FCS General Assembly 2026 in Spain: Land stewardship in a changing Europe



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The debates during this year's Friends of the Countryside General Assembly once again highlighted the role of private landowners as long-term partners in Europe's environmental and food security agenda. A central question ran through the discussions: how can Europe remain competitive, environmentally ambitious and geopolitically resilient at the same time?

The Assembly reaffirmed its support for a strong and independent CAP, with its two-pillar structure preserved and adequately funded. Forests and forestry, biodiversity, climate and the bioeconomy were also among the key topics discussed, reflecting the growing expectations placed on Europe's rural areas.

The strong interest in *Innovators by Nature*, co-organised with ELO, was also confirmed. The event highlights practical business models in areas such as biodiversity, eco-tourism, forestry and renewable energy. Its second edition will take place in Brussels in December 2026.

A new generation of countryside entrepreneurs

The programme also showcased the work of Young FCS (YFCS), the growing network of 18- to 35-year-olds interested in rural issues, land management and countryside entrepreneurship.

This spirit of innovation was reflected in the 2026 FAMIGRO Award, presented to Naturfriedhof Ammersee, a woodland burial concept in which each burial takes place at the roots of a selected tree. More info page 11.

From policy to practice

Beyond policy discussions, the Assembly turned to concrete examples of rural businesses adapting to today's agricultural and environmental challenges.

Ganaderia Pablos, a 410-hectare farm in Trujillo managed according to holistic principles, demonstrated how regenerative livestock farming can be both ecologically sound and economically viable. Its message - *"it's not the cow, it's the how"* - challenged the idea that cattle are inherently harmful. Managed rotational grazing can improve soil structure, rainfall absorption, microbial diversity and carbon sequestration while supporting healthier grasslands.

Finca Pascualete offered a different perspective. With origins dating back to 1232, the estate has transformed a long agricultural tradition into a modern, competitive business. Its farmstead creamery produces traditional sheep's milk cheese using vegetable rennet from wild cardoon thistle. Once a highly local product, it is now exported to more than nine countries and has received international recognition.

The conference concluded with a presentation by CIC on the role of sustainable use in maintaining functional rural landscapes. The discussion stressed that conservation depends not only on environmental ambition, but also on active management, viable rural businesses and cooperation between landowners, farmers, foresters, hunters, scientists and policymakers.

From policy debates to business cases, the 2026 General Assembly showed how environmental, economic and social objectives can reinforce one another when rooted in practical land management.

The next Friends of the Countryside General Assembly will take place in Augsburg, Germany in June 2027.



Members of the Friends of the Countryside in the Gran Teatro Cáceres