

Report of a Study Tour by a Group from the Argyll Region of Scotland to the Basque Country

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**EU Inter-regional Agri-environmental
Exchange Programme 1997/8**

**Argyll Study Tour
of the Basque Country**

The visit was supported by:

**European Forum for
Nature Conservation &
Pastoralism**

British Alcan

United Distillers

Trident Feeds

Background

The motivation which led to the study tour stemmed from the success of the Scottish Highlands and Islands' visit to Portugal, organised under the 1995 LIFE Travel Grant Aid programme.

It was felt that it would be beneficial to organise a similar trip based on farmers, advisors and administrators from Argyll only, so that it might be possible to build on the lessons learned by contact after returning to Scotland. It was also felt that the different viewpoints of the various attendees would emerge all the more clearly when the context of climate and location was common to all.

Why the Basque Country ?

The Basque Country was chosen for 2 reasons.

Firstly, it was felt that the similarities between the area and Argyll were many. It is a high-rainfall, high relief region, with stock farming predominant. It has a strong national identity and culture, which is firmly linked with the farming community. And issues as diverse as the use of common pastures, of control over land, especially as regards tree planting, of wildlife/farming conflicts and of women leaving the countryside all have their analogues in the West of Scotland.

Secondly, the organiser had in Helen Groome of the Basque Farmers' Union (Euskal Herriko Nekazarien Elkartasuna) an enthusiastic and tremendously helpful contact willing to make all the arrangements necessary for the visit. Her contribution was crucial to the success of the visit and we wish to record our heartfelt thanks. We also wish to acknowledge the welcome and interest shown us by all our hosts, as listed in Appendix 2.

The attendees

The organiser also wanted to avoid organising a visit attended mainly by those well-known figures who naturally emerge time and again on a regional basis and to concentrate instead on those active in the agricultural community on a more local scale.

Invitations were therefore issued to prominent and/or innovative farmers and crofters from the main Argyll islands and the remoter parts of the Argyll mainland and to representatives of a variety of public bodies and NGOs.

The trip eventually comprised 10 farmers, 2 crofters, 1 estate factor, 2 farm advisors, 1 crofters' union leader and 1 government conservation agency employee. A range of agricultural enterprises were represented, including not only beef and sheep, but also dairying, pig and potato production. (see appendix 1)

Of the 11 farming businesses present, all but 3 had applied to join 2078 schemes. A number are also participants in woodland management programmes. Three attendees have rights on common grazings.

Funding

The tour was 42 % funded by the EU Inter-Regional Agri-Environmental Exchange Programme 1997/8. Other support was received from the European Forum for Nature Conservation & Pastoralism (£400); British Alcan (£250); United Distillers (£100) and Trident Feeds (£100). The balance of costs were paid by the attendees or their employers.

Programme

9/11 Travel to Basque Country.
Stay in Karrantza (farm tourism) 9-11/11.

10/11 General introduction to Basque Country

Visit common grazings in Karrantza area

Grazings and some farmland owned by municipality. Traditional rights to grazings not legally established. No graziers' assoc., therefore not 2078-eligible. Council has right to plant trees on commons; local farmers had protested and accord on future planting had been achieved.

Incursions of lone wolves from Burgos province becoming more common. Farmers and environmental groups formerly in open conflict. Currently more low-key approach on both sides. Regional government attempts to alleviate difficulties to farmers by aiding rehabilitation of shepherds' huts.

Govt.-approved site for disposal of livestock carcasses by feeding to griffon vultures (formerly in decline). Site popular with farmers as easy way to dispose of dead animals. Change in vulture behaviour throughout Basque Country - attacks on living stock. Dilemma whether to continue feeding to keep vultures away from stock or to stop feeding, hoping the population would decline again.

Visit Eretza area.

Unusual municipality in that it attempts to balance the interests of foresters (and the municipal coffers), graziers and tourists. Summer grazing for 1200 cattle on 400 ha. Thinned Scots pine plantation used for grazing stock. Mixed planting areas. Attempt to use picnic facilities etc. to channel tourists away from sensitive areas and to promote pony trekking. Funding of improvement of grazings to shift from council to graziers committee under 2078. Considered a high priority as land values in valley very high and extra grazing difficult to obtain. One of oldest farming populations in Bizkaia due to proximity of Bilbo.

