



**2024**

# Activity report

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2024 saw an important change in the European political discourse, with 'dialogue' taking centre stage. In her first Commission mandate, President von der Leyen focused on the urgency of Green Deal policy changes, without much discussion with those being asked to implement them. However, this focus on dialogue was too little too late to effectively mitigate voters' pushback. As geopolitical woes continue, the new Commission focused on the EU's strategic autonomy, and is pursuing its effort towards stakeholder engagement. The ELO is eager to continue the dialogue and support the objectives of decarbonisation, competitiveness and security, particularly the EU's food and energy security, where land-based sectors can play a bigger role.

”

**Thierry de l'Escaille**  
ELO Executive President



The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) is a unique federation of associations from Europe, dedicated to representing the interests of landowners, farmers, foresters, and rural entrepreneurs.



## WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY ON ELO SERVICES

“

ELO's services and initiatives offer significant value, including regular ELO Policy Group (EPG) meetings, Board meetings, General Assemblies, the annual Forum for the Future of Agriculture, and regional forums. Most beneficial, however, is the direct communication with the ELO team to address current issues, share experiences, and solve key problems.

”



**Algis Gaižutis**  
Forest and Land Owners' Association  
of Lithuania, Head of the Board

“

For NTF, ELO's main support lies in collecting and sharing best practices from its members across Europe, as well as highlighting transferable legislative elements. Through this, ELO supports rural entrepreneurs and sustainable, innovative initiatives, thereby strengthening sustainability in rural areas across Europe.

”



**Damien Grégoire**  
President of NTF – Rural owners  
of Wallonia, Belgium

“

The strategic dialogue will have a huge impact, shaping the future of all farmers and foresters in Europe. New rules and regulations are not going to improve the general behaviour of farmers and farmers are much better off than this paper suggests. It is essential to ensure our voices are heard, as the backbone of European farming is strong family businesses that have operated for generations, built on solid ownership rights, fair price levels, and foreseeable policies.

”



**Konrad Mylius**  
President of the Association of  
Austrian Land and Forest Owners

“

The analysis of the European election results and the monitoring of the launch of the new European Commission played a significant role in our activities. We greatly appreciated the regular monthly meetings of the ELO Policy Group, which serve as a platform for cooperation with member organizations beyond the Czech Republic. In particular, we would like to highlight our collaboration with Jurgen Tack, Thierry de l'Escaille, Emmanuelle Mikosz, Anne Marchadier, and Ana Rocha, whose contributions have been truly exceptional.

”



**Jan Doležal**  
President of The Agrarian  
Chamber of the Czech Republic

“

## ELO'S 2024 MANIFESTO FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE

2024 was a pivotal year marked by EU elections, bringing significant implications for the ELO in policy advocacy, communication, and dissemination. A manifesto was developed to outline the ELO's priorities and vision for the future of EU strategy, addressing areas such as strategic autonomy, energy, food, and environmental security.

Our long-term vision is built on 6 key pillars: focus on **climate change**; strategic autonomy including **land-based sectors**; addressing **food security challenges**; encouraging **proactive action for the environment**; act for a **prosperous countryside** and **boosting digitalisation**.

*EU policymakers must recognise the vital role of landowners in shaping a strong EU with a vibrant, economically and socially sustainable countryside.*



“

I would like the new Commission to **recognise us - farmers and foresters** - as key players and partners in achieving the goals of the **EU Green Deal**. They must involve the practitioners more and more seriously in their political work. Instead of legal requirements, monitoring and more bureaucracy, we ask for motivation, cooperation and rewards. Only together can we achieve the important goals of the Green Deal: more biodiversity and limiting climate change.

”



**Max von Elverfeldt,**  
Familienbetriebe Land und Forst,  
Germany

“

The ideas outlined in the manifesto were welcomed by a large number of Members of the European Parliament (MEP), who see them as key priorities for the next five-year mandate. There is **strong support** for advancing a **resilient bioeconomy** that balances food security, renewable energy, and biodiversity while ensuring Europe's path to **climate neutrality by 2050**. MEPs recognize the need for a stronger **CAP**, agri-tech innovation, and nature restoration incentives.

