

European

Landowners

Organisation

EPG 17/96 (Final)

## **FIELD SPORTS**

### **Introduction**

Field sports are an important activity in the economic and social life of landowners.

This paper has been produced under the direction of Johan af Petersens (Sveriges Jordägoraförbund) to advise the constituent members of the ELO on how we should address the subject, both with our individual governments and the European Union.

### **The Prerequisites**

Field sports are pursued in very different forms and under very different conditions within the various parts of the EU.

- i) Field sports include shooting of birds and other small game in agricultural landscapes, wetlands, forests and in mountains, hunting on horse back, falconry, hare coursing, stalking and other forms of hunting with rifles. Connected with field sports is also the legitimate control of predators. Fishing for recreational purposes is also considered a field sports.
- ii) Field sports are integrated with agriculture and forestry in the management of land and water.
- iii) For the hunters and fishermen field sports are recreational pursuits whilst for landowners and the rural population field sports can represent considerable economic values and important income. Field sports are essential for sound land management.
- iv) Field sports play an important role and will for the future play an increasingly important role in the rural economy.
- v) The number of sportsmen as a percentage of the population varies greatly within the EU member countries. In some countries shooting and fishing has a very broad popular base while in others it is pursued only by a limited few. Increasing economic wealth and more leisure time may increase the demand for field sports.
- vi) The anti-shooting and anti-hunting movement continues to gain support in some of the EU Member States and poses a significant threat to certain field sports.
- vii) In the EU Member States there are local organisations of landowners and sportsmen dealing with various aspects of field sports.
- viii) Field sports contribute significantly to nature conservation, increased environmental values, biological diversity and the maintenance of the traditional use of land and water.

- ix) Field sports are partly regulated by international conventions within and outside the framework of the EU, and Member States.
- x) FACE, the federation of field sports associations of the EC, promotes the interests of some seven million European hunters at a level of European and international institutions. CIC and EURODUCKS are other organisations promoting the interests of field sports on a European level.

### **The Landowners and the Field Sports - Possibilities and Threats**

For many landowners and the rural population field sports represent economic values and income with considerable potentials for further development. This is of increasing importance in times where traditional agriculture and forestry and fishing may be of decreasing economic importance. Field sports also represent important recreational values for the owners and the rural population.

Field sports are under pressure from various directions. Anti-hunting and some environmental movements try to prevent various forms of field sports. Environmental damage and exploitation for industrial purposes, roads, railways, urbanisation and new methods in agriculture and forestry, pollution of water, replacement of game-benign farming systems, the demand for land for other recreational purposes than field sports, all diminish the opportunities for field sports.

In some Member States there is a continuing political pressure to deprive the landowner of his property rights concerning shooting and fishing. There is also a continuing pressure from EU directives and regulations and international conventions to deprive the Member States of their rights to decide on their field sports.

### **Objectives of ELO activities at the EU level concerning Field Sports**

- i) To defend and strengthen the owner's right to decide over and to develop field sports, if he wants to, on his land and water for economic purposes and for his own and the wider population's recreation.
- ii) To promote subsidiarity in the EU regulation of field sports but with due respect to the aspect of migrating birds and fish.
- iii) To promote field sports as an important part of the rural economy.
- iv) To encourage an understanding and positive attitude towards field sports among the non-sporting population, politicians and environmental organisations.
- v) Primarily, it shall be the task of ELO's members to deal with the questions of field sports in their own country. In limited specific cases, however, the ELO could support the local member organisation.

### **Actions proposed**

- i) **The ELO will acquaint itself with** and closely follow the work within the EU institutions dealing with shooting, fishing, agriculture, forestry and environment on matters of importance for field sports. **The ELO will seek to influence** their work in directions favourable to its members.

- ii) **The ELO will co-operate** with European organisations, such as FACE, CIC and EURODUCKS, in areas of mutual interest.
- iii) **The ELO will actively promote** the role of the field sports in the development of a rural policy for Europe and in particular within the agriculture, forestry, environmental, and nature conservation objectives of the EU.
- iv) **The ELO will stress** the role of the owner of the land and water and the necessity of a well established and secure ownership of land and water to exercise stewardship and management.
- v) **The ELO will in certain specific matters support its member organisations** in their work to promote the interests of landowners concerning field sports. It will seek to communicate best practice in regulation, policy and procedure within the different Members States of the EU.

**ELO POLICY GROUP**  
**January 1997**

**Any comments or queries on this submission should be  
addressed to the Chairman of the ELO Policy Group  
at the address below**

A0842149

**EUROPEAN LANDOWNERS ORGANISATION - ORGANISATION EUROPEENNE DE LA PROPRIETE RURALE**  
**Galleries du centre - Bloc II - 6 ème étage - 1000 Bruxelles**  
**TÉl: (0)10 84 40 00 Fax: (0)10 84 24 00**