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COUNTRY Side

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ELO - European Landowners' Organization

March 2007

Editorial

Sustainable development is based on three linked topics: the environment, economics and social affairs. It is impossible to provide a top quality environment if we do not operate in a profitable way. In order to assist our affiliates in making sensible choices, or even to support their economic activities, ELO has committed itself to the study requested by the European Commission, "SCENAR 2020", which studies the long-term impact on the countryside of four key factors (rural demography, agricultural technology, markets and environmental and social constraints) and to EUROFORENET, which aspires to supporting the creation and development of wood-energy sectors in Europe by targeting mainly private and local authority forest-owners. Of course the development of such a sector may be of concern to certain industries, but the effects on the market of different and greater use of forestry resources can only support a sector where profitability has become marginal for many foresters. It should therefore be welcomed. It is unreasonable to fear that certain industries may be jeopardized by using wood like this, because trees do not grow endlessly upwards, are therefore automatically a limited resource and the price of wood rapidly comes into competition with other resources. Of course the sector is currently developing across the board but we must expect an inevitable rationalization of the bioenergy, biomass and biofuel sector. From our point of view it would be reckless to concentrate on one resource at this stage and being open to all is the least we can do. Our ambition at this stage is not to offer a general solution but to get managers to consider the possibilities on offer, and to evaluate their constraints and advantages. Certainly, both EUROFORENET and SCENAR 2020 give us food for thought about the future. There is plenty of substance here to help us define our political choices.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

Launch of EUROFORENET

In November 2006 the European Landowners' Organization – ELO – launched the EUROFORENET or 'European Forest Energy Network' with the support of the European Commission, Directorate General for the Environment, in cooperation with the European Federation of Forestry Communes – FECOF, and the Institut de Formation Forestière Communale in France – IFFC.

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5 Euros

For one year EUROFORENET will support the creation and development of local wood-energy supply-chains in Europe, in particular in France, Belgium, Italy and Slovenia. It is principally aimed at private forest owners and forest communes.

Wood-energy and market context

European forest management is undoubtedly turned towards the sustainable production of quality wood to supply the traditional wood industry, be it workable timber, panels, paper or even cork, while fulfilling many other functions (socio-cultural, recreational, conservation of biodiversity etc).

Against a background of constant price hikes of fossil energies and the fight against climate change, wood-energy is an innovative alternative to be developed.

Wood is an energy source which is renewable in the medium term and which provides heat energy services. The new available technologies, be they techniques for using wood or combustion, now perform sustainably and economically.
It is vital for landowners, both private and local authorities, to be able to respond to this new demand in society for the supply of renewable raw materials as an alternative source of energy. Adjustments to forest estate management may be necessary in order to better mobilize forestry sources. In parallel local industry must be clearly encouraged by national and local authorities to set the trend, create the market and ensure the sector's survival.

This attempt to mainstream wood-energy will allow the European Union and the member states to meet their international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Wood-energy is the subject of particular attention in the European Commission which, at the end of 2005 and in early 2006, published the Action Plan for the use of Biomass (COM (2005)628- http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/biomass_action_plan/index_en.htm) and the Action Plan on Forests (COM(2006) 302 http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/action_plan/index_en.htm) supporting energy, transport and environment policies. This new action plan on forests is the follow-up to the 1998 European Union Forestry Strategy (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/forestry_strategy_en.htm). It was during its revision in 2005 that the European bodies representing private and public forestry producers asked the European Commission to take action to recognize and promote the use of forestry biomass for energy production. In this way the development of the market will also mobilize wood previously of less importance, such as damaged, uprooted and broken wood, branches, crowns, wood from first thinning etc, which, after processing can enter the alternative energy production chain. In the same way plantations which until now were unexploited because of the high costs can now be used. They could supply local networks which are themselves connected to larger regional networks. This better mobilization of wood will considerably increase the harvest and respond to the legitimate questions asked by paper and panel manufacturers concerning the supply of their sector.

While the European Commission, in its attempts to promote alternative energies, has initiated or supported a series of programmes in this domain, the originality of EUROFORENET is that it is resolutely geared towards forest owners, who are the source for wood supplies, a renewable alternative energy raw material. This is why EUROFORENET will promote on the one hand sustainable production of wood energy and on the other hand will develop a good practice guide with examples, intended for private and local authority owners as well as other interested parties.