”



**Delphine Dupeux,**  
Director of EU Affairs in charge of  
the EU Parliament Elections Campaign



# EU ELECTIONS 2024: CONTINUITY AND RURAL FOCUS

The political landscape in Brussels remained relatively stable with a slight shift towards the right, as the European People's Party (EPP) took a prominent role in rural debates, significantly contributing to Ursula von der Leyen's re-election as President of the European Commission. Despite setbacks for the far-left, the overall balance in the European Parliament held steady, with the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) emerging as a significant force. With the formation of the new European Commission, composed of 27 Commissioners from across the EU, the next five years will see these leaders shaping the bloc's political direction.

The strategic dialogue on agriculture and the EU's "100 Days Vision" will be key tools for ELO to keep agriculture central to EU policy discussions as new priorities like competitiveness, defense, and the green transition emerge. This approach will ensure rural concerns are well-represented in the EU's evolving political agenda.

## STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS

The ELO focuses on building strategic relationships with key commissioners whose portfolios directly impact rural communities and environmental sustainability. These include among others:



**Teresa Ribera**  
Executive Vice President,  
responsible for Clean,  
Just, and Competitive  
Transitions



**Jessika Roswell**  
Environment, Water  
Resilience and a  
Competitive Circular  
Economy



**Maroš Šefčovič**  
Trade and Economic  
Security;  
Interinstitutional  
Relations and  
Transparency



**Christoph Hansen**  
Agriculture and Food



**Wopke Hoekstra**  
Climate, Net Zero and  
Clean Growth



## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERGROUP GAINS MOMENTUM

The European Parliament Intergroup “Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside” successfully concluded its previous mandate, with ELO and FACE, as Secretariat, working to secure its renewal for the current legislative term.

ELO organised two key events, in Brussels and Strasbourg, which gained support from over 100 MEPs across political groups, showcasing strong backing for rural initiatives.

As part of the renewal process, ELO ensured the Intergroup’s structure was updated to address emerging challenges. A new board will be formed, with MEPs taking on leadership roles to streamline decision-making. ELO, as Secretariat, will develop a work plan, set priorities, and ensure the Intergroup remains focused on promoting environmental sustainability and supporting rural communities.



*“This support underscores the importance of a unified voice for rural Europe in European policymaking.*

*“In the face of the climate crisis, it is essential to adopt a holistic approach to land management, ensuring that every decision affecting rural communities is made through consultation and co-creation.”*

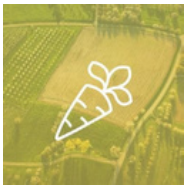
“

We look forward to strengthening cooperation with ELO and FACE concerning the European Parliament Intergroup “Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside”. We believe that ELO’s work on the CAP reform has had the most significant impact on our organisation, and we hope this effort continues in 2025.



**Lino Farrugia,**  
Federation for Hunting and Conservation - Malta

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# AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS

## STRATEGIC DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

"Strategic Dialogue" meetings played a major role in 2024 as an effort to address protests and policy backlash. Special attention was given to the "**Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture**," which began at the start of the year and concluded with a report published in September, along with the announcement of a "**Vision for Agriculture and Food**" set for early 2025. ELO was an active participant in these dialogues, which were generally viewed positively, despite some challenges. At the same time, efforts were made to simplify the new CAP rules, to which ELO contributed suggestions, leading to the softening of regulations and increased flexibility.

Throughout the year, **Green Deal** proposals faced growing opposition, often due to concerns over a lack of details regarding their implementation and financing. Some of this pushback resulted in policy withdrawals, such as the **Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR)**. In response, ELO has been actively working on more effective alternatives, particularly by advocating for action on biocontrols and **New Genomic Techniques (NGTs)**.



## BIOCONTROL

In 2024, following the SUR withdrawal, ELO focused on advancing biocontrol innovation in EU agriculture. ELO joined the Biocontrol Coalition in May 2024, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable farming. Biocontrol was highlighted in ELO's 2024 Elections manifesto, with a focus on integrating it into EU policies. A key dinner debate addressed accelerating market access for biocontrol products and creating a harmonised EU definition. ELO emphasised the need for clear biocontrol definitions to streamline regulation and foster innovation, reinforcing its leadership in sustainable agriculture.

## NEW GENOMIC TECHNIQUES (NGTS)

In 2024, New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) remained high on policymakers' agenda. While red tape around patenting and labelling made a Council agreement impossible, the European Parliament managed to arrive at a balanced position. As discussions continue, with a target agreement by mid-2025, ELO remains engaged to advocate for a balanced regulatory framework that enhances farmers' toolbox.

