



**Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE)
Foundation**

ACTIVITY REPORT

2007-2009

Introduction by the CEO of the RISE Foundation

Corrado Pirzio-Biroli

The Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation has started its operations in 2007¹ when former Commissioner for Agriculture Dr. Franz Fischler, his former Chief of Cabinet Corrado Pirzio-Biroli, the European Landowners' Organisation (ELO) and the Friends of the Countryside (FCS) joined forces in order to promote a sustainable and viable countryside.

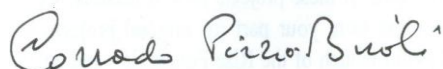
RISE is an independent foundation with a pan European board of directors. It is devoted to the promotion of sustainable agriculture and of a living countryside. Its general aim is to help rural regions to meet the challenges of urbanization and globalization, removing the structural, economic and cultural barriers that hold the countryside back and offsetting growing public neglect of rural interests and their marginalization in public decision.

Since its creation in 2007, RISE, as an increasingly influential think tank, has established a reputation with EU and Member State decision-makers based on its broad contribution to the food and environmental security agenda. More specifically, it has promoted the joint concept of food and environmental security and advocates a system of rewards for land managers for the public goods such as eco-systems they produce.

In addition to its contribution to the political agenda, RISE is also financing innovative projects aimed at conserving the rural landscape. The Foundation has also launched a Friends' Habitat Network of environmentally sustainable, well-managed private projects and bestows an annual *Belleuropa Award* to rural properties, which have utilized agri-environmental measures to achieve impressive results.

This Activity Report gives a more detailed overview of the RISE actions per annum. The coming years will be crucial for RISE in both strategic as contextual terms. In order to guarantee the long term success of this Foundation, RISE is professionalizing its fundraising capacities, expanding its think-tank activities and actively looking for new pilot projects.

I strongly believe that is vital to successfully harness the potential of European agriculture and rural communities to meet the food and environmental security challenges which will confront us in the coming years. RISE plays a significant role in this context.



Corrado Pirzio-Biroli
CEO RISE Foundation

¹ www.risefoundation.eu

2007

The Launch of the RISE Foundation

In March 2007, Franz Fischler presented the RISE Foundation before a packed audience in Madrid, organized by the Grupo de Empresas Agrarias – ELO’s Spanish Member, and sponsored by the BNP Paribas. His presentation on “The Changing Climate for Rural Development and its Financing in Europe: The RISE Foundation” led one present to claim that Fischler was the Al GORE of Europe! The speech focussed on the double food and environment challenge. Reworked and updated, it has since been used on various occasions, notably before the Centre for European Policy Studies, at a working dinner at the European Parliament, and at a dinner speech at Westminster, and has been published in *Politica Agricola Internazionale* and in the *Countryside* magazine.

RISE has drawn the attention of several leading political and industrial figures, but also reserved seats for strategic industrial partners, who have since then agreed to adhere to the Board of Directors. The board is constituted by the following members:

Franz Fischler	Former Commissioner for Agriculture	<i>Chairman</i>
Baron Daniel Janssen	Former President and CEO, Solvay	<i>Vice Chair</i>
Alex Schaub	Former Director General, European Commission	<i>Vice Chair</i>
Corrado Pirzio-Biroli	Former Head of Cabinet of Mr. Fischler	<i>CEO</i>
Thierry de l’Escaille	Secretary General ELO	<i>Deputy CEO</i>
John Atkin	Chief Operating Officer, SYNGENTA	
Michel Barnier	European Commissioner and former Minister	
Paolo De Castro	MEP, Chairman Agricultural Committee EP	
Luc Coene	Deputy Governor National Bank of Belgium	
François Debiesse	BNP PARIBAS Foundation	
Karl Grotenfelt	Former Chairman Maximedia Group and President ELO	
Sandra Kalniete	MEP, Former Minister Foreign Affairs Latvia	
Jože Osterč	Professor and Senator University of Ljubljana	
Cees Veerman	CEO, Bracamonte; Supervisor RABOBANK; Univ. Prof.	

