

## English translation

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### Press kit for the online press conference

#### Orchard international: The first day of the meadow orchard

On April 30, 2021, the international "Day of the Meadow Orchard" will take place for the first time.

Throughout Europe, orchardists will draw attention to this valuable habitat with a wide range of activities. The European cultural asset Meadow Orchard is in the public eye - as a place of biodiversity, fruit diversity, livelihood, enjoyment and recreation and as an important part of the cultural landscape.

This traditional cultural landscape faces many challenges. At the press conference, experts from all countries will discuss how the future of meadow orchard can be shaped. Another topic of the press conference will be the opportunity for Europe-wide networking of orchardists, associations and organizations for orchard cultivation.

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#### Speakers and organizations

##### ARGE Clustered Fruit Austria

Johann Hartl

Chairman and spokesman

ARGE-Streuobst

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The idea for the International Day of the Orchard was born in the Austrian Innviertel. Johann Hartel, together with ARGE Streuobst, got the project rolling and moved it to a European level. In the future, the "Day of the Meadow Orchard" will find its place in the calendar on the last Friday in April. At this time of year, in many regions of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, as well as in the UK, Brittany, Normandy, Luxembourg and Slovenia the scattered fruit trees are in bloom.

Throughout Europe, orchard initiatives, fruit processors, nature conservation organizations, schools and tourism regions use this day, in order to focus on Meadow Orchards.

Statement Hans Hartl: "There is a day for many things. Why not also for scattered fruit trees - our cultural landscape?"

### **Austrian Environmental umbrella organization**

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Supported by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism and the European Union within the framework of the Austrian Program for Rural Development 2014-2020. The Umweltdachverband is committed to the preservation and promotion of sustainable orchards as a habitat for many species of flora and fauna relevant to nature conservation and as an important component of the landscape.

Scattered fruit trees in Austria

The aim of the project is to highlight the actual ecological and economic value of orchard cultures, to implement concrete measures in two pilot regions, and, with the help of Best Practice examples to widen public awareness. Targeted measures are to be taken to promote the preservation of regional variety and diversity and to embed its value for regional development. A special focus is also on improving the conservation status of species of European interest living in orchards.

Statement Gerald Pfiffinger: On the Day of the StreuobstWIESE we draw attention to the conservation of the great diversity of orchard varieties - and especially to the great value of orchards for the preservation and protection of biodiversity. Not only provide food and habitat for insects, birds, bats and small mammals, but also the species-rich meadows and meadows beneath the fruit trees. Not only wild and honey bees, but also Little Owls, Redstarts and Scope Owls find food and habitat in orchards.

### **BirdLife Europe**

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Birdlife Europe is the global partnership of national non-governmental conservation organizations from 120 countries, with over 10 million members and supporters. It is dedicated to conserving wild birds, their habitats and global biodiversity. Traditional cultural landscapes in Europe are a hotspot of diversity and are therefore the focus of our international work. More than one million hectares of valuable nature conservation areas are managed by BirdLife partners. For several decades, BirdLife has been campaigning, particularly in the EU for nature-friendly agriculture and sustainable agricultural funding.

Statement Dr. Raphael Weyland: Traditional cultural landscapes like the high-trunk orchards need a different agricultural policy - and a better support than low-stem plantations. Because from the point of view of species protection, the high-trunk fruit trees, which can live for well over 100 years, are much more valuable than half-trunk or even low-trunk orchards.

### **NABU- Federal Committee - Scattered Fruit Federal Committee for Orchards**

**NABU - Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union Germany**

Dr. Markus Rösler

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Since 1992, the orchard experts of the NABU-Bundesfachausschuss (BFA) have been networking and organising activities in orchard cultivation and for fruit variety diversity on a national and international level. This includes the organization of nationwide meetings of fruit marketers as well as of the mobile and small cideries, international conferences as well as position papers and information papers for political lobbying. Numerous services, such as nationwide lists of cideries, nurseries and distilleries, fruit-trees newsletter, fruit-trees material dispatch, fruit-trees quality mark and the supervision of scientific work serve the research, preservation and promotion of fruit-trees. See here [Streuobst - NABU](#)  
In NABU, more than 500 local groups are active in the protection and care of orchards, in public relations work and environmental education, and in the utilization and marketing of orchard products - at the fairest possible prices for the farmers.

