EU GREEN WEEK 2026 · BRUSSELS · 3–4 JUNE

Europe’s Future Starts in the Soil

Why a nature-positive economy is no longer a question of *whether* — but of **how fast we scale it**.

By Bernhard Aumann · Chairman of the Board, tgo AG (The Good Ones)
Consortium partner · Smart Carbon Farming — Interreg North-West Europe

30 : 1	**$7.3 tn**	**2 days**	**7 May 2026**
more capital flows into nature-negative than nature-positive activity (UNEP 2026)	annual nature-negative finance flows worldwide	Brussels — plenary, pitches, LIFE Awards, investor matchmaking	EU biochar carbon-removal methodology in force (CRCF)

Two intensive and inspiring days in Brussels have come to an end. As Chairman of the Board of tgo AG and a consortium partner in the Interreg North-West Europe project Smart Carbon Farming, I had the privilege of taking part in EU Green Week 2026 — the European Commission’s flagship environmental conference, now in its 26th edition — engaging with leading voices from policy, finance, science, agriculture, industry, biodiversity and climate.

What stood out most was a clear shift in the conversation. A few years ago, the discussion was about whether concepts such as carbon farming, nature credits, biodiversity credits and regenerative agriculture could work. Today the question is sharper: how do we scale them fast enough to meet Europe’s climate, biodiversity and resilience goals? Put differently — we no longer have a knowledge problem. We have an implementation problem.

FROM AMBITION TO IMPLEMENTATION

“Investing in a Nature-Positive Economy”

This year’s theme captured the challenge perfectly. Europe has no shortage of strategies, frameworks, scientific evidence or political ambition. What we need now is implementation. Across sessions — from “Show Me the Money” to “Nature Credits”, “Soil: Fertile Ground for Innovation” and “Farming with Nature” — one message kept returning: nature must become part of economic decision-making. Not as a cost. Not as a compliance exercise. But as a measurable asset that creates resilience, productivity and long-term value.

THE NUMBER THAT SILENCED THE ROOM

For every euro that protects nature, thirty work against it

During one of the plenary sessions, a single figure quieted the hall: today, roughly 30 times more capital flows into nature-negative activities than into nature-positive investment — and a significant share of it is government-funded. According to UNEP’s State of Finance for Nature 2026, some USD 7.3 trillion in nature-negative finance flows each year compares to only about

USD 220 billion for nature-based solutions. The question is no longer “Can we afford to protect nature?” — but “Can we afford not to finance it?”

Just as honestly, a tension was named: an urgent call to act for nature and biodiversity, running alongside a watering-down and delay of the very EU regulations meant to support that shift. When the policy signal stays mixed, the core question only sharpens — how do we translate ambition into decisions? Because “nature-positive” will ultimately be tested not in speeches, but in risk pricing, capital allocation and accountability.

THE MOST VALUABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IS BENEATH OUR FEET

Healthy soil is infrastructure

Of all the sessions, one stayed with me especially: “Soil: Fertile Ground for Innovation — From Sky to Microbes.” It said out loud what many still underestimate. Soil is infrastructure — not roads, power lines or data networks, but a water filter, a carbon store, a biodiversity hotspot, a nutrient cycle and a climate regulator, all at once. Healthy soil performs billions of biological processes every day, entirely for free. For decades these ecosystem services were effectively invisible in our economic systems. Today they are becoming investable — and that is a profound shift.

- **Stores carbon** — locking CO_2 out of the atmosphere
- **Filters and retains water** — buffering both flood and drought
- **Supports biodiversity** — a habitat for soil life and fungi
- **Improves food security** — and stabilises yields
- **Increases climate resilience** — the foundation under everything else

CARBON FARMING COMES OF AGE

From “Can this work?” to “How do we scale it?”

Carbon farming, agroforestry, biochar, peatland restoration and nature-based carbon removal are no longer niche ideas — they are becoming essential pillars of Europe’s transition. That shift now has a regulatory anchor: the EU Carbon Removals Certification Framework (CRCF, Regulation 2024/3012), the world’s first voluntary quality standard for carbon removals. The first methodology for Biochar Carbon Removal entered into force via delegated act on 7 May 2026 — a direct, practical lever for exactly the work we drive at tgo AG with biochar, humus build-up and microorganisms.

What investors are really looking for became clear across many conversations with funds, banks, insurers and corporates: not nice stories, but measurability, transparency, verifiability, risk reduction and scalability. That is precisely why MRV systems, independent verification, remote sensing and digital soil monitoring are gaining ground. The future belongs not to the loudest projects — but to the most credible ones.

