

September 2008

Editorial

While French Presidency is publishing its document "How to best prepare the future CAP," ELO and Sygenta are making the final preparations for the second Forum on the Future of Agriculture which will take place in Brussels on 18 March 2009.

Michel BARNIER will speak on the way the French Presidency's document is progressing. It contains three challenges identified by the 2008 Forum and includes its conclusions by highlighting four objectives: ensure food security, ensure environmental and climate security, play an ethical role by feeding the world and support rural development which is a vital part of the balance in the countryside.

To attain these objectives the imbalance between maintaining the productivity of our farms and meeting society's expectations must be carefully considered. This is necessary if the Union wants the farming world to continue to be an economic mainstay in all areas, including the most fragile.

As we have said before, preserving biodiversity is fundamental, but preserving human activity is too. This preservation will be best served by a policy which reconciles both ambitions.

Sustainable development is the big challenge. Our politicians must introduce instruments allowing private stakeholders to meet that challenge.

There is a risk that certain governments will not perceive the importance of subsidiarity or may limit it for purely budgetary reasons. Leaving the job to the NGOs, while excluding broad participation of the citizens, is not the right philosophy, nor is it what Brussels is calling for.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

SoCo Project



The European parliament has given its support to the creation of a pilot project called SoCo focusing on "sustainable agriculture and soil conservation using simplified cultivation techniques". Stéphane LE FOLL, French socialist MEP and member of the parliamentary committee on agriculture and rural development, agreed to tell us about the project which is so important to him. ▶

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How did the pilot project come about?

On my election to the European Parliament I joined the agriculture committee. From the beginning I noticed we were still holding the agricultural debates of the nineties, even though the agricultural and world context had profoundly changed. I was convinced that our approach needed a radical overhaul to solve the problems of agriculture. This need for reform led me to set up a multi-disciplinary think tank with a European vocation, the St Germain group, which came up with the idea of changing the dominant production method.

Currently, at the start of the 21st century, agriculture is facing one of its biggest challenges. The advent of new food crises reminds us that the question of how to supply the world with food in a balanced fashion has still not been answered. We need to produce more and share wealth more fairly. By 2050 production will have to double to feed a further 3 billion people on the planet. Agriculture will also have to produce for non-food purposes (tourism, energy, green chemistry etc). At the same time we must produce better and in new ways to counteract current imbalances: global warming, scarcity of natural resources, pollution, loss of biodiversity, health crises likely to affect public health...

1) The current situation is no longer sustainable and will be even less so in the future: our production methods are increasingly in conflict with the planet's natural capacity.

- Large-scale arable farming is hitting maximum capacity, not due to a lack of investment but because the production models inherited from the sixties are reaching their limits.

- Because of their heavy energy dependency production costs are increasing – large scale ploughing and the manufacture of nitrate fertilizers consumes 50% of the energy used in farming.

- It is thought that in 40 to 60 years fertilizers of fossil origin such as phosphorus or potassium will become increasingly scarce.

- The deterioration of soil and the biosphere is one of the most worrying environmental problems. This erosion affects 157 million hectares in Europe. It is often the result of over-mechanisation and causes erosion, desertification and an increase in the cost of maintaining infrastructure (e.g. water, drainage) for the public.

- Extensive arable crops which consume large quantities of water have to cope with shortages and demand from other uses.

- Deforestation and single crop farming are contributing to the destruction of biodiversity reservoirs.

2) We urgently need to manage these constraints, in combination with all the opportunities which agriculture offers, whether it be in the areas of food, biofuels, agrimaterials or ecotourism.

This challenge is not insurmountable. It can be met by creating a kind of farming different to the one which emerged after the war. To do so we need first of all to more actively harness research and knowledge – as this seminar has allowed us to – in order to create a fundamental change in current technical tools and models. This technological change will then support and draw inspiration from accompanying policies such as the CAP. The work on the health check



which will begin in the coming weeks should factor in these new circumstances even more.