EUROFORENET, study and communication platform

EUROFORENET is therefore primarily a structure for exchanging information and promoting wood energy.

This is why a specialized communication campaign will be developed this year through topical articles and the presentation of good practices, which will be distributed in the different partners' networks in several countries of the European Union. A EUROFORENET brochure and informative website (www.euroforenet.eu) will also be created to reach a broader public.

EUROFORENET is secondly a platform for the study and analysis of existing or emerging wood-energy sectors. Four different working parties bringing together professionals or specialists in France, Belgium, Italy and Slovenia will study factors favouring or restricting the development of the wood-energy sector at regional or national level.

The composition of these groups varies from one country to another but their common base consists of private forest owner associations, private forest owners themselves, national associations of forest communes, local councillors in forestry communes, federations of wood sellers, members of the regional or national forestry administration, scientists in the energy field, those responsible for wood-energy programmes in local authorities, forestry cooperatives and forest entrepreneurs or even industrialists and producers of forest technology.

Their work and the results of the specific case studies will produce indicators and sustainable management criteria destined to mobilize wood resources and the securing of the supply chain, by identifying the role of each party or intermediary, be they owner, businessman, cooperative or public body. Listing the determining factors in the development of the wood-energy sector and the multiplier effects will lead to a final document which will take the form of a guide to good practice for professionals in the field, managers of private or local authority estates or anyone interested in the development of this alternative energy sector.

Of course this study platform intends to be open and will collaborate with experts, public structures and national research bodies, but also with European and international bodies such as the European Environment Agency or the FAO (United Nations Organisation for Food and Agriculture). Through its study platform, EUROFORENET will deepen the cooperation between networks of European experts.

Although it is obvious that to produce wood-energy cannot be a general solution for all types of property, this option is feasible for the forestry manager and EUROFORENET intends to clarify what this choice involves. We would invite you to consult our future publications and the final results of the study which will be included on our various websites. Any contributions and remarks will be helpful so do contact us at the addresses below.

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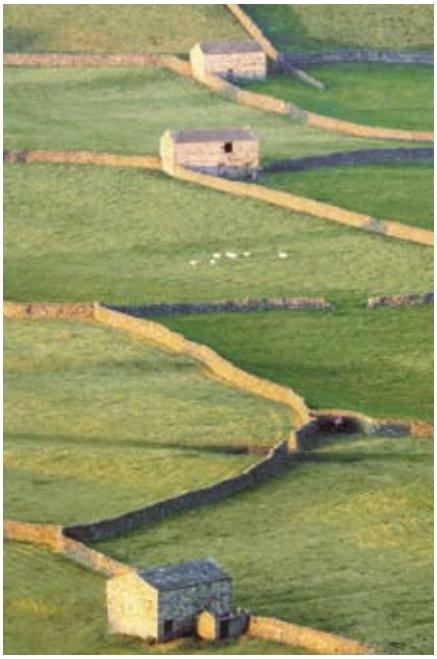
The SCENAR 2020 study

The SCENAR 2020 study (Study of Scenarios for Agriculture and the Countryside) coordinated by the Directorate General for Agriculture of the European Commission and carried out by the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC), Landbouw-Economisch Instituutle, Leibnitz-Zentrum für Agrarlandforschung, Leibnitz Institut für Länderkunde, the Central European University and ELO, proposes a vast data base intended to determine the future of European Agriculture from now to 2020.



To this end SCENAR 2020 is studying the long-term impact on agriculture and the countryside of four main factors which must be taken into account in the creation of future rural and agricultural policies, i.e. rural demography, agricultural technology, agricultural markets and social and environmental constraints linked to the use of land.

The method used identifies this impact based on three scenarios

The 'reference scenario' is built on a trend analysis from 1990 to 2005 and projected trends to 2020. The assumption is based on the conclusions of fruitful WTO negotiations supporting the positions of the European Union, on the strengthening of the second pillar through compulsory modulation and the prospects of a balanced market which would allow a level of public stocks between 1 and 2% of internal consumption with – if necessary – an adjustment of support prices. This scenario also takes into account a further enlargement of the European Union to the Balkans and Turkey.