11/11 Bachelorisation of communities is major problem in many rural areas, as is buying up of rural properties by non-farmers. Introduction of controls on building of new houses on farmland by non-farmers.

Much interest in reintroduction of Basque language, wholly lost from area.

Visit to dairy unit in Karrantza area. 21 ha; 40 milkers; 20 heifers; 2 f/t jobs. Grass and maize silage, with concentrates (high costs). Fragmentation of fields further inc. costs. High level of self-sufficiency in sheep, pigs, veg. etc. for home consumption (as elsewhere in Basque country).

Meet local milk co-op representatives. Small co-op concentrating on quality and accepting milk without differentiating between large and small farms. Will not accept milk from cows eating genetically-modified feed. Investing in collection point. Actively promoting quality issues to bind group together. Fending off large buyers despite their offers of premia to large suppliers. Looking at added-value products such as yoghurt.

Visit sheep's cheesemaking enterprise. Seasonal off-farm business selling direct from creamery, in local market and through one retailer in Bilbo. Pays going market rate for raw milk and collects from farms in churns.

Visit pork processing plant producing 20 different sausages etc.. Family firm (4 brothers + 2 workers) had received grant from EU and Basque Govt. for the factory building, which met all hygiene standards, and from Bizkaian Govt. for marketing. Using Karrantza name to go for quality niche market. Having to import pigs from Alava and Navarra due to low prod. locally. Attempting to control quality of inputs by regulating use of drugs and monitoring proportion of fat.

12/11

Visit Gernika. See Bizkaia assembly building and historic oak tree. Devolution within Spanish state explained.

Meet administrators of Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve. All-encompassing catchment-wide plan aims to control and channel development while maintaining 'traditional' agricultural/forestry in the landscape and the scenic qualities of the estuary area. Original plan did not involve local interest groups sufficiently - this was now being addressed. High % of land under absentee forestry ownership. Agricultural elements of plan focus on niche marketing of produce.

Agricultural economy in the area based on 3 pillars: beef & milk sales (typical unit 6-8 ha owned; 20 ha leased); local market - direct sales of veg. & cheese from 250 farms; pine plantations grown on 30 yr. rotation for construction & carpentry. Union locally against any intensification resulting in red. in employment.

Visit farm producing cow's milk cheese. 4 partners; 45 cows (av. 6000 l); 12 ha - none held in secure tenure. Raw milk sales; home-made cheese and chorizo from pigs fattened on whey. Low bacterial counts and mastitis incidence - put down to low stress levels. 25 % grant aid for cheese plant, with 80% reduction in interest on loan for remainder of investment. Partners stressed quality of life - aimed to have regular week-ends off, for example.

Visit farm combining low input dairying with farm tourism. 27 cows, 10 heifers; 30 ha of grass (24 owned), which grows 12 months of the year. Feeds 600 kg concentrates per cow, otherwise no bought-in inputs. Cows graze all year when suitable; feeds silage and cut fresh grass in byre. Recognised as most efficient farmer in the area. Member of marketing discussion group. 2078 funds to maintain grassland goes to landowner, because no security of tenure.

Stay in Gernika area (farm tourism)

13/11

Visit Lekeitio town. Discuss problem of unemployment and reduction in number of farms locally (from 1000 to 200). Union trying to boost consumption of locally-produced foods by 3-pronged approach: a) stressing importance to local employment; b) stressing quality of local produce; c) relating products available at various times of year to consumption patterns.

Visit Laneko farm product transformation enterprise in small industrial estate. 11 farmers co-operate to produce processed foods using either local products or products formerly grown locally and bought in, eg. preserves, bottled fruit & veg., cider. Come and work in plant after doing the farm work. Experimental products such as kiwi fruit & mint jelly are great success: others, such as preserved leeks, could not be sold. Marketing concentrates on local area where the name means something and costs are competitive with imported supermarket goods. Now having to bring in skills in economics. Selling qualities of products, eg runniness of marmalade, are too variable.

