



Editorial

Private landowners are arguing for a sound, science-based approach to countryside issues – these rigorous standards should not only apply to research, but also to the interpretation of its finding. Politicians and the media have a tendency to misuse or misinterpret scientific findings, which sometimes inhibits the valuable and useful application of new technology and better science to rural areas.

Authoritative reassurances from scientists that allay or even correct alarmist news stories are, unfortunately, not as newsworthy as the original scary story, nor are reports that indicate that many aspects of our lives are getting better, not worse. The accurate communication of sound science to land managers, politicians and the public is as important as the scientific content itself.

We should test the economic and social effects of policies, to see which of these produce the most environmental benefits while work harmoniously with society and business. Risk assessment, necessitated by our need to have measurable knowledge of the (environmental) effects of new and current tools, is an important tool for land managers and policy makers. Falling back too quickly on the precautionary principle denies a proper risk assessment and does not make for reliable policy.

The EU should urgently and carefully reconsider its insistence on a precautionary principle, driven by fear of anything new. If we do not reconsider, we will lose countryside output at a time when its sustainable growth is a necessity. Society, when it sees the consequences of this irrationality, will not thank those who misused facts and figures.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE
Secretary General



50 years of CAP – a partnership between Europe and Farmers



➤ 50 years of CAP – a partnership between Europe and Farmers

C O N T E N T S

- 50 years of CAP – a partnership between Europe and Farmers 1
- ELO General Assembly in Ireland 4
- Conference report: the role of research and technology in resource efficiency and food production 6
- Dr David VINER appointed as principal advisor for climate change at Mott MacDonald 9
- Join the Forum For Countryside Entrepreneurship (FCE). 9
- A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Water Resources 9
- Hamsters, what hamsters? 10
- How actively communicate EU environmental policies to rural stakeholders. 12
- CIC Markhor Award 2012 13
- In the United States as in France Floods are more political disasters than natural 14
- Faucheurs de science - les fanatiques sont dans nos campagnes 16
- Diary Dates 16

The CAP@50 campaign came to an end on the 9th and 10th of December at the communication networking event held in Brussels in the presence of farmers’ associations, NGOs, agricultural journalists, EU institutions and communication experts.

This event was created to exchange best practices with regards to communicating the CAP to stakeholders and the general public, as well as demonstrate projects using highly innovative communication methods. As Commissioner Dacian CIOLOS said *“There are many different excellent projects going on around the EU, highlighting the benefits of agriculture and of the CAP. This competition provided a great example of the diversity of such projects, and certainly all of the nominated projects are winners. I felt inspired and energized by all the excellent ideas and impressive mobilisation in favour of a common policy we all believe in”.*

Back in 1962, the Commissioner reminded the audience, Europeans were predominantly worried about having enough food on their plates. Today we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a cornerstone of European integration that has provided European citizens with five decades of secure food supplies and a vibrant countryside. He pointed out that food security remains important today, but we now have new concerns such as climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources. As we face the chal-

lenges of ongoing CAP reform - what lessons should we learn for the future?

The awards ceremony took place on the 10th of December, and we would like to congratulate the 12 winners chosen by the jury of international communication experts. The 1st place winners in 4 categories are:

Communication to the public: Agri Aware (Ireland) for the « Family Farm – an acre of fun representing an island of farming »;

Communication to stakeholders : Adept Foundation Transylvania (Romania) for « Information Networks for Farmers in Transylvania »;

EU co-financed actions: AGRYA (Hungary) for « Communicating the Tools of the CAP by the examples of young farmers »;

Innovative communication : Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (Poland) for the ‘Ranczo’ TV series.

More information and video from the can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/50-years-of-cap/index_en.htm





Greening in Best Practice Road Show

The "Greening in Best Practice Road Show" project, co-organised by ELO and Syngenta, was preselected with 118 other communication projects to compete for this communication award. Our project aimed to create the right national conditions to shift the discussion of practical "greening" measures from general policy to the defining available solutions: the use of the best management practices that support the implementation of greening requirements at the farm level. These practical examples will be complemented by a dialogue between policy makers, farmers, environmentalists, and scientists. The introductory event of the new road show concept will be held in Brussels on the 4th of March 2013. In the coming year, we will hold a series of conferences targeting 6 European countries. More information will be available on www.elo.org



Join us at the 6th Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA)

The European Commission project on CAP communication showed once more how important it is to communicate EU policies to stakeholders and the broad European public. The ELO, together with its members and partners, uses various tools, such as organizing events and print media, to achieve this aim. In the field of agriculture and environment the FFA has definitely become one of the most important platforms for constructive debates.

Therefore we would like to take the opportunity to share the following invitation from Franz FISCHLER, former EU Commissioner, who returns once more as chair of the 6th FFA in Brussels.

The ELO Team



The success of these forums comes from the consistent theme of giving equal weight to global environmental and food security. Earlier this year, FFA 2012 focused on the role of research and innovation, governance (CAP reform), and resource efficiency in meeting Europe's agriculture and environmental challenges. The core question was how to balance competitiveness, innovation, sustainability and rural vitality. Various responses were given by high level speakers, such as keynote speaker and world economist Parag KHANNA, as well as EU decision-makers, such as Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Dacian CIOLOS, and Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Simon COVENEY.

