



MANIFESTO FOR THE EUROPEAN NURSERYSTOCK ASSOCIATION

ENA PUBLIC AFFAIRS TASK FORCE





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Nurserystock Association—comprising ca. 35,600 nurseries, 249,000 full-time workers, 133,000 hectares of production area and over €10.6 billion in annual output—is a cornerstone of Europe’s green economy. Nurseries supply the trees, shrubs and plants essential for climate resilience, biodiversity restoration, urban greening, which also translate into a positive impact for human health, and rural development. While the sector faces rising challenges such as high labour costs and climate-induced losses, it remains under-recognised in EU policies and funding streams. This Manifesto calls for swift action to empower nurseries as strategic partners in Europe’s green agenda. Key measures proposed include formally recognising nurseries in agricultural and climate programmes, mandating high quality EU planting stock in restoration and urban projects, crediting nursery-grown plants in carbon removal schemes, and unlocking tailored funding for nursery SMEs. These steps will ensure the sector’s full potential is harnessed while its unique needs met in delivering a greener, more resilient Europe.





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A. THE EUROPEAN NURSEYSTOCK ASSOCIATION



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The European Nurserystock Association (ENA) represents growers of trees, shrubs, and ornamental plants across the entire European continent, with a total of **25 national association members**. ENA's members capture the vast majority of the European plant nursery sector, with approx. **35,654 nurseries** cultivating over **133,000 hectares**, employing nearly **250,000 people**, and generating **€10.64 billion in production value annually**. These predominantly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) produce the living green infrastructure – from street trees to pollinator-friendly plants – that underpin carbon sequestration, ecosystem restoration, water management, and regenerative agriculture, urban cooling, and other local initiatives.

ENA and its members are committed to upholding rigorous quality and sustainability standards. They have been collaborating to mainstream the use of environmental national and international certifications, and many nurseries are certified under such. Members of ENA are committed to use the best available practices.

ENA is committed to partnering with EU institutions on **greener cities, a thriving bioeconomy, biodiversity restoration, and climate-resilient landscapes**, in line with the evolving EU agenda and strategic priorities. By raising awareness of the sector's role and needs, ENA seeks full recognition and integration of nurseries into relevant EU strategies & policies. The following sections outline how the nurserystock sector fits into key EU policy priorities and what actions are needed to unlock its full potential as a strategic partner.



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B. ENA, A PARTNER FOR THE EU'S GREEN POLICIES





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Major EU initiatives in climate, environment, and rural development can greatly benefit from the nurserystock sector. Given ongoing challenges faced by ENA's members, only the EU's full-fledged recognition and support of the nurserystock sector will unlock its multidimensional benefits:

1_ Rural development and bioeconomy: Nurseries are integral to rural economies and the circular bioeconomy, but their unique needs are overlooked in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and national support programmes. They generate high-skilled, year-round employment in rural areas, while using relatively limited land to produce high-value outputs, thereby maximising productivity and innovation per hectare. Moreover, while certain support exists for nurseries, container nurseries are not included in the CAP, resulting in inconsistent recognition and access to support mechanisms. Despite being classified as agriculture under EU treaties, nursery producers in several Member States still face limited access to direct payments, eco-schemes, and disaster aid. Explicitly integrating nurseries into CAP Strategic Plans would strengthen the socio-economic resilience of rural communities, support a skilled rural workforce, and unlock innovation across the bioeconomy.

2_ Climate action and resilience: The EU Green Deal and Climate Law set ambitious targets for carbon removal and climate adaptation. Nurseries grow the trees, shrubs and plants that sequester carbon and shield communities from heat and floods. Yet, policy frameworks like the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) or the Roadmap towards Nature Credits have not fully accounted for nurseries as key climate action partners. Additionally, nurseries themselves need adaptation support, as evidenced by severe weather impacts causing significant economic loss across Europe's growers, like in 2024 with loss estimates exceeding €150 million in Spain, €10 million in Czechia, and €2.25 million in Bulgaria.



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3_ Biodiversity, nature restoration and remediation of contaminated sites: Through the Nature Restoration Law, Member States (MS) will restore ecosystems at scale. A successful restoration is a core element of European strategic autonomy, as it underpins ecological resilience, economic stability, and geopolitical independence. Restoration hinges on a reliable supply of climateappropriate, free from pests and diseases, climateresilient plants—precisely the kind of foundational support that nurseries provide, positioning them as key strategic drivers of ecological transformation. Nurseries are also key actors in delivering nature-based solutions, enabling local initiatives across territorial constraints. Through phytoremediation, they notably play a strategic role in the ecological rehabilitation of contaminated areas which represent 2.8 million sites in Europe according to the EEA.

4_ Urban greening, healthier cities and public-private collaboration: The EU's urban greening and pollinator initiatives (e.g. the 3 Billion Trees Pledge), as well as the upcoming Nature in Cities Strategy, rely on the private sector to supply urban vegetation. Nurseries supply the living infrastructure that makes urban sustainability and greening physically possible, enabling urban and rural landscaping, parks, green roofs & walls, indoor greening, urban vegetation, courtyards, gardens, and terraces. To fully realise these ambitions, policies should not only promote large-scale public projects, but also actively stimulate and support private greening initiatives—including gardens, the regreening of paved areas, green walls, and plantings designed to shade buildings, streets, and public spaces. This requires policies that encourage public-private partnerships and formally recognise nurseries as strategic enablers of both public and private urban greening efforts. Strengthening collaboration across sectors will amplify benefits for human health, environmental safety, and local economies, in alignment with EU values and sustainability goals.