Stay in Altsasua

14/11

Visit Urbasa common grazings and meet graziers' representatives. 25000 ha mountain open for 6 months of grazing to stock from anywhere in Navarra. Currently the 17000 ha of actual grazing are used by about 7400 cows; 3300 mares and 54000 sheep. 1000 mm rainfall. 40-150 beef cows per farmer and 10-50 mares (for dog meat etc.) or 300-500 milking ewes. Bulls killed at 11 months @ 350 kg. Feel threatened by agricultural policy generally and by threat of Natural Park designation in particular. Little 2078 support as Navarra Govt co-funding is so low. Some support for rare breeds, such as Betizu, but doesn't affect most farmers.

Farmers stress their role in maintaining the countryside and in minimising hazards such as fire. They fear that any payments made by the proposed Natural Park will stop them accessing other funds.

Meet representative of Navarra Environment Dept.. Failed to get clear picture of the Dept.'s activities due to difficulties in the translation.

Stay in Aezkoa

15/11

Visit beef unit in Arribe area. 9 villages; 800 pop.; 40% employed in agriculture, 50% above retirement age, 10% work in local factory or commute to eg Pamplona, 17% unemployment. Bachelor farmer has 30 ha owned, 30 ha leased and rights on common pasture. 38 breeding cows; 15 mares (used to clean the fields) and 25 sheep. Sells direct to local butcher via slaughterhouse in Pamplona under the Navarra beef label (minimal premium). Beef producers group has 340 members.

Visit mixed farm. 35 cows, 10 ha of seed potatoes.

Visit common grazings. Area has some of biggest semi-natural beech woodlands in Europe. Common land is 80 % woodland and 20% pastures. Municipalities' income based mainly on timber sales. Locals employed as mensurators to carry out tree marking in line with forest plan agreed with Navarra govt.. Timber sold to companies in Pamplona or from as far away as Logroño by sealed bid. These use their own brought-in labour for the harvesting. Little local processing of wood - local sawmill specialises in oak, which is bought from France. A small furniture factory represents the only local industry.

Common pastures not fertilised - farmers decided to maintain their high quality at the expense of quantity.

Some planting of trees occurring on the commons to promote hunting - supported by EU Structural Funds.

Change in griffon vulture behaviour - attacks on livestock - being reported in the area.

Meet local reps. of municipalities, forestry and grazing interests to discuss above matters.

Stay in Aezkoa

16/11

Return to Scotland

Some personal impressions

Why should Basque farming systems be conserved ?

The areas visited were for the most part dominated by small-scale farming, as measured on the UK scale. However, not all of the units seen could be described as 'low-intensity'. This raised interesting questions about the justification for, and the future of, agricultural support, given the strong emphasis placed on the more extensive systems in current thinking.

In the Pyrenees the farming system reflects the intensities of land use prevalent in much of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland nowadays (though perhaps not what used to be the norm 100 years ago ?). Large areas of semi-natural habitat clearly remained - forests in particular. In these areas agriculture was in some ways not the major land use, although much of the land was grazed. The question which was raised in my mind was what deleterious ecological consequences would arise from the demise of farming.

In the Karrantza area, on the other hand, the impression was of a fairly high overall grazing density, albeit distributed across a large number of small units. The region's farming structure was in many ways similar to that obtaining in SW Wales twenty to thirty years ago, and the pattern of field size is similar between the two areas. Only on the hill grazings are stocking rates low in any absolute sense.

It was not clear from our brief visit what if any environmental interest was supported by the 'inbye' land of this latter area. The widespread retention of hedges was a positive feature, but given the level of slurry production it was not clear that there would be many surviving herb-rich pastures, for example. Raptors were seen in some numbers, but again the importance of the low ground as opposed to the hill land was difficult to judge.

The area where farming would seem to me to have the highest potential biodiversity value (although we were not present at the right time of year to be able to judge properly) was on the limestone grasslands of the Sierra de Urbasa. Ironically, this was the area where the SNH representative on the trip expressed most concern about overgrazing.

Biodiversity was certainly not an aspect of the area which was volunteered by the farmers or their union leaders as a strong point in their favour. Even in Urbasa, farmers see their wider 'environmental' role in terms of preventing the build-up of rank 'wilderness' - a fire hazard in this dry area.

Yet we got the impression that the Karrantza valley, for example, had a strong image of itself as an area of 'green' agriculture. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the set of criteria operating in the Basque Country is very different from that used in the UK, at least amongst our conservation sector.