Soil conservation agriculture is one example of these new forms of farming. It optimizes the functioning of the ecosystem by ensuring the soil is permanently covered. This both reduces erosion and stops water loss by evaporation. After harvesting, the plant covering the soil stocks both carbon gas from the atmosphere and solar energy, in order to produce a biomass which by decomposing enriches the soil with humus. The organic life in the soil therefore becomes highly active and is an important fertile supplement. Chemicals can be used as a last resort against pests and disease. In most cases conservation agriculture increases the level of current yields while reducing production costs, and this leads to a substantial decrease in energy bills, since ploughing is no longer necessary, there is less mechanisation and working hours are also cut. The pressure on the environment is lessened or removed altogether.

The optimum performance of these systems must be sought when catering for all ecosystems and reestablishing their equilibrium. The

farmer therefore becomes more of a manager of natural environments as well as an investor who rehabilitates the ecosystem.

3) What political conclusions can be drawn in Europe?

The promotion of these new forms of agriculture requires strong political will and considerable harnessing of resources.

Research and innovation

Research must rediscover the agronomic sciences which are linked to ecology. It is necessary to deepen in particular our biological knowledge of the biosphere, which beneath our feet hosts thousands of little known species of bacteria. Plant species capable of stocking nitrogen from the air must be developed. These innovations must be applied throughout Europe and elsewhere.

Research programmes must also use the farmer's skills, i.e. his knowledge and experience. I therefore welcome the fact the ECAF APAD network is involved in our work. The farmer is better placed than anyone to establish a good environmental balance wherever he is located,

and this balance is indispensable to human life.

Common agricultural policy

At a moment when the CAP is about to be revisited during the health check it is regrettable that the Commission's proposals do not indicate more interest in these promising practices. Doing so would provide a more efficient response to the current challenges which are only mentioned in passing. Until now the only solution proposed has been eco-conditionality which may indeed be necessary but can only be transitional, since the objective of the CAP should be to seek a positive way of integrating whatever is considered to be a constraint today into the production method. The challenge is therefore to move away from 'ex-post' inspections towards a contract between farmers and the authorities, so that they become stakeholders in change, including change in the way their regions are developing. Support for less differentiated pillars should be reconsidered in the form of farm viability contracts, combining 3 dimensions: the economic, the ecological and the social. This contractual policy should also allow the CAP to adjust to the different agricultural conditions of a Europe of 27.

Conclusions

This pilot project is an opportunity for a rapprochement between agriculture and society, farmers and other citizens and is also a development project which can create solidarity on a global scale. It will give meaning back to the CAP and inspire trust in farmers. It is our responsibility to prepare this new future and make sure it succeeds.

■ Stéphane Le FOLL



EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES (UEHHA)

Art theft

Prevention and law enforcement

Today in Europe the theft of works of art remains a difficult phenomenon to control. If legislation in this area is not further harmonised it will remain difficult to combat the trafficking of cultural goods. National laws have many different loopholes which thieves and dealers put to full use by moving the stolen goods across the continent. What other means of prevention and law enforcement exist to fight against this scourge?



The international, national and private law enforcement services play a key role in combating art theft, which now affects the whole of Europe. Given the extent of the phenomenon, it is indispensable that cooperation between these different structures be strengthened. But it is equally essential that there be good coordination between the many existing data bases which keep lists of valuable goods which have gone missing.

At an international level Interpol is actively involved in this struggle. Founded in 1947 this organisation has over 180 member states and centralises, analyses and transmits all the information it receives. To do so it has powerful tools and an extremely efficient information system. A data base only accessible on-line to police forces containing over 26,000 objects, a CD-ROM more widely distributed and posters featuring the most important missing works are made available

to all the member states. However only easily identifiable objects can be registered on the data base and this base receives its information from Interpol's national offices. Not all of them have acquired the habit of passing it on.

There are other relevant international organisations such as the World Customs Organisation and Europol, whose role is to strengthen police cooperation and the exchange of information in

EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES (UEHHA)



Europe. But the fight against this type of crime is also a priority for NGOs such as UNESCO and the International Council of Museums (ICOM). They have drawn up agreements, ethical codes, standard certificates for the export, identification and registration of cultural goods, as well as data bases, the Red List and other advisory and information services.

The involvement of the national police and customs authorities is of course vital to prevention, the search for stolen goods and law enforcement. Although it is not yet a priority, this type of crime which in recent years has taken on an international dimension and is now a genuine form of organised crime is becoming increasingly worrying. A series of countries now have special departments composed of teams specifically trained in the theft of antiquities and works of art. Italy, France and Spain in particu-

lar have specialised services which work in close cooperation with the police, cultural bodies, the customs and the judiciary.