The 2013 Forum, which I have the honour of chairing, will focus notably on investment in Africa and new ways for food production and economic development. Regarding the current economic situation in the Eurozone, we would like to focus on the food value chain and its future challenges, but also include the consumer sector in our discussions.

Key issues will be raised during the various sessions, such as the European need to remain an attractive place for investment in research and development in response to evolving consumer protection behaviour. How can the agricultural food chain better communicate with consumers, while responding to today's global market evolution? Furthermore, in what direction should the future EU regulatory environment take? Another key element of discussions will highlight the bio-based economy as global goal for improved resource and waste management. Once again, the FFA invites scientists, experts, and decision-makers, but also consumer associations and industry to contribute to these vital topics.

I hereby invite you to join us on at upcoming Forum for the Future of Agriculture on March 5, 2013 in Brussels. Every idea and person willing to contribute to the discussions is welcomed to a one-day conference and exhibition space in the heart of Europe.

For more information about accommodations and venue, please visit the brand new FFA website: www.forumforagriculture.com

Franz FISCHLER Chair, FFA

ELO General Assembly in Ireland



The members of the ELO gathered last December in Dublin for their second General Assembly of 2012. Traditionally, the ELO General Assembly takes place in the country which will take up the Presidency of the European Council.

The meeting was opened by Irish host, Dr Nicholas BIELENBERG, President of the Irish Landowners Organisation, who presented the state of play in his country. He also explained the unique situation of land tenure in Ireland, starting with the Cromwell period when 2/3 of lands were confiscated, and over than 300 landlords obtain more than 10.000 hectares. As the Irish tenants at that time had no fixed tenure, no fair rent system, nor did they enjoy freedom of sale, the agricultural revolution did not occur in Ireland. The Great Famine, which reduced population from eight to four million, was the cornerstone of countryside change - with the land acts from 1860 to 1932 landlords received 4% land bonds, and any land not farmed by owner could be compulsorily acquired for redistribution, through these measures former tenants became owners. Today the maximum size of an estate is 400

hectares, with in average farm size of 30 hectares and over 100 hectares for commercial landowners. There are no leases lasting over 7 years and very few leases less than 11 months. The main Irish characteristics remain 90% pasture and 10% arable land, farmed by around 140.000 farmers.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, ELO Secretary General, presented the ELO's activities in the last 6 months, and the main discussion of the day was opened by Professor Allan BUCKWELL, adviser to the ELO Board for CAP reform and IEEP senior adviser.

The second part of the meeting was dedicated to Irish EU priorities presented with a very interesting and fruitful debate between Ms. Patricia CANNON, head of the RDR department at the Department of Agriculture, who gave a brief presentation on Pillar II issues, and

Mr Paul SAVAGE of the Ministry of Agriculture, who spoke about Pillar I issues. The debate focused on the EU budget, redistribution of direct payments, targeting, capping, the 'active farmer' definition, market support, as well as new objectives and priorities for the rural development programme.

For the first time, the official dinner was co-organised with the European Family Businesses association, and Roger PEDDER, EFB President, together with Dr Nicholas BIELENBERG, welcomed its participants.

Corrado PIRZIO-BIROLI, President of the ELO and RISE CEO, gave a presentation on **"FINANCING EUROPE: Budget Freeze, EU Fatigue and Eurozone Headway: Towards a Multi-Tier Europe"** underlining that : *"EU financing is based on an expenditure budget. Resources must match expenditure, mostly via national contributions. No deficit is allowed. Negotiations among budget authorities should normally focus on expenditure allocation and resources, but in the EU they are above all concerned with budget size.*

The EU's current financing system is "dépassé" and needs deep reform. The Lisbon Treaty confirms that the EU budget should no more depend on national contributions, but on its own resources, that can be generated independent from national treasuries. Not for the first time, the Commission has proposed to create new own resources without a net increase in overall taxation. Jacques DELORS, former Commission President, put forward a European carbon tax in order to allow reductions in labour taxes. This was vetoed by the UK. The Commission is re-proposing a true "European Value Added Tax" and recommends a Financial Transaction Tax. The European Parliament has threatened to use its veto if it does not get new own resources as stipulated in the Lisbon Treaty. No doubt the financing of Europe 2020 is the most confrontational budgetary negotiation so far, not only because the current EU



P. YOUNG

financing system needs a major overhaul, but also because there is so much animosity among member states about far more fundamental problems such as serious support imbalances, tensions related to austerity versus growth, and the conditionality of financial assistance. To return to the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), I did not believe that a MFF deal was on the cards at the November meeting of the Council, and would be pleasantly surprised if the European Council reached a compromise by next March. Let us hope it can do so before the end of the Irish Presidency, which has that it can produce a rabbit from its magical hat. When Council agrees on the size of the budget, the European Parliament (EP) will take its position and a compromise will have to be found between the two budgetary authorities. This will take time. Much will depend on whether the EP will be prepared to go to battle in a pre-electoral

phase.¹ After a deal has been struck, both budgetary authorities - Council and Parliament - will have to approve some 75 legislative acts related to the MFF. There is therefore a distinct risk of the introduction of a "provisional twelfths" system as of January 2014, which means taking the actual budget figures of 2013, plus inflation. This would be anathema to most net contributors (except France), but would quite substantially please the poorer members. It would also complicate the implementation of CAP reform. Let me only hope that I will be proven right with regards to a muscular stance by the EP. I favour of a strong EU budget and the implementation of own resources, and that I will be wrong about my scepticism on timing."

