

# WILDLIFE ESTATES LABEL

*WE act for biodiversity*



## The FFA honours second Austrian Wildlife Estates Label



FLTR: **Konstantin Kostopoulos** (COO Wildlife Estates Label), **Humberto Delgado Rosa** (Director Natural Capital, DG ENVIRONMENT, European Commission), **Matthias Grün** (Director of Pannatura, Esterházy Betriebe), **Stefan Ottrubay** (CEO, Esterházy Betriebe), **Nicolas de Buman** (Vice-President, Esterházy Foundation), **Henrike Luhmann** (Familienbetriebe Land & Forst), **Günther Graf von der Schulenburg** (Wildlife Estates Germany), **Thierry de l'Escaille** (SG, European Landowners' Organization)

28<sup>th</sup> March 2017

The Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA) is a unique opportunity to gather all key stakeholders in the field of agriculture and environment to showcase best practices such as the Wildlife Estates Label.

The Wildlife Estates (WE) Label project represents a network of exemplary estates which have implemented good management and conservation practices in favour of nature and biodiversity protection. It rewards responsible land managers by recognizing their achieve-

ments as regards nature and biodiversity protection and highlights their key role in enhancing biodiversity on their lands. Furthermore, it engages the private and public sectors in mutual cooperation to halt the loss of biodiversity. The project now encompasses 248 estates covering well over 1 million hectares of which more than 500.000 ha fall under the Natura 2000 network.

This year we had the pleasure to welcome our newest member, the Esterházy Betriebe from

Austria, at our FFA Gala Dinner. The ELO and the Wildlife Estates Jury were honoured to award the Esterházy Betriebe with the WE Label for their extraordinary wildlife management. **Thierry de l'Escaille**, CEO of the ELO as well as **Humberto Delgado Rosa**, Director for Natural Capital at DG Environment, European Commission welcomed the efforts made on this estate to promote biodiversity.

Being the largest private estate in Austria (about 40.000 ha) with about 20.000 hectares falling under the Natura 2000 network, the Esterházy Betriebe are well aware of the importance of sustainable wildlife management. They developed a holistic approach regarding wildlife management and a concept of criteria and indicators of sustainable hunting in order to reach their sustainability objectives. Three working groups ensured that these criteria were in line with the ecological, economic and socio-cultural principles which were then put into practice to test their suitability.

Esterházy Betriebe cooperates with the WWF in order to make a significant contribution to the implementation of the EU-biodiversity strategy for 2020 and the Biodiversity Strategy Austria 2020+. Successful projects in the area of Lake Neusiedl and in forest areas show the evidence of a good cooperation between landowners and environmentalists.

The national park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel was founded in cooperation with the Esterházy Betriebe, the main contributor of land to this park. Lake Neusiedl and its surroundings became a UNESCO - world heritage site in 2001. It is an important breeding area for more than 340 bird species and a habitat for many other flora & fauna species. A new reserve of 900 hectares has been designated in the north of Lake Neusiedl in 2015 to enhance the living

conditions of flora and fauna and in particular the present bird species.

The agricultural sector of the Esterházy Betriebe is 100% organic farming and contributes to the improvement of biodiversity with important pollinator initiatives such as field margins, grass strips and beetle banks, bushes and uncultivated pastures.

## WE Scientific Committee meeting took place on March 8<sup>th</sup>

Experts of the Wildlife Estates Scientific Committee (WESC) met at the Fondation Sommer in Paris to exchange views on the Wildlife Estates methodology and its adaptation to the various biogeographical regions in Europe. The Committee welcomed its new member, **Prof. Wolf-Henning von der Wense** who was appointed as new WESC member for the Alpine region. **Prof. Carlos Otero** was temporarily appointed as the new expert for the Macaronesian region.

Members reported on adaptations of the Objective Evaluation Methodologies (OEM) by the national delegations of France, UK, Germany and Sweden. France is working on further adjustments of the indicators of tranquillity and biomass. The UK engaged an independent evaluator to start applying the developed OEM on 6 pilot estates. Germany completed the first version of the methodology and will also continue adjusting some indicators.

The committee experts agreed that the mandatory requirements of the WE methodology should in general be respected but could be adapted if specific situations in some regions so require.

