

Official Selection for the CineEco's 32nd Edition: 87 Films Competing from 34 Countries

From 9 to 17 October, Seia once again places environmental cinema at the heart of its cultural programme, with nine days dedicated to the screening of national and international films bringing today's most pressing environmental issues into focus and opening up space for reflection on the challenges facing our planet. A total of **87 films from 34 countries** have been selected. In the International Feature Film Selection alone, **10 documentaries will have their Portuguese premiere**, presenting compelling environmental narratives exploring economic models, the evolving challenges of environmental activism, climate apartheid, environmental migration, species and habitats, and the exploitation of natural resources across five continents.

This year, the Serra da Estrela International Environmental Film Festival in Seia once again received a significant number of submissions for the Official Selection, with **410 works** submitted (including fiction films and documentaries produced for cinema and/or television, as well as national and international visual artworks created in digital media, video or film, all exploring environmental themes). Of the **106 films** presented in CineEco's 32nd Edition, **86 works from 34 countries** have been selected for **the festival's six main competitions**. Overall, taking into account both the films screened and those selected for competition, this year's CineEco features **144 filmmakers**.

In the **International Feature Film Selection**, particular attention should be drawn to a collection of **ten films making their Portuguese premiere**, including works screened or awarded at leading international film festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Visions du Réel (France), Sundance (USA), CPH:DOX (Denmark) and the Thessaloniki Film Festival (Greece).

The selection opens with two fiction films by young female directors: Helen Walsh's classic melodrama **ON THE SEA** (United Kingdom), which explores the tension between tradition and nature within a Welsh fishing community, and Sarah Arnold's radical comedy **L'ESPÈCE EXPLOSIVE** (France), which centres on the conflict between farmers, hunters and... wild boars. The latter received the prestigious Europa Label award at the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival.

The threats posed by modernity and climate change to ancestral pastoral communities come to the fore in **LET OUR MOUNTAINS LIVE** (Norway),

by Håvard Bustnes, where Sámi reindeer herders wage a battle against Europe's largest wind farm; and in **IRON WINTER** (Australia, Mongolia), by Kasimir Burgess, which follows the unwavering commitment of two friends to protect 2,000 horses through the harsh winter of the Mongolian desert.

The contemporary traces of colonial power are particularly visible throughout this Official Selection, as seen in **KIKUYU LAND** (Kenya), by Andrew H. Brown and Bea Wangondu, filmed among the tea plantations of the Kenyan highlands, and **MATERIA PRIMA** (Germany), by Jens Schanze, which examines the exploitation of Bolivia's vast lithium deposits. In different ways, both narratives resonate with Portugal's own history.

Two major recurring themes in environmental cinema are explored with striking contemporary relevance in two further films in the selection. **BLACK WATER** (Spain), by Natxo Leuza, examines climate apartheid through the current refugee crisis in Bangladesh as rising sea levels force communities from their homes, while **DEREK VS DEREK** (United Kingdom), by James Dawson, takes a comic look at the deep divisions surrounding models of agricultural production.

The future is also explored and questioned throughout this programme. The new political, economic, ethical, technological and scientific challenges facing environmental activism are brought into focus in two films that challenge the status quo: the speculative **PLAN C FOR CIVILIZATION** (United States), by Ben Kalina, and the provocative **THE SYSTEM** (Netherlands, Belgium), by Joris Postema, featuring music by Lee Ranaldo of Sonic Youth.

A particular highlight outside the competition is Andy Serkis's animated feature **THE ANIMAL FARM** (United Kingdom), a musical satire inspired by George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

In the **Official Selection of Portuguese-Language Feature Films**, particular attention goes to the Portuguese premiere of the speculative fiction **YELLOW CAKE** (Brazil), directed by Tiago Melo and produced by Kléber Mendonça Filho and Emilie Lescaux, who were both Oscar nominees for *The Secret Agent*. The competition also features the animated film **NIMUENDAJÚ** (Brazil), by Tania Anaya, alongside the documentaries **RUA DO PESCADOR Nº 6** (Brazil), by Bárbara Paz; **ÁGUA MÃE** (Portugal), by Hiroatsu Susuki and Rossana Torres; **O AVESSO DO MUNDO** (Portugal), by Rita Palma; and **BAÍA DOS TIGRES** (Angola, Portugal), by Carlos Conceição.