This is reflected in the things which Karrantzan farmers *themselves* thought made them special - ideas clearly shared by other elements in the wider population to judge from the success of, for example, the marketing of Karrantzan sausages.

The farmers lay much emphasis on the cultural landscape, on the low use of drugs, on the non-use of certain types of feed (genetically-modified, for example) and on the high quality of the final product.

This type of landscape found in Karrantza is not uncommon in Europe - Wales, SW England, Normandy and Brittany - but has I feel generally been neglected in the work of the Forum.

I feel that the emphasis often starts with the distribution of high-profile species and works back to, for example, dehesa management, or late-cutting of grass, or extensive cereals. Areas lacking high-profile species may still support high levels of biodiversity, and these may still be intimately linked, albeit in perhaps a more subtle way, to agricultural management practices, as shown by Eric Bignal with particular regard to the chough in Islay.

It might even be argued that an appreciation of these less-understood systems is all the more important precisely *because* they are not understood - they cannot be easily replaced with the nature reserve type of management so often favoured for the 'target' species. They are also much less likely to receive protection through Natura 2000 or similar designations.

Designated sites and measures in the wider countryside

The lack of widely-available 2078 schemes was difficult to understand, particularly in Navarra, where there seemed (to the UK eye) to be a wealth of farmed landscapes of conservation interest.

The rules concerning eligibility for the existing schemes, which are similar to those applying in Scotland, ignore conditions prevailing in many areas of the country. For example, in the Karrantza area, 2078 schemes were unavailable to common grazings which have no graziers' association.

In the Gernika region, farmers without security of tenure were unable to apply for entry, with the nonsensical result that absentee landowners could obtain payments for the maintenance of pasture areas.

Again in Bizkaia, EHNE points out that on common lands grazings associations must agree not to pesticides, yet the forestry interests on the same ground are not in any way bound to this rule. This lack of suitability for local circumstances was particularly strange given that the schemes are administered by the Basque regional governments. Indeed a cynic might think that the rules are *intended* to discourage entry into these schemes !

Throughout the area there seemed to be an unwillingness of the part of the regional governments to co-finance 2078 schemes, and many of the budgets for existing schemes are, apparently, derisory. If this is a major factor in a relatively affluent area such as the Basque Country, how much more difficult must it be to set up such schemes in the poor areas of the EU.

The Urdaibai catchment has been declared a Biosphere reserve. Our understanding was that this originated as very much a 'top-down' initiative, but was now having to develop into a much more participative affair. It was not however clear what effects the designation would have outwith the realms of planning decisions. In the agricultural field we understood the emphasis to be on the marketing of produce from the region under a premium label. It was not obvious whether the reserve strategy extended to maintaining or promoting those agricultural practices considered to be desirable.

The Sierra de Urbasa is to be designated as a natural park by the Navarra government. Again it was not clear what practical effect this would have on the considerable farming use of the common pastures within the area. It was not even clear whether the government regarded farmers and their current usage levels as positive or negative influences on the Sierra.

It was however clear that the farming community was not won over to the idea of the Park, and fears were expressed that stock reduction payments would be introduced (as has happened in Asturias) which would by some unexplained double-funding rule have the effect of making farmers ineligible for other forms of state assistance.

Farmers in Urbasa, as in *all* the other areas visited felt threatened, not by apathy on the part of politicians, but by what they saw as a deliberate attempt to get rid of them and turn the area into a tourist resort. Although it must be admitted that due to translation difficulties we were unable to understand to any meaningful degree the scope and direction of the Navarrese government's environment policy as it related to farmers, it is still the case that we did not see any evidence that the various tiers of administration were succeeding in alleviating these fears.

Woodland management

We were impressed by the standards of woodland management in the areas we visited. For example, brashing of growing plantations is much commoner than in Scotland. We were also struck by the importance of woodland and its sound management for the local economy, particularly its role in the funding of Navarrese municipalities, and the high degree of local control over the woodland asset. It was interesting to hear that woodlands are an integral part of most farms in the Gernika area.

On the negative side, it was very depressing to see that, as in Scotland, decision-making on forestry issues is so often outwith the control of those grazing the land and that forestry itself is frequently totally divorced from agriculture.

