

## **Responsible Golf Course Management.**

### **Draft FEGGA statement on behalf of the European Golf Greenkeeping Industry**



#### **Contents.**

- 1. Vision Statement.**
- 2. Background information.**
- 3. Strategy.**
- 4. The Future.**
- 5. Appendix – Best Management Practices**

[Type here]



## Vision

FEGGA and the European golf greenkeeping industry are committed to the responsible and sustainable management of golf courses.

## Background information.

There are approximately 5500 golf facilities across Europe, covering a total land surface of close to 500,000 hectares. Of that, approximately 30% is intensively maintained as turfgrass (putting greens, fairways, tees and managed rough) and the other 70% as unmanaged rough grasslands, scrub, woodland, open water and wetland habitats.

Turfgrass plants make up the playing surfaces for the sport of golf. They are therefore the key component that make the largest contribution to the unique “product” and “experience” that is the sport of golf. They play a fundamental role in achieving golfer satisfaction, and by extension benefit the entire golf industry and surrounding community. In fact, presently the total value of the golf industry is estimated at around Euro 15.1 Billion. The sport, employing 150'000 people, provides health-enhancing physical activity in nature to over 7.9 million players.<sup>1</sup> The maintenance regime of this turfgrass, essential for the sport, will vary from club to club. The climate, soils and geography in combination with player expectation and greenkeeping budget will determine the actual maintenance practices employed. The fact that intensively-managed turfgrass is essential for the sport, there is a risk that some of the practices undertaken for the maintenance of the surfaces could have potentially negative impacts on the environment.

This paper therefore seeks to demonstrate the importance of having an overall vision of the profession and a targeted strategy for minimising impact on local ecology and encouraging responsible course management throughout the industry.

<sup>1</sup> The Economic Impact of Golf on the Economy of Europe, Sports Marketing surveys Inc. 2013.



## The Strategy

Through considerable investment and consultation since 1996, the European greenkeeping industry has developed the following strategic approach for the sustainable management of golf courses.

The focus is on Best Practice Management to encourage sustainable performance, support sustainability activity, and increase reporting and awareness.

### Encouraging Sustainable Performance

1. Minimising the consumption of natural resources
2. Minimising or mitigating the impact of golf course management practices on flora and fauna, and encouraging biodiversity by providing habitats for local species of wildlife.
3. Reducing waste by:
  - Lobbying suppliers to reduce packaging
  - re-using waste where possible
  - recycling waste where re-use is not possible
  - finally ensuring that any non-reusable waste is correctly disposed of
4. Minimising pollution or damage to air, soil and water due to use of machines or chemicals.
5. Reducing in size where possible those areas on golf courses which require intensive maintenance.

### Supporting Sustainability (Research and Education)

1. Turfgrass Research
2. Funding further research into non-chemical maintenance practices
3. Building new playing performance evaluation tools
4. Educational programmes (Road shows, GTE, Conferences, etc.)
5. Support/encourage/adopt GEO (OnCourse, Legacy)
6. Supporting/writing new voluntary sustainability standards

### Reporting and Awareness

Transparent reporting of course maintenance and management through GEO OnCourse and/or national programmes.

Promote awareness campaigns to golfing community and beyond into the wider public community.

[Type here]



## **The Future.**

The Greenkeeping Industry is aware of the importance of continually increasing and improving performance, reporting, knowledge and awareness and will annually monitor progress in these key areas at the FEGGA European Conference:

### **Performance.**

- Driving performance towards clear, credible and externally recognised standards which will require clubs to demonstrate and report their adherence to Best Practice. FEGGA, to use Roadshows, publications, the European Conference and other tools to report progress and take industry feedback.

### **Reporting.**

- FEGGA, to use Roadshows, publications, the European Conference and other tools to report participation in Certified systems which provide detailed and third-party verified reporting of maintenance and performance in all areas of the golf course operation. This to include both environmental and social performance.

### **Knowledge and Education.**

- Commissioning new research into understanding the effects of climate change on both turfgrass and the needs of the game.
- Developing systems such as a recognised CPD scheme across Europe in which widely available education and development opportunities keep Practitioners completely up to date with legislation, developments, and industry awareness.
- Industry requirements are to be reported at FEGGA Roadshows, in publications and at the FEGGA European Conference.

### **Awareness, Lobbying and Outreach.**

- Continually work and campaign to raise awareness of environmental issues and the use of Best Practice amongst practitioners, customers and the wider community alike. Case studies of successful campaigns are to be sourced by FEGGA and reported during FEGGA events.
- Continuing to finance market research into the finances and health & social benefits of golf and explore better ways of bringing the information to communities and Government.
- Encourage good PR from greenkeepers and clubs among local community to improve public impression of clubs, increase membership and so maintain and increase the demand for well trained and engaged greenkeepers.

[Type here]

## Appendix – Examples of Best Management Practices (BMP's)

- ❖ Naturalisation to ensure the smallest possible area of turfgrass is intensively maintained using the correct local turfgrass species to match local conditions, and the remainder of the site given over to nature and biodiversity.
- ❖ Healthy growing medium. Soils should be managed appropriately to deliver good structure, mineral and nutrient balance, drainage and oxygenation ensuring CO2 levels are monitored.
- ❖ Optimal Nutrition. Nutrition of turfgrass is managed so as to attain robust good quality playing surface swards which remain healthy without requiring excess nutrition, ensuring that scientific measuring and evaluation are used.
- ❖ Optimal Watering. Irrigation uses significant energy. In managing grass effectively, good quality playing surfaces should be achieved with efficient minimal irrigation based on scientific monitoring, and records kept of consumption.
- ❖ A good growing environment. Shade, air movement and drainage are managed to promote the correct micro-environments for growth.
- ❖ Stress Management. Appropriate cutting heights with sharp equipment and good traffic management are employed to reduce stress factors
- ❖ Thresholds for quality. Determining at what point pest, disease and other turf wear conditions need intervention or curative treatment.
- ❖ Scouting and monitoring. The importance of understanding turf and its reactions to environmental factors through collecting and sharing data.
- ❖ Use of plant protection products (pesticides). The minimised use of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides for both prevention and cure. Labelled use of the lowest toxicity products carrying the least environmental risk.
- ❖ Safe Pesticide Application, Storage and Handling. Well trained operatives using appropriate and properly calibrated & maintained equipment and facilities as per local legislation.
- ❖ Recording and reporting. Records of all applications will be made and kept including the results achieved and made publically available to meet local legislation.
- ❖ Minimisation of waste through reduction, re-use, and recycling will become the industry norm through awareness campaigns.

[Type here]

- ❖ Minimisation of fuel-usage through appropriate and sharp-set cutting equipment, and the elimination of unnecessary mowing procedures.
- ❖ Minimisation of pollution through the use of safe and efficient machinery which is regularly serviced and maintained to manufacturers recommendations.

*FEGGA Board*

*8<sup>th</sup> April 2016.*