On the second day, a public workshop took place around the theme of "Creating productivity with the land we currently farm", organised by the ELO, with

the support of ILO and BASF. The keynote speech on 'Critical Aspects of the CAP post 2013' was given by Prof BUCKWELL, followed by the "Next steps of CAP reform – the Irish point of view" presented by Peter YOUNG, a journalist specialised in agriculture economics from the Irish Farmers Journal. A lively and technical debate followed the round table with panellists Paul LEONARD, Head of Innovation & Technology Policy, EU Government Relations BASF Group; Dr Darren HUGHES, Head of Communication, Rothamsted Institute of Research. Dr. Darren focused his presentation on "Global food security, the need for scientific innovation in farming and civil perceptions of new technologies", Prof. Gerry BOYLE, CEO TEAGASC, Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority explained "The Irish scientific perspective", and Prof. James BURKE, Masstock Professor of Crop Science, University College Dublin, who spoke about "Future land use - the need for productivity growth", with Matthew DEMPSEY, Editor of the Irish Farmers Journal acting as moderator.

All participants agreed that better and more targeted communication is urgently needed to make the voice of research and science heard by the European public. So often, innovation is misunderstood or misused, which leads to irrational fears. Scientists and policy makers must find the time and language to speak about their work. A proper understanding of the latest science and research is a necessity if we wish the EU's competitive edge, and especially to achieve both food and environmental security.

The Next ELO General Assembly will take place in Lithuania in June 2013.

Emmanuelle MIKOSZ, ELO

Full version of the speech of Corrado PIRZIO-BIROLI is available upon request. The video from the conference is available on ELO website: www.elo.org



¹ EP President Schultz has taken the lead on MFF. The other big players are Joseph Daul, EPP Chairman and former COMAGRI Chairman, Paolo De Castro (S&D), current AGRI Chairman, and Reimer Böge (EPP), EP Rapporteur on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework.



Ch. BUREN, E. JONES, T. de l'ESCAILLE, L. MIKO, H. CHRISTENSEN

Conference report: the role of research and technology in resource efficiency and food production

Given a 20 year decline in investment in innovation, the EU faces the threat of lagging behind other countries when it comes to competitiveness and resource efficiency.

To tackle some of these issues, the ELO organised a conference on the 6th of December, hosted by MEP Robert STURDY, Vice Chairman of the International Trade Committee, member of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, and with the support of, Friends of the Countryside, BASF and YARA.

Key conference questions were: Are sustainability and competitiveness compatible? How can we produce enough food and maintain our resources in Europe?

Robert STURDY opened the conference by saying that if in 2050 the world's population reaches the 9 billion as expected, the food has to come from somewhere. Sturdy insisted that agriculture is the most

important subject under discussion not only in trade negotiations, but in almost everything. Governments need food security for their people, and therefore this will always be political.

The organisers of this event, represented by Thierry de L'ESCAILLE, Secretary General of the ELO, reminded the audience that if the EU wanted to remain competitive as a net exporter, then we needed to seriously invest in new research and technology.

The opening speech of the first panel - **Green economy: what choices for the future?** - was by Timothy HALL, Head of Unit, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture, in DG Research and Innovation (EC). He stated that, with regard to

EU farming, we need to become more sustainable and habitat friendly, more resource efficient, with a lower carbon footprint. With an increasing population and changing demands, we have to safely improve food production while resolving energy and resource scarcity. The most plausible answer is that **we have to sustainably intensify production**. Mr. Hall believes that we should avoid resource waste and use more crop and livestock varieties that can increase production with low inputs. In particular, he insisted on the importance of reducing the huge waste present in pre- and post-harvest losses. The most important is **the take-up of knowledge and technologies by the end-user, the farmer**.

Another key issue raised by Timothy Hall was **how to measure farming sustainability and how to monitor it over time**, particularly if farm payments will be linked to sustainable approaches.

The ELO invited Lord MELCHETT, policy

director for the Soil Association, former UK Greenpeace Director and former Minister for Environment, to respond. He presented organic farming as the best European solution. He explained that if we want to go for GMO's, it is difficult for farmers who do not wish to do so. Additionally, the lack of independent research on the health-effects of GM was a key argument. Finally, he too insisted on education on food production and waste.

Bernard AUXENFANS, managing director at Kincannon Reed and former C.E.O for Monsanto, focused on the economic impact of new technologies. Supported by a statistical comparison of the EU and the world, he insisted that technology and know-how has been, is and will be the key driver to sustainable global food production growth.

All panellists agreed that soil, out of all relevant issues, has been the most neglected resource and that Europe must get serious about food waste reduction.

The second session debated on **efficient management of crop pests & diseases**. The keynote speech was delivered by Ladislav MIKO, Deputy Director General for the Food Chain, DG SANCO (EC). He spoke on setting the framework for the safe and efficient use of plant protection products. He disliked the argument of feeding 9 billion people by 2050 – adding that this was a task for the whole world, not just Europe. Resource efficiency and biodiversity protection are part maintaining productive lands. Climate change is as the backdrop to all agricultural challenges and threats.

