

June 2007

Editorial

Seeking to strike a balance between prey and predator is something of a challenge for the conservation of species and ultimately for nature conservation as a whole.

Balance within nature means harmony between species. Protecting nature means accepting that death is a part of it, but strict protection of certain species is only possible, contrary to what we would all prefer, to the detriment of other species which are often equally protected.

The application of strict protection provisions all too often generates a proliferation of dominant species and in the long run has the perverse effect of causing the extinction of both the prey and the predator; as a result the protection measures fail and lose their legitimacy as a means of preserving ecological balance.

To guarantee the sustainability of conservation policies a holistic approach to biodiversity which avoids emotionally-charged debates is urgent. Only such an approach will produce practical solutions, adapted to local situations.

The cormorant, like many predators, migrates with food resources. The problem transcends the borders of the Member States and requires concerted action throughout the Union.

This is why guidelines from the EU on the matter would be welcome, proposing a uniform interpretation of the Community directives on protection issues while allowing the Member States sufficient flexibility when applying them.

Thierry de l'ESCAILLE

«Sustainable hunting, biodiversity and countryside activities» intergroup



A driving force in European decision-making: on 23rd May 2007 in Strasbourg during the plenary week of the European Parliament, the «Sustainable hunting, biodiversity and countryside activities» intergroup met, chaired by the MEP Dr Michl EBNER.

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The intergroup is one of the most dynamic, oldest and best attended in the parliament. It brings together no less than 80 MEPs from all political groups and nationalities who share the values of sustainable use of nature and of its environmental, socio-dynamic and cultural aspects. There are about twenty intergroups dealing with a great variety of subjects. Intergroups are not institutionalized bodies of the European Parliament and do not therefore speak on its behalf. However, they are an unavoidable force in the cut and thrust of parliamentary life - think-tanks, places of debate and exchange, giving the MEPs the opportunity to deepen and fine-tune their views of the topics tackled and to meet experts, representatives from the field and from civil society or other community institutions.

The procedures are flexible and the meetings run parallel to the more regulated formats (such as the parliamentary committees or the political groups) but intergroups can still adopt decisions, recommendations or statements at the end of the meeting, able to put significant political pressure on the decision-making process, whether this be during the proposal phase or during actual adoption. Firstly the intergroup fixes its own agenda without any constraints other than the interests of its members. Then the MEPs in the group may address specific questions to the European Commission by adopting a statement. Commission representatives are also frequently invited to speak during meetings in order to enrich the debate. Finally

the intergroup generates ideas with broad support and political consensus which feed into the work of the parliamentary committees such as the «Agriculture and Rural Development» or «Environment» committees.

ELO is very much involved in the intergroup's work and manages its secretariat together with FACE, using this platform to support and enrich its views, exchange experiences or tackle certain important topics. ELO's expert network speaks during discussions about management and conservation of wild fauna and flora, biodiversity in the broadest sense, sustainable hunting and fishing and sustainable development in the countryside.

The Intergroup calls on the Commission to halt the decline in biodiversity and major damage caused by predatory birds

The meeting of 23rd May was entitled, «Pressure from birds of prey on ecosystems: damage caused by corvidae, seagulls and cormorants». For several years the fishing industry - small coastal fisheries or anglers - and land-owners have been suffering from considerable damage caused by the proliferation of the great cormorant, a protected predator but a danger in particular to freshwater



fish. The bird is having such an effect that many fish farmers have been forced to give up, a problem affecting several member states of the Union. However it is not just a matter of serious consequences to the local economies which depend on fishing and the social fabric; bio-diversity is suffering too. In Austria fish farm basins and ponds, which have a high ecological value, have been literally stripped of 40 to 90% of their fish. And it is not just the fauna in rivers, tributaries and lakes; in Sweden the vegetation of certain protected island zones (belonging to the Natura 2000 network) has been laid waste by cormorant droppings, and several species of wild fauna are now endangered due to the destruction of their natural habitat. In the Irish rivers young salmonids – a protected species – are victims of the cormorants' voracious appetite before they even reach the ocean, thus compromising the survival of their species. In other words, one protected species is destroying another! The harmful effects on the richness of biodiversity are currently very worrying from the point of view of the conservation of species, as well as causing difficulties for land managers (particularly in Natura 2000 zones) when they have to comply with their conservation and biodiversity obligations under Community legislation.

