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Editorial

Speaking about the challenges for a competitive agriculture in Europe is also speaking about the future of mankind and the search for solutions to an enormous paradox: how can we reform a model of society and economy that is precisely the one to which the new emergent powers and nations are striving for, but that we know is not viable in the long term.

It is estimated that plant and animal production is to increase of around 70% by 2050 if we want to be up to the challenge of delivering foodstuffs to an increasing population.

One of the most fundamental challenges that we must face worldwide in the coming times is the ability to conciliate food security with environmental sustainability, while at the same time guaranteeing competitiveness in agriculture.

Therefore, Europe and the world must be capable of rapidly rearranging agricultural models that must be explicitly capable of responding simultaneously to at least four objectives: increasing the production of agricultural goods and raw materials, that can be competitive in the world markets as well as in local markets, on the basis of agricultural practices respectful of the environment, human health and animal welfare; climate change mitigation and adaptation, through decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, allowing for carbon capture and production of renewable energies and increasing ecosystem resilience to environmental disturbances; protection and sustainable promotion of natural resources, biodiversity as well as agricultural and rural landscapes; and finally, the reinforcement and diversification of the economic and social networks in the rural areas and the promotion of its diversity in full use of its human, natural and productive potentials.

We have now in Europe one unique opportunity to build the most appropriate model to meet these objectives, which is at the same time an opportunity that gives us the authority and the responsibility to induce a commitment that leads us in the good direction.

It is urgent to find the right path to face these challenges, and we need both a political and certainly a technological response. For the latter, input from the scientific world can be invaluable as contribution for a comprehensive response.

The EC in its Communication about the future of the CAP pleads for a European agriculture subordinate to the principles of a "viable agricultural production", together with "sustainable management of natural resources" and "balanced territorial development".

In the EP, we are aware of this challenging task and we are also ready to transform these principles into concrete proposals.

Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, MEP

*Chair of the subgroup "Agriculture" of the European Parliament
Intergroup "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development"*



2010, the international year of biodiversity: let us preserve our forests!

"We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Our planet is being ecologically over-consumed upon and it is time to gain consciousness about it. It is worrisome to see that in this international year of biodiversity the loss of genetic resources in Europe and around the world has only grown. As Member of the European Parliament and Mayor of a French town which lies at the heart of the National Parc of Mercantour, I am very concerned about the erosion of our biodiversity at both the European and global level. It is essential to mobilise for the fight against this scourge because the consequences will be dramatic. The stakes are high. The erosion of genetic resources leads to catastrophic environmental, economic and social consequences.

In the framework of my activities as Chair of the sub-group "Forest" of the EP Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development," I have come to see that the maintenance and the safeguard of forests contribute to the preservation of our genetic resources. 80% of worldwide biodiversity is kept in forests, notably in tropical forests. Without forests, maintaining biodiversity will be difficult. I believe that the health of our forests is closely linked to the wellbeing of human beings.

Forest ecosystems are increasingly weakened. It is necessary to fight first and foremost against the deforestation and degradation of these forest ecosystems. Each year in the European Union, 500.000 ha of forests in average are destroyed by fire. The Member States that are most affected by this situation record up to 50.000 forest fires each year. Human intervention is responsible for the start of forest fires in 90% of the cases. I believe that prevention is the most efficient weapon to protect our forests and our biodiversity.

Another problem that worries me particularly concerns the fight against invasive species. The introduction of novel species of plants, trees and animals now cause serious problems to forests and give rise to concerns in the forestry sector. I have set up within the EP a working group on the invasion and proliferation of red weevil. The invasion of red weevil in Europe threatens the survival of palm trees on the Mediterranean region. The palm tree is an integral part of the common heritage of the States of the South and it represents an ecological and economic issue for those countries.

I am also a fervent advocate for the conservation of wild life. I have set up a wolves' parc named ALPHA in order to protect these predators in Saint Martin Vesubie, France. These wolves are red listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as endangered species. I am very worried about the vulnerability of wolves and their rescue is for me an essential issue.

I believe that it is now necessary and urgent to establish a coherent policy so as to halt the loss of our biodiversity. The new strategy implemented by the European Commission regarding the maintenance and protection of biodiversity is encouraging. In my view, it is essential to have economically visible genetic resources. Biodiversity and ecosystem services are too often considered to be an abundant richness, free to access and inexhaustible. I am very worried by the impact of biodiversity loss on societies' prosperity. If no particular measure is taken to curb the gradual loss of biodiversity the value of goods and services linked to forests that will be lost will amount to 5% of the world's GDP by 2050. It is still time to act and we cannot wait anymore.



Gaston Franco, MEP

Chair of the subgroup "Forest" of the European Parliament Intergroup "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development"



Deadline Life - Nagoya defines future for life on earth



Governments approved a step change for biodiversity at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10) in Nagoya this October.