# Official launch of the WE Label in France – 8 estates awarded with the WE Label

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, the official launch of the WE Label in France was celebrated in Paris. The following 8 territories covering more than 3000 hectares in France have been awarded with the WE Label for their extraordinary wildlife management and conservation practices in favour of biodiversity:



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FLTR: **Dominique Bénard** (President of the Association of land managers of Vallée de la Durdent), **Guillaume Marette** (Owner of Groupement forestier de la Ferté et de Forges les Eaux), **Odile Gauthier** (Director of Conservatoire du Littoral, owner of Domaine des Grandes Cabanes du Vaccarès Sud), **Nicolas Croce** (Land manager of Domaine des Grandes Cabanes du Vaccarès Sud), **Arnaud Heim de Balsac** (Owner of Domaine de la Touchardière), **Claude Rosier** (Owner of Domaine du Rembuché), **Slyves Perier** (President of Société Communale de Chasse de Nojals et Clotte)

“**Ferme du Tors**” is an agricultural area located in Normandy. Landowners created specific management measures for wildlife such as planting of hedges and grasslands which also have some positive impact on the soil. Natural populations of grey partridge and European hare, could be developed although these species are in decline in this part of France. The label for this estate was handed over by the ministry of environment.

“**Domaine des Grandes Cabanes du Vaccarès Sud**” is a wetland area located in the south of France, in Camargue. The territory belongs to

the coastline conservatory, a public administration in charge of the protection of the coast and lakeshore. It is managed by the National Hunting and Wildlife Agency. The management of the area includes a new concept among institutional bodies: the combination of economic durability and nature management and measures against invasive species.

“**Bois Léon and Ginette**” is a forestry area, located in Normandy, made up by two private territories, managed in the same way. They act for biodiversity by increasing the diversity of the forest, fostering natural regeneration and

keeping dead wood on soil. This management led to an increasing population of hunted species and also allowed them to commercialize wood production. In 2017, a peatland of 7 hectares will be restored in the area.

“**Basse Vallée de la Durdent**” is a wetland area, located in Normandy, made up by an association of 16 landowners. An environmental management plan was set up in 2014. The plan included an inventory of species in the area and the definition of the measures to set up for the development of biodiversity. Hunters restored several ponds to increase the resources for bird wildlife but also preservation of trees, hedges, flat reefs for snipes, etc. These mosaics of habitats lead to the presence of a high diversity of flora and fauna.

“**Ferté and Forges-les-Eaux**” is a forested area with heathland. The management of the forest has led to the development of biodiversity. This area is very quiet, which is an advantage for wildlife that reacts sensitive to disturbance. All the works are realised outside the breeding time of animals and the hunting activity is limited to 9 days by year.

The “**Nojals and Clotte**” area is a bocage landscape with agricultural land located in the South-West of France. The area belongs to the communal hunting society that takes several actions to enhance biodiversity. They have reintroduced pheasants coming from wild generation but not for hunting purposes.

“**Domaine de la Tourchardière**” is mainly an agricultural land. In order to improve the small fauna, the landowner has completely changed his land use to sustainable farming. A small part of the area is a forest that received the Pan European Forest Certification.

“**Domaine du Rembuché**” is a forestry area located northeast of Paris. The landowner aims to achieve a good equilibrium between wildlife and forest. Big game hunting is limited to three times by year. The estate is also a study area for research programs on bats.

Landowners and –managers from the estates received their WE Label at a press conference in Paris organised by the François Sommer foundation, the National Hunting and Wildlife Agency (ONCFS) and the National Hunting Federation (FNC).

**Thierry de l'Escaille**, Secretary General of the European Landowners' Organization, started the press conference by presenting the origin of the label in 2005 and its development. **Philippe Dulac**, President of the François Sommer Foundation, **Alain Durand**, Vice-President of the FNC and **Nirmala Séon-Massin**, Deputy Director of Research and Expertise at ONCFS, explained individually why their organisations have joined this project .