The respondents were Henriette CHRISTENSEN, policy advisor for PAN EUROPE, who focused on the use of hazardous pesticides. She stated that it is possible to use only ecologically sound alternatives, while eliminating chemical dependency and supporting safe and sustainable methods. On the other side, Euros JONES, director of regulatory affairs at ECPA, focused on sustainable risk management through safe pesticide use. Christoph BÜREN – vice-president of SAF- Agriculteurs de France, spoke eloquently on the use of these products on a day-to-day basis, insisting that they were the only reliable approach at his disposal.

The discussion showed that a sound sci-



entific basis was essential; modelling can help predict diseases and improve treatments. Even so, it is impossible to push GM technology against the will of most European consumers.

The third panel was dedicated to **innovative solutions for sustainable management of soil and water resources**. Michael HAMELL, Head of Unit, Agriculture and Soil, DG Environment (EC) opened the discussion, underlining that innovation needs to take into account the impact on soil, water and biodiversity. He also referred to soil salinization and desertification, which is not properly addressed and should be addressed with new legislation.

To give practical solutions to soil and water management, the respondents were Antje KOELLING, policy manager at IFOAM, who focused on organic farming systems in Europe; Paulo FELIX, FLUIDRA Group director, who focused on increasing water-use efficiency through improved irrigation. Finally, Dr. Frank BRENTROP from the fertilizer company YARA mentioned increasing nitrogen-use efficiently.

This 3rd round ended with the same question: how and who should pay for the implementation of these innovations?

The final panel was called: **Europe and the world: the example of soya production & how to maintain Europe competitiveness**. The opening speech was given by Matthias KRÖN, president of the Danube soya association, followed

by Pierre BASCOU, head of unit for agricultural trade policy analysis, DG Agriculture and Rural Development (EC). He supported increasing European soya production. Maurice HOUSE, counsellor for agriculture at the U.S. Mission to the EU defiantly stated his position regarding European policy and its desire to remain competitive. Paul LEONARD, head of innovation & technology Policy at BASF EU highlighted the effect of soya transport in productive countries vs. its direct production in Europe. Giving consumption levels, he underlined what he saw as Europe's challenge: finding the optimum balance between "greening" agriculture and avoiding virtual land grabbing.

In conclusion, there are many choices society can make – from vegetarianism to new technology. Farmers need to make a decent living, which means that consumers have to be ready to pay the real production price. Thierry de L'ESCAILLE finished: Europe has to prepare itself well in advance if it wishes to remain competitive as a net food exporter. We have to adapt ourselves and need to find new tools to find new solutions.

The ELO will continue these discussions in 2013.

The ELO Team

Conference videos and presentations are available on the ELO website at www.elo.org.



DEUTZ-FAHR.
AGRICULTURE AND
ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.



DEUTZ-FAHR

Tractors, combine harvesters, telescopic handlers, implements.

Modern styling and the highest standards of comfort. Powerful engines and advanced technology. DEUTZ-FAHR offers a full line range to meet every need. Leading edge technology and advanced precision farming tools, combined with low operating costs, make DEUTZ-FAHR the ideal partner to increase the profitability of your business.

Find out more about DEUTZ-FAHR on www.deutz-fahr.com

The use of original lubricants and coolants is recommended.



DEUTZ-FAHR is a SAME DEUTZ-FAHR trademark.





Dr David VINER appointed as principal advisor for climate change at Mott MacDonald

On the 20th of November Dr David VINER was appointed by the management, engineering, and development consultancy Mott MacDonald as principal advisor for climate change. An internationally recognised expert, he brings with him 20 years of experience in the area of climate change. He worked for 17 years at the University of East Anglia's (UEA) Climatic Research Unit, where he developed a worldwide reputation working across all areas of climate change. He led UK public engagement on climate change adaptation and has advised both the UK government and international agencies.

In 2007 Dr VINER took up a new position as Natural England's principal climate change specialist where he developed

an adaptation framework and indicators for climate change. In 2008 he was appointed global director at The British Council where he developed a groundbreaking cultural relations strategy and programme that was delivered through 250 offices in 109 countries.

Dr VINER was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for his contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change between 1993 and 2007. He is also an Honorary Lifetime Friend of the Countryside for his work on climate change and the European countryside. He has published over 100 papers and research reports and has undertaken numerous public lectures around the world.

Source: <http://www.mottmac.com/newsandpublications/newlist?id=294066>

Join the Forum For Countryside Entrepreneurship (FCE).

Next year, the Young Friends of the Countryside will launch a brand new initiative called the Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship (FCE), the first edition will take place in Brussels on Saturday 16th of February 2013 and aims to spark a constructive discussion about entrepreneurship in rural areas.

The FCE aims to become a yearly event, taken to different European countries, in order to bring together academics, politicians, entrepreneurs, and young people interested in the business opportunities offered by the European countryside. The focus will be on addressing issues such as managing a successful business start-up, current and future business opportunities in the countryside besides farming, how land managers can maximize efficiency and profitability on their properties by using the best business models, and similar topics linked to rural entrepreneurship.

The weekend program will start with an informal get-together in the heart of Brussels on Friday evening. On Saturday, after the substantive session, forum participants will be able to enjoy a visit to the beer museum in Brussels and visit the Parliamentarium on Sunday. More information will soon be available on the YFCS Platform and invitations will be sent out to members in January.

