Permanent pastures and meadows - an overview

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Outline of the presentation

- The range of agricultural land within ‘permanent pastures and meadows
- Their relationship to Community nature policy and other environmental values
- Different ranges of values and different threats to their future.
- General objectives and a rational approach?
Much more than that....

New Forest, England
Burren, Ireland
Navarra, Spain

Stara Planina, Bulgaria
Spanish National Forest Plan – ‘forest’ (monte) in Spain

Character
- Tall forest: 14.04
- Other: 11.96

Use
- Grazing: 19.4
- No grazing: 6.8
“Land that you have re-sown with grass or other herbaceous forage during a five-year period is still counted as permanent pasture.” (Scottish Government guidance to farmers)

“Land used to grow grasses, clover, lucerne, sainfoin or forage vetches” (Northern Ireland Government guidance to farmers)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grass</th>
<th>Weeds</th>
<th>Browse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
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</tbody>
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Adapted from “Diversified Specie Grazing For Brush, Range and Pasture”, An Peischel, 1999
Acorns in Iberico pig diet

- **Mast season** – early Nov to late Feb
- **Dry matter intake:**

![Pie chart showing the proportion of acorns and grass in the diet](image)
Ostermann list of Annex 1 biotopes dependent on agricultural management

- Herbaceous
- Significant non-herbaceous aspect
6530 Fennoscandian wooded meadows

6280 Alvar

8240 Limestone pavement
4090 Endemic oro-Mediterranean heaths with gorse

4030 European dry heaths
51 Temperate and submediterranean matorrals

52 Mediterranean arborescent matorrals

53 Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-steppic matorrals
6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands

5130 Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands

5210 Arborescent mattroral with Juniperus spp
9120 Atlantic beechwoods with Ilex or Taxus understorey

9430 Alpine and subalpine Pinus uncinata forest

6310 Dehesa
Carbon store – on farmland it is mostly in pastures

Soil biodiversity – temperate grasslands have c. 100 t/ha: equivalent of 2000 sheep

Protection of soil structure
Spectrum of permanent pasture
(according to definition)

Marginality
Public goods delivery
Some conclusions about pastures

- Pastures and meadows are more than herbaceous vegetation in enclosed fields, more even than just grazing
- The use of forests, matorrals, heaths is not an anachronism – it’s real farming today over vast areas of Europe (e.g. 3.5-4 mill. ha of dehesa is Spain alone)
- They are central to EU nature objectives
- They are key to the new environmental agenda
- Not all pastures and meadows of equal value
Some conclusions about values

- *There is a range of values:*
  - All pastures probably provide higher services than e.g. silage maize
  - Difference between some ‘PP’ and some arable very slight
  - Maybe truly permanent pastures provide higher services than the occasionally ploughed?
  - But pastures/meadows under low-intensity management **definitely** provide highest overall levels of public goods
Some conclusions about needs

• *There is a range of threats*
  – Intensification
  – Conversion to arable
  – Abandonment
  – Loss to other land use (e.g. afforestation)

• *And of how significant these threats are*
  – Not all PP deliver high biodiversity
  – Not all even deliver C storage
  – Conversion not an issue in sown legumes etc.
  – Abandonment not a threat to most intensive

• *Protection and maintenance efforts*
  – Should reflect public benefits actually there
  – So one size does NOT fit all
Starting to think about policy…..

- Policy (and statistical definitions!) should reflect agriculture, not vice versa
- Policy should encourage farming which benefits the environment wherever it happens
- Policy should certainly not discourage positive management or give signals which lead to damage
- Permanent pastures and meadows of high public benefit should be maintained in active use across the EU, by means which are sufficient to conserve their environmental value
Diolch yn fawr!
Thank you!
Tänan!
Tack så mycket!
Благодаря!
Merci!