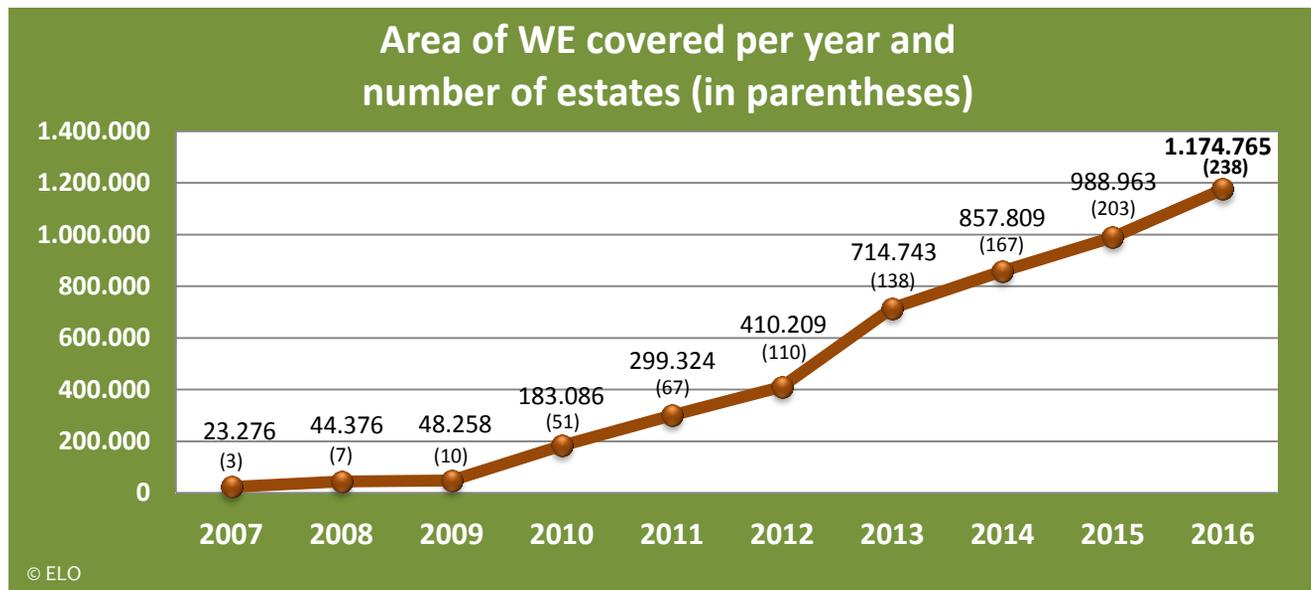
Join us for the next event of WE France in Normandy when a movie on the WE Label in France will be published. Save the date: the 19th of May, in Veulettes-sur-Mer, in Normandy!

For further information please contact:

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# WE Steering Committee met on March 29<sup>th</sup> in Brussels



Starting with 3 estates covering an area of 23.276 ha in 2007, the WE project encompassed 238 estates covering well over 1 million hectares in the end of 2016. If the average yearly increase of about 30% observed in recent years is maintained, we can expect that around 2 to 3 million hectares will be covered under the WE certification in 3-5 years.

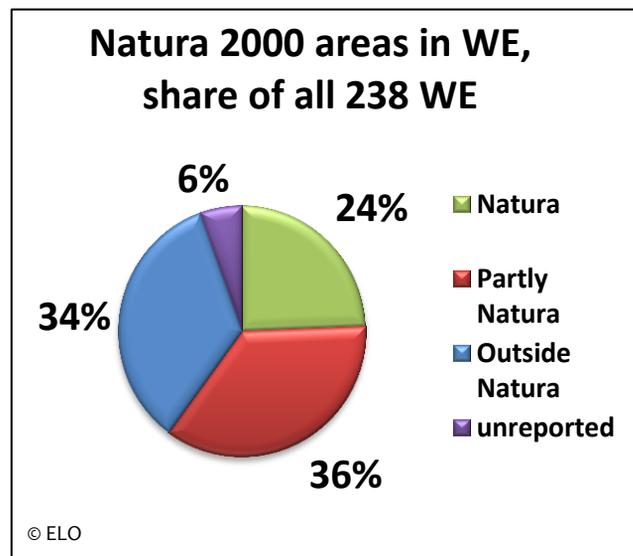
The WE Steering Committee, chaired by Konstantin Kostopoulos, COO of the project, met in Brussels to discuss current developments of the WE project in the different member states of this initiative. Members reported on positive progress at national level including several newly evaluated estates.

The project has reached well over 1.1 million hectares with 238 labelled estates in 2016. Natura 2000 areas account for about 42 % of the total area under the WE label. This is equivalent to just over 500.000 hectares.

Participants were briefed on current developments as regards the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy and the nature directives. The European Commission will soon publicise an Action Plan with specific measures.

Communication and data analysis were also discussed.

The next WE Plenary meeting will take place on the 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 in Romania.



# Experts suggest structural changes to CAP



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10<sup>th</sup> January 2017

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) accounts for nearly 40% of the total EU budget and is a crucial support mechanism for agriculture and the rural environment in Europe. When designed and managed effectively, it can have a real impact on how European agriculture addresses climate change (both through reduced emissions and adaptation), manages land and the countryside to optimise provision of food, energy, biomaterial and ecosystem services and supports the economic development of rural areas.

However, if the CAP is to maintain its large share of the EU budgetary allocation (just under 40%), it has to show policy makers, stakeholders and European citizens that it is fit for purpose and good value for money.