The report on «Halting the decline in biodiversity by 2010 and beyond» submitted by the Cypriot MEP Adamos ADAMOY and adopted in



plenary on 22nd May 2007 by a large majority of the European Parliament makes no bones about the fact that unprecedented efforts must be made to fight against the decline in species, a threat as important to our survival as climate change.

It is in this context that the MEPs held a broad debate during the intergroup meeting, passing on the concerns expressed by the voters. The desire for an urgent and efficient solution to be found to counter the loss of biodiversity and resolve the economic and social problems affecting countryside activities was made clear on several occasions.

Experts invited to the event confirmed that cormorants have surpassed their conservation limit thus jeopardizing genetic diversity and rural businesses.

Possible solutions

Article 9 of the European Birds Directive proposes a derogation¹ which would allow hunting and the control of the excess numbers of great cormorants despite its status as a protected bird. However the possibilities of applying this provision vary according to the member states. The intergroup members therefore called upon the Commission to propose specific

¹ Directive 79/409/EEC of the Council, 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds ('Birds' directive). Member states may derogate from the conservation principles in the directive 'to prevent major damage to crops, livestock, forests, fish farms and water courses' and 'to protect flora and fauna'.

guidelines for a single EU-wide interpretation. Apart from the specific species of the great cormorant, the problem is one of balancing ecosystems. The cormorant has no natural predator but benefits from the same level of protection as species lower down the ecological chain. There is therefore an imbalance within the ecosystem and a threat both to the conservation of biodiversity and the eco-systemic services linked to it. The overrepresentation of one predator which in addition benefits from a high protection status cannot fail to have an effect on the ecological balance. This is true of many other predators. The definition and application of conservation policies also calls for a holistic approach to the concept of biodiversity rather than a sectoral one alone, with practical solutions adapted to local situations. The response to the problem of the cormorant must be transferable to similar circumstances in which protected predators are inflicting disproportionate damage to other species around them.

Finally action must be consistent. Cormorants, like many other predators, migrate with food resources. The issue is a cross-border one and therefore requires concerted action throughout the Union. The guidelines published by the Commission will therefore be welcome. This is a tool which gives enough flexibility to the member states – which are not legally bound – while proposing a uniform interpretation of the Community directives on protecting habitats and species.

ELO, together with FACE, intends to organize a seminar on the subject of conservation and sustainable



management of wild fish species as they relate to the cormorant. Planned for next autumn, the event should take place with the participation of the European Parliament.

■ Alexandre MARGHELIS

Setting up of a temporary committee on climate change at the European Parliament

Proposed on 19th April 2007 and approved on 25th April in the European Parliament's plenary session, a temporary parliamentary committee on «climate change» was set up with a mandate for a renewable period of 12 months. With 60 members and chaired by Guido SACCONI, a member of the European socialist group, it held its constituent session on 21st May in Strasbourg. With this gesture the European Parliament intends to play «a key role in awareness-raising» on climate change, with the ambition of raising the issue to the top of international priorities. The new committee will have the task of taking stock of the situation, evaluating the impact of climate change from all angles and in particular the cost of taking no action, and will make relevant proposals for the European Union's future integrated policy on climate change, in particular as part of the negotiations on the international framework of climate policy post-2012.


 The logo for BNP Paribas Private Bank features a stylized green bird or arrow graphic above the text "BNP PARIBAS" in bold black letters, with "Private Bank" in a smaller font below it.

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Cork oak, cork and NATURA 2000: a perfect match

Cork oak forest extends over an area of almost 2,2 million hectares (ha), concentrated mainly in the Mediterranean region, in the South of Europe and North Africa (Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia).