Statement by Dr. Markus Rösler: "Orchard meadows are biodiversity hotspots for the whole of Europe - in Germany alone there are well over 5,000 species of animals, plants and fungi, as well as over 6,000 varieties of fruit. We want to preserve this ecological and cultural treasure and at the same time develop it further - for people and nature.

### **Orchard Competence Center**

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The communities of Schaufling, Lalling and Hunding in the Bavarian Forest form the Lallinger Winkel. In the so-called "fruit bowl" orchard cultivation has been a tradition for about 1,000 years tradition. In 2020, the "Streuobstkompetenzzentrum" (orchard competence center) was launched, a cooperative project involving municipalities, associations of the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences and practical orchard farmers such as Peter Gruber. Together with his wife Maria, he initiated the center, which is now making headway in the areas of production, nature and species conservation, and tourism with innovative offerings.

Statement Peter Gruber: "We have experienced ourselves what is possible with a network. European networking is therefore indispensable."

### **Hochstamm Germany e.V.**

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Hochstamm Deutschland e.V. networks scattered fruit growers from all over Germany. Since March 2021 the Streuobstanbau is German UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. The non-profit association Hochstamm Deutschland e.V. took the initiative in 2019 under the title "The cultivation of scattered fruit trees in Germany as an archive of cultural heritage" for the application to the German UNESCO list. 1.3 million supporters joined the project. The next goal is now: Orchard cultivation becomes an international cultural heritage - for the whole of Europe.

Statement Martina Hörmann: "In many European countries, orchards are part of the traditional cultural landscape. It is precisely this potential that we want to bundle and increase the appreciation for orchards.

## **UK Orchard Network**

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The Orchard Network is a partnership of organisations across England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, working together to actively promote the conservation of orchard fruit and nut trees and their varieties, and in their many forms; and to conserve the orchard habitat's biodiversity. It shares knowledge about orchards including orchard events, training, protection, news, resources, services and community orchards. The group is jointly led by the National Trust, Natural England, the National Fruit Collection and PTES.

Statement Adam Cade: "We already have a very popular Apple Day celebrated in October throughout the UK, especially by community orchard groups, and now The National Trust has just developed a Blossom Together Campaign. So a Traditional Orchard Day in the UK could add to these events and help us to celebrate our shared European orchard heritage.

## **Background**

### **Traditional Orchard Day**

On the initiative of the ARGE Streuobst and the Umweltdachverband Österreich the last Friday in April was declared the international "Day of the Meadow Orchard". Under the motto "Streuobst ist überall" (#streuobstistueberall, #orchardseverywhere) we aim to show the diversity of European orcharding. The European cultural asset "meadow orchard" will be celebrated - as a place of biodiversity, fruit diversity, livelihood, enjoyment and recreation and as an important part of the cultural landscape. The public are cordially invited to various (covid compliant) actions: Guided tours, photo actions, raffles and much more. Further information and offered events can be found here [Tag der Streuobstwiesen - Hochstamm Deutschland e.V. \(hochstamm-deutschland.de\)](#) and here [Streuobst-Termine - NABU](#)

### **Meadow Orchards in Europe**

The meadow orchard is a typical traditional cultural landscape in Europe with distribution areas from the Atlantic coast in the west over Central Europe to Hungary and Romania in the south-east. It originated from a traditional rural use, has been planted on a large scale since the 18th century and reached its peak in the middle of the 20th century. Thus, scattered orchards are a historically developed form of nature-compatible fruit growing, in which predominantly large-crowned fruit trees are widely spaced. Orchards include both the classic meadow orchard with regular under-utilization as permanent grassland, as well as orchards with regular under-use as permanent grassland, but also arable and horticultural forms of use, orchard avenues as well as other

linear plantations and individual and yard trees. Depending on the region, orchard stands differ in their growth form, tree species and variety, trunk height and age classes. In contrast to semi-trunked or low-trunked orchards with closed uniform plantings, the individual tree is always clearly recognizable in orchards.