It is important to note that the CineEco 2026 Official Selection also includes the **International Competition for Short and Medium-Length Films**. This competitive section brings together 31 new films exploring a diverse range of themes, from resource exploitation and sustainability to threatened natural territories, indigenous communities, resource management and urban planning. Among the highlights are **QUIETUDE**, by Portuguese filmmaker Gonçalo Almeida, and **FELICIDAD**, by Spanish

filmmaker Francesco Mastroleo — two short films produced as part of a film residency held in La Palma in 2024, under the guidance of German filmmaker Werner Herzog. The far-reaching dimensions of climate change and global warming emerge in the science-fiction narrative **1,5 Y MÁS**, by Miguel Dorado, and in the poetic vision of **YOU TOLD US TO TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER**, by British filmmaker Harry Tomlin. Aquatic ecosystems take centre stage in **THE HERRING QUEEN** and **KOMARNICA: THE WILD THAT REMAINS**. Biodiversity, meanwhile, is explored in **LOVE BIRDS, WE ARE ANIMALS** and **DAWN CHORUS** (a film celebrating the beauty of birdsong at dawn, following musician and philosopher David Rothenberg as he records sounds in the forest to create music in dialogue with the birds).

The theme of landscape and territory has been a recurring thread throughout CineEco's editions and returns in this year's programme with films such as **IBRIDO URBANO**, **FINDING THE LANDSCAPE** and **LAST TROPICS**. Other themes that have long been central to the festival include indigenous cultures and local activism, explored in **SAY IT SLOWLY**, which addresses traditional languages and cultures; **REMIGIA'S LESSONS**, which examines local resilience through the transmission of knowledge; and **LOST SONGS OF SUNDARI**, an exploration of preserving memory as part of a culture's intangible heritage. The programme also features films centred on reforestation and the therapeutic relationship between humans and flora, including the documentary **REPLANTING A GARDEN** and the animated film **PETRA Y EL SOL**. Migration driven by environmental or social pressures, as well as journeys along perilous routes, is explored in films such as **RISKY ROUTES**, which follows amphibious migration in Switzerland, and the Mexican fiction short **EL GÜERO**, in which an employee of a US company arrives in a coastal town in Mexico to oversee the construction of the region's first hotel.

The Official Selection of **Portuguese-Language Short and Medium-Length Films** features 14 works, including **OS BRAVOS**, by Catarina Mourão; **ALGUMAS COISAS QUE ACONTECEM AO LADO DE UM RIO**, by Daniel Soares; and **ONDE NASCEM OS PIRILAMPOS**, by Clara Vieira — films that have already enjoyed a notable international festival run, including screenings at the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Cannes Film Festival.

No less important is the **Regional Panorama Competition**, dedicated to films whose narratives are rooted in the region and the Serra da Estrela. The section also features **MAÇOS E MARTELOS**, by Tiago Cerveira; **O AVESSO DO MUNDO**, by Rita Palma; **O PRÓXIMO PRINCÍPIO**, by Pedro Nogueira; and **O ANJO DA GUARDA**, by Eduardo Pires. This year, a special out-of-competition screening will present **LESSONS IN FIRE** (Finland), directed by John Webster, a documentary about wildfires in Portugal, filmed in Castelo Branco and in the village of Sabugueiro, in Seia.

CINE ECO 2026

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Also worth highlighting is the fact that CineEco includes, for the second time, a competitive category for **Fiction, Non-Fiction and Animation Shorts**, featuring 25 films from 15 countries.

Discover the full Official Selection for CineEco's 32nd Edition [here](#).

Further Information:

CineEco – Serra da Estrela International Environmental Film Festival is **one of the world's longest-running environmental film festivals**. Held every October in Seia, it has taken place continuously since 1995, on **the initiative of the Municipality of Seia**.

CineEco offers audiences a carefully curated programme, showcasing lesser-known and alternative films beyond the mainstream film market.

The festival unfolds over eight days of **free-admission** activities. Alongside its competitive programme, CineEco also offers an educational strand and a wide range of **parallel events**, including **conferences, concerts, workshops, exhibitions and a film market**. Together, these initiatives encourage **active citizenship in the fields of sustainable development and territorial appreciation, while promoting environmental and film education and broadening knowledge and awareness in both areas**.

Throughout the year, beyond the festival period, CineEco's extensive network of screenings across the country allows audiences to discover films from the Official Selection — one of the festival's distinctive features.

CineEco is organised by the Municipality of Seia and enjoys the High Patronage of the President of the Portuguese Republic and the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It also receives financial support from DGArtes (Directorate-General for the Arts).

The Festival programme is curated by Cláudia Marques Santos, Daniel Oliveira and Tiago Alves.

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