



European Forum on  
Nature Conservation  
and Pastoralism

## ANNUAL REPORT

### January 2013-December 2013



The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism brings together ecologists, nature conservationists, farmers and policy makers. This non-profit network exists to increase understanding of the high nature conservation and cultural value of certain farming systems and to inform work on their maintenance.

### What is EFNCP?

The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) is a pan-European non-profit organisation, bringing together non-governmental and governmental participants from several interest areas. It is a network to exchange information, identify issues and solutions, and inform policy development. EFNCP is a company limited by guarantee, established in 1996.

Our vision is **to ensure a viable future for the farming types that most benefit biodiversity across Europe, by making them valued by policy and the general public, and environmentally, economically and socially sustainable at the farm and landscape scales.** Our work involves:

- Raising awareness that certain European farming systems are central to achieving the EU's biodiversity targets and are also of high cultural importance, summarised in the term High Nature Value (HNV) farming.
- Raising awareness of socio-economic and cultural factors as critical in ensuring a sustainable future for HNV farming
- Ensuring the availability, dissemination and exchange of supporting information combining research and practical expertise.
- Encouraging networking and dialogue to foster this awareness, especially between actors who traditionally have found it difficult to find common ground.
- Bringing together ecologists, nature conservation managers, farmers and policy makers to consider problems faced by HNV farming systems and potential solutions.
- Developing and promoting policy options which ensure the ecological maintenance and development of these farming systems and cultural landscapes.

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## **Directors' Report**

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2013 has been a difficult year for the Forum, but one which ends with our finances intact and some real success stories on the ground. We were not awarded a DG Environment NGO support grant for the first time since 2009, which was before our recent period of expansion and consolidation. An ongoing DG Enlargement project, payrolls to administer in the UK and Bulgaria and a number of projects to run within the year without any core funding put our finances and human resources under huge stress. Staff numbers and staff hours were cut and the remaining personnel gave over £100,000 worth of time without pay.

Part of this in kind contribution was work on protecting pastures in the context of the current Common Agricultural Policy reform. We had to struggle to ensure that the gains made in the main Regulations were not lost in the Commission's delegated acts, and achieved considerable success on this. Our advocacy work then shifted to the national level, especially Spain.

On the project front, the highlight was undoubtedly Ireland, where we acknowledge the generosity and understanding shown by the Heritage Council in filling our project funding gap. As a result we were able to play a role in getting HNV farming into the forthcoming Rural Development Programme and in securing funding for the Aran Life project. Important work was also carried out on common pastures in Bulgaria, building relationships with local authorities there, and in the North Pennines AONB (UK). We took part in two major EU studies on subjects where we have particular expertise; sadly the demands made were so far in excess of the funding available that they added to, rather than reduced, the pressure on key staff members.

We end the year satisfied that through a combination of financial management and favourable exchange rate movements we have managed to record a small surplus. Although the board is aware that another year like 2013 will be very difficult to weather, we have put a contingency plan in place for 2014.

## **Informing and improving policy**

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In 2013, the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) regulations were finalised and work continued on the detailed implementing rules produced by the European Commission (EC). We continued to provided a detailed input to senior EC officials and to delegations in the European Parliament on issues relating to permanent pastures, especially concerning the potential exclusion from the CAP of HNV pastures with trees and shrubs. We continued to collaborate on CAP issues with environmental NGO networks, and also with European Parliament delegations, providing expert input on technical issues relating to pastures and "greening" instruments

Where funding allowed, we made submissions on CAP implementation in Member States. In Ireland we did this on our own, in collaboration with the Heritage Council and in a partnership for the uplands convened by Mountaineering Ireland. In the UK, we were part of the RSPB-led HNV farming coalition. In Spain we were closely involved in setting up the new National Platform for Extensive Livestock and Pastoralism and in developing detailed policy proposals and holding bilateral meetings with the State authorities

We continued to carry out policy-related desk studies to provide policy-makers and lobby groups with meaningful and accurate information from which to work: We were leading members of consortia working on two major reports for DG Environment. The first, led by the Institute for European Environmental Policy, concerned HNV farming in the EU 27 and its support under the CAP. The second, led by Alterra, analysed the availability of data on a range of issues at the environment-agricultural policy interface, including 'ecologically valuable grasslands' (defining the term, estimating their extent and describing their policy context); and the environmental effects of CAP-subsidised farmland afforestation. Taken together, these two reports were the biggest element of our policy-related work at the European level this year.

There were other significant proposals of considerable significance to HNV farmers – animal and plant health. We provided a commentary for Slow Food on the draft Regulations, summarise the views expressed by civil society organisations and suggested specific areas where lobbying efforts might be focussed.