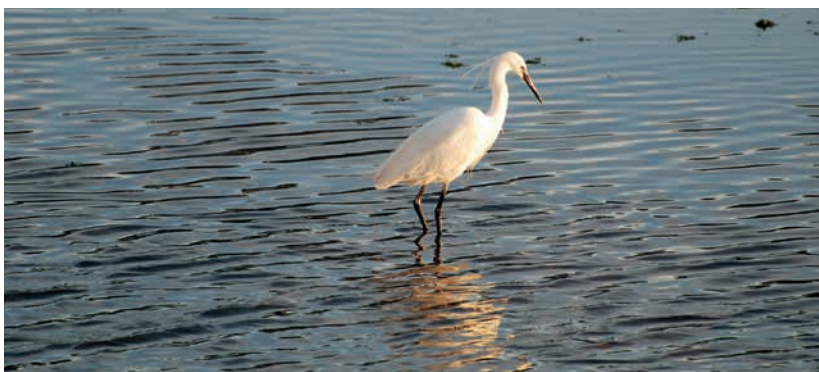
Therefore the YFCS Board takes the opportunity to invite all Young Friends to what promises to be an exciting and interesting weekend, and at the same time would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a successful New Year!

The YFCS Board

A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources

As pointed out by the European Commission DG Environment Communication published on the 14th of November: "the status of EU water is not doing well enough!" Water is essential for human life, nature and the economy. Although permanently renewed, it is a finite resource that cannot be replaced or remade artificially. Fresh water constitutes only around 2% of global water supplies and competing demands may lead to an estimated 40% world water supply shortage by 2030. The EU's water policy has been successful in helping to protect our water resources. This 'Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources' aims to tackle the obstacles which stop or inhibit actions that can safeguard European water resources and is based on an extensive evaluation of the existing policy.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/index_en.htm



Hamsters, what hamsters?

The 19th Meeting of the International Hamster Workgroup and the challenge of conserving declining farmland biodiversity

What is the International Hamster Workgroup?

The International Hamster Workgroup (IHWG) was founded in 1994 when serious declines in European hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*) populations became evident in Western Europe. From this first meeting the group has grown continuously. Today it unites international scientists from various fields with members of associations and representatives from public authorities, the political arena, and the agricultural sector. The long-term goal of the IHWG is the restoration of stable hamster populations across its distribution range in Europe.

Report of the 19th Workgroup Meeting

From November 20th-22nd, in the heart of Flanders, at Herkenrode Abbey in Limburg, the RISE Foundation hosted the 19th IHWG, consisting of 60 participants from eight different European countries. Earlier in the year RISE introduced, as the lead partner, a transnational LIFE+ proposal targeting the European hamster and farmland biodiversity through wildlife-friendly farming practices with 18 partner organisations from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. This project was officially launched during the previous year's IHWG meeting. RISE was thus proud to host the 19th annual meeting of the IHWG this year, with the support of the Province of Limburg, the Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests and the ELO.

Deputy Nature at the Province of Limburg, Frank SMEETS, said it all in his open-

ing speech when he reminded those present that the 60 participants gathered in the Herkenrode Abbey Conference Centre outnumbered the hamsters currently surviving in Flanders' fields. This was a sad but important reminder of the reason for gathering together in Belgium.

Stefan LEINER, Head of Nature unit from DG Environment at the European Commission, then gave the keynote speech on "the tools and strategies to safeguard the EU's declining biodiversity". He explained to the audience the achievements of the EU regulatory framework (such as the Birds and Habitats Directives, Natura 2000 network) for the preservation of species and habitats. On the positive side, he noted that the large-scale destruction of high value nature areas had halted, cooperation between countries and stakeholders had increased, several species had been brought back from the brink of extinction, and the nature funding for had increased significantly. However, he stressed that many more efforts were still needed given that only 17% of all species currently had a favourable conservation status, and this was as low as 7% for those living in agricultural grassland areas. Mr LEINER highlighted the success of the LIFE+ programme in protecting habitats and species, stating that 320,000 hectares of land had been restored since the beginning of the programme. He declared the hamster a priority for the Commission and a good test case for the successful integration of biodiversity into agricultural policy and practice.

Following the keynote address, the format of the conference switched to presentations from the workgroup members, with time for questions and discussions after the individual presentations. First, there was a presentation about contradictions in the control mechanisms between the hamster-friendly agri-environment schemes and the cross compliance regime, creating a serious disincentive for farmers to continue with their voluntary participation in AE schemes, an issue which RISE will take up with DG AGRI.



Other key issues on the agenda included updates from the research side regarding important discoveries about the hamsters' physiology which could be used to improve breeding and monitoring programmes in the field. There were also updates from the various on-going and planned conservation projects, including the LIFE + programme and the new French National Action Plan, as well as presentations mapping the current genetic diversity of remaining populations.

A working session was organised by Dr Ulrich WEINHOLD in order to apply for an update of the IUCN Conservation status of the European hamster from that of "least concern" to "vulnerable" or even "endangered". The group together amended the existing status in a file that would subsequently be sent for review by the IUCN. Notable amendments included more precise explanations on the causes of population decline such as modern agriculture and pesticides, as well as more precise descriptions of population declines - taking into account new population data from Central and Eastern Europe. The application is to undergo final review



by all following the conference and sent off by the end of the year. This was a very positive and concrete output of the 2012 IHWG since an update of the status would mean an acknowledgement that the species faces a high chance of extinction in the wild. This revised status would greatly support further conservation efforts.