5_ Plant health and biosecurity: As plant pests and diseases spread with climate change and trade, the importance of sourcing from professional, accredited nurseries has grown. The EU is increasingly exposed to potential biohazards and unfair trading practices that threaten the viability of a competitive nursery sector based in Europe, particularly when plants are procured from suppliers that are not subject to the same level of professional controls, traceability, and oversight as dedicated nursery producers. ENA members already adhere to strict phytosanitary standards, and EU support for traceability systems will further safeguard biodiversity and biosecurity.





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C. ENA'S KEY POLICY ASKS





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Recognize and include nurseries, cultivating in containers and open-field in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. Formally acknowledge the nursery stock sector as a distinct branch of agriculture and biomass production in EU and national policies. Recognising Europe's nurseries as essential green SMEs will strengthen rural economies and improve supply of quality planting stock. This means:

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- Ensure full eligibility for nursery producers in CAP revision, the National CAP Strategic Plans, eco-schemes and rural development funds, including access to direct payments and resilience funding.
- Harmonize rules on plant protection products, organic standards and plant health passport across MS to create a level playing field for growers.
- Simplify regulatory burdens for nurseries (plant health checks, import/export of young plants, certification) to reduce cost and delay, especially for SMEs.
- Ensure that environmental conditionality in the CAP (or analogous schemes) distinguishes nursery stock producers fairly from typical crop producers (recognising their different business model).
- Ensure recognition of nurseries in their needs to access key resources (e.g. water, land) across MS on par with other agricultural stakeholders, as access to those is critical to unlocking nurseries' potential.
- Establish or extend mechanisms to support nurseries facing climate-events (droughts, floods, storms), pests/pathogens, logistic / input cost shocks. Because nurseries cannot simply "turn off" (plants must be maintained).



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2_ Make quality plant procurement mandatory in restoration and urban greening. This policy would both improve project outcomes and incentivise more growers to adopt sustainability certifications. Setting high procurement and traceability standards will reward best practices, enhance biosecurity, and ensure plantings thrive long-term.

- Leverage the Nature Restoration Law and upcoming urban greening initiatives to require certified, disease-free, provenance appropriate and climate-resilient planting stock in all EU-funded restoration projects and city greening efforts. Nurseries should be named as delivery partners in these initiatives. Provide incentives (grants, tax credits) for nurseries to adopt sustainable substrates (peat-reduction or peat-free), water-efficient systems, integrated pest management (IPM), and circular production practices.

3_ Count nursery-grown planting as certified carbon removals. By recognizing certified nursery in-soil outputs as carbon removals, the EU would unlock new incentives (and income streams) for growers to cultivate the climate solutions Europe needs.

- Integrate the nurserystock sector into EU climate mitigation mechanisms. As the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) is to be finalised (2025–2026), ensure that tree planting and maintenance driven by nursery supply qualifies as an eligible carbon farming activity.
- Methodologies should credit the full carbon sequestration benefits of nursery-grown vegetation over its lifetime, with monitoring and verification (MRV) approaches that are workable for SMEs. Align this with Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) accounting and the 2040 Climate Law trajectory so that nursery-supplied trees count toward national carbon removal targets.



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4 _ Unlock EU funding with SME-friendly access

Prioritizing nursery SMEs in EU funding will help to upgrade nursery infrastructure (e.g., propagation facilities, automated systems, substrate/peat alternatives, digital monitoring) so nurseries can scale in line with tree-planting/green-infrastructure commitments and secure Europe's plant supply chain against rising costs and risks.

- Dedicate and adapt EU funding instruments to support nursery sector innovation, sustainability, and generational renewal (e.g. CAP, Strategy for Generational Renewal).
- Secure explicit eligibility for nurseries in the 2028–2034 EU budget programs – from the Green Innovation Fund and Cohesion Policy to Horizon Europe and the LIFE programme – as well as in national Recovery and Resilience Plans.
- Explore the EU-wide application of compensation funding schemes similar to those already implemented in certain Member States (e.g. compensation for quarantine pests in Germany), to create predictable support mechanisms for nurseries facing biosecurity or environmental damage costs.
- Application processes should be SME-friendly, with simplified rules and reduced administrative burdens. Earmarking funds for nursery modernisation (e.g. water-efficient irrigation, green energy, smart mechanisation) and climate adaptation (e.g. stormproof infrastructure, insurance schemes) will future-proof the sector.



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D. CONCLUSION

Europe's climate, biodiversity and urban greening goals all rely on the supply of high-quality planting stock. Nurseries are a critical part of that chain, enabling the practical delivery of natural solutions across rural and urban areas. To meet rising demand and ensure these projects succeed, the sector needs clearer policy recognition, fair access to agricultural and climate instruments, and procurement and funding frameworks that value quality, sustainability and innovation. Through this Manifesto, ENA and its national member associations pledge to actively support EU institutions, Member States and cities in delivering Europe's environmental and climate objectives. ENA is committed to turning these ambitions into reality and stands ready to contribute its expertise, capacity and partnership to support the quality planting, climate resilience and nature-restoration efforts that Europe's future depends on.



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MORE PLANTS MORE LIFE