However we should not ignore the role played by certain private companies such as *My Find* or *Art Loss Register*. Founded in 1991 ALR works in partnership with galleries, art market associations, insurance companies and the International Foundation for Art Research. It is based in London and has created its own international data base. For a small fee stolen or lost valuables may be safely listed in detail on ALR's website. In close cooperation with the police, Interpol, galleries and certain parallel networks, steps are taken to assist owners and insurers in finding their property. However in the case of an object been returned, the charge can be up to 20% of its value.

We have highlighted the importance of close cooperation between all these different stakeholders but the contribution of museums, collectors, individuals and other targets of dealers is also indispensable. Without a highly detailed description and a good quality photograph of the stolen antiquities, works of art or jewellery, the chance not only of finding them but also of getting them back is minimal. Such object profiles are on the one hand an indispensable working tool for the investigators but are also necessary to register these objects on any national or international data base. If an object is discovered they can provide irrefutable proof of its authenticity and origin, thus ensuring it is returned to its rightful owner. Unesco is proposing a Standard Object ID, and other bodies are proposing their services to create it.

It is also important to report a theft quickly. But above all should the owner not first ensure his property is safe and properly insured? We will shortly be looking into what resources are available to him today.

www.unesco.org
www.interpol.int
www.artloss.com

■ Donatienne de SÉJOURNET

THE INSTITUTIONAL ECHO



(\$100 a barrel) that would make 6% of what we spend on oil! And with current prices at \$135, it would be 8 or 9%.

We need three hundred million hectares on which to promote photosynthesis, i.e. the sun has to fall on enough leaves to transform its energy into sugar, protein, fat or dry matter. Once the ground is covered in leaves to the point of invisibility, the system will run itself.



Coordination:
François de RADIGUÈS
Tel: +32 (0)2 234 30 00

We will be able to maximize the stocking of solar energy, the elimination of carbon dioxide and the release of oxygen if the plants get enough water to work around the clock. Every second, minute, hour and day sugar will be accumulated in the form of dry matter in millions of plants, and all of their carbon will be sucked out of the atmosphere. Chemically pure oxygen will be redistributed in the air, ready to fill our lungs.

The system is of course an old one, we just need to balance it anew. With 300 million hectares of newly created land processing dry matter we could take all of our civilisation's excess carbon out of the atmosphere, and the balance would finally be struck. And the water? Wouldn't it be a dreadful waste, a drain on rivers and an unnatural, unsustainable expense?

Actually no. All the water used on the 300 million hectares will evaporate in molecular form and improve the frequency of rainfall in the future. The land will only be borrowing the water, and will return it to nature with considerable benefits, having filtered it and transformed it into molecular form for generations of rainfall to come. The harvest on this new land will be a direct replacement for oil (which will no longer be burnt) or will create new materials which will allow a slow use of the planet's forestry mass. The idea is to sustain an operational forest for a longer period (thus creating an alternative outlet for the annual biomass harvest) and at the same time save as much oil as possible, by manufacturing green fuel. At the end the current negative balance which adds 2 parts per million of carbon to the atmosphere every

year will be wiped out. At least we will be able to halt the runaway train before it careers into the ravine!

If this sounds too simple, it is not. Currently China is reforesting over 30 million hectares under a programme signed with the European Union. The International Energy Agency recently said that rebalancing the carbon account will cost 29 billion euros. This model would only cost 14 million. In the Ebro valley there is potential for 500 000 hectares of newly irrigated land, which is half of Spain, if the above total area is shared out on a pro rata basis.

Using the planet's vegetation to balance carbon and rainfall is no pipedream. Introducing vegetation to areas hitherto uncultivated or sparsely covered is a real solution to today's energy problems. In this way the ecological problem of climate change will also be solved.

The search for the right land and designing it so that it produces many tons of useful vegetation are tasks likely to banish boredom forever. We must also change the entire current processing chain, based on oil, to one based on plants. This will signal the dawn of a new civilisation which this time will be sustainable.

■ Augustín MARINÉ

President of the General Association of Spanish maize producers (AGPME)

THE ENLARGED EUROPE

Italian ingenuity to combat desertification in China

The patent by Venanzio VALLERANI, a tropical agronomist, helps populations who are trying to combat arid lands; he has partnered with reliable and technologically advanced partners, including New Holland tractors.



