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*European Forum  
on Nature Conservation  
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# **High Nature Value farmlands: Recognising the importance of South East European landscapes**

## **CASE STUDY REPORT Mehedin i (Romania)**



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This report is produced as part of collaboration between the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) and WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme (WWF-DCP). Both organisations recognise the importance of certain farming systems for nature conservation. Between 2006 and 2008 a project was executed aiming at finding out at a local scale where agriculture overlaps with areas of High Nature Value in order to understand better the relation between both. The project consisted of six local workshops, three each in Bulgaria (Strandzha, Rusenski Lom and Western Stara Planina) and Romania (Sibiu, Mehedin i and Gala i), and a reporting seminar in Brussels. After concentrating on the ecological aspects, the workshops analysed the socio-economical needs of local farmers and identified where policy can be improved. In this way the project linked the developing concept of High Nature Value farming to the reality of farming and considered the practicalities of implementing the EU commitments on identifying and supporting HNV farming in different local situations. All findings were reported to relevant bodies from local to European level.

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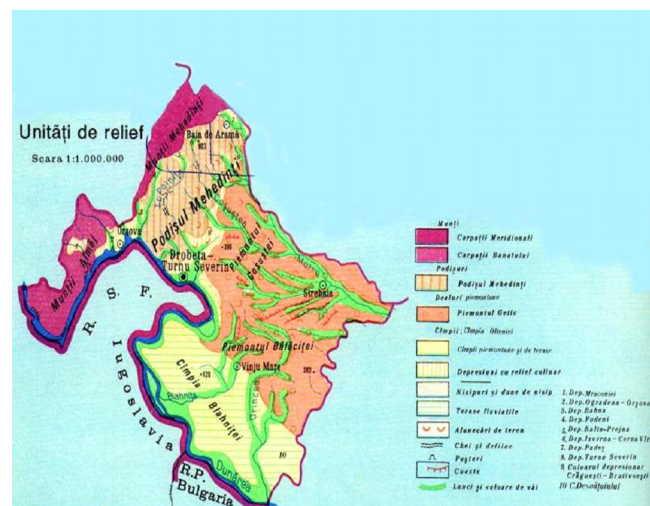
## I. INTRODUCTION

Mehedin i County is situated in the south-eastern part of Romania and spreads over an area of 4900 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a NUTS III territory and has a population of 330.000 inhabitants or 67,8 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, 47,2% of which live in urban areas. The main urban settlements of the county are the municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin and the towns of Or ova, Vanju Mare, Strehaia and Baia de Arama. The county also has 59 communes and 344 villages.

The Danube forms the southern border of the county. This is the region in which the Carpathian Mountains cross the Danube River and thus form a unique hotspot for biodiversity of national, European and international importance.



Map 1: Map of Mehedin i County



Map 2: Relief in Mehedin i

## II. NATURE VALUES

The County of Mehedin i combines three types of relief – mountains (9%), hills and plateaus (65%) and plains and meadows (26%). This mixture of the relief determines the main distribution of the land cover and related biodiversity in the county. The region hosts more than 1110 species of higher plants, 1500 species of Lepidoptera (45% of the national total), and many bird species, including Red Listed ones such as *Apus melba*, *Coracias garrulus*, *Cinclus cinclus*, *Oenanthe hispanica*, *Emberiza citronella*.

Some of the plains and plateaus are used for intensive agriculture but the grasslands in the hilly and plateau areas are home to a variety of species of conservation interest.

Semi-natural grasslands in Mehedin i are habitats for:

- Species of medical importance, used in medical therapy (wild chamomile, white willow, milfoil, common cowparsnip, horsetail, plantain, wormwood, common motherwort, hawthorn, common mallow, peppermint, dandelion, bilberry, burdock, thyme)
- Small mammals (European Ground Squirrel, Hamster)
- Butterflies (*Papilio machaon*, *Agria tau*, *Vanessa atalanta*, *Aporia crataegi*)





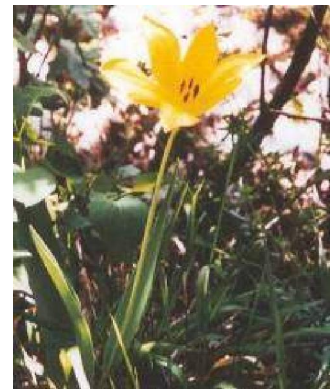
Picture 1: Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*) is associated with semi-open, sometimes dampy habitats as well as alpine and hillside grasslands



Picture 2: Black Veined White (*Aporia crataeg*), can be found on meadows with scrub or cultivated areas with fruit trees

However, the Romanian nature conservation interests so far have focused on the forests biodiversity and landscapes in the region, as can be seen from the official designations in the region.

There are three major protected areas in the county represented by the Portile de Fier (Iron Gates) Natural Park, Domogled - Valea Cernei National Park and Mehedin i Plateau Geopark – Natural Park, covering a total area of 282,866 ha. There are also a number of landscape sites and botanical reserves in the region protecting endemic (including grassland) species such as Iron Gates feather grass (*Stipa danubialis*), *Tulipa hungarica*, *Centaurea atropurpurea*, *Cephalaria uralensis*.



Pictures 3-5: Bearded Iris (*Iris reichenbachii*); Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*); *Tulipa hungarica*

Typical species of the alpine meadows (1500-1800 m) are: *Juniperus sabina* (Savin Juniper), *Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* (Alpine Juniper), *Pinus montana* (Mountain pine) and *Vaccinium myrtillus* (Bilberry), *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue), *Festuca supina* (Tufted Fescue).