A new Strategic Plan, consisting of 20 targets designed to tackle the extinction crisis and restore the earth's natural capital, was one of the main outcomes of the conference. There is also a decision, following intensive all-night negotiations, on a new international protocol to give access to genetic resources, while at the same time making sure that benefits derived from them are properly shared (ABS). The third key component of the "Nagoya package deal" was the agreement on the resource mobilization strategy – which should increase the financial resources available for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This strategy needs to be endorsed by the next CBD COP in 2012 in India.

The stakes were high at the Nagoya conference. The latest IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ showed that nature's very backbone is at risk – with a third of species assessed seriously threatened and many among them facing the risk of extinction. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study, known as TEEB, warns us that many of the benefits of nature that we have been taking for granted and enjoyed for free are at risk of running out. The Global Biodiversity Outlook 3 (<http://gbo3.cbd.int/>) showed that we are on the verge of catastrophic and irreversible tipping points.

IUCN, whose mission is to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature, has played a crucial role in the development of the Convention on Biological Diversity and in its implementation. Its goal has been to ensure that sound biodiversity science underpins the decisions affecting biodiversity while influencing governments to take serious steps to realize their pledges.

A delegation of Members of the European Parliament, including a number of representatives of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development led by Jo Leinen, Chair of the Environment Committee attended the CBD COP10 as observers. IUCN Regional Director for Pan-Europe, Hans Friederich guided the MEPs through the discussions and IUCN position by providing briefings on the key points of debate.

A Party to the CBD and a key player on the global international scene, the European Union is committed to the long-term biodiversity 2050 vision and the 2020 targets adopted in Nagoya. The new Plan meets the objective of taking urgent and effective action to stop the loss of biodiversity set out by the European Council Conclusions of March 2010. The EU post 2010 Strategy – to be endorsed in 2011 – aims to contribute to the implementation of Nagoya's commitments.





Global farmers express their support for GM crops to EU policymakers



From October 25th-29th, six farmers from three continents visited Europe during which they had a series of meetings and events with European policymakers. The visiting farmers travelled from China, Uganda, the Philippines, Burkina Faso and Brazil to speak about their experiences with GM crops and to ask why European farmers could not reap the same benefits

In Brussels, the farmers learned more about the situation for GM crops in Europe and gave presentations about their work to EuropaBio's agricultural biotechnology team. Their busy meeting programme included one-to-one meetings with MEPs at the European Parliament, together with senior officials from European Commission's DG SANCO, DG AGRI, and DG DEV, and a number of other meetings with farmers' organisations, embassies and several Permanent Representations.

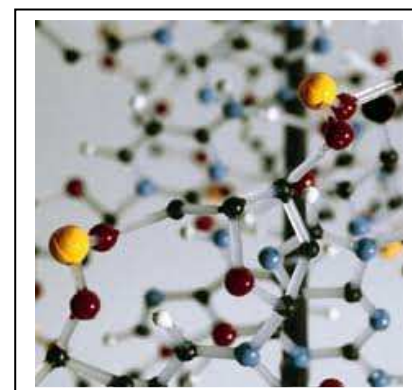
Following their meeting programme, the farmers participated in a well-attended and thought-provoking discussion, 'Sustainable Solutions for Food Security,' which was attended by around 50 people. Following presentations from two of the farmers (Ms. Rosalie Ellasus from the Philippines and Mr. Ivo Carraro from Brazil) alongside Mr. Roberto Ridolfi, Head of Unit for EuropeAid in the European Commission, and Dr. Justus Wesseler of Wageningen University, a lively debate began. Farmers and audience members presented an argument for or against a proposition. The audience then 'voted with its feet' by moving to the side with which they agreed. Attendees discussed the influence that Europe's decisions have for the rest of the world, the possibility that it is being surpassed by other countries who readily adopt innovative ideas, as well as the importance of communicating information about food and agriculture to the public. After this compelling event, the farmers spoke at an event in the European Parliament entitled 'Food, Water and Energy: Balancing increasingly scarce resources against growing demand.'

Following their meetings and events in Brussels, the group of farmers then split up - two farmers travelled to London, while four farmers went to Paris for meetings with policymakers and the media.

The Paris group had lunch with French parliamentarians, including well-known Senator Jean Bizet, followed by interviews with journalists in the afternoon. They also met with leaders of an association that promotes agricultural biotechnology, and they gave presentations at the offices of the French farming organisation SAF to an audience of around 30 people, including scientists and several journalists.

The farmers who travelled to London met with high-level politicians at Westminster, including influential MP George Freeman. They then visited the National Institute of Agricultural Botany for 'Agriculture in Action,' during which they spoke to an audience of both agricultural scientists and farmers. The following day, they had multiple meetings with journalists, including *The Times* and the BBC, and MPs, including Neil Parish and Laurence Robertson.

For photos and brief biographies of the farmers, please visit:
<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=81453&id=1071458053&l=ec06875b3c>





3 questions to...

... Hans Friederich, IUCN



Q: The implementation of ecosystem-based approaches and the integration of biodiversity and sustainable land management considerations into relevant climate change adaptation will require enhanced cooperation. How can synergies between the different biodiversity, land management and climate change actors be reached, especially with regards to the three Rio Conventions.