### **Meadow Orchard: Good for people, animals and nature**

The services provided by orchards go far beyond the production of fruit - and thus healthy foodstuffs such as dessert fruit, dried fruit, juice and spirits. The structure and vitalization of the landscape through orchards creates an attractive landscape. This increases the recreational and leisure value. The quality of living and working places can also be increased by nearby orchards. Furthermore, the trees that characterize the landscape convey a sense of home and reflect the character of regions. The trees also prevent soil erosion, especially on slopes, and thus contribute to water protection and reduced nutrient loss. As a gene reservoir, old fruit varieties keep the options open for further development in breeding. In contrast to commercial fruit-growing meadow orchards are used both purely as a hobby and as a sideline and in some cases as a main source of income. They are one of the most diverse habitats in Europe and serve as a refuge for numerous animal and plant species.

### **What threatens Meadow Orchards?**

Despite the high ecological significance and the growing importance of nature and environmental protection issues in society, the remaining meadow orchards are not sufficiently cared for. This is due, on the one hand, to an agricultural policy that for decades neglected orchards, especially in comparison to fruit plantations, and, on the other hand, to consumer behaviour and the desire of many people for the most pristine, immaculate and uniform fruit possible. In addition, the prices for orchard fruit are usually at a level that does not allow for profitable cultivation. However there are profitable good exceptions in the area of the distilleries as well as in speciality products. In contrast to intensive orchards, the cultivation of meadow orchards requires more effort, which is based on various factors: long time span from planting to full yield, fluctuating yields due to alternation and, especially in the case of dessert fruit, higher labour intensity and risk of accidents. The effort and yield of an orchard depend on the management method - e.g. with machines, by the choice of tree species and fruit varieties, the type of under-utilization - as well as local conditions such as the level of labour costs and special subsidies. The spread of mistletoe and other diseases threaten fruit trees, which in some regions of Europe are also weakened by prolonged periods of drought and heat.

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Since March 2021, orchard cultivation has been included in the nationwide list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in Germany. The idea of adding Meadow Orchards to the list of intangible cultural heritage originated at the State-wide "Scattered Fruit Tree Day" in Baden-Württemberg in 2015. Since then, the initiators have carried this idea forward, e.g. via their own

newsletter. In 2019, Hochstamm Deutschland e.V. took the initiative to organize the application as a nationwide cooperation project. In 2021, the Conference of Ministers of Education voted in favour of the application, which was joined by more than 1.3 million supporters - including various nature conservation associations, small fruit growers and private individuals - joined in. The cultural characteristics of orchards coincide with the UNESCO criteria in the following points: Knowledge and customs related to nature and the universe, traditional craft techniques, customs, rituals and festivals.

### **Orchards for the future**

Meadow Orchards and "scattered fruit trees" are a part of the cultural landscape, they are man-made. Their continued existence is only ensured if they are cared for and managed. They are useful ecosystems in which the added value is achieved from fruit production and various uses of the area under the trees (under-utilization) are achieved. The production of fruit and the under-utilization serve both as a source of income and self-sufficiency. The initiators therefore call for a flourishing future for orcharding. For example, the Traditional Orchards Day offers consumers an insight into the value of orchards as a valuable habitat. Everyone can make a simple contribution e.g. by the increasing the production of high-quality juice and cider with a regional label and by direct marketing to the consumer. The organisers and their partners also see a great opportunity in networking - from local to international. The active exchange of ideas and best practice examples is thus a decisive building block.