VOLANTE

VISIONS OF LAND USE TRANSITIONS IN EUROPE

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VOLANTE

D13.2 Summary

VOLANTE Roadmap for Future Land Resource Management in Europe

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS
The landscapes of Europe have altered rapidly over the last few decades, with profound changes in the ways we use the land to support a growing, and increasingly affluent and urban population. The past 50 years have seen significant and unprecedented human impacts on our landscapes and we have now entered a critical decision space: a window of several decades within which it is still possible to avoid crossing planetary boundaries. In a Europe facing many challenges and changing aspirations, it is imperative to explore alternative visions of a more sustainable future land use, and evaluate the pathways that can lead us to these visions. Within the context of land use, this implies managing natural capital to ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services into the future. This document “VOLANTE Roadmap – The Scientific Basis” gives the rationale (including references to VOLANTE’s scientific background evidence) for a roadmap to a future Europe that manages its land resources better to achieve several societal and environmental goals.

The VOLANTE roadmap1 comprises: a) three visions of future land use in Europe derived from consultations with a wide range of European stakeholders, taking into consideration the linked components of food, feed and fibre production, rural development and urbanisation; b) a set of pathways required to achieve these visions in a suite of scenarios, and c) the implications of these visions and pathways for society and decision makers, including the associated trade-offs. A general consensus is emerging around future European land use, which emphasises the role of multi-functionality, resource efficiency and the provision of services in rural areas – all of which are reflected in the VOLANTE visions:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>BEST LAND IN EUROPE</th>
<th>REGIONAL CONNECTED</th>
<th>LOCAL MULTIFUNCTIONAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal use of land resources</td>
<td>Living closer to the natural environment</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency of local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimal use of land is crucial to ensuring maximum production of food and other natural products. Land across the EU is matched to the most appropriate use.</td>
<td>Society’s needs are met regionally in a coherent relationship between people and their resources. In a non-globalised economy, there is a move away from regional specialisation.</td>
<td>Land functions are localised in small areas based on innovative approaches to living, working and recreation. There is high diversity in goods and services, land use and society.</td>
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The VOLANTE roadmap emphasises that there are alternative, not necessarily compatible, visions of future sustainable land use in Europe. Under current socio-economic and policy conditions, however, none of these visions can be achieved without the need for trade-offs. Local Multifunctional, in particular, seems the most challenging vision to achieve without a thorough transformation in society and decision-making processes, underpinned by individual behavioural change. Best Land in Europe would supply the greatest quantity of ecosystem services on a continental scale, but remote rural areas would struggle to support local communities unless land use and economic activities were restructured, for example by moving away from a dependence on agriculture to new rural businesses that require new infrastructure. Regional Connected would require strong regional governance and regulation and a broad acceptance of this by society. Despite major contrasts between the three VOLANTE visions, there are important similarities which highlight the need for bold and coordinated change in European land use.

Moving towards the visions requires targeted policy intervention that takes account of the diverse regional contexts across Europe and which balances trade-offs in a transparent and well-informed way. To be effective and relevant, such policies also require cross-sectoral strategies for land use and management that depart from the traditional focus on sectoral policy. The incentive for such strategies is that European land resources must be used more efficiently, providing a wider range of benefits, including a better environment, enhanced socio-economic wellbeing, and ultimately a more equitable European society.

Links