Activities

In its first months, RISE has been instrumental in organising and leading the conference ‘Food, Feed and Bio-energy; Priorities and Dilemmas’, which was held at the Renewable Energy House, Brussels in January 2008. Since then both debates, on food and energy security on the one hand, and on bio-fuels on the other, have been hard to miss thanks to good (and lucky) timing for these two subjects. RISE Chairman Fischler as well as its CEO have thus been in great demand on the conference circuit. Preparation for the input to the 1st Forum for the Future of Agriculture, which was devoted to food and environmental security, formed a substantial part of the Foundation’s work at the end of 2007.

Besides being active in the conference circuit, the first months of RISE focussed on the establishment of a funding strategy. In that light, a contract was signed with *Factary* Consultants for the first phase of a capital campaign. Accordingly, 106 priority prospects have been identified, and a number of requests have been made for advice regarding our capital objective. A capital objective over a five-year period of €15m by 2012 has been set, devoting

50% of annual donations to projects, 35% to capital and up to 15% to administration. For larger cross-border donations, RISE benefits from negotiated fees under the Transnational Giving Europe Network through the King Baudouin Foundation.

RISE has obtained seed money from the BNPPARIBAS for €100.000 and private contributions amounting to a quarter as much. It has invested €10.000 for a land reclamation project north of Madrid. It has indications that it may obtain further donations totalling €1.2 million, and possibly €2.1 million, and has raised interest with a number of companies with whom the possibilities of partnerships are being assessed.

Work has been hampered by lack of staff time, but the CEO is now assisted by one junior staff.

Nevertheless, a Task Force for a study on rural development priorities has been launched in order to produce a paper on the public goods farmers can provide and their remuneration, as well as the priorities for a foundation such as RISE for the 2nd Forum on Agriculture to be scheduled for spring 2009.

As the only pan-European independent foundation devoted to sustainable rural development, this initiative is particularly timely as public funds for the sector diminish. The neglect of rural interests has huge negative effects on rural life. Rural depopulation leads to decreased voter power and economic globalisation marginalizes rural interests in the public decision making process. Capital collection is so far developing nicely. The exposure of RISE in the public debate has been quite beyond expectations and should be of help in future funding.

2008

2008 was a key year for RISE. The first strategic partnership was secured and innovative rural development projects were funded. There were however also some difficulties and disappointments, which were the result of the economic turmoil at the end of 2008.

Partnerships

Syngenta has become the first strategic partner of RISE after confirming a contribution of €1m over a three year period. John Atkin, the Chief Operating Officer of Syngenta has since joined RISE's Board. The BNP PARIBAS remains an associated partner, joined by the MAFF, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Activities

In 2008, RISE continued to focus its activities on two main strands: it continued its think-tank activities, whilst financing innovative pilot projects.

I. Think-Tank Activities

Task Force on Public Goods

The main project of the RISE foundation in 2008 was the creation and work of the European Task Force on The Delivery of Public Goods and Priorities for Public and Private Support in the European Countryside. The objective of the study is to focus on the nature and scale of

public goods and services produced by land managers, and to draw consequences for the second pillar of the CAP in view of the EU Financial Perspectives and of the next CAP reform steps.

The Task Force involved outlays in 2008-2009 for €203,000 and revenues for €103,000, with a net cost of €100,000. Contributions were provided by the Italian Government (€ 89,000), Syngenta (€ 83,000), The Country Land & Business Association (€ 10,000), the FCS (€ 5,000) and the ELO (€ 5,000).

The study analyses the available evidence on the range of environmental and man-made landscape services that land managers – farmers and foresters – provide. These are ecosystem services such as biodiversity, i.e. species and habitats, aspects of the cultural landscape, and the resource protection roles undertaken by land managers. The study is trying to look not just at the actual services delivered, but also to quantify the scale of the non-market services from multifunctional land management, such as flood protection, water filtration, and carbon sequestration. This in turn stimulates a look at the various ways of trying to bring about the delivery of these services.

