Semi-natural Pastures and Meadows Policy Seminar

Trends in State of Meadows and Characteristic Species and how to improve Data and Understanding

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Trends in semi-natural pastures and meadows of Natura 2000 Habitats and Species

What we know, what we need to know, and how to improve data.

Natura 2000 series and HNV grassland

- HNV grassland - important habitats for butterflies, moths, flowers and birds

- Different types of grassland of EU importance in Natura 2000

Hay meadows; Wet meadows; Chalk meadows; Steppes; Molina and Nardus meadows

Benefits of grassland – Ecosystem Services

Soil fertility

Carbon storage

Pollination

Water storage

Fire prevention (in forest areas)

Recreation

Biodiversity

State of EU Grasslands

Article 17 Reports by EU Member States - only 7% Natura 2000 grasslands in favourable conservation status; 76% unfavourable – inadequate or bad; 17% unknown

- 0% of Natura 2000 Grasslands in FCS in Atlantic Biogeographic zone

State of species linked to Agro Ecosystems

Article 17 Reports results:

- 3% species in favourable conservation status (only in Pannonian and Boreal regions)
- 70% unfavourable – inadequate or bad
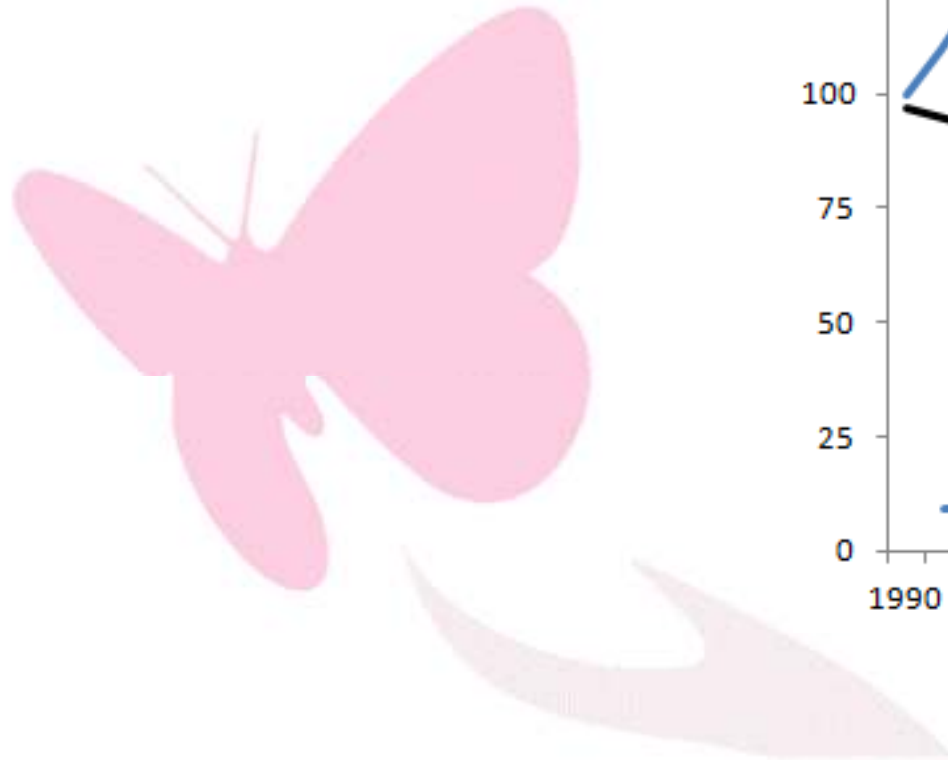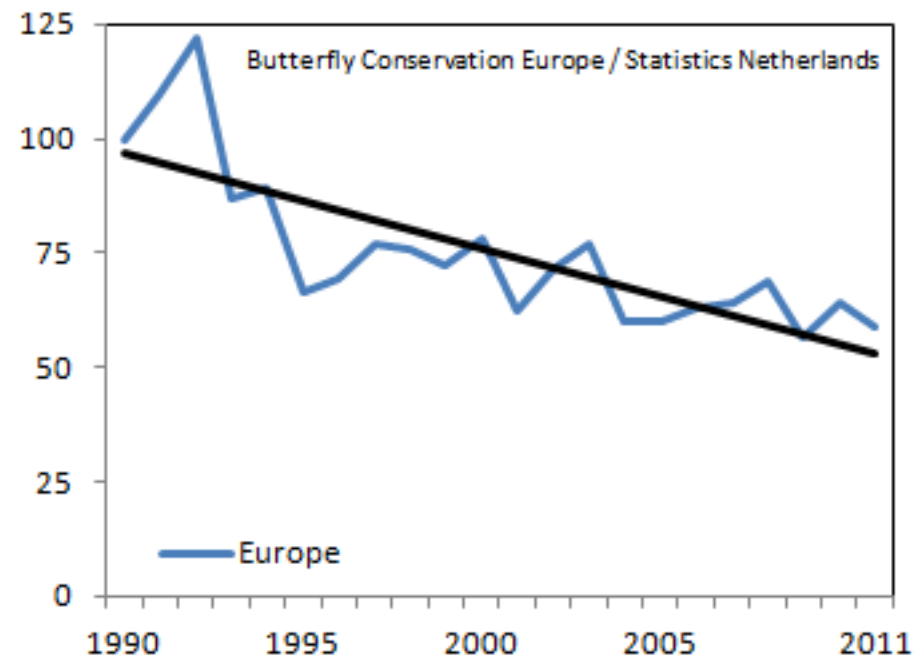- 27% unknown; 60% assessments unknown in Mediterranean region