## THE EUROPEAN BEE AWARD



The European Bee Award has been acknowledging projects of great commitment to enhance pollinators' well-being and bee-friendly farming practices since it was established in 2014 by ELO and the European Agricultural Machinery Industry Association (CEMA).



Hosted by **MEP Paulo do Nascimento Cabral** at the European Parliament, the 2024 ceremony honored diverse approaches, from integrating pollinator-friendly farming (Beekeepers and Dairy Farmers Together for Biodiversity, Italy) to pioneering biocontrol technologies (Natural Odors as an Alternative to Neonicotinoids: Agriodor007 in Sugar Beet Fields, France).

## PROJECTS

### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

ELO is committed to providing farmers with valuable training opportunities. As a partner in several Erasmus+ projects, ELO helps develop free and open-access training platforms covering key agricultural issues. Explore these educational hubs on the ELO website.

Water management    Transhumance    Social Farming



Needs Inclusion

Agrotourism



### FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE BETWEEN AGRONOMISTS & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS

ELO actively fosters this collaboration through projects such as Chemskills. This four-year initiative aims to develop essential skill sets for the use and production of synthetic fertilisers in precision agriculture, aligning with the green and digital transformation of the chemical industry. More on [www.chemskills.eu](http://www.chemskills.eu)





## EVENT

IMPROVING TIME-TO-MARKET  
FOR BIOCONTROL: DINNER  
DEBATE
 April

 Brussels

 13

ELO hosted together with Bayer a dinner debate on biocontrol in agriculture, uniting stakeholders to explore its adoption challenges. Discussions emphasised regulatory reforms, collaboration, and flexible policies aligned with the European Green Deal to support biocontrol innovation, addressing skepticism and ensuring sustainable yet productive farming.

## PROJECT

DISCUSSION PAPER: FINANCING THE  
TRANSITION FOR REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE

Financing the transition from one food production system to another remains a significant challenge for farmers and, to some extent, the entire food value chain. ELO actively participates in numerous research projects exploring different aspects of food system transformation, including SoilValues.

The SoilValues project's first discussion paper explores ways to overcome barriers to adopting regenerative agriculture, focusing on incentives that enhance soil health and support farmers during the transition.

The study examines existing incentives in six European countries, using data from 54 interviews and secondary research. It concludes that no single incentive is sufficient. Key recommendations include designing locally tailored incentives that balance practice and outcome based targets, integrating financial, technical, and risk-reduction support, and fostering stakeholder collaboration.



# FORUM FOR THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE



The Forum for the Future of Agriculture (ForumforAg) is the premiere meeting place in Belgium to debate sustainable agriculture and environmental challenges. As one of the leading international forums, it is dedicated to building a more resilient, competitive, sustainable, climate-smart, and nature-positive food and agriculture system.

Founded by ELO and Syngenta in 2008, the Forum is where agriculture and environment meet for an open dialogue. This takes place during our Annual Conference each March, as well as through other events throughout the year, including Regional Forums, thematic workshops, policy dinners, podcasts, articles and summaries.

Today, the Forum’s growing network comprises over 15,000 people across 40 countries and five continents. Its Chairman is Janez Potočnik, former European Commissioner for the Environment President of the Rise Foundation and Co-president of UNEP.

## FOUNDING & STRATEGIC PARTNERS



## SUPPORTING PARTNERS



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS

+1,600 participants



## REBUILDING UKRAINE’S AGRICULTURE

+100 participants

## FOOD SYSTEMS PODCAST

+50 podcasts

Close to 20,000 downloads

Our Food Systems Podcast interviews politicians, civil society representatives, thought leaders, scientists, activists, farmers, business leaders and many others with ideas and actions on how we can achieve a more resilient, sustainable, climate smart and nature positive food and agriculture system.

Available on   



**Food Systems Podcast**  
Episode 47

**In dialogue with Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE**

In this edition of the Food Systems Podcast, we feature a discussion with Dr. Jane Goodall, DBE, during our Annual Conference, about restoring our connection to nature. She also addresses how we can still create a sustainable future for all living beings on our planet, by taking action against climate change and biodiversity loss.



## CALL TO ACTION PROGRESS

In 2023 the ForumforAg launched a Call to Action (CTA) with **seven key commitments** for a resilient, sustainable, climate-smart, and nature-positive food and agriculture system. This first annual report outlines our progress over 2024, highlights key activities, and looks ahead. It features examples of the Forum’s work and contributions from our partners across various CTA areas.