The first of the two 'alternative' hypotheses is based on a regionalization scenario where the WTO negotiations fail and where the situation is therefore governed by bilateral trade. For Europe this hypothesis involves strong support for rural development policies and consequently an increased budget for the second pillar. It also implies an approach based on a balanced market.

The second 'alternative' scenario is the so-called 'liberal' one since it includes a total dismantling of the 'first pillar' policies of the CAP, which means a total liberalization of markets, a major reduction in support for rural development and less environmental legislation to ensure European agriculture remains competitive vis-à-vis both third countries and other sectors of the economy.

The comparison between the different scenarios has two stages

The first exercise consists in analyzing the potential results of every scenario by using simulation models and quantitative analyses. If necessary these analyses are combined with other qualitative analyses and experts' judgments.

The second phase has been dubbed 'SWOT' from Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It applies to each scenario and includes the implications thereof. Its framework is geographically defined – referring to 'typical' regions which respond in similar ways to different simulation factors.

The study therefore identifies the main challenges which agriculture and the countryside must face in terms of 'diversification' and 'adaptability' e.g. the impact of new 'products' such as renewable energy, the adjustment to structural and environmental change and new opportunities on world markets.

Although it is true that the so-called rural and agricultural policies must be different, the link between the two must cater for the long-term trends in demography, technology and markets.

These must define the outlines of policies intended to maximize social and environmental benefits For ELO, such a study is of major interest because it gives political decision-makers ideas as to the impact of the various options they will have to choose. It will give us ideas for our prospective analysis and the ensuing choices for us as a lobby.

For more information:
http://ec.europa.eu.agriculture/publi/reports/scenar2020/index_en.htm

■ Cécile BONINO

The energy profile of historical buildings

The verdict issued by the climate experts of the intergovernmental group on climate change, GIEC, which met last month in Paris is final. We are responsible for upsetting the climate which has led to temperature increase, ocean and sea-level increase and the melting of the glaciers.

We are responsible for 'most of the increase in the average global temperature since the middle of the 20th century'. Although this alarming report is mainly addressed to the leaders of our planet as a reference for an environmental policy intended for all levels of society, it also concerns us directly as citizens.

'On the brink of the irreversible', we should all make daily gestures to help, and many organizations featured in the press offer advice and tips on domestic and nutritional matters or more directly on mobility. To play our part in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions due to human activity we must contribute to the reduction of energy consumption, an aspect which directly affects our homes.

Today in the renewable energy sector, solar heating or wood granules, photovoltaic solar panels, heat pumps and wood stoves are part of the multiple alternatives to fossil energy, which after dominating the market for generations is now revealing its weaknesses - its contribution to local emissions of toxic particles and greenhouse gases, increasingly high prices and its dependence on the powers controlling its production. But although these alternative solutions are accommodated in new buildings this is not the case in listed buildings subject to multiple constraints. How can we meet the demands of heritage conservation while complying with current ecological constraints?

Although solar panels can be fitted to a flat, well-oriented roof, and a pellet boiler can replace a traditional one when it breathes its last, other means of providing a pleasant temperature are more difficult to adapt. Reducing energy losses in a building often focuses on double or even triple glazing, which is almost impossible to install on narrow 18th century frames. Many efforts are also made to insulate but this becomes much more complicated in ancient buildings. These structures have walls that need to 'breathe', and insulation using the coefficients stipulated for new buildings can jeopardize not only the health of the building but also that of the occupants exposed to a humid and stuffy atmosphere. This sort of clash of ideals can also occur with other contemporary techniques and materials which are too rigid for ancient, flexible masonry.

So although preserving the qualities of our listed buildings remains a priority, every case is a special one and should be individually examined in order to find the best-suited alternatives. While waiting for industry and research to come up with better new technology for the conservation of our heritage, it should not be penalized either through tax or other constraints because of its current inability to contribute as effectively as others to this major challenge increasingly facing the construction industry.