Born in harmony with nature, cork has for long proved to be a natural, renewable, recyclable and biodegradable raw material. Cork is produced in rich, complex, stable ecosystems - which are a feature of Mediterranean regions that are poor for farming - in an environmentally friendly process during which not a single tree is cut down.

The cork oak tree has a lifespan of around 170 – 200 years, during which time it will be stripped around 15 – 18 times (every nine to ten years). Stripping the outer bark is a very delicate operation carried out by skilled workers using special axes. After the harvest, the bark renews itself until the next harvesting.

Cork is mainly associated with the production of wine stoppers. Cork for bottle stoppers accounts for almost 70% of the total value of the cork market, ensuring a vital role in maintaining the economic value of cork and the cork oak forests. However, due to its unique structural characteristics, cork has many other different applications, from construction to automobile and aerospace industries among many others.

The economic importance of cork forests is not restricted to the production of cork. In the undergrowth of cork oak forests, aromatic and medicinal plants, mushrooms, natural grazing with extensive livestock farming and a great deal of game complete this fantastic eco-system of high economic and environmental value. Cork oak forests provide rural populations with work, helping to settle people in areas where the population density is

falling to a dangerous low, and where other sources of income and employment are limited. Cork has a wide range of positive merits assuming a great importance in the economic, social and environmental context of the rural Mediterranean economies.

NATURA 2000

In Portugal and Spain the cork oak landscapes are often dominated by a unique silvo-pastoral system shaped by men, combining open woodlands with more or less dense tree-cover, high quality pastures and rotation crops. These are called «Montado» in Portugal, and «Dehesa» in Spain. These cork oak habitats (natural landscapes, «montado» and «dehesa») have been ranked among the most valuable in Europe and are listed in the EC Habitats Directive:

- HABITAT 6310 – Quercus spp. Stands of Perennial Leaf;
- HABITAT 9330 – Quercus suber Forests.

These landscapes support one of the highest levels of biodiversity among forest habitats, including globally endangered species such as the Iberian Lynx, the Iberian Imperial Eagle, the Black Vulture, and the Black Stork, a large number of migratory and wintering birds from Northern Europe, a rich diversity of fauna, including endemic spiders, spade foot toads, geckos, skinks, vipers, mongoose, wild cats, roe deer, boars, Barbary deer and genets.

They are also an effective barrier against the desertification affecting a large part of the Mediterranean regions, for they play a key role in ecological processes such as water retention, soil conservation and carbon storage.

■ Nuno CALADO,
UNAC





EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATIONS (UEHHA)

Dendrochronology - science at the service of our heritage

Behind this erudite and complicated name lies a science which dates wood. Dendrochronology certainly comes in handy when historians and architects hesitate about the period of construction of certain monuments.

A word from the chairman

Politicians are finally waking up with a hangover after the warnings against the harmful effects of human activity on the environment, and the owners of rural sites and other historical parks are wondering about their own fate.

These green lungs remarkable for their great biodiversity are sought after both by a society eager to find places of leisure and by green NGOs with highly dogmatic views on the management of green areas and biodiversity. This phenomenon is exacerbated in the highly urbanized zones of Europe with high population density. Wherever these historic landscapes have been enriched by multiple varieties of plants and trees for almost four centuries by botanists and renowned scientists, the trend of certain environmentalists is to reduce the biodiversity of these sites to a few endemic species. However, these wild parks and other arboreturns which contribute widely to botanical research and the use of forests are all too often turning into fragile historical monuments.

We therefore wish to launch an appeal to the public authorities to help the managers with the conservation of these exceptional sites.