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Our partnership with ELO strengthens the Romanian Farmers Club’s strategic vision and European network. Each year, we proudly **bring 50 farmers to ELO’s Forum for the Future of Agriculture**, a renowned international event that connects European leaders, think tanks, and industry experts - fostering knowledge exchange and advocating for sustainable, innovative agricultural policies.



**Florian Ciolacu**  
Director Executive, Romanian Farmers Club, Romania

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“

As the Polish Agricultural Federation, representing 1,000 farms and over 500,000 workers, we proudly co-hosted the **2024 Regional Event in Poland**.

Our cooperation with ELO throughout 2024 greatly enhanced our visibility among European stakeholders and decision-makers in agriculture, while also strengthening partnerships and fostering new connections with experts across the sector.



**Grzegorz Brodziak**  
President of the Management Board, Polska Federacja Rolna, Poland

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## FORESTS & FORESTRY

In 2024, several key actions affecting forests and forestry progressed under the **Biodiversity Strategy** to 2030 and the subsequent **Forestry Strategy**. Among the proposed initiatives, the most significant was nature restoration, particularly the restoration of forest ecosystems (Article 10), which passed with great difficulty.

Despite frequent mentions of the importance of an EU bioeconomy, these strategies lacked concrete actions to stimulate it. In response, ELO supported Member States in advocating for a **bioeconomy strategy** to be included in the Commission's next working programme - a joint effort that proved successful.

The proposal for a **Forest Monitoring Regulation**, announced in the strategy, was released at the end of the previous Commission's mandate. However, its purpose and framework remained unclear, and there was insufficient time for proper discussion before the elections. Since then, ELO has been working to identify gaps and advocate for a solution that preserves well-established monitoring structures in different Member States.

In parallel, ELO, along with other observer organisations, has continued to support Forest Europe's initiatives. This includes reaffirming the importance of **Sustainable Forest Management** and welcoming the establishment of the Forest Risk Facility - both of which remain critical to the future of European forestry.



ELO has supported us strongly in promoting our **forestry agenda in the EU**. We have also been able to take a leading role in the national debate on ecological compensation and nature credits thanks to ELO's role in those issues.



**Kimmo Collander**  
Secretary General of the Finnish  
Landowners' Association, Finland

## EU IS NOT READY TO IMPLEMENT ITS DEFORESTATION LAW

The **EU Deforestation Regulation** remained a contentious issue throughout the year, ultimately leading to a one-year postponement of its implementation.

ELO, alongside other organisations, made multiple efforts to ensure that the necessary clarifications, guidelines, technical tools, and benchmarking system were ready in time. While we fully support the regulation's objective of reducing deforestation, its overall effectiveness remains uncertain - particularly due to the significant administrative burdens and costs it imposes. This has raised serious concerns among stakeholders across the agricultural and forestry value chains.

## PROJECTS



ELO is engaged in three major forestry initiatives, each addressing key challenges in sustainable forest management: **Small4Good**, which empowers small-scale forest owners with multifunctional management strategies; **PathFinder**, aimed at developing a Pan-European centralised forest monitoring system; and **INTERCEDE**, which explores market-based instruments for payments for ecosystem services benefiting forest owners.



PathFinder has developed its first **European-wide maps** and published a **policy brief** advising EU policymakers on a governance structure for a permanent forest monitoring and pathway assessment system. These policy recommendations come at a pivotal moment in the development of the **EU's forest monitoring regulation**.



Small4Goods explores various multifunctional management strategies employed by small forest owners across **four living labs** in distinct European regions: North (**Norway**), South (**Spain**), Central (**Germany & Switzerland**), and East (**Romania**). Additionally, it investigates the barriers and motivations that shape forest owners' decisions to adopt multifunctional management practices in these areas.



Researchers are building a comprehensive database on **market-based instruments for payments for ecosystem services** across Europe. They are also actively engaging in **transdisciplinary collaborations**, participating in forums with key stakeholders to explore potential applications. ELO is ensuring that the **landowner's perspective** is well represented.