## Strengthening the network

Two new members joined our network in 2013:

- Pärandoosluste Kaitse Ühing (Estonian Semi-natural Community Association)
- Norsk Seterkultur (Norwegian Transhumance and Pastoralism Association)



Environmentally Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of Rural Areas

The work of the Slow Food-led ESSEDRA network in SE Europe began in 2013. The network, which in 2013 included 6 partners in Accession/Candidate States and 4 partners in the EU, is funded by DG Enlargement with the aim of developing the capacity of NGOs within the region to engage with policymakers on matters concerning policy alignment to the EU - the *acquis communautaire*, EU funding and so on. EFNCP has taken the lead on policy issues within the partnership. In 2013, we organised a workshop on food hygiene rules within the cheese sector in association with the Farmhouse and Artisan Cheesemakers of



Europe (FACE) Network and a workshop on pasture-related issues. We also guided the process of policy-related information gathering by partners in the States of the region, wrote synthesis papers and a guide to how NGOs might approach engagement with the process of developing IPARD rural development plans in the countries covered by ESSEDRA.



## Projects on the ground



Michael Starrett of the Heritage Council, Patrick McGurn of EFNCP, Eddie Downey and Gerry Gunning of the Irish Farmers Association and Cliona O'Brien of the Heritage Council meeting in May 2013



Funding for projects on the ground was minimal this year. However we did have one major success in Ireland, where we, in collaboration with our long-term partner, the Sligo Institute of Technology, and with Heritage Council funding, wrote a successful application for Life funding for conservation work by farmers on the Aran Islands. AranLife started at the end of the year.

## Improving understanding

We carried out a number of projects which were designed to inform discussions of future policy options.

- In England's North Pennines, EFNCP and Cumulus Consultants were commissioned to carry out a project to collate and summarise relevant information and data on HNV farming, to interview a representative sample of HNV farmers, to identify 'pinch points' or barriers where the existing policy framework is not working and to arrange a seminar for farmers to seek their views on the information gathered and proposed recommendations
- We collaborated with IDDRI, developing a scenario exercise on the future of agricultural policy in the medium to long term, taking an environmental perspective. The interaction between the agroecology and HNV farming concepts is emerging as a particularly interesting aspect for further investigation. We have started the process of involving other NGOs which share a common interest in developing low-input farming, considering the whole food chain transition. A comprehensive concept note has been issued, showing the strategic goals of the scenario building and the conditions for supporting decision making in the CAP reform process, based on nature conservation.
- In Bulgaria, we partnered with national NGOs and municipal authorities to share current experiences in the management and governance of common pastures, including aspects of best practice from the region and other areas in Europe. The collected evidence, practices and lessons from Bulgaria and Europe were presented and discussed in two consecutive meetings. The international round table in April 2013 focused on Western Balkan countries which share a common history of pasture governance practice and nowadays face similar challenges. The national workshop in May 2013 produced a series of recommendations that contributed to a change in the legislation for common pastures governance. The new rules introduced easier access to public pastures for owners of grazing animals replacing the requirement to organize a tender procedure for both individual and common grazing.

## Publications

### **Policy submissions**

- [Letter to MEPs in support of certain amendments to proposed CAP Regulations](#)
- [HNV coalition letter to English Minister on CAP](#)
- [HNV coalition letter to Scottish Minister on CAP](#)
- [HNV coalition letter to Welsh Minister on CAP](#)
- [HNV coalition letter to Northern Ireland Minister on CAP](#)
- [UK HNV farming coalition manifesto](#)
- [Paper on a national, outcome-based Agri-environment Programme under Ireland's RDP 2014-2020](#)
- [EFNCP up-date on proposed CAP Delegated Acts affecting the eligibility of pastures](#)
- [Scientific research showing the efficient productivity of wood pastures with a high density of trees and shrubs](#)
- [EFNCP Comments and queries re DS/EGDP/2013/9 – rev.1 \(21/11/13\)](#)

### **Books and reports**

- [Beaufoy, G & Poux, X. Supporting HNV extensive livestock systems in Mountain and Mediterranean areas – The need for an adapted European Policy. Options Méditerranéennes, A, no. 109, 2014, 19-29](#)
- [Jones, G; Silcock, P; Brunyee, J & Pring, J. North Pennines AONB High Nature Value Farming Research](#)
- [Short, C & Waldon, J \(2013\) The apportionment of agri-environment monies on common land in England. A report by the Foundation for Common Land](#)



*National workshop on communal pastures, Bulgaria*