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Towards a Resilient Rural Europe: The EU Climate Resilience Framework

ELO welcomes the European Commission's initiative to develop an Integrated Framework for Climate Resilience. Such a framework should strengthen preparedness and adaptive capacity while empowering those who manage land and natural resources on a daily basis. To succeed, the framework must ensure that climate adaptation policies remain operationally feasible for primary producers, reduce unnecessary administrative complexity, and create fair economic incentives for ecosystem services provided by landowners.

Integrating climate resilience by design in key sectors

Climate resilience must be integrated directly within the sectors most exposed to climate impacts. Land-based sectors, particularly agriculture and forestry, are already experiencing the consequences of climate change through more frequent droughts, floods, pest outbreaks and extreme weather events. These sectors require proactive and flexible adaptation strategies that combine production objectives with ecosystem health. Active management will be essential to ensure the long-term stability of landscapes and natural resources.

Water management also plays a central role in climate resilience. Increasing climate variability is intensifying pressures on water availability, with longer dry periods followed by more intense rainfall events. A resilient framework should therefore promote integrated water management that addresses both water quantity and quality while recognising the important contribution of privately managed land to water retention, flood mitigation and groundwater recharge.

Land use and spatial planning must also evolve to reflect climate realities. Adaptation measures often require landscape-scale solutions that extend beyond administrative boundaries. Flexible

planning tools are therefore needed to enable land managers and regional authorities to implement coordinated adaptation strategies across territories. Rural development policies remain essential for ensuring that these strategies can be implemented locally and that rural communities retain the economic viability necessary to adapt successfully.

Strategic policy alignment

For climate resilience to become operational across Europe, it must be integrated across existing EU policy frameworks rather than addressed through isolated initiatives. The Common Agricultural Policy should increasingly recognise resilience-building measures as a core public good and provide incentives for practices that enhance soil health, water retention and ecosystem stability. The LULUCF framework should also evolve to better reflect the dynamic nature of forest ecosystems and the role of harvested wood products in long-term carbon storage and substitution of fossil-intensive materials.

Water policy, Nature restoration law and bioeconomy strategies should also be better aligned to support resilient land management and the use of renewable resources. Rather than creating new layers of reporting requirements, resilience indicators should be incorporated into existing legislation. Simplification and policy coherence should remain central principles, ensuring that land managers can focus on implementation rather than administrative compliance.

Coherent risk assessments and planning

A coherent approach to climate adaptation requires a common understanding of future risks across Europe. ELO therefore supports the establishment of harmonised parameters for EU and national climate risk assessments. Shared climate scenarios and trajectories should be used across Member States to ensure consistency and comparability in adaptation planning. These assessments should be conducted regularly and be grounded in robust scientific evidence.

Clear identification of responsibilities will also be necessary to ensure effective implementation. Climate resilience and adaptation plans should define which actors are responsible for addressing specific vulnerabilities, ensuring accountability across infrastructure systems, public authorities and land management sectors.

Empowering regional and local action

Climate adaptation is inherently place-based and must therefore be designed and implemented in close cooperation with regional and local stakeholders. However, many local actors currently face barriers that limit their ability to act effectively. These barriers include limited access to specialised technical expertise, insufficient funding for adaptation projects and limited engagement of local communities in the design of resilience measures.

The EU Climate Resilience Framework should therefore strengthen the link between European funding instruments and local implementation. Dedicated national initiatives for climate adaptation, supported by clear coordination mechanisms between national, regional and local actors, could help accelerate implementation. Providing accessible technical guidance and facilitating knowledge exchange will also be essential to ensure that land managers and rural communities can translate climate information into practical adaptation measures.

Scaling Nature-Based Solutions

Nature-based solutions represent one of the most effective and cost-efficient ways to enhance climate resilience while delivering additional environmental benefits. Across Europe, many land managers are already implementing practices such as agroforestry, regenerative agriculture, wetland restoration and sustainable grazing. These practices improve soil health, increase water retention capacity, enhance biodiversity and contribute to climate mitigation.

Despite their potential, the large-scale deployment of nature-based solutions remains limited by fragmented policies, financial barriers and technical uncertainties. Moving beyond pilot projects requires stable financial incentives that recognise the multifunctional benefits of these practices. Supporting knowledge exchange between land managers, scientists and policymakers will also help accelerate the transition from experimental projects to systemic adoption across landscapes.