■ Ghislain d'URSEL

It is almost a textbook case – an abbey barn in the grounds of Bernay manor in Sarthe with two protagonists. One, an architect, dates it from the 19th century based on his knowledge and his observations whereas the other, the owner of the monument, thinks it similar to the surrounding buildings from the end of the 15th century. Classification as a listed building is at stake. As the archives do not settle the matter they decide on a dendrochronological analysis. Samples are therefore taken from each of the eight pillars and from the framework so that the laboratory in Bordeaux (Laboratoire d'analyses et d'expertises – LAE) can rule on the matter. They find the whole building is homogenous, the wood coming from the same forest, all of which was felled in 1520. The barn has now received a favourable opinion and will be protected as a listed building – there the story ends.

Is dendrochronology the ultimate solution? Perhaps, as long as it is correctly used and that we know its limits.

The memory within the tree

To begin let us do a little etymology: this science takes its name from the Greek dendron: tree, chronos: time and logos: science. Beatrice SZEPERTYSKI, the director of the Bordeaux laboratory, explains: «Dendrochronology is the science which measures time through fluctuation in tree growth. By extension, fluctuation of tree growth also involves the ability to

comprehend the factors causing this fluctuation in growth, primarily climate but also the nature of the soil, forest structure – dense or thin – and the intervention of man (pruning). Trees record the slightest variation, whether they are directly affected or whether the effect is on the environment.» Instinctively then we know the dendron provides information not only about the age of wood but also on climate and the condition of the forest. It is our job to decode this «hard disk» in the tree and isolate the different pieces of information. In order to do so incredible quantities of data must be processed. Beatrice SZEPERTYSKI for example has had to collect 12000 samples to cover one third of France!

No dendrochronology without a reference standard

Dendrochronology is an extremely precise science and fixes the date at which the tree was felled and –within a span of six months –its age at the time. This requires a reference standard for each region and species. This is not necessarily a complicated task, since software makes mathematical calculations easier, but the collection has to be done rigorously. The standard is created starting with the oldest tree in the sector. The number of rings determines its age, and then a tree must be found which was ending its life when this one's was beginning. In this way overlapping sequences are formed in order to gradually go back in time.

EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATIONS (UEHHA)

The Bordeaux laboratory has published its reference standard and had it validated by the Académie des Sciences. The Bordeaux team is capable of dating practically all the wood brought to them from the Atlantic coast.

The date: a vital piece of evidence

As Beatrice SZEPERTYSKI says, «In Les Landes, a region I know well, architecture was always said to date from the 18th and 19th centuries and [it was said] that there were no ancient dwellings, but we have discovered 14th century structures – was this old wood being reused? Relevant samples have now been taken from studies on buildings and it has been irrefutably established that a 14th dwelling existed in this region. In such cases, dendrochronology plays a vital role.» There are many such examples. Mirelle-Bénédictte BOUVET, the regional keeper of the General Inventory of the Lorraine Region, says she has about ten analyses done every year. «If there is a possibility a monument was constructed using archaic methods but observations of its architecture and research in the archives do not allow us to establish the chronology of work which has affected it, we ask the dendrochronologists for a study.» She stresses however that the structural analysis of the building must be done in advance and what is more, that the samples should not be random. The wood chosen must have enough rings to provide information and be in a strategic position.

Advance preparation of the dossier and asking the right questions

Historians, scientists and researchers agree on the essential points. For Beatrice SZEPERTYSKI the study done at La Fresnaye manor is exemplary. History claims the



manor was built at the beginning of the Hundred Years War and refurbished under Henry IV. This version was recently contested in the press: it was claimed that the manor was destroyed during the Hundred Years War like most of the surrounding buildings and completely rebuilt in a medieval style under Henry IV. The owner, Patrice CAHART, contacted the LAE. The analysis was done on a wooden harrow support and on beams. The result showed that La Fresnaye's dungeon dates from the beginning of the Hundred Years War. An analysis of the mortar, again by LAE, is underway to confirm the diagnosis and clarify the situation of La Fresnaye manor, which apparently predates the dungeon. Dendrochronology therefore also helps us to gain a better understanding of the buildings. Pierre Yves CAILLAULT, an architect specializing in historical monuments, notes that, «the results of the dendrochronological analysis are indis-

pensable and can have a bearing on the design during restoration. In Lunéville, dendrochronology dated certain joinery from the initial work carried out by Germain BOFFRAND. This gave us a reference to redo the joinery according to the initial construction. In this way we were able to return the monument to its original state.» At a time when restoration work must scrupulously respect monuments and their history, dendrochronology can help to determine the restoration designs. Well used, this is anything but a gimmick. The trick is to decide why it is being used and to what end!