> *Nature is not a backdrop. It is the foundation of our economy — and healthy soils are Europe's most productive infrastructure.*
>
> — Bernhard Aumann, tgo AG

RESTORATION WITH INTEGRITY

Restoring functions — not only surfaces

At the LIFE Awards, one idea stayed with me: restoring nature is not always about controlling, engineering or adding complexity. Sometimes it is about giving nature the space, time and conditions to do what it already knows how to do. A floodplain reconnecting with water. A wetland regulating excess flows. A soil that stores carbon, filters water and supports biodiversity. Certification, nature credits and carbon credits can support this shift — when they are grounded in robust science, transparency, independent verification and clear ecological outcomes. So the central question is not only how we invest in nature, but also: how do we restore with integrity, measure with humility and govern with responsibility?

AGRICULTURE AS SOLUTION — NOT PROBLEM

Farmers are among Europe's most important solution providers

One of the most encouraging developments was the changing perception of farming. More and more decision-makers recognise that farmers are not the problem — they are among the most important solution providers for climate, biodiversity, water management and food security. Regenerative agriculture can store carbon, retain water, support biodiversity, stabilise yields and create new revenue streams, all at once. This is where some of Europe's biggest opportunities lie — a theme that also shaped sessions such as "Can nature reinvigorate the countryside?" and "Building bridges: From polarisation to restoration."

VOICES FROM BRUSSELS

Perhaps the greatest value: the exchange

Among many candid and encouraging conversations, two perspectives stayed with me:

> *"We have the frameworks — now it's about making them work. 'Nature-positive' is decided not in speeches, but in risk pricing, capital allocation and accountability."*
>
> — Nicole Streuli-Fürst, Co-Founder & President, RepRisk — on transparency over business conduct and nature-related risk

> *"Restoration means restoring functions — not only surfaces. Sometimes it is enough to give nature the space, time and conditions."*
>
> — Dr. Senda Zarrouk, Engineer & Environmental Scientist, AgroParisTech — a carbon-farming wink from Padova to Brussels, and a spark for future Europe–Africa collaboration on soil regeneration and carbon credits

FROM THE STAGE TO THE DEAL TABLE

tgo AG at “Re:Invest in Nature”

For the first time, Green Week opened a dedicated startup-investor marketplace — “Re:Invest in Nature” — where projects working on nature-based solutions connect directly with capital. We used it to present two complementary, investable initiatives to different investors: one rooted in Ireland’s peatlands, one scaling permanent carbon removal across European farms.

Note: *the detailed commercial terms of both pitches are confidential and have been kept out of this public article. A full investor version with the financial model is available on request.*

1 · Peatlands for Prosperity — making Ireland’s peatlands productive again

A consortium proposal for Ireland’s peatland counties — tgo AG together with the Green Restoration Ireland Co-operative and Castlepollard Local Development. The idea is deceptively simple: paludiculture, or “wetter farming” — productive land use on rewetted peat that keeps carbon locked in the ground, slashes greenhouse-gas emissions, and still earns farmers an income.

1.66 M ha of Irish peatland — 75% of all the country’s soil carbon	**85%** already damaged or degraded today	**6–10 Mt** CO_2e emitted every year from drained peat	**~10 t** CO_2e avoided per hectare per year by raising the water table

The approach protects the intact core of a bog by making the outer zones pay: rewet and farm the degraded middle ring, raise water levels gradually on the agricultural edge, and the water table for the semi-natural core restores itself — systems thinking at landscape scale. Proven crops at the consortium’s demo farms already point to real markets and import substitution:

- “Bog” berries — blueberry, cranberry, chokeberry (today, 98–100% of these are imported)
- Sphagnum moss for peat-free growing media
- Cattail and reed for construction, textiles and packaging; reed canary grass for fodder
- Paludiculture timber (alder, poplar), willow for biomass — and biochar from cut-over woodland

Six wins flow from a single intervention: climate and carbon (70–90% lower emissions), clean water, flood and drought control (peat stores ~20× its weight in water), restored biodiversity, stacked farm income, and new rural jobs in processing, machinery, ecotourism and education. Crucially, public funding sets up the infrastructure while farmers earn from the land — a business, not a subsidy treadmill. Under the CRCF, Irish paludiculture can qualify across all three tracks: carbon farming (peatland rewetting and humus), storage in products (reed, cattail

and timber in building materials), and permanent removal (biochar). A first county template is ready to build and replicate — a genuinely continental-scale infrastructure opportunity.

Behind it: a ready-made consortium — farmers and landowners, the peat-cutting community, the Green Restoration Ireland non-profit co-op, and German and Irish technology partners (Regenis MAX biochar / REW Quakenbrück, the Greifswald Mire Centre, and digital-twin MRV).