Well-known academics Allan BUCKWELL, **Allan Matthews**, **David Baldock** and **Erik Mathijs**, all experts in the CAP, discussed the value proposition of the CAP at an event hosted by the President of the Intergroup on Biodiversity Hunting and the Countryside, **Karl-Heinz Florenz** and co-organized by ELO and the RISE Foundation at the European Parliament this January. The event represented part

of the search for new ideas as the CAP reform season is upon Brussels. The EU, faced with continued financial problems, a refugee crisis and the departure of the United Kingdom, is under pressure to reduce what many perceive as lavish farm subsidies.

In order to re-define the CAP the day's speakers are all part of a group of experts brought together by the RISE Foundation. The report, titled 'CAP: Thinking out of the box' considers the fundamental nature of the CAP. It asks why changes are imperative, what reforms should look like (including land and risk management) and how structural changes to the governance of the CAP could assist the policy. A crucial part of the work of the Foundation is to consult regularly with a wide range of interested stakeholders, therefore the views and opinions expressed during the Parliamentary debate will be integrated into the further development of the project.

In his opening speech **Janez Potočnik**, Chairman of the RISE Foundation, explained that the 21st century is characterised by resource use acceleration, unprecedented population growth and widening

inequalities. The planet, he noted, had dangerously passed through at least 4 of its 9 identified planetary boundaries, including genetic diversity and nitrogen and phosphorus emissions - all clearly linked to food production. With regards to biodiversity, 60% of ecosystems are already degraded or used unsustainably, and there are increasingly severe impacts and acceleration of climate change. To answer these challenges, the EU has signed two important international agreements a little over a year ago: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. According to the chairman; *“If we are to reach the SDGs, it is imperative that we have a CAP that supports them to realise their potential as critical agents of change in the transformation of current consumption and production systems.”*

Professor **Allan Buckwell**, the report Director, said: *“The constellations of the EU stars are not well aligned for a further significant reform after the mandate for the current CAP runs out in 2020, but our analysis shows it is essential that the next reform is more meaningful than the 2013 reform and thus we must do what we can to engineer the conditions to enable such reform to take place.”*

In her feedback, MEP **Mairead McGuinness** urged all those involved in any discussions on the future evolution of the CAP to leave their baggage outside the door and come to the debate with an open mind, and said: *“To date, efforts to green the CAP have resulted in more complexity and criticism from both farmers and environmental organisations. Environmental sustainability has to be at the heart of day to day farm management, but the CAP is also needed to guarantee economic sustainability and on this, it is found wanting. Tackling volatility, imbalances in the food supply chain and long term sustainability will require everyone to think outside the box, but the challenge of funding this new dynamic CAP may ultimately be the greatest one.”*

In his response, **Marco Conteiro**, EU Policy Director on Agriculture for Greenpeace, argued that facts, data and clear analysis of these complex issues are central to this debate if we are to move away from arguments motivated by emotion. Phasing out the entitlement culture and discussing a new system of contracts would allow Europe to talk about a bottom up approach. Farmers, he said, deserve to be rewarded for what they do, but whether or not direct payments are the best ways remains to be seen.

In his closing remarks MEP **Karl-Heinz Florenz**, said: *“Nobody is happy with the current European agricultural policy for different reasons. The RISE Foundation presented us today a way forward, ‘thinking out of the box’. I believe that our biggest problems are the failure to be sustainable and halt biodiversity loss and the failure to talk to farmers and include them in the decision-making. We should make more use of farmers’ experience and knowledge as to what might be the best and most appropriate measures to take. In my opinion, it is the right moment to start the debate now in order to be ready for the CAP reform in 2020 and to be able to actively engage in the discussions of the future.”*

The new lobbying season for the CAP is now fully in swing. As part of the first phase of this modernisation effort, DG Agriculture recently opened its three-month public consultation, with the deadline set at the 2nd of May 2017. The results will be published on its website and with a public conference in July 2017.

For the full report of EP meeting visit  
[www.europeanlandowners.org/intergroup](http://www.europeanlandowners.org/intergroup)



## Exchange of views on the access and use of farmland



**Karl-Heinz Florenz**, MEP and chairman of the European Parliament Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside, introduced this conference on the crucial topic of land access and concentration. This panel, chaired by **Annie Schreijer-Pierik**, MEP and member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, gathered high-level speakers coming from both the political and scientific world.

7<sup>th</sup> February 2017

As MEP and Shadow Rapporteur on the Parliament's own-initiative report entitled "State of play of farmland concentration in the EU: how to facilitate the access to land for farmers", **Vladimir Urutchev** introduced the report and shared his concerns and proposals regarding land concentration and land access in Europe. He first highlighted that this document has one primary objective; to highlight that farmlands –the wellspring of food production in Europe are under strong pressures. Given current developments, it is crucial to more closely monitor farmland acquisitions and prevent speculative market behaviours.

