and fewer but better rules that reward multifunctional land use.

The Commission reiterated its intention to move away from overly rigid conditionality, acknowledging that complexity had previously hindered effectiveness.

He reaffirmed the importance of maintaining a common baseline across Europe to safeguard the single market. He also urged policymakers to preserve a dedicated rural development function within the CAP and to avoid folding agriculture into overly broad partnership frameworks.

In TACK's view, the path forward should include transition payments, streamlined conditionality, improved risk management tools and better alignment between innovation funding and regulatory incentives. He concluded by cautioning that without clearer rules, long-term stability and fair remuneration, farmer confidence in the reform process could be seriously undermined.

Conclusion

As moderator Mark TITTERINGTON noted, the conference revealed more common ground than many had expected. While positions differ, there is shared recognition that the CAP must adapt to an evolving landscape while remaining fit for purpose. Future reforms will need to reconcile economic pressures with environmental ambition, grounded in evidence and guided by open, structured dialogue.

Facing the future of agriculture: Market outlook, environmental challenges and policy priorities

As global agricultural systems face mounting pressures from climate change, market volatility and shifting consumer expectations, the Forum for the Future of Agriculture convened its 2025 Market Outlook Workshop on 6–7 November in Brussels. The two-day event brought together economists, policymakers, sector representatives and modellers to examine the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook (2025–2034) and explore how agriculture can respond to intersecting economic, environmental and geopolitical challenges. Discussions highlighted the need to align productivity with sustainability, ensure long-term policy coherence, and support farmers as key actors in delivering food security and climate objectives.



Liz WILSON

Bence TÓTH (DG AGRI) emphasised that food security challenges persist despite high production levels, with access, affordability and food waste remaining major concerns. He also highlighted the pressure on policymakers to deliver rapid analysis in a volatile context. HANIOTIS added that high gas prices continue to disadvantage European fertiliser producers and called for greater uptake of precision fertilisers and improved food waste measurement.

Panellists acknowledged that modelling remains essential but increasingly difficult under uncertainty. For example, food waste reduction scenarios may appear universally beneficial, yet closer analysis can reveal income losses for farmers. Policymakers therefore need tools that combine technical robustness with real-world relevance.

Day 1: Markets in a shifting global landscape

Opening the workshop, moderator Lee Ann JACKSON stressed the importance of evidence-based policymaking in an increasingly disrupted global environment. She noted that agriculture is shaped by forces well beyond the farm gate, requiring long-term thinking and robust analysis.

Tassos HANIOTIS, Special Advisor for Sustainable Productivity at the Forum and Senior Guest Research Scholar at IIASA, outlined major structural shifts affecting agriculture. These include growing trade tensions, the dual role of agriculture as both an emitter and carbon sink, and declining reliance on scientific evidence in policymaking. He questioned whether the long-term decline in real agricultural prices may be reversing and warned that geopolitical instability and climate impacts could undermine market stability.

The global baseline and modelling challenges

In the first session, Máximo TORERO, Chief Economist at the FAO, described the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook as a critical tool for anticipating long-term trends and disruptions. Marcel ADENÄUER (OECD) explained the baseline assumptions underpinning the Outlook, including slowing population growth, steady economic expansion and increasing regional divergence in diets. While agricultural emissions are projected to rise in absolute terms, emissions intensity is expected to decline.

Arable crops and livestock under pressure

The second session focused on arable crops. Thomas CHATZ-OPOULOS (OECD) described the sector as mature, with productivity gains sustaining output but slowing demand and increasing market concentration creating vulnerability. Oilseed yields remain volatile due to climate impacts, while biofuel growth is expected mainly in emerging economies.

Iliana AXIOTIADES (Coceral) warned against growing policy interventionism and stressed the difficulty of balancing sustainability goals with food security. Tiffanie STEPHANI (Yara) highlighted the potential to improve nutrient efficiency, noting





that European farmers could increase nitrogen use efficiency by up to 20% through better practices.

Alexander DÖRING (FEFAC) argued for stronger cross-sector collaboration, from feed to food systems, and stressed that livestock should be seen as part of climate solutions rather than solely as a problem. Glauco BERTOLDO illustrated Brazil's integrated approach to food, feed, fuel and carbon, underpinned by decades of research and innovation-driven, low-subsidy production.

The livestock session highlighted a sector at a crossroads. Marcel ADENÄUER (OECD) noted that while global meat consumption will continue to grow, the pace is slowing in high-income regions. Productivity gains will reduce emissions intensity, but total emissions are still expected to rise. Ignacio Pérez DOMÍNGUEZ (EC) pointed to progress in decoupling production and emissions through sustainable intensification.