## THE EUROPEAN TREE OF THE YEAR AWARD



The European Tree of the Year award emphasises the crucial role of trees in both the natural and cultural heritage of Europe, highlighting the invaluable ecosystem services to which they contribute. The winning tree of 2024 is the Polish beech “Heart of Garden” with 39,158 votes. Yet another beech tree takes the second place: The Weeping Beech of Bayeux from Normandy, France. An honourable third place goes to The Thousand-year-old Olive Tree of Luras from Sardinia, Italy. ELO is a proud supporter of this initiative.

## EVENTS



### COMMISSION DIALOGUE ON THE FOREST-BASED BIOECONOMY

 March  Brussels  28

ELO was among the 27 organisations invited by Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič to participate in the 6th Clean Transition Dialogue. This session focused on unlocking the full potential of the forest-based bioeconomy while ensuring the sustainable sourcing and use of forest resources.

The discussion also briefly addressed new business models for forest owners, including carbon farming and biodiversity credits.



### MULTIFUNCTIONAL EU FORESTS AND THEIR ROLE IN SUPPORTING EU STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

 September  Brussels  109

Organisers: ELO, CEPF, COPA-COGECA, and EUSTAFOR  
At the start of this new political cycle, forest owners and managers saw the need to highlight key policy files that will require discussion in the coming years. The event aimed to draw policymakers' and stakeholders' attention to these issues and their potential impact on the forest sector.



# BIODIVERSITY

The adoption of the **Nature Restoration Regulation** marks a major milestone in EU environmental and biodiversity policy, aiming to restore at least 20% of degraded ecosystems by 2030. Officially published in August 2024, the regulation sets specific targets for various ecosystems, habitats, and species but faces challenges in rebuilding trust with farmers, foresters, and land managers who felt overlooked. Concerns remain over its long-term effectiveness and enforcement.

The year 2025 will be crucial for implementation, with efforts focused on developing **Nature Restoration Plans**. The European Commission is forming a working group, with ELO as a key stakeholder, to discuss new guidelines on landscape features and pollinator restoration.

A comprehensive financing report, including funding opportunities and potential adjustments under the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), is also expected.

The **EU Biodiversity Strategy** for 2030 sets ambitious targets to protect 30% of EU land and seas, with 10% under strict protection. However, securing commitments from Member States remains a challenge. ELO highlights the need to address climate change, invasive species, and risk management while ensuring active land stewardship. It is also actively engaged in discussions on Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (**OECMs**) to recognise landowners' contributions to biodiversity.

## BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE



## BELLEUROPA AWARD



## ENHANCING WATER AND LAND RESILIENCE

November    Brussels    85

The **2024 Biodiversity Conference** explored the vital role of water in biodiversity, agriculture, and climate adaptation. Experts discussed nature-based solutions, economic incentives such as biodiversity credits, and community-driven projects, emphasising the need for collaboration and integrated policies to strengthen water resilience and tackle shared environmental challenges effectively.



This year, the prestigious Belleuropa Award, which honours exceptional contributions to biodiversity and rural landscapes, was awarded to **Carmeuse SA's Moha Quarry** in Belgium. The site was recognised for its innovative hedgerow planting project, which established 10 km of ecological corridors, demonstrating how industrial activity can be successfully integrated with environmental stewardship.

## THE EU PLATFORM ON COEXISTENCE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND LARGE CARNIVORES

The European Commission has proposed downgrading the protection status of wolves under the Bern Convention from "strictly protected" to "protected." This follows a 2023 EU study indicating that the wolf population has surpassed 20,000 over the past two decades. While conservation efforts, public support, and habitat restoration have successfully reestablished a viable wolf population, they have also led to growing conflicts, particularly with livestock farming.

The decision requires further discussion and integration into the EU's **Habitats Directive**. As co-chair of the **EU Platform on Coexistence Between People and Large Carnivores**, ELO will play a key role in assessing the implications of these changes.

We remain actively engaged in regional workshops, including sessions in Bulgaria with the **Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Platform** and in **Salerno**, South Tyrol. The Brussels plenary session marked a milestone for the Platform's 2024 activities, featuring updates on large carnivore management, thematic debates on livestock and land use conflicts, and discussions on the role of hunters in conservation.



### PROJECTS

#### SOILGUARD

The SOILGUARD project contributes to shaping the **Vision for the Future of Agriculture** by integrating the societal dimension of soil biodiversity into research. As part of this effort, the project has released its first scientific publication, "**Valuation of Soil-mediated Contributions to People (SmCPs)**," authored by partners at IÖW and UP. This study highlights the essential role of soil biodiversity in delivering ecosystem services critical to human well-being.



