Aran Farming Workshops

Exploring High Nature Value Farming

11th – 13th August 2010
Evening Work Programme

- Overview of Aran’s work to date
- Burren farming for conservation programme (€3million over 3 years)
- A Burren type programme on the Aran Islands?
- Island farm representative group
- Next steps
High Nature Value Farming

• HNV farming = type of extensive farming practiced on Aran islands and similar areas across Europe
• Increasingly under threat from land abandonment and intensification
• EU member states have pledged to support HNV farming
• What can be done on Aran Islands to support this type of farming?
## Work to date on HNV on Aran Islands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2008</td>
<td>BurrenLIFE and Teagasc information meetings on Aran Islands, followed by farm visits to Burren</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Report commissioned by Heritage Council on case studies of HNV farming on Aran Islands and north Connemara. Series of public meetings on Islands in April and November/December</td>
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<td>April 2010</td>
<td>Heritage Council Report completed</td>
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<td>Today</td>
<td>EFNCP funded workshops on Islands</td>
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Case Studies on HNV

• Maintaining our heritage relies on maintaining the extensive farming that created it
• Farming under threat
Case Studies on HNV: Findings

- Aran Islands: Beef production (mainland finishing), vegetables-home use.
- Traditional farm practices in decline: vegetable growing and stone wall building
- In danger of being lost: working Connemara ponies, rye production for thatching
- Scrub encroachment not severe overall but some walls encroached
- Evidence of abandonment on some farms e.g. spread of bracken and brambles
- Farmers proud of their natural and cultural
Case Studies on HNV: Challenges

- Difficulty of earning a living: dependent on direct payments (REPS and AEOS closed) and off farm income
- Farming increasingly part time, low product prices, increasing bureaucracy and paperwork.
- Ageing farm population
Case Studies on HNV: Solutions

• **Communication and better relationships:** farmers involved in developing policy

• **Agri-environment schemes:** tailored to areas, farmers involved in design, simple and flexible, focused on conservation

• **Research:** sustainable grazing; conservation and management of rare arable flowers; controlling scrub and bramble

• **Marketing:** produce from HNV areas

• **Traditional farm skills:** research and support
Burren Farming for Conservation Programme:

Producing quality food and a quality environment
Principles

- Central Role of farmer
- Partnership
- Importance of farm planning
- Being practical and innovative
- Being flexible
- An honest days work for an honest days pay
- Creating real benefits
- Importance of monitoring
On the ground

• Understanding what we want
• Getting grazing right
• Complementary feeding systems
• Scrub control
Benefits to farmer

- Our heritage, our legacy
- Creating employment
- Meeting our obligations
- Creating new opportunities
- Investing in our community
- Benefits for society
- Leading the way