

EMPOWERING EUROPE'S GREEN AGENDA: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF FLOWERS AND PLANTS

KEY DATA

The European flower and ornamental plant production is valued at **€9.4 billion**, with over **33,000 enterprises operating on 55,600 hectares**¹.

The production value of the European nursery industry is around **€7 billion**, with over **26,000 companies in the sector**².

Altogether, the **sector produces the majority of ornamental flowers and plants** – both indoors and outdoors, plants to grow fruits and vegetables, and trees.

Hundreds of cooperatives also play an important role in this sector by **enhancing the bargaining power** of growers in the supply chain.

BENEFITING A GREENER EUROPE

EU flower and plant growers play a pivotal role in transforming European cities into green, liveable environments. The immense diversity of plants, flowers, and trees is the heritage of biodiversity and unquestionably a vital element in realising the European Green Deal. With this policy, it becomes increasingly evident that they stand as a key player in the realisation of greener and sustainable urban and rural ecosystems.

Furthermore, the sector stands as a **powerful tool in the fight against climate change** by facilitating carbon sequestration within urban and rural areas. The strategic planting of trees and greenery acts as a natural carbon sink, absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide and mitigating the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions³. **Recognising and promoting this facet not only aligns with the goals of the European Green Deal but also positions the sector as a driving force in building sustainable, climate-resilient rural and urban areas for the future**⁴.

THE SECTOR'S CONTINUED EFFORTS



Flowers and plants play a beneficial role in enhancing the health and well-being of millions of Europeans and the environment they live in on a daily basis, contributing to the celebration of significant moments in life and promoting social interaction.



Plants provide essential food for human beings, as well as for pollinators thus fostering biodiversity restoration. Plants green and cool our European cities and communities, improving air and soil quality, and mitigating climate stress.



The sector is constantly investing in new models to reduce its footprint from producer to consumer: sustainable plants for all across the continent.



Growers want to store rainwater, irrigate more efficiently, and reuse water as much as possible to reduce our environmental footprint.

¹ INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS FLOWERS AND PLANTS 2022, Volume 70 Compiled by Finn Awisus Centre for Business Management in Horticulture and Applied Research Leibniz University Hanover, Germany. Data includes the United Kingdom

² K. Tanja-Dijkstra, A. van den Berg, J. Maas, J. Bloemhof-Haasjes & P. van den Berg (2017), Chemotherapie in de tuin. Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Oncologie, 14, 175-181.4.

ALLOWING TO GROW THE FUTURE



If plants are a response to the challenges the EU is facing, the care our growers give them must be up to the challenge. It should be remembered that one of the specific features of the sector is the length of the product life cycle: from several months for annual plants to several decades for trees.



Clean water remains essential. Water supply should be ensured and innovations for efficient irrigation, storing water, and reusing wastewater should be boosted.



Growers are eager to accelerate the energy transition. Access to renewable and affordable power supply is a key enabler in decarbonisation of production. To enable the transition the infrastructural expansion of electricity and sustainable energy and heat grids shall be prioritised.



The sector is unique for its upfront equipment investment needs, which relies heavily on banks' confidence, crucial for successful operations. To ensure a sustainable future, it must be recognised as a viable industry, supported by robust insurance against climate and industry-specific risks. With many growers set to retire, developing takeover mechanisms with banking and insurance support is vital for the continuity of European plant production.

AREAS OF ACTION



Recognising the sector's role in contributing to the Union's environmental and health objectives. Flowers and plants do not only achieve ornamental purposes: this must be promoted at EU level through better education and communication.



Boosting investment in research for new plant varieties (e.g. NBTs) through renewed legislative support, and more public financing to invest in urban greenery, and better education programmes for European schools.



The costs of raw materials and energy have eroded producers' income. Transitioning to more sustainable production methods is only feasible if horticultural entrepreneurs have the necessary capital to invest in new processes, as well as more technological and innovative infrastructure with reduced environmental impact.

3 Braubach, M., Kendrovski, V., Jarosinska, D., Mudu, P., Andreucci, M. B., Beute, F., ... & Russo, A. (2021). Green and blue spaces and mental health: new evidence and perspectives for action. World Health Organization.

4 Ribeiro, A. I., Triguero-Mas, M., Santos, C. J., Gómez-Nieto, A., Cole, H., Anguelovski, I., ... & Baró, F. (2021). Exposure to nature and mental health outcomes during COVID-19 lockdown. A comparison between Portugal and Spain. *Environment international*, 154, 106664.

ABOUT COPA-COGECA

Copa and Cogeca are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, they ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive, guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe.

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