■ Donatienne de SÉJOURNET

THE INSTITUTIONAL ECHO

UNECE, CEPI, EFI, FAO, MCPFE and FAO/ECE/ILO join together to mobilize wood resources

The promotion of the use of wood as a carbon neutral energy source together with rising energy prices leads to an increase in wood demand. Since the traditional use of wood in Europe (saw-timber, paper, panels) continues to expand as well, competition between the demand for wood for bio-energy and for traditional industrial uses is increasing. To discuss this important and challenging issue, UNECE-CEPI-EFI-FAO-MCPFE-FAO/ECE/ILO organized a 2-day workshop in Geneva in January 2007.

Forest inventories have shown that in most European forests the annual growth exceeds by far the volume of wood harvested. Governments and stakeholders are therefore now considering how best to mobilize additional wood resources to satisfy demand for both raw material and energy, and on the other hand to ensure forest sustainability.

Market-distortion

Energy is the lifeblood of the world economic system. The incentives aimed at improving the competitiveness of bio-energy have introduced increased competition into the traditional industrial wood market, causing distortions and teething problems in adapting to new competitors and calculations. However, the industry is reacting with high flexibility, exploring new solutions, technologies and models, and developing new wood-based building systems. Regarding bioenergy, there are considerable national and regional variations in the use of wood for energy, and in the effects on wood prices of increased competition and demand. Problems arise from the fragmented nature of private forest ownership, and the heterogeneity of forest owners' behaviour and responses to changes in wood prices, as well as the reduced price-elasticity of the supply (state forests). Management restrictions and poor infrastructure and logistics are the next challenges.

Win-win solution

What are the opportunities for wood mobilization to provide a win-win solution for all the different stakeholders? First, a potential to harvest more wood on a sustainable basis must be acknowledged. Then forest owners can establish additional ways for marketing more wood, including residues, as well as a market for low quality wood. The importance of networks and cooperation, as well as the need for information and education is more than evident. Empowering forest owners, through both facilitating cooperatives and providing economic incentives to the supply side, is necessary.
Sawmills can benefit from increased demand for their by-products like wood chips and sawdust, and especially for pellets; pulp industry can use e.g. black liquors not only in Combined Heat and Power facilities, but also in "biorefineries" .

The mobilization of wood resources diminishes the number of forest fires, due to the increased use of biomass which would otherwise be left in the forest, and it will also have a positive influence on rural economies.

Conclusions of the joint workshop for MCPFE

Some of the recommendations made to the next Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, in November 2007, are: to examine country specific issues, and to develop in response country specific solutions and country specific subsidy policies; to develop greater harmonization; as well as to improve the quality of the information available on best practice, including through education and professional associations. European countries and the EU are strongly recommended to develop overall energy policies and strategies based on integrated analyses of the triangle of economic growth, energy security, and climate and environment.

■ Pavla BORTLOVA

IN BRIEF

The 2006 Friends of the Countryside Annual Assembly at the pearl of the Baltic Sea (Part 2)

Following the FCS General Assembly on Friday 7th July 2006, Friends split into four groups to discover the cultural, historic and landscape territory of Helsinki. The excursions were the prelude to the gala dinner at the Finnish House of Nobility. The following day, Saturday 8th July was spent discovering private estates which enhance the value of the countryside.

Visit to Fagervik estate

Fagervik has been a conventional farming estate since iron manufacturing ceased in 1903. Forestry now forms the backbone of the activity, and a sawmill belongs to the estate. In addition the grain farming is sizeable. There has been an important diversification into tourism, for the whole village constitutes a unique example of an early industrial estate. The estate is in the hands of a descendant (in the 9th generation) of one of the two HISING brothers, who bought the ruins of the ironworks in 1723 after they had been destroyed during the Russian occupation of Finland at the beginning of the 18th century.

Visit to Fiskars

Fiskars Works were founded in 1649, when Peter THORWÖSTE was granted royal privilege to manufacture cast iron. In 1822 Johan von JULIN established Finland's first cutlery factory. Today, Fiskars is an international corporation with most of its operations outside Finland, but the company's roots are still in Fiskars Village. The Fiskars Real Estate Group manages some 15,000 hectares, including more than 100 lakes and 250 km of shoreline, and is involved in numerous environmental projects.