2 · Nature-Based Carbon Removal — biochar & Terra Preta

Our second pitch, presented with Humusguru GmbH, tackles the credibility gap at the heart of carbon markets. Most carbon credits today rely on temporary storage of 10–30 years and are reversible; fossil emissions, by contrast, persist for centuries. The answer is permanence. An integrated, nature-positive system stores CO_2 for 500–2,000+ years in biochar-enriched Terra Preta soils — while restoring degraded farmland, enhancing biodiversity and generating renewable energy.

500–2,000+ years of stable, certifiable carbon storage	**410 t** CO_2 permanently removed per unit, per year	**820 t** biochar output per unit, per year	**2,677 MWh** renewable baseload heat per unit, per year

The system is a self-reinforcing loop: nature-positive farming and agroforestry grow biomass, pyrolysis converts it into durable biochar and renewable heat, and the biochar returns to the land as Terra Preta — improving water retention, soil biology and fertility, which in turn grows more biomass. It is one of the few nature-based solutions that delivers permanent, measurable carbon removal (certifiable under the European Biochar Certificate) while restoring ecosystems at scale, with co-benefits in renewable energy and farm productivity.

It is built for Europe's policy tailwinds — the CRCF, the Nature Restoration Law, the Biodiversity Strategy, CAP reform and the EU Soil Strategy — and for a fast-growing corporate appetite for durable carbon removal among buyers such as Microsoft, Stripe, Shopify, Frontier and Swiss Re. The model aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger), 7 (Clean Energy), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land).

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

Two days, one direction of travel

Time	Wednesday, 3 June — Day 1
13:30	Opening of the Green Week conference
14:00	**High-level plenary: Investing in nature, investing in resilience**
14:50	**Show me the Money**
16:05	Show me the Model — Nature, the business case
16:55	**Nature credits**
18:00	LIFE Awards

Time	Thursday, 4 June — Day 2
09:10	Eco-entrepreneur Louis De Jaeger
10:00	**Soil: fertile ground for innovation — from sky to microbes**
11:40	Can urban greening and urban development go hand-in-hand?
13:45	Fireside chat — Wild Romania: Conservation, Restoration, Recreation
15:15	**Farming with Nature**
16:55	Wrap-up with Eric Mamer, Director-General, DG ENV

MY TAKEAWAYS FROM BRUSSELS

Three convictions, reinforced

- **The pilot-project era is ending.** Europe is looking for scalable solutions, not more proofs of concept.
- **Nature needs business models.** Not to put nature up for sale — but because capital flows must be redirected.
- **Soil is becoming a strategic asset.** Regenerating soil, storing water and binding carbon creates visible, increasingly rewarded value.

The time to act is now

The future of climate action will not be decided in conference halls alone. It will be decided in fields, forests, wetlands, businesses, financial institutions and local communities — where science meets practice, policy meets investment, and measurable environmental outcomes create real value. Europe has the knowledge, the innovation and the people. Now we need to accelerate implementation.

With thanks to the many people who shared insights, challenged perspectives and explored collaborations — among them Nicole Streuli-Fürst, Dr. Senda Zarrouk, Hojjat Mansourpour, Kiri Campbell, Frederik Van de Perre, Martine van Weelden, Giuseppe Dodaro, Max Kolb, Livia Mello, Gemma Parkes, Marco Lambertini, Balázs Hamar, Nathalie Lhayani, Patrick Goodman, Matteo Nenciolini, Aigar Kallas, Vicente García Albert, Sonja Stuchtey, Lucio Brotto, Alessandro Leonardi and many more.

#EUGreenWeek #NaturePositive #CarbonFarming #SoilHealth #RegenerativeAgriculture #NatureCredits #Biodiversity #CarbonRemoval #Biochar #Agroforestry #CRCF #SmartCarbonFarming #InterregNWE #tgoAG #TheGoodOnes

Sources & background: EU Green Week 2026, Brussels, 3–4 June 2026, theme “Investing in a Nature-Positive Economy” (European Commission, DG ENV) · UNEP State of Finance for Nature 2026 (≈30:1 ratio; ~$7.3 tn nature-negative vs. ~$220 bn nature-positive) · EU Carbon Removals Certification Framework (CRCF, Reg. 2024/3012),

biochar carbon-removal methodology in force since 7 May 2026 · tgo AG investor materials “Peatlands for Prosperity” and “Re:Invest in Nature 2026 — Nature-Based Carbon Removal” (confidential; commercial terms omitted here).