

## Horses are rural and green animals

In December 2019, the new European Commission presented its main strategy for the next 5 years : the Green Deal. This new growth strategy aims “to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy”.

The European equine industry has a role to play in the achievement of the « farm to fork strategy » and the biodiversity strategy. Equines are not only production animals, they also provide ecosystem services, especially for land uses and biodiversity preservation.

### European target

**- 50 %**

of GHG emission in 2050 in comparison to 1990

Reduction of GHG emission

**Sector** contribution

Equine traction can be used in arable areas and forests to reduce GHG emissions.

The energy needed to feed a working equine is up to 60% renewable (9% if using a tractor powered by oil).

**Carbon storage thanks to permanent grasslands**

The presence of equines contributes to the maintenance of grasslands (2<sup>nd</sup> carbon sink after forests).

Valorisation of manure to reduce the use of fertilizer

European target

**- 20%**

of use of fertilizers in 2030

**Sector** contribution

The equine sector produces manure that could be used to fertilize soils and reduce chemical spreading (less nitrate emissions).

This goal can be reached putting manure producers through processors

**VAL'FUMIER (FRANCE)**

The aim of this project is to find solutions in order to locally valorise manure thanks to 4 steps:

1. Identification of manure producers' needs
2. Identification of local processors
3. The linking of producers and processors
4. Description of manure (agronomic value, residues of medicinal products)



### Restoration of the biodiversity

European targets

**30 %**

of land in Europe protected by 2030

Legally binding targets

Bring back **at least 10%** of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features

**Sector** contribution

Equines play two roles in the preservation of biodiversity. First, grazing helps to maintain open landscapes. Second, it contributes to the conservation of traditional breeds, adapted to their environment and used for land management.

### Domestic biodiversity

*“The decline of genetic diversity must also be reversed, including by facilitating the use of traditional varieties of crops and breeds”.* Chapter 2.2.2 “bringing nature back to agricultural land” of the biodiversity strategy

**Sector** contribution

Among 180 registered local equine and donkey breeds in the FAO database in Europe and Caucasus  
48 % are at risk  
15 % are extinct

### Soil Preservation

Soil is a non-renewable resource extremely important. *“It is therefore essential to step up efforts to protect soil fertility, reduce soil erosion and increase soil organic matter”* (Chapter 2.2.3 of the biodiversity strategy).

**Sector** contribution

Compaction of soil can be reduced with the use of equine traction instead of machines. Equine traction is particularly adapted for the exploitation of small plots or parcels with natural handicaps (slope, small space, natural obstacles...).



**Maintenance of areas under high-diversity landscape features**

The presence of equines contributes to the conservation of permanent grassland and the maintenance of areas of high biodiversity value, such as hedges, trees, buffer zones...

## The use of mixed grazing

Equine animals have a unique impact on lands. Their morphology, physiology and behaviour are different from other species. They can be used in complementary with other species for an optimal recovery of grasslands and a good preservation of the biodiversity. Mixed grazing is a sustainable agricultural practice. Scientific studies demonstrate the positive impacts of mixed grazing :

1. A better nutritional value of the grasslands
2. A better control of shrubs
3. A decrease of parasitism



« *Greening urban and peri-urban areas* » (chapter 2.2.8 of the biodiversity strategy)

Equines are able to develop plots where other species can not graze, especially in peri-urban areas. Equines contribute to a soft urbanisation maintaining grasslands in peri-urban areas. The presence of equines is a way to preserve natural surfaces in urbanised areas creating an interaction between humans and animals and strengthening leisure activities.

## Management of environmentally sensitive area

The equine grazing contributes to the conservation of environmentally sensitive area where the use of a machine is not possible.

## KONIK POLSKI (POLAND)

In Poland, ponies called Konik Polski are introduced in forests and post-agricultural areas. Their presence has positive impacts on these areas with an increase in insects, in birds, and the development of interest and awareness of nature and ecology for tourists and local people.

## HOW CAN THE EQUINE INDUSTRY BE SUPPORTED BY THE EU LEGISLATION ?

- **Maintaining the definition of «genuine farmers»** as proposed by the Commission in the article 4 of its proposal for a regulation on strategic plan (COM (2018) 392 Final – 2018/0216 COD). In some member States, equines are recognised as farm animals. With this definition they will be able to include measures fostering the presence of equines in their national strategic plan.
- **Promoting the green measures in the next CAP** (conditionality, eco-schemes, rural development) and the development of agroecology. As presented in this paper, equines present many green assets and can be used for many purposes (mixed grazing for the management of grasslands, equine traction...).
- **Helping the European Equine industry by restoring coherence between the animal welfare strategy and the trade policy.** European equines are permanently excluded from the food chain for the use of some medicinal treatments while horses imported from third countries are only excluded for 6 months. This unfair competition introduces on the market meat from equines bred with less strict welfare standards than in the EU.
- **Encouraging the dissemination in member States of the 2 guides on welfare of equine animals** produced by the subgroup of the EU Animal welfare platform. These guides and factsheets could be an effective tool to transfer knowledge and good practices.
- **Contributing to rural development in the next research programme Horizon Europe.** Projects linking rural development, agriculture and natural resources are essential for an harmonious and sustainable development of territories all around Europe.

## Key figures

of the European equine industry

7 million  
Equines

6 million  
Hectares of  
grasslands

800 000  
people  
employed

100 billion  
€/year  
Economic  
impact