The **EUKI project** has published manuals on peatland management, covering sustainable farming, restoration, and forestry. Highlighting peatlands' role in **carbon storage** and **biodiversity**, they provide practical guidance and **funding options**.

With two manuals out in 2024 and a third published in February 2025, the initiative promotes climate resilience and sustainable practices.



## WILDLIFE ESTATES – THE LARGEST PRIVATE INITIATIVE FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



Since 2004, the **Wildlife Estates (WE) Label** has been recognising exceptional territories across Europe for their outstanding biodiversity and wildlife management practices. With over 580 estates spanning 19 countries and covering more than 2 million hectares, the Wildlife

Estates project continues to grow steadily. In 2024 alone, 60 new estates joined the label, with notable contributions from Scotland, Belgium, and Spain, as well as a remarkable new entry from Italy.



The WE Label holders are deeply committed to their land and actively contribute to the economic, social, and environmental development of rural areas. They exemplify the vital integration of sustainable land use with local human development.

In 2024, WE members gathered during the Plenary Session held in Arnhem, the Netherlands, on September 3rd and 4th. The session focused on the label's role in supporting the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and shaping the future of land management beyond protected areas.



Special field visits provided valuable insights, with exemplary territories like **Landgoed Middachten** and **Hoge Veluwe National Park** receiving well-deserved recognition for their contributions.

This year's meeting highlighted the growing impact of Wildlife Estates, showcasing how these exceptional territories continue to set benchmarks for sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation.



## CLIMATE & NATURAL RESOURCES

The ELO supports the objective of becoming climate-neutral by 2050. Agricultural soils and forests provide valuable sequestration and storage capacities for carbon, which can be further enhanced with appropriate management.

The EU forestry sector can play a major role in **carbon sequestration** and storage and boost the substitution effect by replacing fossil-based products and energy. However, many investments seem to be focused on removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the air through technology, while removals from agriculture and forestry appear to be sidelined. There is increasing pressure to shift from rewarding direct efforts in the market to adopting a value chain approach, where rewards are likely to be integrated into value chain prices. This pressure will continue in 2025, particularly with the development of methodologies for the newly agreed **Carbon Removal Certification Framework**.

The Commission will also examine the feasibility of certifying activities that result in emission reductions from enteric fermentation and manure management by 2026.

In 2024, the three major EU institutions solidified their positions on the **Soil Monitoring Law**, which will be finalised early next year when the last trilogue meetings are scheduled. From the beginning, the ELO appreciated that the directive took exciting frameworks into account, namely LUCAS. Still, both the European Council and Parliament improved some critical points, notably by removing the proposed "soil health certification" and addressing distortions created by the "one out, all out" principle.

The ELO also welcomed the Parliament's proposal to replace **Sustainable Soil Management** principles and practices with a Sustainable Soil Management Toolbox, which we hope will be included in the final text. Despite some expectations for a **Water Resilience Strategy** in 2024, the Commission decided to make this proposal a major focus for 2025. Meanwhile, attention has been on zero pollution and the revision of the water package (WFD, GWD, and EQSD), which includes several points that could have a significant impact on farmers' pesticide toolbox. While this pressure will continue in the coming year, including nutrient losses, we expect some focus to shift toward prioritising nature-based solutions for watersheds' health and resilience in policy actions.



## THE LAND AND SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD



Since 2008, The Land and Soil Management Award has honoured projects that contribute to soil protection and serve as role models in sustainable land management.

In 2024, it was granted to the French project "**Halage**", recognised for its pioneering work in revitalising soil on a former industrial wasteland. The award was presented during the Gala Dinner of the **Forum for the Future of Agriculture**, under the chairmanship of Prof. Martin H. Gerzabek, President of the Jury. The jury also rewarded two additional proposals with a diploma of recognition to: **Bokrijk Soil and Heritage Conservation** and **Le Jardin des Saveurs**.

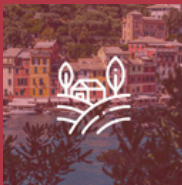
## PROJECTS



CLIMATE FARM DEMO is a pan-European network of 1,500 Pilot Demo Farmers across 28 countries, aiming to accelerate Climate Smart Farming (CSF) adoption and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The project implements Adaptation and Mitigation Measures, monitors environmental performance, and explores rewarding mechanisms for sustainable models. ELO raises awareness of these incentives and analyses EU policy, including the 2024 EU Carbon Removal Certification Framework, which will shape future climate-smart farming incentives.