State of Grassland Butterflies

European Grassland Butterfly Indicator 70% decline since 1990

Butterfly Conservation Europe / Statistics Netherlands

— Europe

Threats to HNV Grassland

Intensification/overgrazing/urbanisation in Western Europe

Abandonment/loss of sustainable grazing and mowing in East and Central Europe
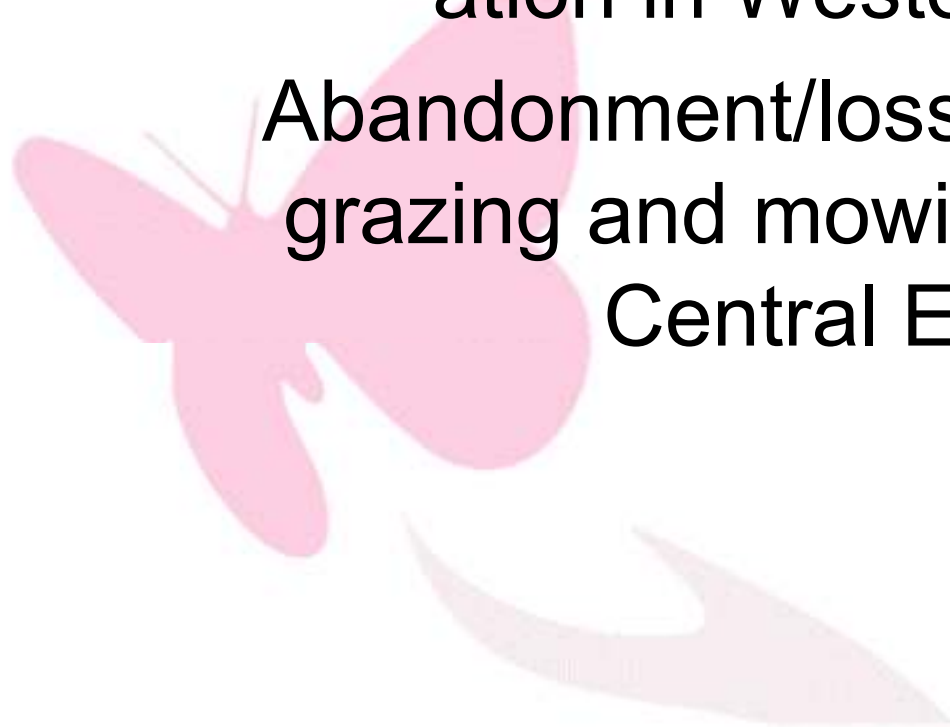
Causes of loss of HNV Extent and Quality

Socio-economic drivers

Western Europe – bigger farms, production focus, CAP incentives

Eastern/Central Europe – loss of grazing enterprises, lack of support from CAP

What do we need to know?

The EU 2020 biodiversity headline target

"Halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss"

What do we need to know?