This is the story of a man and his passion; it is a story in which genius and generosity result in solutions that can change the lives of an entire population. This is the story of Venanzio VALLERANI, an Italian-born tropical agronomist, originally from Umbria, where he often returns between one trip and another. Although he is 84 years old, VALLERANI never stops: Syria, Egypt and China are just a few of the many destinations where he attends meetings to present his most recent studies, displays his patents and educates people about sustainable development. When we met up

with him he exclaimed “Make sure to write that crazy Vallerani says that if we work with his “system” we can still beat desertification!” But how? That is where this story begins.

At the end of 1997 VALLERANI was invited to Damergou, in Niger, where Italy was conducting a large project on Integrated Rural Development to discover how desertification might be defeated. He immediately understood that manpower alone would not suffice. Looking to mechanization, he invented the “Delfino” and “Treno” ploughs. Built and patented

with the Italian company Nardi, the ploughs allow for the excavation of semi-crescents and divided furrows creating micro-basins that facilitate the collection and concentration of the limited resources that are still available (ground and runoff waters, fine, superficial soils and organic substances).

From Geneva to Inner Mongolia

In 2001, VALLERANI attended the World Conference against Desertification in Geneva; the focal point of his lecture was the system bearing his name. The presentation

THE ENLARGED EUROPE



did not appear to capture a big audience, however, seated at the back of the lecture hall was a large group of Chinese citizens who were very interested. VALLERANI went to northern China the following year, along with the Italian Ambassador to China and in August of 2005 an agreement was signed between Italy's Ministry of the Environment and Territory and the State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China for a pilot project. The area of interest was the Balinzuo County in Inner Mongolia, a region where land can be cultivated for just a few months each year, from April to June.

Before that period it is too cold (temperatures can get as low as -30°C/-22°F); afterwards the rainy season begins. To make his special

plough work, VALLERANI employed a New Holland TM175 180 hp 4WD tractors supplied by Italy.

And the machine was faced with a daunting task, since it has to work in extreme conditions, on the edge of the desert, a long way from all facilities, at a fast pace and subjected to exceptional mechanical stresses, in order to plough the largest possible number of hectares for planting with trees before the rains arrive.

"In 24 days," VALLERANI recalls with enthusiasm, "with the Chinese technicians, we worked 532 hectares of land and the following year that number increased to 1,433 hectares. The results up to this point have been extremely positive; the pilot project was expected to remove

1,000 hectares of desert land in five years but after just three years the numbers more than doubled and 2,500 hectares once again became arable".

In light of these results, the project has been refinanced for 2008 and the Chinese have asked for the launch of many new projects of the same kind, covering large areas, using the VALLERANI System and with New Holland machines in all cases.

The partnership

The meeting between this ingenious agronomist and the company took place a few years ago when Lodovico TARABINI, currently the responsible of Middle East Operations for International region, was the head of operations in Africa. "A farmer," he tells us, "needed assistance for a tractor that used the VALLERANI System and so we met on that occasion. That moment was the beginning of a collaborative relationship that was consolidated during the realization of the FAO's (the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization) "Acacia Project," which was financed by Italy. Since 2005, six New Holland TM155 tractors, together with a parts and service package, have been fighting against desertification in Kenya, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal". The project enabled the rural populations of these countries to snatch more than 13 million hectares of land back from the desert, make it fertile, and plant Senegal Acacia trees, which yield an edible gum in great demand on today's market and help to provide the local people with a reasonable income.

■ Roberta BARBA

IN BRIEF

The French Senate approved a report about new rural space in France

The delegation for spatial planning and sustainable development approved a report about new rural space in France during its session on 15th July 2008. The report was presented by senators Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET and Claude Belot, the president of the delegation. The report deals with rural space in France and its recomposition.

The number of inhabitants living in rural areas has increased since 1975 and nowadays the French rural population is growing three times faster than urban population. Nevertheless, the new rural population differs a lot of from the traditional one, as it is composed of former urban citizens which come to rural areas, having left cities.

The new rural population is open, more dynamic and closely bound to urban areas. The shift in population implies income shift which has impact on development of services. Consequently, there is a growth of vacancies which contributes to further development of rural areas.