Mobilising Finance and Private Investment

Achieving climate resilience at scale will require significant financial resources that cannot be provided by public funding alone. Integrating climate resilience considerations into public

spending, procurement policies and private investment decisions will therefore be essential. National adaptation plans should increasingly function as investment strategies capable of mobilising private capital alongside public support.

Improving access to affordable insurance solutions will also be important to address the widening climate protection gap. Climate-related disasters are already generating growing economic losses, and innovative financial mechanisms such as blended finance structures, resilience bonds and public-private partnerships could help distribute risks more effectively. Payment schemes for ecosystem services could further incentivise land managers to maintain landscapes that deliver flood prevention, water regulation and biodiversity benefits.

The emerging market driven valuation of ecosystems services and carbon sequestration should play a role through carbon (rf. Position on CRFC below) and nature credit. These new financing mechanism should be used as a leverage for private sector to contribute to biodiversity protection and climate mitigation while rewarding early adopters and land managers in their path toward nature restoration projects.

Actionable climate information

Access to reliable and accessible climate information is fundamental for informed decision-making. Land managers, businesses and public authorities require tools that translate complex climate projections into practical guidance. The development of user-friendly digital platforms providing localised climate projections and sector-specific guidance would significantly improve the capacity of stakeholders to anticipate and respond to climate risks.

Such tools should combine climate data with practical adaptation guidance for agriculture, forestry and water management. By improving the accessibility and usability of climate information, these platforms could support more informed investment decisions and encourage the integration of climate resilience into long-term planning.

Innovation as a driver of competitiveness

Climate resilience should also be seen as an opportunity to strengthen Europe's economic competitiveness. Innovation in climate-resilient crops, forestry systems, soil management and

water-efficient irrigation technologies will be essential to maintain productive and sustainable land-based sectors. Digital technologies, including satellite monitoring and data-driven risk management tools, can also support more precise and adaptive land management practices. Supporting research, innovation and technology deployment will therefore play a crucial role in ensuring that Europe's agricultural and forestry sectors remain competitive while adapting to changing climatic conditions.

Carbon removals and market incentives

Land-based sectors also play a central role in climate mitigation through carbon sequestration in soils, biomass and wood products. The Carbon Removal Certification Framework represents an important step toward establishing a credible European system for certifying carbon removals. The draft delegated acts provide a scientifically robust and environmentally credible basis for certifying carbon farming activities, including safeguards related to eligibility, quantification, additionality, permanence and sustainability. The introduction of transitional provisions recognising early movers who initiated carbon farming activities before the full operationalisation of the framework is particularly welcome, as it acknowledges the efforts of landowners who invested in climate action ahead of regulatory certainty.

At the same time, from a landowner perspective, the framework risks becoming operationally complex, legally burdensome and economically uncertain. While the delegated acts establish a strong environmental foundation, cumulative administrative requirements, long-term liability obligations and limited clarity regarding demand for certified removals could restrict participation. For carbon farming to scale across Europe, environmental integrity must therefore be balanced with proportionality, legal certainty and market functionality.

A successful framework should ensure that technical requirements remain practical and accessible for land managers, that liability arrangements remain manageable given the natural risks inherent to land management, and that clear market rules provide confidence to both investors and buyers. Ensuring fair value distribution across the carbon value chain will also be essential so that landowners receive an appropriate share of the benefits generated by carbon removal activities. Only a balanced and workable framework will allow carbon farming markets to develop at scale and deliver durable climate and biodiversity benefits.

Conclusion

The EU Climate Resilience Framework offers an opportunity to strengthen Europe's capacity to respond to climate change while supporting the long-term sustainability of rural territories. For this initiative to succeed, landowners and land managers must be recognised as essential partners in the transition toward a more resilient Europe. By combining practical adaptation strategies, policy coherence, market-based incentives and technological innovation, the European Union can ensure that rural landscapes remain a resilient source of food, renewable resources and biodiversity for future generations.

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About the European Landowners' Organization (ELO)

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) is a leading voice representing the interests of landowners, rural entrepreneurs, and rural land managers in Europe. ELO promotes sustainable land management practices, fosters innovation, and advocates for the recognition of landowners' crucial role in shaping Europe's landscapes and rural areas