Sabrina KOGLER (DG AGRI) raised concerns about shrinking grasslands due to declining livestock numbers, with implications for biodiversity and climate regulation. MEP Benoît CASSART warned that relocating production abroad would simply export emissions and undermine EU objectives, stressing the need for stable CAP support.

Risks and uncertainty

The final session of Day 1 explored what could go wrong. Joseph GLAUBER (IFPRI) highlighted escalating trade tensions and questioned the resilience of the global trading system. John BAFFES (World Bank) warned that fertiliser prices have decoupled from energy prices and that climate impacts may be masked in yield data. Alan MATTHEWS cautioned that rising interest in food sovereignty and protectionism could fragment markets over time.

Day 2: Environment, policy and the path forward

Day 2 shifted focus to environmental impacts and policy responses. Cédric DU MONCEAU (Committee of the Regions) called for cooperation over competition and urged policymakers to move beyond GDP towards footprint-based indicators. HANIOTIS defended open markets and warned that climate policy must remain socially viable to maintain political support.

Ana Luisa BARBOSA (JRC) presented findings from the EcAMPA study, highlighting that protecting peatlands offers significant emission reductions with limited production impacts. While carbon pricing is effective, it also carries trade-offs, including higher food prices and livestock decline. Tamas KRISZTIN (IIASA) underlined the importance of multi-model approaches to better capture uncertainty and integrate biodiversity and land-use considerations.

Farmers and policymakers on the front line

Anne-Catherine DALCQ, Walloon Minister for Agriculture, highlighted the growing impact of climate extremes on farmers and warned that the transition must not lead to unaffordable food. Leonard MIZZI (DG INTPA) described converging crises in developing countries and called for better-aligned trade and development policies.

Liam MACHALE (Irish Farmers' Association) and Jurgen TACK (ELO) both stressed that while innovation is happening on farms, short policy cycles and limited access to finance hinder long-term investment. The workshop concluded with a call for courage, stability and trust, recognising that while challenges are significant, the tools and partnerships to address them already exist.

Regenomics offers new economic insights for landowners

Regenerative agriculture holds great promise, but how can it become economically viable? In the Public Private Partnership (PPP) project 'Regenomics', Wageningen University & Research and its partners are working to shed light on the costs and benefits of regenerative agriculture. How can we support farmers to make choices that fit their specific circumstances? By the end of 2025, the research results will be available for all European farmers.

Throughout the project, we share 4 different stakeholder perspectives on the transition: how they see their role and responsibility, the opportunities and barriers they encounter, and how better insight into the costs and benefits can help to speed up the transition. This is part 2: the landowners' perspective.

'Agriculture is at a crossroads, more than ever before', says Jurgen TACK, secretary-general of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO). 'Farmers, buyers, food processors, landowners: we all have both an ecological and an economic responsibility. That is what makes regenerative agriculture so promising.'

ELO is an international advocacy organization representing landowners, farmers, foresters and rural entrepreneurs. Their 67 member organizations together represent about 2.8 million European agricultural professionals. In the WUR research project Regenomics, ELO is one of four partners.

Landowners look at land use differently than farmers who rent their land, TACK explains. 'For them, land is capital. To preserve that capital, they must ensure it remains in good condition. That is why we need agricultural models that are both sustainable and profitable. It is rare for these aspects to come together in one strategy. But in regenerative agriculture, they do.'

Promising model

What especially triggered ELO to participate in the Regenomics project, is the project focus on finding a sound business case for regenerative agriculture. 'In our lobbying work, we need metrics and proof', TACK points out. 'Everyone asks for outcomes – but credible, widely accepted data on soil health, biodiversity, and water is still evolving. Without trusted metrics, it's hard to argue for outcome-based rewards or to de-risk private investment.'