Visit to Kullo Estate

The 750 hectare estate, which was formed in 1613, can be characterised as multifunctional. In addition to agriculture (190 ha of spring wheat, 10 ha of sugar beet, 4 ha of strawberries) and commercial forestry (360 ha), the 18-hole golf course, which was built on the farm in 2003 together with a restaurant and clubhouse, is a highly successful venture. There is also in the pipeline a venture to crush granite into shingle. Kullo Estate is a good example of what is required today in response to EU-agricultural policy reducing the income from traditional agriculture.

Visit to Malmgård Estate

Malmgård Estate, situated 75 km east of Helsinki on a small river in the municipality of Pernå, has its own hydroelectric power plant. The estate is specialized in organic agricultural production (500 ha), and the forest area covers 1,000 hectares. Tourism has recently become an important part of its activities and the castle is shown to visiting groups by appointment. The history of the estate began in 1606, and the present owner, Count Johan CREUTZ, represents the 13th generation of owners. The grand manor house in the Dutch new renaissance style was completed in 1885.

Visit to Tervik Estate

The estate is situated 70 km east of Helsinki, by the sea, in the municipality of Pernå. The agricultural activity is mainly grain farming (250 ha), and the forest area is approximately 1000 hectares. Large areas of meadows by the sea and an inland swamp area have been designated as nature reserve. Tourism has recently become a part of the activity, and the manor house is by appointment shown to visiting groups. The estate, which was founded in 1637, is in the hands of the 13th generation after the founder. To conclude the visits a Dinner was held for Friends at the Klippan Island Restaurant in Helsinki Harbour. Following the success of this event, we're looking forward to the 2007 GA, which will be held in Évora – Portugal on the 14th -16th June.

■ Carla GUERRA

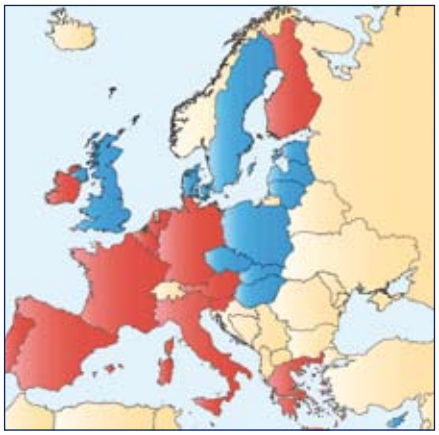
THE ENLARGED EUROPE

The Euro in Slovenia

By decision of the Council of the European Union on 11th July 2006, Slovenia was given the green light to join the Eurozone. Having set it as a priority, the former Yugoslavian republic has now made the Euro a reality: on 1st January 2007, Slovenia became the 13th EU country – a leader among the new member states – to introduce the single currency. Relying on the Commission's favourable report validating the fulfilment of the so-called Maastricht convergence criteria, Ljubljana's European counterparts acknowledged the past years' outstanding economic performance.

The Eurozone citizens will now have the opportunity to hold in their hands one of the 300 millions coins representing Mount Triglav or France PREŠEREN, Slovenia's national poet and author of the national anthem.

The successful transition towards the Euro was achieved smoothly. Admittedly, Slovenian consumers have not abandoned their suspicions regarding price-stability, as they recall the adverse effects that followed the first introduction of the single currency in 1999. But this was not sufficient to cut into Slovenian enthusiasm. Firstly, Ljubljana has taken a set of measures aimed at preserving consumers' level of confidence and avoiding any kind of artificial inflationary trends. Secondly, the dual display of prices remains mandatory until the end of June 2007 (the dual circulation period ended on 14th January). But above all, Slovenian preparedness will benefit from the experience of previous changeovers. Finally, the Euro is expected to expand the influx of tourists and attract new foreign investors.