SoilWise will create a unified access point for scattered soil data in Europe, making it FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) to enhance trust, willingness, and capacity to share and reuse soil data and knowledge. Through co-creation with stakeholders, the project highlights existing workflows and repositories, increasing their discoverability and interconnection. As a common platform for countries, the EU, and stakeholders, SoilWise supports informed decision-making, aligning with the Green Deal's 2030 goals to achieve healthy soils by 2050.



## LAND ACCESS AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

ELO strongly supports free movement and property rights across all EU Member States, as it is vital for a sustainable rural economy. With 27 national frameworks in place, it is crucial to avoid over-regulation. Access to land must benefit current and future landowners and farmers, ensuring well-functioning land and forestry markets.

In 2024, ELO focused among others on taxation, inheritance, land tenure, diversifying sources of income and adapting business models, and infrastructure, advocating for rural jobs, services, and economic diversity while equipping members with the tools to defend their basic rights. ELO advocated also for these issues during its active participation in the Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture.



### PROJECT

Launching in November 2024, LandShift aims to develop sustainable land use and management methods to enhance ecosystem functions, including carbon sequestration and emission reduction. ELO plays a key role in connecting project findings with LULUC(F) political and stakeholder communities throughout its duration.



### EVENT ON TAXATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND



May



Paris



120

ELO members presented on the taxation and profitability of agricultural land, which influence various aspects of agricultural and environmental policies, as well as land use and urban planning. The session featured presentations by Philippe Casier from Landelijk Vlaanderen, Max V. Elverfeldt from Familienbetriebe Land und Forst, and concluded with remarks by Emmanuelle Bour-Poitrinal.



## LIFE ENPLC

## EUROPEAN NETWORKS FOR PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION (ENPLC)



The LIFE ENPLC project united landowners and conservationists to restore private land for nature and climate benefits across Europe. A major achievement was the creation of the Conservation Landowners Coalition (CLC) by Eurosité and ELO, fostering trust and collaboration. As the project concluded in 2024, a final conference explored emerging trends, financial tools, and strategies for scaling up private land conservation. We were honored to welcome Charlie Burrell (Knepp Estate) as keynote speaker, highlighting one of Europe's most inspiring conservation initiatives.

## ENPLC FINAL CONFERENCE



## ENPLC WORKSHOP ON CONSERVATION EASEMENTS



March



Brussels



168

With conservation easements, landowners can actively shape the future of their natural areas. This voluntary approach allows them to protect nature by establishing legally binding environmental obligations on their property for up to 99 years. Introduced in 2016 by the