■ Virginie de LA BATUT

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THE ENLARGED EUROPE

Training and Education for Forest Owners

Training for forest owners is provided in order to improve their skills and techniques in forestry and their knowledge of the activities in the forest sector in addition to silviculture, wood technology, wood marketing and other activities. There is significant support and a will on the part of the Commission to improve current training methods and tools and to start working on this issue more intensively. It is important to have a long-term strategy and solid back-up offered by forest training centres.



action 5, which calls for «Fostering the cooperation between forest owners and enhancing education and training in forestry». The reasons were: the changing ownership structures and the increasing share of non-farmers owning forests, resulting in the fact that a growing number of owners lack skills and capacities for sustainable forest management. To prevent potential future difficulties caused by fragmentation of private forest holdings leading to further and higher costs in forest management, reducing mobilisation of wood and undermining the provision of forest services, it is crucial that forest owners, managers and also their workforce are well-trained and adaptable.

In view of the above, the Commission asks Member States to support vocational training and education of forest owners and forest workers, and to support the development of advisory services for forest owners and their associations. These services will contribute to new market-oriented approaches, to disseminating information on sustainable management practices, and to improving forest-owners' skills in biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration.

According to the Forest Action Plan, the Commission and the Member States will exchange experiences and best practices on these issues and on how to increase the market supply of wood for industrial use. The EARDF, together with Community instruments for education and training, provide

opportunities to support these activities.

Moreover, the Commission realises the necessity of ensuring that the benefits of sustainable forest management are acknowledged by society. Environmental education and information is encouraged also in the key action 10.

The importance of the communication in forestry (one of the tools for it is training) is stressed also in the key action 18 - to improve information exchange and communication where the Commission, with active participation by the Member States, will develop a communication strategy on forestry. This will outline the main steps to be taken to improve communication on forestry in the Community. The creation of websites of forest-related information is strongly encouraged, and it is also proposed to develop a European Forest Information and Communication Platform in order to better use and communicate the information available. In addition, the Member States are encouraged to organise visibility events, such as a «Forest Week» or «Forest Day», to raise awareness of the benefits of sustainable forest management. Part of these events could also be training, workshops and seminars.

Valuing formal, non-formal and informal forms of learning by workers in the forestry sector

A recent project coordinated by

EU support

One of the background and supporting documents for our discussions on forest training is the EU Forest Action Plan adopted in June 2006. The European Commission became aware of the need for training and education in forestry, e.g in the key

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Inverde, Forest Training Centre in Belgium (www.inverde.be), concentrated on the training of forestry workers. Besides the formal training circuit, forest workers acquire a lot of knowledge, skills and attitudes through both non-formal (eg. learning by doing) and informal learning (eg. learning from the instructions of colleagues). The promoters and coordinators of the project realised that these forms of learning are rarely recognised, and that the number of arrangements and methods for the evaluation of these competencies learnt through non-formal and informal ways are restricted.

The project made an inventory of the existing evaluation methods and arrangements. Furthermore, it developed a comprehensive and integrated approach enabling those involved to assess and to value a large range of qualifications and competence resources. This new approach is needed to build bridges and facilitate access to individual pathways of learning. The results and further information on the project can be found at www.learnforwork.org.

New project on eLearning in forestry

«European System of Knowledge for Internet Supported Distance Learning in Sustainable Forestry» is the project promoted by the Vocational Forestry School in Svenljunga (Naturbruksgymnasiet i Svenljunga), Sweden, and coordinated by Inverde, Forest Training Centre in Belgium. The project was proposed on February 2006 to the Community Vocational Training Action Programme (2000-2006) – sub-programme Leonardo da Vinci, and approved by the EC at the end of 2006.