As a lobbying organization, ELO mainly works in Brussels – engaging with the European Commission and the European Parliament. Over the past 3 years, they have organized different events around the topic. 'We work with politicians and policy-



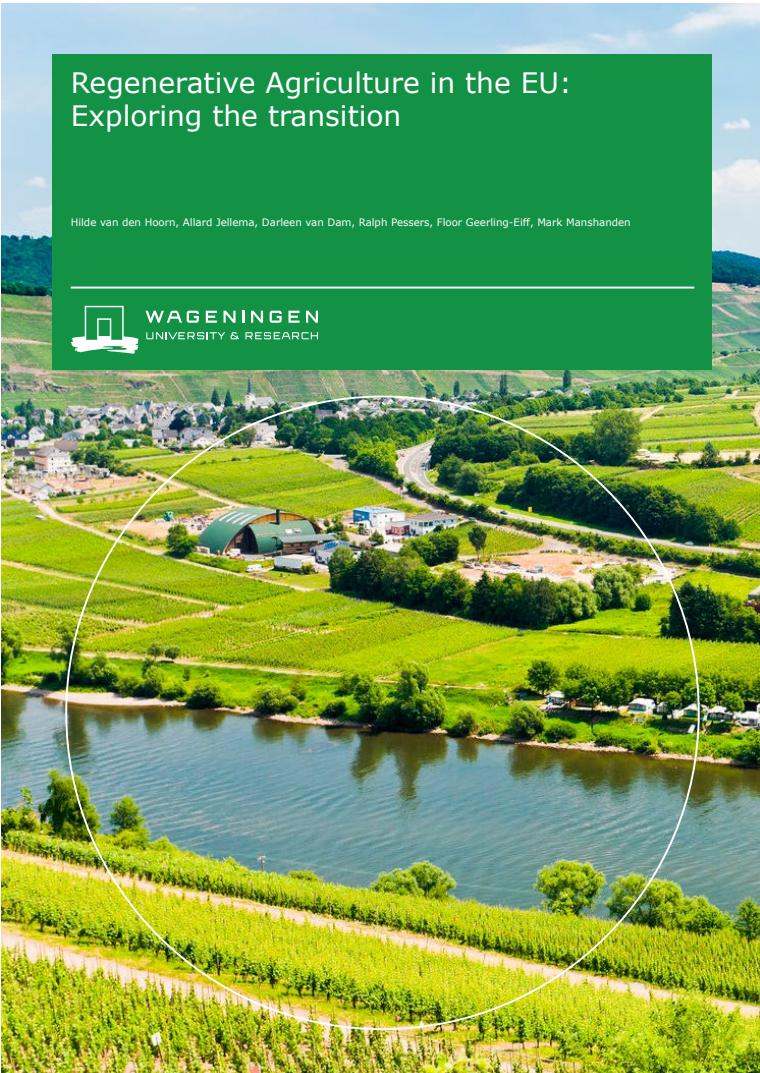
makers to ensure regenerative agriculture is part of future European agricultural policy. That is not easy, because European rules often change, member states interpret them differently, and policy dossiers overlap. This makes it difficult to give landowners stable, long-term signals.'

Next to their lobby activities, ELO connects landowners to research projects, pilots and other practical initiatives. 'That way, members who are eager to innovate can join the transition early on. We've seen many new agricultural methods – especially 'green' ones – fail because they were too idealistic and not focused enough on economic outcomes. Our role is to keep the focus on practical, region-specific solutions that deliver both competitiveness and environmental benefits. Only if a method is profitable, our members will adopt it for the long term.'

Challenges and barriers

ELO and its members face several other challenges in their work. 'Administrative burdens are increasing', says TACK. 'Reporting demands are rising, but the tools are fragmented and not interoperable. That erodes trust among landowners and takes time away from actual management.'





Regenerative Agriculture in the EU: Exploring the transition

Hilde van den Hoorn, Allard Jellema, Darleen van Dam, Ralph Pessers, Floor Geerling-Elff, Mark Manshanden



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For private landowners, the biggest barrier to switch to regenerative agriculture is a financial one. 'People have invested in their production equipment. When they switch to a new approach, some of that equipment is no longer usable. Switching from one agricultural model to another is therefore always done with a certain reluctance.'

Even so, TACK and his colleagues see a growing interest in the model. 'I am convinced that the Regenomics research results will help more people take the leap. We already see more and more landowners eager to start applying these practices.'

Using the results

ELO plans to use the research findings in several ways, TACK says. 'We will translate the cost-benefit curves and risk profiles into position papers and amendment proposals. Quantified evidence can persuade ministries and members of parliament to pledge their support. The results can also serve as decision-support tools for our members.'

Better-substantiated lobbying matters, emphasizes TACK, because it changes decisions. 'Policymakers and buyers will back models that are proven to work, costed and verifiable at scale.'

Solid evidence helps move the debate from ideology to implementation, targeting support where it delivers the most environmental gain per euro. That is how we can ensure private landowners are paid for performance – and how Regenomics makes a real difference.'