New member states: A thorny path towards the Euro

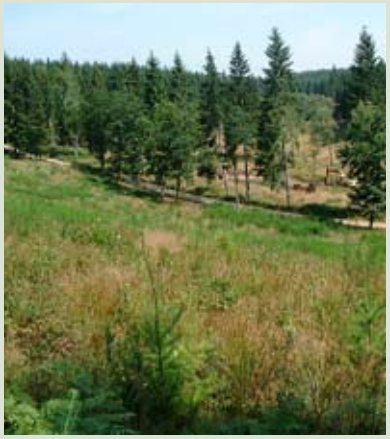
Still, the exemplary case of Slovenia does not really reflect the overall picture. Among the 9 other states that joined the EU in 2004, Estonia and Lithuania failed to follow the 2007 wave due to an excessive inflation rate. Whereas Cyprus, Malta and Estonia are expected to adopt the Euro in 2008, Slovakia will probably have to wait for an extra year. Conversely, as a result of its capricious public deficit, currently approaching 10%, Hungary is to adopt the Euro no sooner than 2010, while the Czech Republic and Latvia have postponed their initial schedule to an unknown date. Poland, the only country not to have yet fixed a date, is however reported as considering to hold a referendum around 2010. The march towards the Euro seems to be taking place in an variable economic environment. In Poland and Hungary, the budgetary deficit has proven to be beyond control, and unemployment is soaring. In this context, the obligation to comply with strict convergence criteria might well compromise several candidates' plans.

Nevertheless, Cyprus, Malta, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia have taken the first step by entering the "exchange rate mechanism II" (ERM II), a system based on the Euro which does not tolerate a margin of more than 15% off a predefined exchange rate between the Euro and the national currency.

Despite the uncertain context, the youngest member states Bulgaria and Romania show optimism. Bulgaria hopes to join the Euro as soon as mid 2009. Indeed, the National bank of Bulgaria has been maintaining the LEVA – a currency which has enjoyed a fixed parity with the deutschmark for a long time – in very rigorous monetary conditions which might prove advantageous for accession to the Euro zone. Romania expects that its Eurocoins will be circulating by 2012, betting on a likely entry into the ERM II in 2009.

The prospect of sharing the gains of a Eurozone membership will certainly galvanise the new member states. Let's wish them good luck and hope that they will not be disenchanted.

■ Alexandre MARGHELIS



Natura 2000: Rulings and site designation – a good thing Management plans – a very good thing! What next?

In Belgium the first 40,000 hectares are reaching the end of the cartography and 'Flora and Fauna' inventory stage in the field. The time has come to ask certain questions about what happens after designation. Each conservation commission will have to introduce management contracts but how will they be monitored, how will they evolve and how efficient will they be?

- Designation rulings and management contracts:
- What needs to be done to ensure a habitat survives:
  - Location, general and specific description of the flora and fauna species for every Natura 2000 habitat.
  - Make copies available of the designation rulings including the paper and cartographical list of the parcels, with an idea of the surface area and persons concerned with ownership or leasehold status.
  - Update of detailed cartography on sites provided by the CNRFB [1] with reference to:
- Sector plans, digital land register data, National Geographical Institute maps and various aerial photographs.
  - Detailed list of current authorized and banned management measures for each site and/or sub-set of sites included in the designation ruling.
  - Detailed and personalized list for each owner and/or occupant of the planned intervention for both conservation and all or part of the sites undergoing restoration.
  - Monitoring of the plan and the state of play of the current and extraordinary work.
  - Management of the distribution of the AEMs (agri-environmental measures), restoration budgets, and compensation for the financial deficits of certain owners, managers and/or occupants.
  - Monitoring of the development of the state of conservation according to the management measures of the designation ruling and of the initial management contract.
  - Modification and adjustment of management measures given the development of indicators, observations in the field and the impact or result of the previous management measures (revision every 6 years).
  - …and so forth….

It is obvious that specially adapted management measures will be necessary if we are to solve the complicated equation of how to implement Natura 200 on multi-functional properties.
OXYGIS is a cartographical solution for the management of Natura 2000 sites.

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■ Ramon REYNTIENS

1 CNRFB : Centre for Research into Nature, Forests and Wood => Responsible for cartography and general management of Natura 2000 designated sites in Wallonia (based in Gembloux).

YFCS

Young entrepreneurs and the challenge of climate change

Young entrepreneurs can already help European society to fight against climate change today, while enjoying sustainable benefits from their action. This will be the theme of the General Assembly of the Young Friends on Friday 30th and Saturday 31st March this year in Brussels. To introduce and debate topical issues affecting the countryside, several European experts and senior officials of the European Commission will be present to run two sessions on separate topics.