EU Biodiversity Strategy Targets

Target 1: Improve conservation status of habitats and species of European importance

Target 2: Maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services

Target 3: Increase the contribution of agriculture to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity

What do we need to know to maintain HNV grassland improve biodiversity ?

- State of HNV grassland
- State of the species dependant on HNV grassland
- Ecosystem services delivery
- Effect of HNV agricultural management
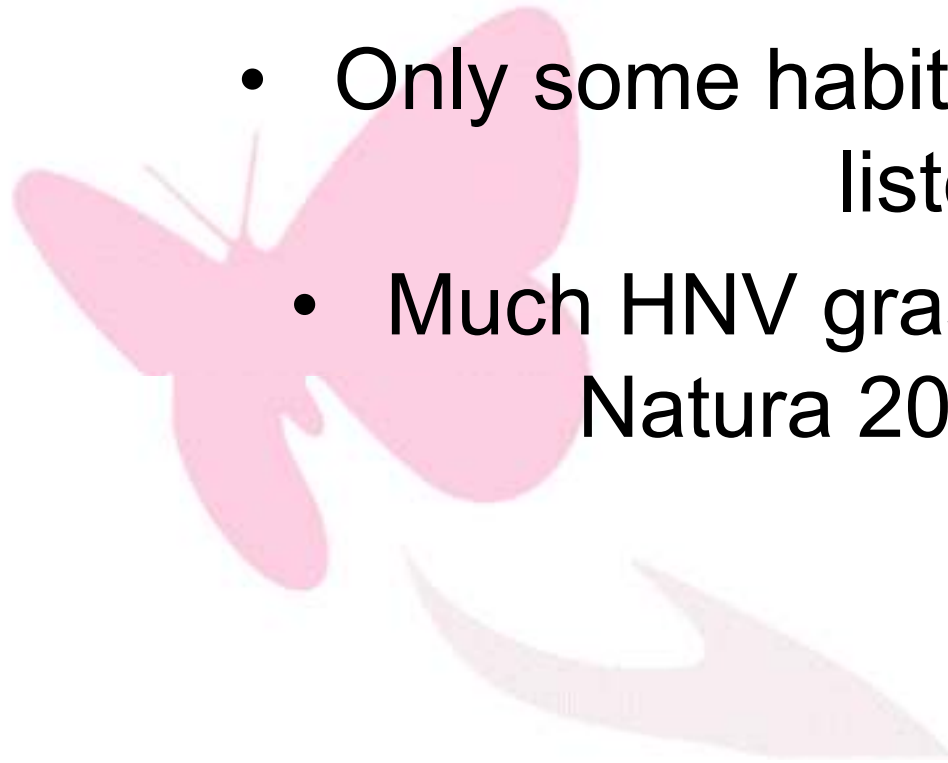- Impact of EU CAP subsidies

How good is the data?

Article 17

- Some data missing

- Only some habitats and species listed

- Much HNV grassland outside Natura 2000 series

How good is the biodiversity data?

- Good monitoring and reporting on birds and butterflies by Birdlife and BCE volunteers

- Very little systematic species monitoring by the Member States

- No reporting on grassland extent and quality through farmer reporting

More data needed

To systematically track delivery of EU Biodiversity Strategy targets, including population and abundance data for characteristic grassland species

To monitor extent and quality of Natura 2000 and HNV grassland and effects of management and subsidies in all Member States

How to improve data?

Article 17 – improvements to reporting in hand; need to ensure MS compliance and use data to influence agriculture policy reform

LPIS/IACS reporting by farmers – record semi-natural pastures and meadows and track management and subsidies

How to improve data?

- CAP subsidies (Pillar 1 and 2) – track impact (positive and negative) of spend on biodiversity / HNV

- Butterfly monitoring – support comprehensive monitoring and recording schemes in all Member States and compilation of policy relevant indicators

Conclusions

- HNV Grasslands in Natura 200 and outside in poor conservation status

- Species dependant on grassland declining and seriously threatened

- Benefits of sustainable management of semi-natural grassland not recognised or valued

Conclusions

- Plenty of data illustrate the scale and urgent need for remedial action

- Improvements in protection and management of HNV clearly possible and need to be incentivised

- Improvements in grassland and biodiversity recording and data analysis possible and should be implemented

Thank You

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