To ensure the findings reach both European policymakers and ELO's members, the organization will share the results in its newsletters and discussions. 'Scientific results can only have an impact once they reach society. We see it as our role to build those bridges.'

Next steps in the transition

What does ELO need from other stakeholders in the supply chain to move the transition forward? 'Buyers, processors, and retailers can help by offering pre-competitive, multi-year offtake agreements with fair pricing, linked to verified outcomes. It's also vital that they invest in the transition themselves.'

'If that happens across the entire chain', TACK concludes, 'we can absolutely make the leap to what may soon become our new 'traditional' agriculture. That would be good news: not only for climate and biodiversity, but also for agriculture and global food security in the decades to come.'

Do you want to know more about the Regenomics project, or do you have a question for the WUR research team? Send an e-mail to Mark MANSHANDEN (mark.manshanden@wur.nl), and we will get back to you soon.

About this project

Regenomics is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) project, in which we aim to create a better understanding of the economic costs-benefits of the regenerative agriculture transition in Europe. We are doing this by developing 'Regenomics': a replicable cost-benefits framework to create scenarios for arable farms. In 2025, we are testing our model in 4 different EU regions: Picardie (France), Észak-Alföld (Hungary), Niedersachsen (Germany) and Dolnoslaskie (Poland). After that, it will become available for all European farmers.

In this project, Wageningen University and Research works together with four project partners: Cargill, Unilever Europe, Mars Pet Nutrition Europe and the European Landowners' Organization. Since we're working in different regions, various local partners are also involved: Agro-Transfert Ressources et Territoires (France), The Institute of Agricultural Economics (AKI) (Hungary), Kompetenzzentrum Ökolandbau Niedersachsen GmbH (Germany) and Agro Smart Lab with Dorota ŁABANOWSKA-BURY (Poland).

“Building the European Peatlands Initiative: a strong alliance for peatland climate protection in Europe”



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Policy Officer, ELO

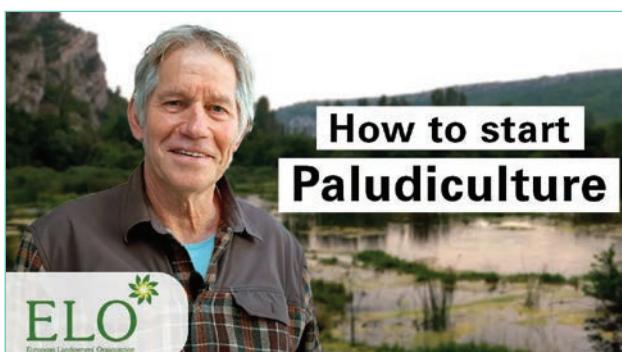
The EUKI EPI project was launched to address one of Europe's pressing climate challenges: the rapid degradation of peatlands. Funded under the European Climate Initiative (EUKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Climate Action, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUKN), the project set out to create the first pan-European alliance for peatlands.

Why was the project created?

The initiative addressed three gaps across Europe: a lack of EU-level peatland policy guidance, limited cross-country collaboration, and low awareness among landowners, decision-makers, and the public about peatlands' climate importance. Through EPI, these gaps became opportunities to connect. Thanks to our partners—Eurosit, the European Land Conservation Network (lead partner), the Michael Succow Foundation, Greifswald Mire Centre, and CEEweb for Biodiversity—and to everyone who contributed to events and discussions across Europe.

Key achievements:

1. Europe-wide stakeholder network: The project brought together landowners, farmers, foresters, scientists, NGOs, and government representatives from over a dozen countries, creating a platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange.
2. Policy engagement: Workshops, roundtables, and dialogues ensured peatlands were considered in the EU Nature Restoration Law, CAP eco-schemes, and LULUCF Regulation. Highlights included the 24 January 2025 workshop in Oulu, Finland, on sustainable peatland forestry, which informed the subsequent Peatland Forestry manual by ELO.



3. Practical tools and guidance

EPI produced brochures, guides, and decision-support materials to make complex environmental solutions accessible for landowners, farmers, and forest managers.

- **Farming (in) Peatlands:** Balances productivity with sustainability, highlights funding gaps, and offers policy and collaborative solutions for sustainable agriculture on peat soils.
- **Peatland Restoration:** Explains why peatlands matter, with practical steps for rewetting, habitat recovery, and monitoring, promoting benefits for ecology, economy, and education.
- **Peatland Forestry:** Provides climate-smart forestry techniques to reduce emissions, protect water regimes, and combine conservation with productive forest management.