On the last day, a walk and talk excursion was organised to visit in-situ agri-environment measures for the hamster implemented by local farmers in and around Bertem, in Vlaams-Brabant. The excursion was led by VLM (a Flemish Agency responsible for AE contracts with farmers) and ANB (Flemish Agency for Nature and Forests), who have been involved with the design of the measures, contracting with the farmers, and monitoring results. During the excursion it was explained that farmers were compensated for planting rotations which included leaving unharvested cereal strips through the winter to ensure food and cover for the hamsters after the main harvest. Restrictions also applied to ploughing and the use of crop protection products. The farmers seemed satisfied with the

measures, explaining that the guaranteed income over five years was a useful security against bad weather events, even though the fixed prices did not vary according to market prices. The measures also had incidental benefits in the fight against erosion, as roots from cover crops helped to hold soil particles in place. From 2013 onwards, some eight farmers would be participating in hamster protection in this area, covering an area of 30-40 hectares. In the medium-term this should help to stabilise the very small local population prior to expanding efforts over time. Core areas of 300 hectares with some management actions applied within them is thought to be the minimum necessary area in order to achieve viable population sizes. These figures were discussed and agreed by the participants during this year's meeting.

The participants were able to observe yellowhammers and skylarks during the excursion together with several birds of prey species. The walk and talk with the farmers in such well-managed landscapes took place under a blazing November sun, putting everybody in a warm mood before

heading back to their respective locations. After the excursion, the 2012 Conference drew to a close, having achieved several concrete outputs and numerous fruitful exchanges of knowledge and experience. The conservation challenge remains urgent and complex but continual improvements in knowledge and understanding are an important mechanism to make positive changes for the future.

RISE now believes that new thinking is needed on how to move towards a better balance between productive and profitable farming and sound ecological management. This is a major objective behind the LIFE+ proposal for the conservation of the European hamster which RISE put together with its partners this past year. We will hear whether or not the proposal has been selected for funding early in 2013.

On behalf of the RISE Foundation and the ELO Team, we would like to thank all participants and sponsors for their ongoing support.

Alison BOYES, RISE Foundation

How actively communicate EU environmental policies to rural stakeholders.



In cooperation with its partners, the ELO organizes regular meetings for farmers, land managers, foresters, hunters, and all rural stakeholders in order to keep them up to date with relevant EU legislation and projects – the latest of these was on November 13.

It was held under the auspices of Véronique MATHIEU, member of the European Parliament and President of the Intergroup on Sustainable Hunting, Biodiversity, Countryside Activities & Forest. During this meeting, the ELO met with various heads of French Hunting Federations. The event was organised in the cooperation with the FACE and welcomed hunters and rural stakeholders from French regions Picardie and Nord-Pas-de-Calais. This seminar aimed to educate and inform hunting organizations on EU environmental policies, including Natura 2000 and programmes such as LIFE, with a focus on the 3WATER project. To help

discussion and improve communication, the ELO prepared a guide which answered some basic questions on LIFE and other funding programmes.

The meeting was opened by Angus MIDDLETON, the Secretary General of the FACE, which was followed by several presentations on the activities of the FACE and the ELO.

Delphine DUPEUX, Policy Officer at the ELO, gave an overview of ELO activities that give land managers a voice in European politics. An important part of these actions are the Wildlife Estates (WE). The Wildlife Estates project, coordinated by the ELO, aims to establish a network of exemplary estates across Europe that showcases the principles of good management and conservation. The overall objective is to engage the European public and private sectors in productive cooperation that will help halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity.

The WE project is adapted to the differences in hunting management strategies in various biogeographical regions of the European Union. It also tries to improve stakeholder management within Natura 2000. Recent examples show that improved communication about Natura

2000 can help increase cooperation with local landowners.

The negative attitude of some stakeholders towards Natura 2000 is often linked to unawareness of its goals and meaning. Therefore, the Wildlife Estates project informs hunters and land managers and answers questions about the socio-economic consequences of a Natura 2000 designation. What is especially important is the value of hunters and land managers for the Natura 2000 network due to their deep knowledge of local biodiversity. This can be invaluable to aid in the compilation of scientific inventories. Delphine DUPEUX concluded her presentation by an explanation of how hunters can join this important project (available on <http://www.wildlife-estates.eu/>).

The information meetings for hunters will continue in 2013.

Barbora BUCKOVA, Project Coordinator at the ELO, followed this presentation with a practical illustration of the successful involvement of the rural stakeholders in Natura 2000 management: the LIFE+3WATER project.

The 3WATER project contributes to the implementation of Natura 2000. Specifically, it aims to restore and conserve habitats and species of Community importance at the core of the Natura 2000 area in Belgian Midden Limburg. The project targets the bittern and the tree frog as flagship species; a restoration of their habitat will improve the whole ecosystem and thus the prospects of many other animals and plants. This is a unique project; it involves close cooperation between private and public landowners who work together to achieve the project's objectives.

The biggest landowners in the project area were identified before the start of the project. In order to establish their close participation, it was crucial to create an atmosphere of trust and open communication. Various strategies were used to enlarge the number of private landowners participating in the project.