As a result of rural population increase, rural economy becomes more diversified. The agriculture remains the principal activity in rural areas. However, there are new economic activities which develop: home services, tourism-especially agrotourism, green energy-anaerobic digestion, geothermal power, wind power, small-scale hydropower, solar power, biomass power, telework.

Finally, authors recommend ten measures which should be taken to support the rural development: green energy development, telework encouragement, www.senat.fr/noticerap/2007/r07-468-notice.html

The European Water Partnership

The European Water Partnership (EWP) launches the European Water Vision and Aquawareness.

EWP is an action-oriented open forum in Europe. It unites all stakeholders including government agencies, universities, research institutes, private companies and non-governmental organizations to exchange views and stimulate partnerships to face world water challenge.

It was established in March 2006 by sixteen founding organizations.

The number of members doubled in the first year and the current membership is 53 organizations from twelve European countries.

The EWP aims to provide an open forum for discussion, initiate and support cooperation among its members, promote technological innovation and influence water policy within the EU framework.

EWP participates in various projects all over the world to achieve its objectives. It also cooperates with the European Institutions. Currently it holds these activities: Aquawareness, Blue Gold, the European Water Vision, European Regional Coordination the fifth World Water Forum, Stockholm World

Water Week 2008 - EWP Side Events, Water and Energy.

The European Landowners' Organization takes part in some of them as a member of the EWP.

The European Water Vision and Aquawareness, the European wide awareness and water stewardship programme within the European Parliament, are quite recent, as they were launched on 30th June 2008 by the Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Slovenia Mr. Janez PODOBNIK, EC Commissioner for the Environment Mr. Stavros DIMAS and the President of the European Parliament Mr. Hans-Gert POETTERING. Both programmes were initiated by the EWP.

Whereas the European Water Vision should be a vision for all people to achieve sustainable water management in Europe, Aquawareness is a voluntary programme aimed at dealing with the current water challenge

and initiating a change in Europe. It will be divided into two areas: Water awareness programme and Water stewardship programme. The former one will focus on enhancing water awareness among lawmakers, key stakeholders and citizens, while the latter one will establish and provide voluntary schemes for sustainable water governance across public, private and industrial sector.

This action may be another small step on the long way to the sustainable development in Europe.

■ Barbora BUCKOVA

“How to best prepare the future CAP”

T rue to the intentions clearly announced at the beginning of its mandate to start the debate on the future of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) at the same time as the Health Check negotiations, the French presidency distributed a 5 page memorandum to member states at the end of July 2008 entitled “How to best prepare the future CAP,” which discusses the CAP’s long-term development. The intention was to provide food for thought at the informal agriculture ministers’ meeting which took place from 21 to 23 September 2008.



This document places agriculture back at the heart of tomorrow’s challenges, be they economic, ecological or societal, by stating that “the job-creation potential of its economic power, its local focus, its links to a dynamic agri-food sector and its contribution to the environment make it one of the major sectors of Europe’s strategy.” It also states that the CAP could assume new legitimacy if it manages to demonstrate that it responds to clearly identified, undisputed collective needs. These needs are the three major challenges facing European society: food, land and the environment.

The text states that to respond to these three challenges, any new agricultural policy must meet 4 objectives:

- ensure the European Union’s food security while accommodating the relevant health issues, given the increase in health risks
- contribute to a global food balance to boost global food security and seek a place on the markets of the future
- preserve the balance in the countryside to maintain territorial cohesion

and local focus on business and jobs

- participate in the fight against climate change and improve the environment to build a form of agriculture which reconciles economic performance and ecological efficiency

The agriculture ministers of the member states have been invited to speak on these goals which will affect the CAP of tomorrow. To do so they have been given debating guidelines such as the cost of health, environmental and animal welfare standards, and the issue of how to ‘protect’ European farming from becoming distorted by seeking to balance competitiveness and society’s expectations.

There is also the issue of market volatility and European agriculture’s ability to cope in order to preserve a sustainable production base in Europe, against the background of the legitimacy of aid “which would be totally disconnected from the real market situation”.

The memorandum also includes the inevitable question of climate change and regional cohesion – dear

to the heart of minister BARNIER – and questions the sustainability of the current model, implying that agricultural policy should be more flexible and adaptable to market fluctuations and regional characteristics, while at the same time promoting good and economically sustainable environmental practice. Stress is placed on the great diversity of agricultural production and European territories.