Although we appointed a brilliant task-force director in the person of Professor Allan Buckwell, and succeeded in assembling an impressive group of European experts on the subject, of which there are only a few including two Commission officials, the task, turned out to be even more difficult than originally thought. DG Environment of the European Commission launched its own study on the subject, the second phase of which has just started, and the early member of our Task Force from DG Agriculture considered the subject so vital for the next proposals on CAP reform, that he led the Commissioner for Agriculture to launch a further study only a couple of months after the first meeting of our Task Force.

Intellectual input for International Conferences

2008 was also the year of consolidation of the support for the organisation of conferences, such as the preparation for the 2009 Forum on the Future of Agriculture at the Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels. Indeed, RISE provided input by delivering speakers and by developing the key themes of food and environmental security.

Besides this project, RISE has delivered several speeches, notably by its CEO Corrado Pirzio-Biroli, such as at the Agra Europe Conference on Impacts of Biofuels on Commodity Market and at a BUNGE company seminar in Istanbul on the battle for food, water, energy and the environment, at the European Commission's Green Week and at a parliamentary Dinner at Westminster. Several speeches have been delivered also by the Chairman Franz Fischler, by Paolo De Castro, and by other Board members, notably regarding the future of the CAP. For example, Corrado Pirzio-Biroli has written a chapter for the book "The Perfect Storm" edited by Professor Johan Swinnen of the Centre for European Policy Studies. Other Board members are authors of press articles and interviews.

II. Innovative Pilot Projects

The establishment of partnerships and the other donations have allowed RISE to provide funding for the Foundation's first two rural development projects. They concern an experimental flood protection study on Coastal Bay Design in England, and a pilot land reclamation and management project North of Madrid. These projects have been completed

(on land reclamation), reached their end phase (the Task Force), or launched (the flood protection).

More precisely, RISE has provided:

- A grant of €10,000 for the € 65,000 research pilot project called “Optimal Stable Bay Design” in Norfolk, UK. The aim is to stabilise an eroding beach for 21 km and protect seven villages from flooding and/or erosion with a population of some 4,500 people together with several historic buildings, 4,200 ha farmland and fresh water habitat including Natura 2000 sites. The full financing of the project, partly by local public authorities was obtained only after our Executive Committee made a commitment on behalf of RISE. The conclusions of the study will be submitted during the course of 2009.
- A grant of € 10,000 for the € 100,000 pilot project “Cereal steppes of rivers Jarama and Henares”, in the north of Madrid. This is an innovative project as well, which uses quarry-extracted sludge to improve the composition of agricultural soil. More precisely, it consists of a water recovery proceeding from dry sludge treatment and the use of the dry mud thus obtained for rural rehabilitation of agricultural land and for the conservation and maintenance of the Bustards (*Otis tarda*) population in that zone of Madrid.

In addition, RISE has launched the Friends’ Habitat Network of EU properties committing themselves to respect seven conditions (to be a private property; to respect the natural, cultural, and historic heritage, with bi-annual reports on actions undertaken or envisaged; to develop sustainable practices regarding the conservation, management and promotion of renewable natural resources, such as the fauna, the flora and the landscape; to plan and implement activities for the education of the new generations of landowners and managers of public relations, and/or at least authorize appropriate access to the public; to respect the legal and ecological constraints such as Natura 2000, where applicable; to identify a Head manager of the site; to be a member of the FCS or of an association linked to the ELO or the FCS, or agree to join either).

Members receive a shield to be shown at the entrance of their properties. The launch took place in September 2008, where Seger van Voorst tot Voorst, owner and manager of The Hoge Veluwe Estate in Henderloo, The Netherlands became the mid-wife and first member of the project. The RISE Foundation has made an initial order of 50 such shields at a cost of € 20 each and plans to provide them to new members of the network. They are being offered free of charge to the 65 or so properties that will appear in the forthcoming publication on The European Estate. The cost of membership in the form of a donation to RISE is €150, with annual membership payments of €120. All members would automatically become Friends of the RISE Foundation. Their dues would be used for the Mission of the Foundation and can benefit of tax exemption. This project has attracted the interest of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

2009

2009 has been an important year for RISE, as it was a year in which the Foundation managed to broaden its scope and in which it has finalised its major projects. It was a year in which strategic decisions concerning the future of RISE were made. The think-tank function of the foundation developed beyond what we had envisaged.