Several press conferences were held, followed by a media campaign to get the attention of landowners. The project partners also organised also an open information meeting for everyone: locals, landowners, and any other interested party. The most important communication tool was direct contact with private landowners, as even for those who have been protecting the nature on their lands for decades it was still unclear whether they stood to gain or lose from Natura 2000 regulations. Thanks to many personal meetings, it was possible to demonstrate a clear picture of what encompasses Natura 2000, and to inform them about this unique opportunity to participate. Although not all landowners came on board, most of them understood the necessity of a strong network of different stakeholders to counteract the degradation of local nature and biodiversity.

The results from this process are part of the study on landowner participation in the management of Natura 2000 sites which is available on the project website www.3water.eu.

Barbora BUCKOVA,
ELO LIFE+ Coordinator
Delphine DUPEUX,
ELO Policy Officer

The 3WATER project is supported by the European Commission Directorate General Environment under the LIFE+ Nature programme (Grant Agreement N° LIFE08 NAT/B/000036).



CIC Markhor Award 2012

The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) has honoured Namibia with the prestigious **CIC Markhor Award** at the 11th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Hyderabad, India.

The CIC Markhor Award recognizes and celebrates outstanding conservation performance by personalities, private and government institutions, enterprises, or conservation projects that link the conservation of biodiversity and human livelihoods through the application of the principles of sustainable use, in particular hunting, as part of wildlife and ecosystem management.

The communal conservancies programme in Namibia, which began with 4 areas in 1998, now includes 79, and covers around 19 per cent of the country. Coupled with the creation of new conservancies, many species have seen their numbers increase.

“In Namibia, our people made a choice to say ‘We will live with wildlife’ and we do, with great success!” – highlighted Maxi LOUIS, speaking on behalf of the Namibian Conservancies.

The key to this success, and consequently the justification for the CIC Markhor Award, is the Namibian Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 which has engaged the private sector, including rural communities, in facilitating the sustainable use of wildlife on communal land.

Wildlife has become a valuable conservation asset for locals and this provides a strong catalyst for wildlife recovery in the communal areas of Namibia. In turn, this has meant that poaching is now increasingly considered as socially unacceptable. While there is increasing evidence that globally, and in particular in Africa, wildlife populations are often in decline, the Namibian example shows that this is certainly not an irreversible trend. Good wildlife management and the creation of incentives by sustainable hunting can prevent this.

CIC Team

Please read the full article here: <http://www.cic-wildlife.org/index.php?id=910>





© European Commission

In the United States as in France Floods are more political disasters than natural

The dramatic storm “Sandy” which struck the eastern US coast, especially New Jersey and New York, calls to mind the conflict posed to public authorities and disaster victims resulting from the ‘Xyntia’ storm in 2010 in Vendée (France). These victims were not only hit by the storm it-

self, but also by the negative effects of a law passed in 1982, which imposed compulsory insurance against natural risks, including those linked to floods, which gave an implicit backing to the urbanisation of flood zones.

This law, voted in unanimously, was criticised from 1983 by Haroun Tazieff, expert in this field, and being both scientist and, paradoxically, as Minister responsible for its implementation: « *The law from 1982, called the Solidarity Law, is demagogic, prepared in a hurry by people who don't know the topic... From the beginning I have said that it was an unachievable goal ... the boundary between the 'red' (no construction allowed), the 'blue' (conditional), and 'white' (free) is impossible to draw without approximation ...*

This means that the person on the 'red' side will feel damaged, compared to those on the 'blue' side. This will create unsolvable disputes (revue 'Aménagement et Nature' nr 90).

This has created a situation where all buildings owners are compensated through compulsory, additional insurance premiums, which similar for all and do not take the risk into account. The law also specified that special anti-floods protection plans - Plans de Protection des Risques d'Inondation (PPRI) - should be created, in order to forbid any construction in flood zones. This was not realised as drawing up the PPRI is puts city mayors in a very uncomfortable situation - similar to winners and losers in the game of Monopoly - given that it would be very hard to revise the zoning. Significant pressure was exerted to extend the designation period for as long as possible (following the rules of game it was possible to obtain building permits during this process) or to contest technical data (uncertain by definition) to maximally reduce zones where no construction would be allowed. On the other hand, public authorities, in order to be exempt from any responsibility, were tempted to extend risk zones beyond any reasonable

webcast
streaming
video services

Contact:
Emmanuel De Groef
Tel: +32 2 709 10 50
manu.de.groef@telemak.com
www.telemak.com

¹ One year later the Ministry of Ecology was not referring to any negative effects of the law from 1982

grounds; as any additional zoning would increase the shortage of residential land!

'Insurance creates risk'; common sense which inspires insurance companies to modify premiums according to risk and, if needed, to even refuse to insure. Since some basic rules were not respected, the cash registers were quickly emptied and the insured parties, or even further – the tax payers, are now obliged to pay instead of the irresponsible owners, or, to be more accurate, the legally 'dis-responsibilized' owners.

Curiously, we find the same negative effects in Unites-States: since 1968, both on federal and state levels, lawmakers have financed public insurances funds which have encouraged the urbanisation of the littoral coastline, which regularly suffers from storms. Again, public authorities have encouraged ill-designed action at the expense of tax payers - the destruction of high value ecosystems and potential losses of human life an increased fiscal burden and the transfer of riches to benefit of economic pressure groups ... or compassionates.