The work of the project is based on a partnership of 8 partners and 1 observer:

- Sweden, Naturbruksgymnasiet i Svenljunga, Vaxjo University

- Belgium, Inverde
- Netherlands, IPC Groene Ruimte
- Germany, Forstliches Bildungszentrum
- Austria, Universitat für Bodenkultur Wien
- Czech Republic, Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno
- Scotland, Barony College
- Spain, The Forest Technology Centre of Catalonia
- Observer: ELO – European Landowners' Organization

The partnership decided to work on two inventories: one for the forest workers and vocational students, and one for the forest owners and forest teachers. The first target group will be offered education in traditional forestry, using the frameworks of the previous Leonardo da Vinci project (above), the second target group had the opportunity to express their needs in the enquiry and to choose some of the issues of alternative forestry. The results of the enquiry will be available soon.

Based on the needs of the two target groups expressed in the enquiries, the subjects and topics for the pilot education project will be chosen. Their development is the responsibility of the partnership, and will be shared by partners according to their knowledge, experiences, and resources.

The next phase of the project is an internet-based platform. Vaxjo University in Sweden will create such a platform using their experiences of already existing and successful platforms for forestry in Europe. This platform shall contain different study materials in the form of documents, presentations, pictures, videos, etc., a notice board, and discussion rooms. It will be possible to join in with training on-line, to create individual timetables for training according everyone's own schedule, and to ask for support from the teacher.

This project is considered as a pilot one, so it is necessary to have mentors, experienced people delivering feedback on the evolution of the project – both technical and knowledge-based remarks and comments. Their participation is necessary for good orientation and direction of the project. There will be two of them from each partner's country and two mentors from ELO members.

For the pilot education project, 5 students for each course per each partner's country are expected to be enrolled before the course starts.

The last, but not least, step for the partnership will be the evaluation and dissemination phase of the project, which is necessary for the publishing of results, and possible follow-up of this pilot project.

Schedule of the project

The first meeting of the partners was organized on 26th – 29th February 2007 in Svenljunga in Sweden. The participants discussed the project and its technical and practical details, and agreed on first steps. There will be other two working meetings later this year. Before the end of 2007, the platform should make progress and the partners are expected to start preparing their topics and chapters. These should be finished in the first half of 2008. The pilot education project itself is expected to start in November 2008.

After finishing the project at the end of 2008, every partner should organise one meeting, or participate in one, in order to disseminate the results of the project.

For more information on the project, please contact the project coordinator joeri.vanbelle@lne.vlanderen.be

■ Pavla BORTLOVA



EUROFORENET

The key position of forestry cooperatives and forestry traders in harnessing wood-energy

Forestry biomass produced by private and local authority owners will need to feature considerably in the achievement of the 2020 European energy objectives. Extra quantities of wood-energy will have to supply the market while preserving forestry biodiversity, including the quality of soil and water.

To meet these challenges and achieve both the European and national objectives, two major stakeholders will have to play a central role: the forestry cooperatives and the producers of forest woodchip. The initial results of the EUROFORENET programme developed by ELO, FECONF, IFFC, with the financial support of the European Commission, demonstrate this trend.

In order to ensure optimum and sustainable harnessing of forestry resources and meet society's demand for renewable energy, many European countries have set up national and/or regional «wood-energy and rural/local development plans» such as in France or Belgium. These plans are currently being developed in Slovenia in cooperation with the FAO. This programme dubbed WISDOM (Woodfuels Integrated Supply/Demand Overview Mapping) has in particular been used for mapping the supply and demand for wood-energy throughout the country. In the Czech republic however there are as yet no such plans.