Partnerships

2009 was also the year in which RISE had to deal with some financial disappointments. Due to the economic crisis, some potential partnerships were put off. The KBC Group – who had committed €900,000 over three years, to be contributed one third each by the Boerenbond, CERA and KBC Bank – pulled out after the collapse of the KBC share. Nevertheless, RISE managed to establish new associated partnerships with John Deere and BUNGE. Some individuals decided to make annual donations, showing that there is a growing confidence in RISE' activities.

RISE did also take the decision to attract a permanent Fundraising Officer in order to be able to meet its ambitious objectives, set out during the Factory Capital Campaign. The new Fundraising Officer will take office in January 2010 and will establish a new Strategy and Funding Campaign. In the meanwhile, RISE has speeded up its actions regarding the attraction of new partners and has established a Funding Committee, consisting of influential members representing the 27 Member States.

Activities

The year of 2009 was devoted to the finalisation of the foundation's three key projects. *Factary* presented to the June Board the conclusion of its feasibility study for a capital campaign by *Factary*. It believed that the target of raising €15 million was feasible, 50% of which for the endowment and 50% for projects. That conclusion, which was analysed by the RISE Board in June 2009, showed that the time had come to recruit at least one additional permanent staff as well as a full-time funding expert so as to launch a proper capital campaign in 2010. The first recruitment has taken up her job in September and the fund raiser has been found and will start operations at the end of January 2010.

I. Think-Tank Activities

Task Force on Public Goods

The Task Force delivered its report with the title: *Public Goods from Private Land*, which was published in December 2009. A Press Briefing Lunch on the 1st December, hosted by European Parliament Agricultural Committee Chairman Paolo de Castro, marked the official publication. It was attended by several journalists, Commission officials and MEPs.

In the beginning of 2010 the Report will be promoted at a public event at the Centre for European Studies (CEPS) in Brussels. The full report is available in paper and on the RISE website in English and Italian, and its executive summaries are available in English, French and Italian.

Since the Task Force has reached its end phase, RISE has started to focus on new think-tank activities. After having been contacted to assess the feasibility of a comprehensive European study on the environmental impacts of specific agricultural products, RISE has initiated a preparatory research phase. It has sent out letters with requests for information and statistics to the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment of the 27 Member States, to DG Agriculture and DG Environment, and to Eurostat, the Joint Research Centre and the European Environmental Agency. Still in the phase of information collection, it is to be expected that in 2010 RISE will form several working groups working out a more detailed study, in line with the US Keystone Study 'Field to Market: The Keystone Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture',

which assesses environmental resource indicators for measuring outcomes of On-Farm Agricultural Production in the United States.

Intellectual Input for International Conferences

The beginning of 2009 was dominated by the organising of the 2nd Forum on the Future of Agriculture held on the 17th-18th March 2009 at the Bibliothèqu Solway. The Forum, chaired by RISE's chairman Dr. Franz Fischler, was a resounding success, fully packed with 400 overflowing attendees.

The keynote speakers, like Nobel Prize Winner Paul Krugman and Commissioner for Agriculture Marianne Fischer Boel, dealt with the linkages among the three serious crises: financial, food and environment and the need for a new financial architecture, the conclusion of the Doha Round and an EU role in contributing to feed the world by producing more and better food in a more sustainable way. We heard different views on food availability in the future. A great majority expected rising prices and price volatility, and a deterioration of the balance between demand and supply. The need for a global food safety net and appropriate food stocks was underlined, and the lack of a food lender of last resort was lamented.

The discussions also included the potential of the CAP to help purchase public goods by farmers, even if this means that a permanent change in direction with new targeted policy instruments allowing producing verifiable results is needed. Land managers should be involved in shared projects.

There was also talk at the Bibliothèqu Solway about food safety and quality as part of food security. Commissioner Fischer Boel dealt also with biofuels (for), and GMOs, on both of which views were divided. She believed that the publication of individual farm payments would clarify future reform discussions and better explain to tax payers why direct payments were justified and what to do with the ecosystem services.