It was disappointing that local councils did not seem to take much account of the wishes of the graziers of their common land in their (subsidised) planting programmes, even in areas where agriculture is the biggest employer in the municipality. It was made clear that the integrated management seen in Eretza was very much the exception.

In the Pyrenees, it was difficult to understand why, despite the lack of local employment being a major issue, tree felling was undertaken by imported labour and very little value was added to the product within the area.

Many in Scotland feel that local decision-making is the answer to the problems of conflicting interests. The experience in the Basque Country suggests that this is not necessarily the answer. On the other hand, we saw many examples where the state was not making a good job of balancing local interests with long-term sustainable use. Somewhat depressingly, the good examples we saw depended on enlightened individuals who made a conscious decision to overcome the nature of the system.

Marketing initiatives

We saw or heard of a range of local food marketing initiatives:

- the milk co-op in Karrantza
- sheep's cheese in Karrantza
- cured pork products in Karrantza
- cows' cheese and chorizo in Bizkaigane
- Laneko product transformation plant
- Navarra beef label

These cover a whole range of scales and strategies (small seasonal off-farm; small-scale industrial; home production...). Some were aimed at maximising the value-added element on the farm, while others, such as the Navarra beef, offer little in the way of a premium and seemed to be ways of keeping purchasers faithful to a high quality product.

We were concerned that *everywhere* seemed to be promoting local products under a premium label, which we did not think would be sustainable outwith the local market context. In this respect the ideas of the Lekeitio group on cultivating consumers in the immediate locale seemed to be sensible.

I was very concerned that no-one in the group expressed doubts about the fact that the pork product plant we visited marketed as 'Karrantzan' sausages items made from pigs from Navarra and Alava -actions which would tend to undermine the confidence of consumers in 'local' brands.

'Quality' and 'traditional' seemed to be couched solely in terms of avoiding unnecessary drug use and thus of residues in food. On one hand, we felt that this had positive aspects in that the emphasis was on the standard of the end product, not on mere observance of the regulations in its production.

We felt that in general hygiene or animal transport rules, for example, are applied more rigorously in Scotland than in the Basque Country. It was of great concern to us that the Basques are allowed to continue and we all felt that a complete change of attitude is required in the EU and on the part of governments such as the UK which impose even stricter restrictions on their own consumers.

However, while end-product quality was strongly marketed, there seemed to be little in the way of promotion food products in terms of traditional systems or the landscapes and wildlife they support. Thus truly traditional pig farmers selling to the Karrantza factory would seem to be in competition with more intensive producers. Once again this reflects the different perceptions in Spain about what is important about the countryside.

The Laneko plant was of great interest. We could not but admire the work that had gone into the plant and the way that the producers concerned had pulled together. However, we saw the unit as a salutary example of the importance of firmly establishing one's market *before* engaging in such a capital-intensive venture. We could not understand why local people might be thought likely to buy processed leeks, for example - a vegetable available fresh for a large portion of the year at low price.

It was interesting that despite the failure of many of the product lines the farmer-partners seemed to find it so difficult to stop growing the crops in question - carrots were quoted as an example - even though the state of the market was made clear to them at first hand.

Agriculture/wildlife conflicts

Incursions of lone wolves from established populations to the south of the provincial boundary are a problem in the Karrantza area. It was heartening to hear that the polarised attitudes of some years ago were now replaced by a more low-key approach by both farmers and environmental activists.

The farmers had originally made a big splash in the press of shooting lone wolves and there had been many conflicts with environmental groups from Bilbo. Now there was dialogue and a blind eye was being turned to the farmers, who in turn carried out the culling without any media publicity or other public displays.

However, it was of concern that, as in many areas of farming life, the 'solution' appears to consist of ignoring the regulations while having your heart in the right place. The problem then appears to go away. I fear that while this makes unworkable rules less likely to be reformed, the farmers are continually at risk of litigation.

The attitude of the local government seemed to be based in a romantic urban view of farmers. Their promotion of the reintroduction of full-time shepherding through the restoration of shepherds' huts ignored completely the changing aspirations of country dwellers. This attitude is again seen in the UK, where it has been suggested to Mull farmers that they should avoid predation by the reintroduced white-tailed eagle by in-wintering their flocks.