The MEP's report calls for the collection of comprehensive up-to-date data on national land markets. Furthermore, the European Commission should issue guidelines to Member States to ensure that rules comply with the internal market rules and, more importantly, with the general interest.

This last idea was echoed by **Dr. Thomas Wiedmann**, Head of Unit for the European Commission's DG for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Market Union. He stressed the importance of guaranteeing internal market freedoms to all the EU citizens (including free movement of capital) at a time when certain European countries are adopting special measures to restrict acquisition of farmlands from foreign investors. He emphasized that the Commission strongly believes that tackling land speculation should not interfere with internal market freedoms. Disproportionate and discriminatory national measures thus need to be taken off the table, as they go against the core principles of the common market. Nevertheless, he also noted that we should never lose sight of the public interest; some restrictions imposed by the Member states being seen as more than justified given the scale of the challenges these states are facing.

After these political presentations, the two other speakers provided a scientific basis to the conversation by sharing relevant data and figures. As Professor at the Catholic University of Leuven, **Liesbet Vranken** gave a very clear overview of the land markets and their regulations in Europe. **Jan Novopacky**, Secretary General of the Czech and Moravian Agricultural Union, complemented this analysis with the Czech Republic's example. These presentations were followed by a lively Q&A session with the audience and the discussion led to some very interesting exchanges. Two civil servants from the Commission took the floor to defend Commission's position. **Ricard Ramon**, from the DG AGRI, stressed the necessity to improve the definition of 'active farmer' and to get better data regarding the average farmers' age. His colleague from the DG ENVI, **Nick Hanley**, then raised the sensitive issue of the environment standards that need to be fulfilled by farmers.

ELO Secretary General **Thierry de l'Escaille** emphasised that too many restrictions on land markets leads to a decrease in land lease contracts as landowners become reluctant to engage – a phenomenon taking places all over the EU. He stated that it is crucial that farmers, like all other SME sectors of Europe, are allowed to expand in order to remain competitive. This is especially vital, he argued, as taking care of the environment is only sustainable for profitable land managers.

The ELO will continue this vital debate and bring solutions as well as well-founded examples in order to ensure land access for the next generation of Europe's farmers, and to improve access to innovative tools for those already farming.



## 25 years of LIFE and Habitats Directive: Join the celebration!



This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the LIFE programme and of the EU Habitats Directive, both approved on 21 May 1992. To recognise their major contribution to the preservation of Europe's natural heritage, the European Commission together with the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions will proclaim 21 May 2017 as 'European Natura 2000 day' at a special event in Brussels.

WE members are also invited to take part in the celebrations by organising a public event on Sunday, 21 May or on a suitable day in May or in June 2017. Two of our members already followed this invitation. **De Hoge Veluwe National Park** ([www.hogeveluwe.nl](http://www.hogeveluwe.nl)) from the Netherlands will organise an open day with guided walks on their territory on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. **Domaine de Mazerolles** ([www.domaine-de-mazerolles.fr](http://www.domaine-de-mazerolles.fr))

from France will also organise an open day with guided walks on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June.

In addition to communicating project activities to relevant stakeholders, local authorities, the public and the media, these open days should also help inform people about the 25th anniversary and the considerable achievements of EU nature legislation and the LIFE programme. The Habitats Directive created the EU Natura 2000 network of protected areas which also includes the sites designated under the Birds Directive. LIFE Nature projects have played a key role in the implementation of the network and nature conservation in the EU.

If you would like to join the celebration with your public event or if you require further information then please contact [wildlife@elo.org](mailto:wildlife@elo.org)



- **10/05/2017: Intergroup Meeting „The value of private land conservation“** in Brussels  
Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/european-landowners-organization-8532765157>
- **15/05/2017: FCS meeting** in Sweden
- **24/05/2017: Open day and guided walks at the Hoge Veluwe National Park**, Netherlands
- **29/05/2017 - 02/06/2017: Green Week 2017**
- **31/05/2017: „EU/UK TRADE – what works for the food and farming industry?“** in Brussels  
Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/cla-13412022537>
- **31/05/2017 - 01/06/2017: ELO Policy Group Meeting**
- **13-14/06/2017: ELO GA** in Tallinn, Estonia
- **25/06/2017: Open day and guided walks at Domaine de Mazerolles** in France
- **19/09/2017 – 21/09/2017: Wildlife Estates Plenary Session** in Bucharest, Romania

**[www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu)**

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