Forestry cooperatives are a major common denominator of these wood-energy plans, and are at the heart of the wood-energy chain. They have proved to be efficient in France and Italy in particular and are based on a public/private partnership. They are an efficient means of bringing forest owners together, which partially tackles the problem of the fragmentation of small



private properties. Market accessibility releases further quantities of wood. Consistent, sustainable land management is therefore made possible, supply sources optimized, traders better structured, and the wood-energy supply-chain is therefore better off.

Cooperatives also promote the creation of wood platforms which:

- Connect supply and demand, in particular for forest woodchip.
- Create a network of wood-energy traders.
- Unite plots of available wood, in both private and public forests.
- Centralize crushing firms to ensure forest work is subcontracted.

These crushing firms clearly play a strategic role between supply and demand for wood-energy. They do the logistics of forest crushing, transport, storage and the final delivery to the collective and private dry woodchip heating units. They can also work in a lean supply chain

(«crushing furnace - heating unit»), using humid woodchips. Given the investment costs of the crushers and the logistical means needed, only independent traders are able to make enough profit at current woodchip prices. Moreover, the crushers must have relatively large supply radii (150km) to work at full capacity and ensure profitability. Owners must ensure therefore that they respect the specifications of the crusher doing the sub-contracting in order to reduce the production costs of woodchip and thus optimize their income and forest capital.

Although the forest owners can optimize the productivity of their forests by producing woodchip, the cooperatives and woodchip producers are two lynchpins in the business. The former pool and maximize supply while the latter subcontract production and ensure demand is met. The EUROFORENET programme is about identifying trends and the development of good practice and expert networks. We invite you to visit the website (www.euroforenet.eu) for more information.

■ Marie-Alice BUDNIOK
■ Robin du PARC

Climate Change:

A world energy context favourable to changes

Climate change is becoming one of the greatest environmental threats today. The Kyoto Protocol establishes an international policy context for the reduction of carbon emissions and increases in carbon sinks in order to address climate change.

Within this context, the European Commission has set up in June 2000 the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP). It aims to help identifying the most environmentally sound and cost-effective EU measures which would enable the EU to meet its target under the Kyoto Protocol, namely 8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2008-2012, complementing Member States' efforts.

The EU institutions supports climate change mitigation efforts through the integrated approach promoted in the 7 Thematic Strategies, the Biofuels Strategy coupled with the Biomass Action Plan, as well as the various Green Papers on Energy Efficiency and Security of Energy Supply.

Besides, under the ECCP, the Commission also proposes the European Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS) which became operational in 2005 as the first and biggest market enabling companies to trade carbon dioxide emissions. The EU-ETS (market for permits to release CO₂ into the atmosphere) entails the principle of financial and technological transfers to land management projects and initiatives (through forestry and farming) that sequester and protect carbon stocks through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry Mechanisms (LULUCF).

All sectors of society have the responsibility to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to think

carefully about the potential impacts that climate change may have for them and how they may have to adapt. European Landowners and land managers have therefore a crucial role to play!

The rural world is aware of its share of responsibility in terms of contribution to climate change - as farming is the source of 2 greenhouse gases (methane and nitrous oxide) which must be reduced-, but also of its unique role in mitigating climate change through good land management practices.

The rural environment and European forests are significant tools for climate change mitigation thanks to the supply of carbon-saving renewable energy (including «2nd generation» biofuels) and of sustainable building materials (timber or hemp for eco-building), as well as their carbon storage capacity in soil and trees. Unfortunately, the interest in carbon sinks varies between countries. For ELO there is a clear need for developing a common position taking into account the wide range of social and economic benefits that land-use projects could provide.

Renewable resources and biomass for non-food applications helps reducing dependence on hydrocarbon-based economy. ELO actively promotes the use of alternative energies coupled with using energy more efficiently, through for instance converting estate's use of energy from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as

biomass for biofuels, biogas from rural wastes, wind farming, hydro electrical, solar, etc. There is not only one type of renewable energy but a real need for combination.

ELO hence proposes some strategies to adapt to the effects of climate change, such as amongst others enhancing water resources through building of reservoirs, adapting cultivation practices (no-tillage) and cropping or careful management of native biodiversity.