The subjects tackled will be the production and consumption of agricultural and forestry biomass as renewable energies, the impact of climate change on the countryside and finally the consumption of biofuels in Europe. Biofuels have made their appearance on the European market in recent months. They have made a timid start on some national markets such as Belgium but are more widely used on others such as Sweden. This new market is a growing opportunity for agricultural producers to respond to a massive demand in European society. A real product of the future, a sustainable source of income for producers, or just a passing fad – what is the truth about biofuels? Young entrepreneurs and managers of natural resources must ask questions about the opportunities and difficulties of developing such a sector, so they can strategically position themselves on the emerging international market.

Traffic is constantly on the increase in Europe. Cars and lorries provide such socio-economic advantages that life without them is difficult to imagine, although the situation is becoming untenable. Transport generates almost a third of carbon emissions, the main gas involved in global warming. 90% of the fuel used is oil, a fossil fuel most of which is imported and which is likely to increase in price as reserves run out. Given these concerns, Europe has proposed an immediate response. It is encouraging the replacement of diesel and petrol with biofuels: 'clean' fuels which are renewable and easy to produce from vegetable oils such as colza, cereals and sugar beet. The development of this sector will create jobs and open up new outlets for agricultural production. But above all biofuels contribute to the solution of global problems by diversifying energy sources and through respecting the Kyoto protocol commitments.

Bioethanol and biodiesel are the two liquid biofuels which could replace petrol and diesel on a large scale; they can be used in modern car engines and be sold through the existing infrastructure.

Manufactured using oil plants such as colza or sunflower, biodiesel is obtained by pressing and refining. It can be used either in pure form in modified diesel engines, or in a mix of 5 – 30% with diesel in existing diesel engines.

Obtained from sugar crops such as beet or cereals, bioethanol is obtained by fermentation or distillation. It is either processed in an additive called ETBE which improves the quality of petrol, or is directly mixed to petrol in existing engines, up to a maximum of the 5% authorized by the current directive on the quality of petrol (Directive 98/70 of 13 October 1998 – http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/fr/lvb/128077.htm). A mix containing up to 85% of bioethanol could run specially adapted engines.

Although bioethanol is the biofuel most widely used outside the European Union, the Union has developed biodiesel to a greater extent because most vehicles within the Union run on diesel. Europe produces too much petrol in its refineries and has to import diesel to meet the demand. This is why biodiesel is more widely used than bioethanol in Europe. Europe is the world leader in biodiesel production. This industrial sector

is well-developed in Germany and France.

In the European Directive on Biofuels adopted in 2003 (Directive 2003/30/CE-http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/legislation/doc/biofuels/fr_final.pdf), Europe has set itself a target: to replace 5.75% of conventional fuels with biofuels by 2010. In reality Europe is way off achieving this. The member states failed to reach the intermediate goal of 2% by the end of 2005. Compulsory standards are one of the main demands of biofuel producers. Several policies are being introduced to stimulate the production and use of biofuels in Europe. According to Mr PIEBALGS, European Commissioner in charge of Energy and Transport "a fiscal policy is already in place and allows member states to reduce tax on biofuel. This is a good instrument but still others are possible. The introduction of legal tools to apply to fuel suppliers which would oblige them to mix part of their production with biofuels is one of these instruments."

Such measures would provide greater investor security and a new breath of life for the industry. To reach the goal of 5.75% in 2010, the European Commission is encouraging the member states to oblige suppliers to market a minimum percentage of biofuels. However, large-scale consumption would require a more general policy beyond this date.

In a few years from now more ambitious goals must be defined in order to respond to growing consumption. And several questions are already being asked. How will the real production capacity in the Union respond to demand and consumption perspectives in a global marketplace? Producers must be sufficiently competitive vis-à-vis countries such as Brazil or Ukraine. Will they manage this? As for the areas of research and car production, manufacturers will have to think about the type of fuel to promote.