Besides giving input for the 2009 Forum, RISE has already been involved in the preparation of the 2010 edition, to be held in March 2010 which will focus on the Economics and Politics of Food versus Climate Change.

Moreover, RISE has been contacted by the Region of Lombardy to help with the theme 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life' in the preparations for the EXPO2015 to be held in Milan. RISE has been asked to propose a European task force (for which it will initially get €20,000) to advise Lombardy's authorities for the EXPO, and to help spreading across Europe their experience on urban-rural integrated development. Its exact task needs to be clarified before entering into a contractual arrangement.

In 2009, the speech activities of RISE Board members continued on the same priority themes. Our stance on bio fuels has become increasingly critical. Moreover, at the request of ELO and FCS, RISE drafted a Biotech Manifesto as a *Sprachregelung* for members interested in making up their opinion about GMOs. RISE has also provided a chapter for a book on the future of the CAP edited by Paolo de Castro (MEP).

II. Development Projects

The Foundation's first two rural development projects financed so far concern an experimental flood protection study on Coastal Bay Design in England, and a pilot land reclamation and management project North of Madrid. These projects have been completed (on land reclamation), or launched (the flood protection). For a detailed description, please see the 2008 Chapter of this Activity Report.

Because of the limited dimension of the endowment after the drop outs of potential partners, and due to a lack of personnel, the Executive Committee made no calls for projects in 2009. However, now RISE is considering the financing of new projects, which will need further reflection, preparation and assessments.

III. Networks and Awards

Besides the RISE Friends Habitat Network (described in the 2008 Chapter), RISE has found another way of actively promoting a living and sustainable countryside.

It has taken over the bestowing of the *Belleuropa Prize*, which is an annual award developed in the 1990s and offered by Giuseppe NATTA, a Friends of the Countryside (FCS) member, consisting in a naturalist painting. The Prize is bestowed to managers of private rural properties that promote “Third Generation” agriculture with immaterial productions such as quality of life, landscape, noise absorption, and CO2 reduction or limitation encouraging conservation, biodiversity and the development of new technologies. The selection committee consists of Thierry de l’Escaille, the Minister of the Environment of the Lombardy Region and the IIMA President Carlos Otero.

The first winner was the Garganta property in Spain. This year the winner is the “**Renaturation of a former iron curtain**” project of the estate of Forstbetrieb Morsleben in Germany, owned by Dr. Eberhard Hamer. The Forstleben estate is a good example of recovering natural habitat, the natural conditions, biodiversity and landscape after having been seized by the Soviet Union and becoming part of the iron curtain. During this seizure a considerable part of the forest was turned into waste-land by military units to build up the iron curtain. Other devastating practices such as the use of weed killers, the emplacement of land mines, anti tank obstacles and automatic firing devices damaged the estate to a considerable extent. Through reforestation with a great variety of wood species, the enrichment of the area with 4 lakes and 5 natural clearings, not only the forests has been brought back to a better state, but natural habitat and biodiversity has been restored as well.

As mentioned in the 2008 Chapter, the Friends’ Habitat Network was launched in September 2008 in The Netherlands, where the Hoge Veluwe, the only privately owned National Park, which consists of 6,800ha and is directed by Baron van Voorst tot Voorst, was chosen as the first founding member of the network. It hosts the Kröller-Müller Museum and sculpture garden, the St. Hubertus Hunting Lodge and 500,000 visitors a year. Since its launch, the foundation has received several applications and is examining them as to whether they meet the seven conditions for network membership. At least a couple dozen additional members paying the annual fee of €120 are expected to join in 2010.

Conclusions

Since the creation of the RISE Foundation in 2007, RISE has preferred to focus on few activities that are feasible within the limits of its initial financial and staff resources and that have a considerable potential impact. Now that RISE is attracting more strategic and associated partners, that its Executive staff has been complemented by two full-time staff members and that its reputation in the Food and Environmental Security field is increasing, it is more than confident that 2010 will be a year of additional members and new projects, both on the think-tank and on the pilot projects side. It will continue its efforts to promote a sustainable and viable agriculture and countryside in Europe and beyond.