The problem of vultures was also of some interest. The belief was widespread amongst farmers in more than one area visited that griffon vultures had changed their behaviour and now attacked live stock. However, this charge was not, it seemed, being taken seriously by the state, adding to the paranoia of the farmers. Again, this harks back to Mull, where farmers' complaints were initially dismissed out of hand on the grounds that white-tailed eagles in Norway never attack stock.

Conclusions

The visit to the Basque Country left us with a mix of impressions. In many ways we felt they were very vulnerable to change. Their units were mostly small and therefore had a limited capital base from which to respond to variations in prices or subsidies or regulation.

The way in which the whole economy seemed to depend on ignoring established EU regulations on a whole range of issues, from animal transport to milking parlour hygiene to wolf control made us fear for them, but also added to the cynicism felt in farming circles that the law is not equally applied to all.

We did not feel that farmers were any more confident of their future than in the UK. Some of this was of course due to the difficult economic situation of small farmers. But it was also noticeable that despite the lighter touch of regulation, farmers still did not feel that the wider population or the government had any empathy with them, and indeed were convinced that they were to be cleared off the land in the near future.

This was particularly surprising considering that marketing of products based on widespread popular conceptions of particular regions was so common. It seemed that farmers were not succeeding in making the link between the quality of the product, the beauty of the cultural landscape and their circumstances and needs.

There also seemed to be a long way to go before an integrated policy for the countryside was achieved. The control of land and resources was a fundamental problem, especially on a local level. Looking at the wider perspective, it was not clear what long-term future was proposed for the Basque farmers or whether government saw clear reasons, be they in order to preserve landscape interest or food quality or biodiversity or community life, to maintain and support the agricultural way of life.

There certainly seemed to be little common ground between the urban-based conservation movement and the farmers. The debate, such as it was, seemed to centre around single conflict species - the wolf, for example - and did not consider what, if any, threats wolves might pose to the wider biodiversity interest if its spread into Bizkaia after years of absence led to a decline in farming. The difficulties in reaching a satisfactory solution to the problem of ever-increasing numbers of globally-rare Greenland white-fronted and barnacle geese on Islay raises many similar issues.

On the positive side, it was impressive to see how Basque farming had preserved many of the aspects of country life which in the UK we had been told could not survive. Small-scale milk production and small-farming generally were common. Despite the problems of a skewed gender balance and pressures from urban house-

buyers, the farming population was remaining strong. There is still the strength of sheer numbers which has been lost in many parts of Wales, for example.

The landscape looked 'traditional' and wildlife everywhere to be seen. Local marketing was being strongly and, in many cases, successfully pursued and the commitment to product quality seemed deep-rooted and genuine. Agri-tourism was taking off and, to judge from our experience, was of high standards and would be easy to promote abroad.

There was also in a few places a move towards integration of rural interests. The management of the municipal commons at Eretza could be imitated elsewhere. And the shift of emphasis towards a bottom-up development of the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve was positive.

As the fate of Basque farmers moves more and more into the European arena, it is to be hoped that will be able to capitalise on their strengths before they are crippled by their weaknesses. Much the same can be said for all the less-favoured areas of the EU.

Areas for further work

For the Forum, two areas where further work is urgently needed are suggested. Firstly a conscious shift in emphasis away from the 'sexy' species and habitats is essential if a meaningful contribution is to be made to the debate on, for example, Agenda 2000.

There is already a widespread acceptance of the idea that the LFA coincides with areas of high conservation and landscape interest. This is true even outwith the narrowly-defined conservation interest group. However, all too often this assertion comes across as more of an emotional response than an objective assessment. This is even more true when it comes to assessing the role of farming systems in the maintenance of these species, habitats and landscapes.

The second area for investigation has already been flagged up by the work of Steve Goss and colleagues on the possible impacts of the introduction of area payments for livestock farmers. A large proportion of Europe's farmers utilise land on which they have no secure tenure. This may be in their sole use, or may be used by other farmers at other times of year (community grazing of stubbles, for example).

A further group of farmers use shared grazings of some description, for example, privately owned common land or municipal grazings. Complications here include the presence of separate forestry interests on the same land within grazed woodlands.