Given the increase in oil prices, these questions will move slowly up the list of priorities on the European political agenda. The potential of biofuels is considerable. The European Union is committing itself to a real policy of legislation in the area of biofuels - a policy which will develop taking into account environmental imperatives such as the respect for biodiversity, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Young agricultural entrepreneurs have the means to help Europe and society to achieve its objectives by 2010 and beyond. As managers and producers they have the raw material needed for the entire development of a new market supported by European policy. The original targets have not yet been reached at a time when a more ambitious one is emerging. If young entrepreneurs are currently seeking new long-lasting outlets to market their harvests and guarantee a viable source of income for the coming years, they have every interest in turning to the production of biofuels. But a massive about-turn in farming while implementing an energy programme must not overshadow the priority of providing food, or the need to limit our imports in this area. The challenge lies in a sensible division of our resources between these two markets.

■ Robin du PARC

Secretary General of YFCS

BOOK OF THE MONTH

BRUSSELS: perspectives for a European capital

Managed by: Pierre LACONTE, chairman, Foundation for the Urban Environment, Belgium and Carola HEIN, Associate Professor, Bryn Mawr College (USA).

Published by the Foundation for the Urban Environment (www.ffue.org) on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome (March 2007).

The Brussels-capital region, responsible for the urban construction work intended to host the European and international institutions, has gradually realized the importance of the European challenges of its future. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the Foundation for the Urban Environment has published a booklet specially dealing with this challenge. As minister Charles PICQUÉ says in the preface: 'Hosting the European institutions is a great honour and heavy responsibility for Brussels and it must prove itself worthy. Their presence can never be taken for granted.'

Pierre LACONTE chairs the Foundation for the Urban Environment, a public utility which supports and organizes activities promoting mobility and sustainable urban development. This foundation has published various works, the most recent being Brussels – Perspectives for a European Capital, which places the national and international development of Brussels in its historic context and proposes a prospective vision. It recommends that the position of the European institutions in Brussels show greater respect for the quality of life, both of the workers and the inhabitants affected, greater diversity of activity in the European Quarter, better liaisons between the hubs of Place Schuman and the European Parliament esplanade and finally greater attention is to be paid to public areas and events with a symbolic value. It also proposes that the new European premises be scattered throughout the different parts of the city, while ensuring from the outset quality infrastructure.

In the foreword, Siim KALLA, vice-president of the European Commission, confirms that this is the Commission's policy. Carfola HEIN explains the network of some twenty towns hosting European institutions and the attempts to build a more rational relationship between them. Detailed proposals for the implementation of these infrastructure goals are introduced by Bruno CLERBAUX, both for the European Quarter and for its future extensions, under the heading Place-making for Europe in Brussels. Bruno CLERBAUX is the author of several studies on urban planning in Brussels, while Baudouin de la KETHULLE de RYHOVE, chairman of the Interministerial Committee of Headquarters Policy, makes proposals intended to make Belgium and Brussels a European cultural hub. Jerôme VIGNON situates Brussels in the context of the European cities and Pierre LACONTE locates the European presence in a city historically open to the outside, and concludes by highlighting particular qualities which make Brussels European par excellence, the microcosm of a decentralized European Union.

Diary Dates 2007

2-4 April , Beja (Portugal)
European Meeting Point: Energy for Development 2007, Beja, Portugal http://www.energyanddevelopment-2007.net/pages/summary.php

14 April, Ontario, Canada
Biomass Energy Systems for Agri-Food Users Workshop - an added feature at Growing the Margins : Energy Conference http://www.gtmconf.ca/program_highlights.htm

17-18 April 2007, Brussels
Conference 'Perspectives for FOOD 2030', organised by the DG Research on the future research and competitiveness aspects of the European food industry. The four main sessions are : Trends and Outlook in World Economics, Culture and Food; Drivers of Food demand and of the Market Today and Tomorrow, New Technologies for Food Production; Future Perceptions of Food. http://ec.europa.eu/research/biosociety/news_events/news_perspectives_food2030_en.htm

23-24 April, Bonn
Conference on Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development www.agra-net.com

25-26 April, Warsaw
Workshop on European Funding Opportunities for Nature Conservation, organised by Eurosite, Natura International and Natural England, with the support of the European Commission www.eurosite.org