Thesemanagementsystemsareenvironmental services which should be supported by the EU. ELO promotes these activities through its position papers and numerous interventions at meetings and conferences. Rural actors are the best allies in working to reduce the ecological footprint of modern society. Adaptation to climate change is local, but mitigation, while the investment is delivered locally, must be global. The rural world produces for both world and local markets, which limits transport emissions.

As solution providers, the landowners' role is not only to reduce their own GHG emissions but also to help enabling the rest of society and the economy to achieve the transition to the low carbon future.

There is a need NOW for political decisions empowering them to play their crucial role as regards climate change mitigation.

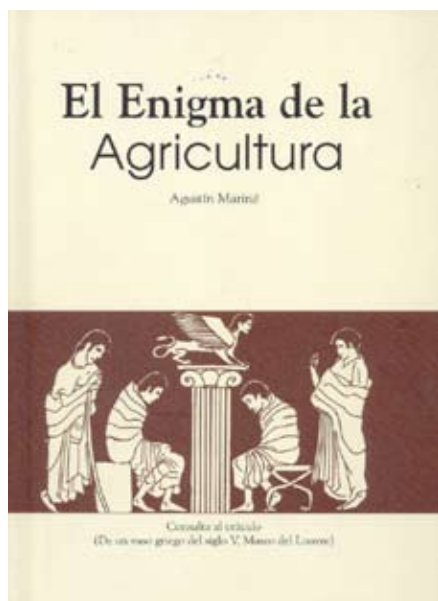
■ Cécile BONINO

BOOK OF THE MONTH

The enigma of agriculture

Agustin MARINE, Edition Agricole Espanola

This collection of reflections on farming aims at submerging us into the reality that we, as the main rural actors, have to confront.



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To love our profession and to be able to live by it: this is the challenge we have in front of us. Land will always be there, in its place, and we will keep on working on it. However, our activity is suffering deeply from the ceaseless depreciation of the value of our products and from the endless list of new obligations and regulations, not always reasonable, some of which will have to be rectified in the future. Two large axes converge in the distance to ensure our sector's survival: the evident scarcity of world food resources - which can only worsen in the long term because of the increasing demographic pressure - and the scientific establishment that agri-

culture is the best friend of the environment. All the biosphere's - balances on which our survival depends are readjusted thanks to a vital activity which promotes an effective photosynthesis, improves the oxygen level of the atmosphere and increases the amount of evapo-transpiration water and, consequently, the future rain. Civilization cannot be imagined without any agricultural activity on its grounds. Our wish is that society debates its points of view on the agrarian sector considering all the factors and not only part of them, as often happens.

■ Agustín MARINÉ

Diary Dates 2007

1 July 2007

Second «Energy Trophy+» challenge. This European «public structures» competition (businesses, local authorities, schools) is intended to reduce energy consumption by changing the behaviour of office workers. <http://www.mediaterrre.org/france/>

2 July 2007, Cité des sciences, Paris

Has the environment transformed society? 3rd research meetings of the Environment Agency and Maîtrise de l'Energie (ADEME): to tackle environmental issues and opinion forming, application to

daily life and individual decisions. <http://www2.ademe.fr/servlet/>

2-5 July, Glasgow, Scotland

Rural and environmental sustainability through information and communication technologies. 5th annual conference of the European Federation of information technologies in agriculture. <http://www.efitaglasgow.org>

3 July, Brussels

Launch of a public debate on the European Union Action Plan on climate change. <https://www.synergyregistrations.com/>

4-7 July, Paris

Ecosystems and extreme events. Seminar organized on the initiative of the general secretary of the Académie des sciences. <http://www.academie-sciences.fr>

27 July – 1 August, Libramont (Belgium)

75th agricultural fair and forestry demonstrations (in Palisuel) with round tables, conferences on the future of the Wallonian forest and its mascot, the carthorse. Tasting of local produce. www.foirelibramont.com



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