Superstorm 'Sandy'

Superstorm 'Sandy', with 70 lives lost and material costs between \$40 and 50 billion, is a reminder of Hurricane 'Katrina'. It will force the revision of measures that have lead to the urbanisation of the littoral coastline, and thus to the endangering of local inhabitants and a ruinous expense for taxpayers.

indicate as at risk by the local ZERMOS map, you will be not insured, or you will have to pay a double or a triple premium. It is up to you to decide. ».

It is about returning to the principle of liberty of contracts, of individual responsibility and of 'depoliticization'...if only to restrict the corrupting temptation of defining zones and city planning documents. Once again State subsidies, especially those based on good feelings of 'solidarity', have led environmental and economic harm. It is true that the 'theory of public choice' has proven that politicians have a tendency to distribute profits to well-organised groups, or those able to arouse compassion, or tax payer money, and to thus ensure their own reelection... both in France as in Unites-States.

If the link between global warming and the frequency of storms is uncertain to say the least, the one between compassionate demagoguery and negative effects is well proven...including and above all for environmental protection. At the end of the day the biggest injustice is to tax the wise and to compensate the irresponsible!

Max FALQUE
Director, International Centre for
Research on Environmental Issues
www.icrei.org

AGRILAND
25
YEARS
1985-2010

Le gestionnaire de référence
de propriétés agricoles
en Wallonie et en Flandres
Spécialiste en transactions foncières

Avenue Pasteur 23
1500 Wavre
Tel. +32(0)10 23 29 00
Fax. +32(0)10 23 29 09
www.agriland.be

What about France? It is obvious that the system put in place in 1982 does not function and that its negative effects exceed its discounted benefits. It is high time for legislators to abolish this law and leave the insurance companies free to adjust the prices of compulsory insurance needed in order to obtain construction permits¹. Once again, remarks by Haroun TAZIEFF were prescient: «*We have to abolish this law and replace it by an intelligent measure ... instead of doing costly and useless PPRI; we should develop a system of maps like those done for years by BRGM (Bureau of Geological and Mining Research) ... People, after looking at these maps, can then decide if they wish to build or not. Here, there is a big role for insurance companies: if you wish to build in a zone*



'Faucheurs de science - les fanatiques sont dans nos campagnes'

Gil RIVIÈRE-WEKSTEIN

Edition Le Publieur

ISBN 978 2 35061 0474

(Not yet available in English)

For over ten years, environmental activists have been a disruptive part of countryside life. Their intimidation of farmers and scientists, social and economic damage, and questionable tactics have been investigated in a new book by journalist Gil RIVIÈRE-WEKSTEIN.

Drawing on three years of investigations, he has conducted a systematic inquiry into the activities of these groups and catalogued both their methods of communication and their actions.

As part of a larger debate on animal welfare, genetically modified crops, and the hardships faced by European farmers, this book represents a penetrating take on a difficult issue.

Gil RIVIÈRE-WEKSTEIN is founder of the monthly magazine 'Agriculture et Environnement' and a specialist in agricultural and environmental issues. He has published « Abeilles, l'imposture écologique » and « Bio : fausses promesses et vrai marketing ». He is member of the French association of agricultural journalists (AFJA).

DIARY DATES 2013

15 January 2013, Brussels

InfoDay on FP7 Environment Research in the specific field of water innovation demonstration projects
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=events&lg=en>

15-17 February, Brussels

Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship
www.yfcs.eu

4th March, Brussels, morning session

Kick off meeting for the yearly project 'Greening in best practice', co-organised by ELO and Syngenta
www.elo.org

4th March, Brussels, afternoon session

7th Stakeholder Roundtable on CAP Reform
<http://operaresearch.eu/en/home/>

5th March, Brussels

6th Forum for the Future of Agriculture
www.forumforagriculture.com

5th March, Brussels

Ceremony of the Soil Award - created by ELO under the auspices of the European Commission DG Environment and the Joint Research Centre, in association with the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) of Vienna, Syngenta International and the Centre for Soil and Environmental Sciences of the Ljubljana University
<http://www.europeanlandowners.org/about/awards>

5-6 March, Stockholm

World Forests Summit
<http://cemea.economistconferences.com/event/world-forests-summit#.UM8LyH-cWk0>

15-17 April, Torino, Italy

NEV2013 Workshop on 'Nitrogen, Environment and Vegetables', co-organised by European Commission DG Environment and the University of Torino
<http://www.nev2013.org/>

23-26 May, Toledo, Spain

Friends of the Countryside XVI General Assembly
<http://friendsofthecountryside.org/>



Syngenta

Brussels Office

Avenue Louise, 489 - B - 1050 Brussels

Tel : +32.2.642 2727 - Fax : +32.2.642 2720

CountrySide

is a publication of ELO
in English and French

Publisher :
Thierry de l'ESCAILLE
Chief editor :
Emmanuelle MIKOSZ

Rue de Trèves, 67
B - 1040 Bruxelles
Tel. : 00 32 (0)2 234 30 00
Fax : 00 32 (0)2 234 30 09

countryside@elo.org
Internet Site :
www.elo.org
5 Euros