

# Golf Course 2030: Industry Insights

## Maria Strandberg

In 2018, The R&A established Golf Course 2030 (GC2030), an industry initiative to consider the positive and negative impacts climate change, resource constraints and the impact any future regulation could have on golf course condition and playability.

The goal of this work is to create a road map which comprehensively considers potential future challenges and details a range of scenarios at different levels to help overcome them.

In this blog, we hear from Maria Strandberg, Director of the Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation (STERF). With a strong background in working with golf and the environment, Maria discusses the importance of international collaboration to create a sustainable future.

Highlighting the work of STERF, she outlines the need to together work proactively and invest in new knowledge to transform the golf sector into a more sustainable one.



### Author

Maria Strandberg is Director of Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation, STERF. Maria has more than fifteen years of experience in working with golf and environment and she is actively involved in scientific issues regarding all aspects of high quality, and environmental and economic sustainability of golf facilities. Maria serves on a number of the committees and boards of important international golf and research organisations and she is the president of the International Turfgrass Society. In 2008 Maria received an award from the King of Sweden for her national and international work on integrating golf and environment and in 2011 she received GEO Environmental Award for her significant contribution to sustainable golf.

The golf sector needs to invest in research and development. There are many indications that we will not have a restart after the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead, we must expect and plan for a new start. All aspects of sustainability (environmental, economic, social) will have a higher priority after the pandemic crisis.

Therefore, new knowledge built on research and science is crucial for supporting the golf and turfgrass industry to meet new critical challenges. These include the pressure arising from government demands for more extensive environmental regulation, the increasing pressure on natural resources, notably water, energy and land, the emerging role of turf and golf course management in supporting ecosystem services and enhancing biodiversity, the continued need to promote integrated pest management, and the looming challenges posed by a changing climate and an urgent need to adapt.

Ready-to-use research is an important tool to help prevent negative impacts on the planet and new knowledge is necessary to change the mindset and attitudes of people worldwide. A global agenda is needed to guide this work. The best available agenda at present is the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was adopted in 2015.

**STERF - A Farsighted Investment**

Fifteen years ago, Scandinavian golfers acted as both initiators and early adopters when they decided to contribute €0.50 per golf player and year to research on sustainable golf, a decision that has been recognised all over the world. This decision to invest in ready-to-use research is today an important contribution by the golf sector to guarantee golf courses of a high standard, minimise factors affecting climate change, stop the accelerating loss of biodiversity, and meet the increasing need for sustainably managed green areas in the urban landscape.

**“STERF’s goal is to stimulate and support the golf clubs to take the initiative, work proactively, and create change by continuously delivering new ready-to-use knowledge.”**

Based on the Scandinavian golf clubs' decision to invest in research and development, the Scandinavian Turfgrass and Environment Research Foundation (STERF), was set up fifteen years ago and it has expanded substantially during my time with the organisation.

Right from the start, STERF's guiding star has been to base all projects and activities on the needs of the golf clubs and of society as whole. STERF's goal is to stimulate and support the golf clubs to take the initiative, work proactively, and create change by continuously delivering new ready-to-use knowledge.

Today, Nordic golf clubs consider new knowledge delivered by STERF as the key factor to create sustainable and high-quality playing surfaces for golf and to run a credible environmental protection work. The investment in STERF has increased golf's benefit to society and has given Nordic golf very high credibility within the international golf sector and in society as a whole.



THE ONGOING ICE-BREAKER PROJECT. EXPERIMENTAL TRIALS AT NIBIO RESEARCH STATION IN NORWAY



INVENTORY OF BUMBLE BEES AT OSLO GC WITHIN THE PROJECT FROM DENSE SWARDS TO BIODIVERSE ROUGHS

STERF has earned a position as one of the best recognised centres of excellence in turfgrass and environment-related science. STERF is also considered a role model for countries all over the world and we are frequently consulted by various stakeholders on how to build a research and development organisation for turfgrass science.

Our advice is to consider regional conditions, characteristics and limitations and to:

- Set up a focused and motivated management and project team.
- Formulate a solid problem description for the region and explore different solutions.
- Identify research needs in the long and short term and ensure rapid delivery of applied results.
- Taking a lead in making research results and new knowledge easily accessible to end-users and ensure that scientists deliver ready-to-use results.
- Develop a financial system that engages golf clubs, golfers, the industry, public sources, and research bodies.
- Create networks between the sector and scientists, and make knowledge transfer the mantra.
- Relate the sector-specific challenges to a global agenda to guide the work, e.g., United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These are the STERF factors for success. We look forward to cooperating with new established research nodes inspired by these factors and the R&A Golf Course 2030 initiative. More information about STERF can be found at [www.sterf.org](http://www.sterf.org)

### International Collaboration & Golf Course 2030

International collaboration is the only viable strategy to overcome current challenges and create a sustainable future. Together we must work proactively and invest in new knowledge based on research and science, which is necessary to support the golf sector to transform it into a more sustainable sector.

The R&A Golf Course 2030 is a significant initiative to support and stimulate golf industry stakeholders to agree on a roadmap that secures optimal golf course condition and playability for current and future generations. The roadmap must also highlight golf courses' potential to be designed and managed to promote critical ecosystem services, and to restore and enhance biodiversity in ecologically simplified landscapes.

An important development for Golf Course 2030, in which STERF wants to play a key role, could be to investigate the value of and bring together an international alliance of organisations focusing on research related to golf, which would take a pragmatic approach to deliver ready-to use research results. The international alliance could work together to identify gaps in knowledge from a global strategic perspective. This will ensure that research and development initiated by the golf sector focuses on internationally important areas where concerted research and industrial effort is required.

**Focus on research and development is a question of survival for the golf sector, that gives us freedom to act now instead of reacting in the future.**



LABORATORY STUDIES OF DOLLAR SPOT WITHIN THE PROJECT INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF IMPORTANT TURFGRASS DISEASES AND INSECT PESTS ON EUROPEAN GOLF COURSES. A JOINT STERF AND THE R&A PROJECT.