These areas, often of high conservation value due to the lack of incentive to improve the ground (in the former case) or the innate conservatism of systems needing near-unanimity within the community. However, proposals for changes in subsidy regimes are often predicated on the ability to make long-term commitment to certain management prescriptions (as in 2078 and 2080 schemes).

Insecure tenure and the use of common grazings have been integrated into the year-by-year subsidy system based on headage and, subject to availability rules, are counted as forage area for the purposes of IACS. However, any decoupled support mechanism raises important questions for these farmers' future. It also has the potential to affect directly the management of the land if, as happens in 2078 schemes and afforestation programmes the eligible applicant is the landowner.

The assumptions which underlie some existing management schemes are clearly based on areas of enclosed land under secure tenure. It is important that the pitfalls of this approach are brought forward by the Forum and presented to the EU in a biodiversity context before Agenda 2000 is implemented in detail.

Appendix 1 - Attendees

Sandy Carr, Torr an Tuirc, Glen Lonan, Oban PA34

Farm manager: beef, sheep

Lesley Cranna, SNH, Bridge Rd., Portree IV51

Scottish Natural Heritage Area Operations Manager (Skye & Lochalsh, Wester Ross & Lochaber)

Jim Corbett, Laggan, Loch Buie, Isle of Mull

Farmer: sheep, beef, wild red deer

Hugh Donaldson, St. Fergus, Acharacle, Ardnamurchan PH36

Crofter: beef

Nigel Grant, Kiloran, Isle of Colonsay

Farmer: beef, sheep, dairy

Angus Ferguson, Windy Edge, Portnahaven, Isle of Islay

Crofter of the Year 1996: sheep, pigs, potatoes, tourism

Donald Harrison, SAC, Glencruitten Rd., Oban PA34 4DW

SAC Advisory Service Area Advisor

Gwyn Jones, 1 Castle Rd., Oban PA34 5AN

Farm Conservation Advisor (tour organiser)

Angus Kerr, Scarrabus, Bridgend, Isle of Islay

Farmer & creamery director: dairy, beef, sheep

Dee & Mary MacAulay, Dalilea, Acharacle, Ardnamurchan, PH36

Farmers: beef, sheep

Minty MacKay, Ardalanish, Bunessan, Isle of Mull

Farmer: beef, sheep, tourism

Donald MacLean, Knock, Gruline, Isle of Mull

Farmer: sheep, beef

Jeff & Chris Reade, Sgriob Ruadh, Tobermory, Isle of Mull

Farmers & cheese producers: dairy, tourism

Angus Robertson, Ardtornish, Morvern, by Oban

Estate factor: sheep, beef, wild red deer, forestry, hydro-electric, tourism

John Toal, SCU, The Old Mill, Broadford, Isle of Skye IV49 9AQ

Scottish Crofters' Union, Director

Appendix 2 - Contacts in the Basque Country

Karrantza :

- Helen Groome (EHNE)
- César Valera (Dairy farmer)
- Amparo Flores (GUVAC-Leche)
- Santos Fernández (Sausage factory)
- Mari Luz Arrien (Cheeses)

Gueñes :

- Joseba García (Parish Council official)
- Antonio Isusi & Carlos Galinde (Farmers)

Gernika :

- Xabi Arana (Biosphere Reserve Director)
- Jabi Arriaga (Bizkaigane farm : pigs, cows, cheese)
- José Luis Bermeosolo (farmer : diary cows and farm tourism)
- Paul Nicholson (EHNE, laneko)

Urbasa :

- Miguel González (presidente farmers Junta)
- Mikel Lasarte (EHNE)

Navarra Regional Government :

- Juan Pablo Gil (Head Environmental Quality Dept.)

Aezkoa :

- Fermin Irigarai (EHNE)
- Juan Martin Elizondo (Beef cattle)
- Fernando Garralda (beef cattle and potatoes)
- Mari José Andueza (Ugatza, ecology group)
- Afternoon event :
 - José Ignacio Dufour (Mayor Burguete)
 - Leoncio Campos (Rep. Erro Town Council)
 - Paula Erinoa (Aezkoa Council)
 - Felix Jamar (Aspina)
 - Javier Larrea (Tourism Council)
 - Fermin Izco (Forest engineer)