April



Paris



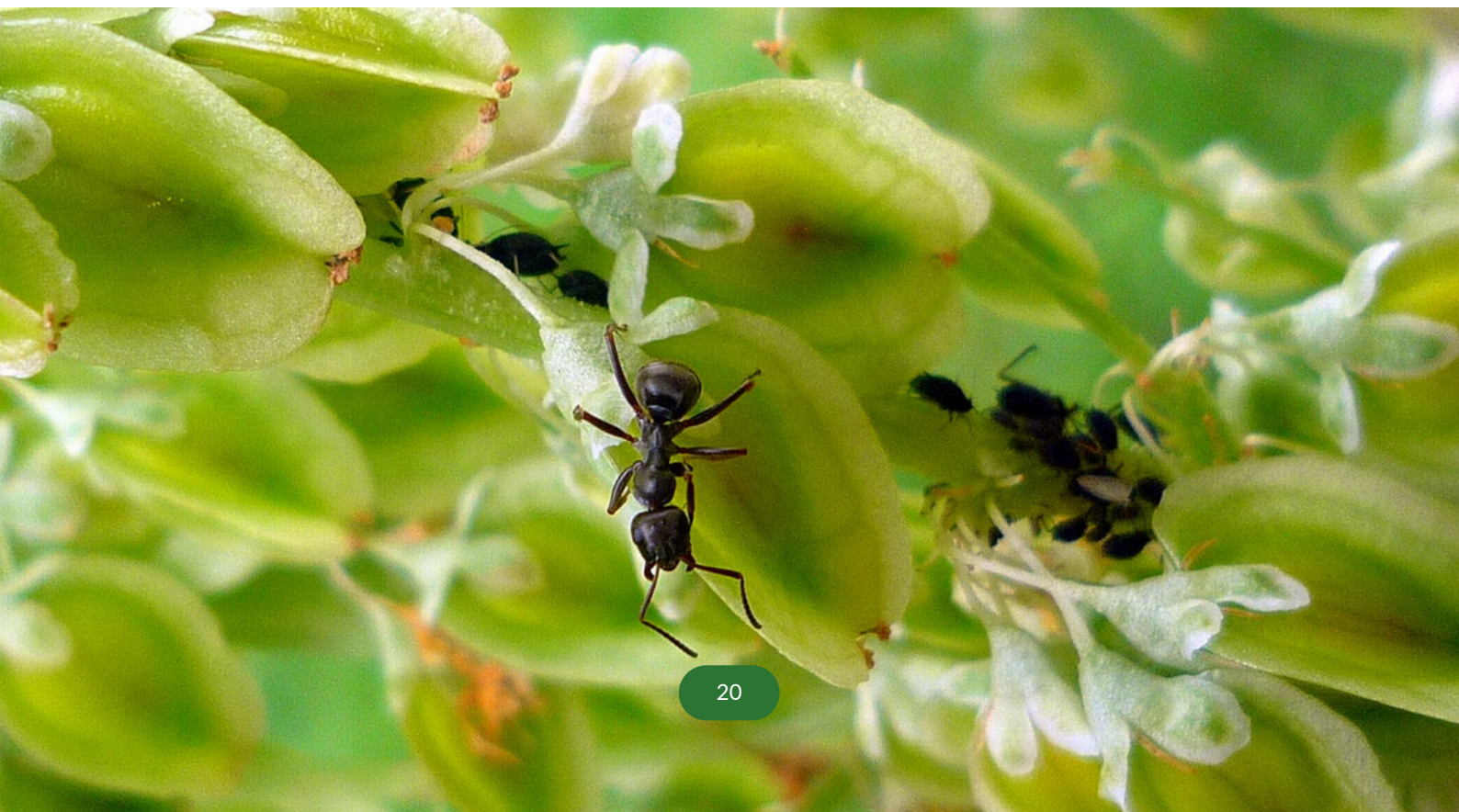
200

French law for the reconquest of biodiversity, nature, and landscapes (Article L.132-3 of the Environment Code), this mechanism provides a powerful tool for long-term conservation. The ENPLC workshop in Paris explored this important topic.



# NETWORK

ELO is part of a vibrant ecosystem of partner organisations, sharing our ideal of a thriving countryside in one or several aspects. What binds us together in 2024? We offer unique insights across the expansive landscape of rural life.



## COUNTRYSIDE MAGAZINE

For nearly 26 years, our magazine has served as the voice of land managers and rural entrepreneurs, offering a platform for the exchange of ideas and best practices. Its mission goes beyond just providing a space for dialogue - it connects the diverse sectors of agriculture, the environment, and rural businesses. It also provides an ideal venue to showcase the many projects in which ELO is involved.

The magazine highlights policy developments and introduces innovative ideas, serving as a tool to foster connections, promote events, and help its extensive readership - over 15,000 individuals including policymakers, academics, ELO members, and others interested in rural issues - understand the challenges facing agriculture and the environment at local, national, European, and global levels.

The CountrySide Magazine is the perfect platform for land managers and rural entrepreneurs to make their voices heard, ensuring that their perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. It is published every two months in English and French.



## ELO GENERAL ASSEMBLIES



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Protecting private property rights has become more crucial than ever in an era of increasing geopolitical instability. Conflicts, economic sanctions, and shifting global alliances have demonstrated the vulnerability of assets to state intervention, expropriation, and regulatory overreach. Strong property rights provide individuals and businesses with security, incentivizing investment, innovation, and economic growth.

Moreover, in a world with rising authoritarian tendencies, strong private property rights ensure economic autonomy and personal freedom. The ability to own and manage land fosters resilience for all, particularly in uncertain times when political and economic disruptions can undermine wealth and livelihoods.

As global tensions escalate, reinforcing the legal frameworks that protect private property is not just an economic necessity but a fundamental pillar of stability and prosperity.

**Jurgen Tack**  
ELO Secretary General