H.F.: One of the most effective ways to adapt to the effects of climate change is to harness the forces of nature. This includes conserving, managing and restoring ecosystems that have been modified during the past decades or centuries. Examples are traditional floodplains, windbreaks and groundwater reserves that have been altered for mainly agricultural or industrial developments. They should be preserved so that they continue to provide ecosystem goods and services on which livelihoods depend.

Allowing rivers to use natural spill ways and using lakes and swamps to absorb water during times of flooding, can provide natural infrastructure against extreme events. This may require, for example, breaching of dikes and reconstructing natural water courses instead of man-made canals.

Similarly, restoring water reserves in peatlands allows for sustainable water supply downstream during periods of droughts. This will require redirection of streams towards peatlands during the rainy season, to enable recharge of groundwater reserves, and may require the plugging of artificial drainage channels.

Q: According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, climate change is likely to become one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss by the end of the century. How can the EU ensure mutual support for biodiversity and climate change objectives? Which incentives have been put forward to facilitate climate change related activities that take into consideration biodiversity?

H.F.: After the 2009 elections, the European Commission split the Department of Environment into two new Directorates – one responsible for climate change and one for environment. The first pre-requisite for mutual support is that DG Climate Action and DG Environment work closely together.

With the pressure on scarce finances, and the trend to reduce government budgets, it is important to invest in activities that promote biodiversity while addressing climate change. This includes restoration of degraded natural systems. When implementing forest planting programmes, it is advantageous to introduce mixed type forests, preferably using local species, and to enable semi-natural forests to grow.

Many of the funds in DG Agriculture could be used to promote landscape restoration, creating corridors for biodiversity and climate change adaptation while enriching agricultural systems through natural pollination and diversification.



Q: In preparation of the next stage of the work on climate change and biodiversity, how can both Climate and Biodiversity issues feature in the final Rio+20 Agenda?

H.F.: Climate change has been part of IUCN's work for over a decade and the link between climate change and IUCN's mission of biodiversity conservation has never been stronger. We also know that poverty reduction is impossible if we do not maintain ecosystems on which most of the poor people in the world depend. Nature-based solutions to adaptation and mitigation (including the so-called REDD+ mechanism) are available, cost-effective and sustainable solutions in reducing emissions and enabling us to adapt to climate change.

It is critical that progress on reaching MDG 7 and especially the sub-target on biodiversity conservation is seen in line with MDG 1 and others. We have stated many times that all Millennium Development goals are inter-related, and one cannot try to achieve one goal without tackling the others.

Headline target 5 of the CBD Strategic Plan calls for the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, to be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero, and to significantly reduce further habitat degradation and fragmentation. This will provide a secure basis for local livelihoods, and it will provide a foundation for climate change adaptation.





Letter from Peter Van Dalen, MEP

Chair of the subgroup “Maritime Affairs” of the EP Intergroup “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”



As you may know, European Parliament's Intergroup “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” has reinstated the subgroup “**Maritime affairs,**” of which I now am chairman. Sometimes it seems that biodiversity and maritime affairs mainly have conflicting interests. I don't think so and our subgroup can have an added value to bring both items closer together. It is a challenge to seek ways to find common grounds. Also, I want to show colleagues and people in the field that there are already great examples of cooperation between the areas of biodiversity and maritime affairs.

Therefore I decided to host a **visit to the Port of Rotterdam on January 13th 2011**. We will explore the concept of the **‘Green Port’** and how it's being put into practice by the Port of Rotterdam. For instance: cleaner vessels are dealt with more quickly than more polluting vessels, and the cleaner ships receive a discount on their harbour-dues.

During the first part of the visit we will have speeches from the vice-mayor of Rotterdam and Mr. Ruud Lubbers, chairman of the **Rotterdam Climate Initiative (RCI)**. The visit is organised in close cooperation with the RCI, a movement where government, organisations, companies, knowledge institutes and citizens collaborate to achieve a fifty per cent reduction of CO2 emissions, adapt to climate change and promote the economy in the Rotterdam region. I believe this integrated approach, where all stakeholders are involved, can be a great example for other harbours.

The CEO of the Port of Rotterdam, Hans Smits, will give a speech during a lunch meeting. In the afternoon we will visit several clean vessels in the port and we will be informed about the latest developments. We will close our visit with a dinner with an exchange of views with various stakeholders.

I am looking forward to this first visit of the subgroup of Maritime affairs and I will keep you informed on our other activities.

Kind regards,

Peter van Dalen, MEP

Chair of the subgroup “Maritime affairs” of the European parliament Intergroup “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”





Newsletter

October – December 2010

Season's Greetings

The team of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development wishes you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year for 2011!

We look forward to working with you again in 2011.

Warmest Regards,

Despina, Mélanie, Kathleen, Arianna, Mirian, Gilda and Chiara.