In the text this diversity is only accommodated by rural development, through aid to less-favoured zones or agri-environmental measures, since the first CAP pillar is characterized by the uniform character of its support.

The CAP should allow viable agriculture to be maintained over Europe’s entire territory “since preserving farming by maintaining large numbers of farmers in all areas where agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, including the most fragile, is a way of preserving Europe’s identity..”

ELO and YFCS share this point of view and hope that this document will lead to a fruitful discussion and an agreement on an agricultural policy for tomorrow capable of living up to the inherent challenges of ELO’s main focus, i.e. environmental and food security!

■ Cécile BONINO

BOOK OF THE MONTH

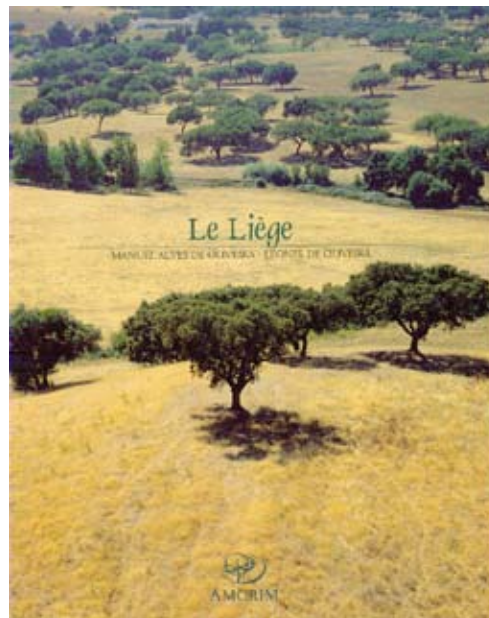
Cork

Manuel Alves De Oliveira
Leonel De Oliveira

This unique fruit of the earth which has such a miraculous protective ability is the source of a traditional economic activity. The cork oak is undeniably part of our landscape, our culture and our geographical memory, it is a part of people's daily lives and as they learn to love and nurture it over many years while preparing it for the final harvest. Cork production is an extraordinarily unique process, requiring technical skills and know-how deeply rooted in Portuguese memory, such as stripping, preparation and processing of the cork. It is a clear illustration of the close relationship between man and the earth that gave birth to him, expressed through the care and patience he

must show with the trees which are a treasure to be cherished. Through this communion between men and nature, between the life in the soil and the life of people, cork demonstrates it is part of the natural, ecological and economic heritage of Portugal.

The production of cork which requires care and attention and a respect for the natural environment which produces this most excellent crop is without a doubt an example of the way a profitable economic activity has been integrated into the cycle of nature and the earth. This is why it requires such rare skills which are



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part of a slower lifestyle, one which has seeped through to us from former generations who knew how to savour the earth as a respected companion.

Diary Dates 2008

8 – 9 October, Committee of the Regions, Brussels

European week of regions and cities – open days focusing on “Sustainable Development : regional responses to the challenge of climate change.”
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2008/index.cfm

8 October, European Parliament, Brussels

“European Biodiversity – contribution of private landowners” co-organised by ELO, WHF, the St Hubert Foundation and the RISE Foundation
elo@elo.org

15-16 October, Budapest

5th forum on Eco-innovation, “Emerging techniques for eco-innovation: opportunities and risks”.
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2008/2nd_forum/index_en.htm

16-17 October, Limassol, Cyprus

“Europe's rural areas in action: facing the challenges of tomorrow,” organized by EC DG Agriculture and Rural Development, with the participation of Marian FISCHER-BOEL and Androulla VASILIOU.
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_en.htm

16-17 October, Brussels

“Renewable heating and refrigeration”- exhibition.
<http://greenpower.msgfocus.com/q1cQCEtwVVQ5u/vv>

20-24 October, 46 European countries

European forest week.
<http://www.europeanforestweek.org/home/en/>

21 October, Brussels

TOPPS seminar: results and benefits of sustainable water management in the agricultural sector
www.topps-life.org/

30 October, Brussels

European summit, “Europe's energy strategy and its definition



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– a long-term perspective”, organized by Friends of Europe.
www.friendsofeurope.org