Find the brochures online on our website, or get a paper copy at the next Forum for the Future of Agriculture on Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Your contribution: #PeatlandsMatter Campaign

EPI produced 11 thematic videos to raise awareness on peatlands, featuring land managers, scientists, policymakers, EU representatives, and community members across Europe. Video 7 highlights Rosie Snowden (UK), Humberto Delgado Rosa (EU), Jüri-Ott Salm (Estonia), and Allan Phillips (Belgium), sharing insights on peatland conservation and restoration. It is paired with an 8-minute practical guide on paludiculture, showing how wet peatlands can be sustainably managed for agriculture and forestry, restoring ecosystems, maintaining carbon storage, and providing economic opportunities – linking directly to EPI's broader resources on peatland agriculture, restoration, and forestry.

Legacy and future outlook

The EUKI EPI project laid the foundation for a stronger, co-ordinated European movement for peatland protection. By building networks, producing practical tools, and amplifying stakeholder voices, it fostered long-term collaboration. Partners continue to work together, inspiring new proposals, partnerships, and EU-funded initiatives for peatland restoration, paludiculture, and carbon-neutral rural landscapes. The project may have ended, but its momentum continues.

Thank you for your contribution.

Two Wildlife Estates sites honoured with Baillet Latour Environmental Awards

Lummen & Arendonk (Flanders), October 2025
 – Two Wildlife Estates in Flanders have been honoured with the Baillet Latour Award for the Environment, recognising private landowners' role in preserving Belgium's natural heritage. Loyer Estate received the main 2025 award (€20,000), while De Zeshonderd Estate earned the Honorary Diploma and Encouragement Award (€5,000). The awards are organised by Natuurmakers.Vlaanderen with support from the Baillet Latour Fund.



Alec VAN HAVRE
Project Officer, ELO



Eleonore RAYNAL-PEČENÝ
Communication officer, ELO

De Zeshonderd Estate: Multifunctional management

Located in Arendonk near Landschap De Liereman, De Zeshonderd Estate, owned by the VAN PUIJENBROEK family, features pools, fens, forests, hedgerows, marshes, and farmland. The estate excels in wildlife management, water regulation, and collaboration to enhance ecological resilience. A Wildlife Estate since 2019, it exemplifies multifunctional land management combining production, biodiversity, and ecosystem services.

Loyer Estate: Centuries of stewardship

Covering over 200 hectares in the Demer Valley, Loyer Estate retains its historic landscape, as shown on 1777 maps, under the stewardship of the DE FABRIBECKERS family. Its mosaic of parkland, forests, meadows, fields, and ponds is part of Natura 2000. A sophisticated water management system protects both ecology and heritage, contributing to a doubling of the rare Great Fen-sedge habitat over the past decade. Loyer supports habitats and species of European importance and has been a Wildlife Estate since 2018.

About Natuurmakers.Vlaanderen

Natuurmakers.Vlaanderen supports private landowners in integrating biodiversity and sustainable land use, promotes the European Wildlife Estates Label in Flanders, and coordinates the Baillet Latour Award and Tree of the Year initiative.



Apply for the Land and Soil Management Award



Kyia KANANI
Policy Assistant, ELO

Soil Award
The Land and Soil Management Award

2026
APPLY NOW

Soil is the foundation of European agriculture, yet it faces increasing pressure from erosion, degradation, and biodiversity loss. Across the countryside, however, many landowners and farmers are proving that soils can be restored through practical, innovative management. To celebrate these efforts, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) invites applications for the annual Land and Soil Management Award.

Since 2008, the award has recognised projects that protect and regenerate soils while supporting sustainable land use. Past winners have shown that simple but well-designed practices, whether improving soil structure, increasing organic matter, or restoring living ecosystems, can strengthen farm resilience and revive landscapes. Their work demonstrates that soil care is not only good for nature, but also for long-term productivity.

The award is open to landowners, managers, researchers, and organisations across Europe who have implemented effective solutions to soil challenges. Winning brings Europe-wide recognition, visibility through ELO's network, and a €5,000 prize. More importantly, it amplifies the stories and experience of practitioners whose work can inspire change elsewhere.

Applications for this year's edition are now open. If you or your organisation contribute to healthier soils and more sustainable land management, ELO encourages you to apply. Your project could help guide the future of European agriculture and highlight the importance of protecting the resource that sustains us all.

Let's increase our food supply
without
reducing theirs



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