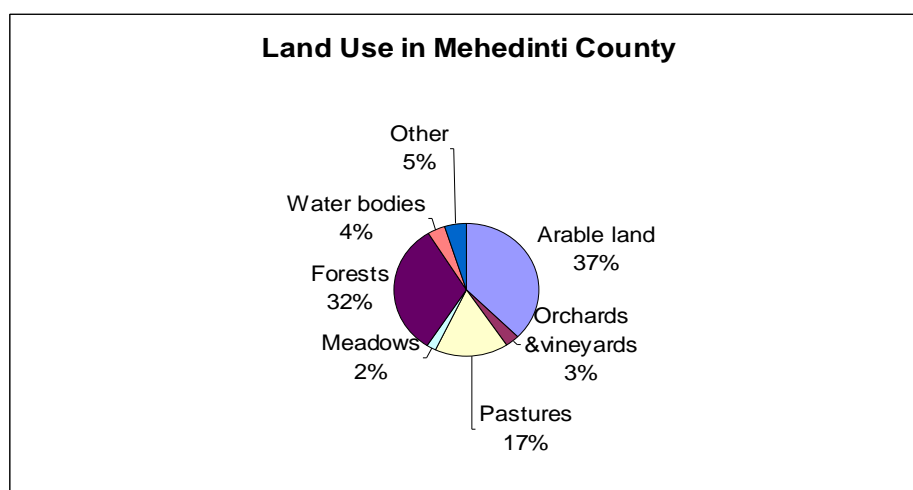
Small grass meadows prevail at altitudes of 1600-1700 m where *Rhododendron kotschy* (a protected species) is found. The presence of juniper shrubs marks the passing to the forest level represented by *Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* in the region of Arjana, the peak of the Mehedin i Mountains and the Oslea Romaneasca peak.

Table 1: Protected Areas in Mehedin i County

<i>National and Natural Parks</i>	<i>Surface (ha)</i>	<i>Extending also into</i>
Domogled - Valea Cernei National Park	61211,00	Cara -Severin and Gorj Counties
Portile de Fier (Iron Gates) Natural Park	115655,80	Caras Severin County
Mehedin i Plateau Geopark – Natural Park	106000,00	
TOTAL	282866,80	

### III. LAND USE AND FARMING IN MEHEDIN I

The land use in Mehedin i County is dominated by agricultural land use (a total of 59%) both as arable lands (37%) and as grasslands (19%) for pasture and meadows. The arable land is located on the plain and plateau areas in the Eastern and South-Eastern parts of the county. Grasslands, on the other hand, are concentrated (80%) in the hilly parts of the county with only 9% in the mountains and 11% in the plains. Forests, which cover approximately one third of the total territory, are mostly located in the Carpathians in the northern part of the county.



The majority of agricultural land is private property, which accounts for 94% of arable land, 67% of grasslands and 98% of meadows. In contrast, forests are mostly state owned (80,8%).

Table 2: Land use and land ownership in Mehedin i

<i>Land Use</i>	<i>Total agriculture land</i>		<i>Property</i>			
			<i>Private</i>		<i>Public</i>	
	<i>ha</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>%</i>
TOTAL	294 002	100	263 785	90	30 217	10
Arable land	188 333	100	178 751	94	9 582	6
Pastures	80 875	100	62 781	67	18 094	23
Meadows	10 649	100	10 414	98	235	2
Vineyards	6 259	100	5 143	82	1 116	18
Orchards	7 886	100	6 696	85	1 190	15
Forests	156 792	100	30 088	19,2	126 704	80,8

Arable land is located mainly in the lowlands and plateau areas of the county. Its land use is dominated by the intensive production of cereals and maize (mostly as monocultures or 2-

year crop rotations). Maize, soya, lucerne, field vegetables and sugar-beet mostly grow in irrigated areas.

Grasslands benefit from good growing conditions, although there are areas with reduced land fertility. Approximately one third of all grasslands are reported to be acid; 12% are dominated by gravel and rocks.

Table 3: Status of semi-natural and natural grasslands

<i>Grasslands status</i>	<i>ha</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Normal conditions	44 800	49
Eroded and experiencing mud slides	2 500	3
Excess moisture	2 150	2
Soil acidity (pH below 5)	29 800	33
Salinity and alkalinity	1 200	1
Sands	450	-
Gravel and surface rock	1 0624	12
TOTAL for the county	91 524	100

Livestock farming also varies spatially: pigs are concentrated in the maize growing areas, while sheep and goats are located mostly in the areas with natural and semi-natural grasslands. On the other hand, cattle are evenly distributed throughout the county. This is easily explained by the farming systems in which the different types of animals are kept. Thus, sheep and goat systems represent the highest interest in terms of High Nature Value areas since they are dependent on the grasslands resource for survival. The main breeds in the region are as follows: for cattle - Baltata romaneasca, Bruna de Maramures and Pizgau; sheep - White urcana for milk production and Merino mestizo. There is a serious decline in the total number of sheep in the region, while goats have increased slightly in number. This trend is potentially quite threatening for the longer-term management of the grasslands of High Nature Value in Mehedin i.

Table 4: Number of livestock in Mehedin i

<i>Livestock</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>
Cattle	46 625	48 250	42 000
Sheep	135 200	121 240	114 059
Goats	35 800	37 080	37 100
Pigs	67 623	110 000	66 800
Poultry	1158 100	1150 000	1189 410
Bee hives	22 620	21 500	20 696

In 2007, a total of 68 849 sheep were registered for payments by 758 farmers with the Paying Agency, which represent approximately 60% of the sheep flock in the county (114 059). The average flock size in the registered farms is approximately 90 animals; however, according to the official data, only 25% of all applicants have more than 30 sheep, illustrating that the distribution is highly skewed in favour of small flocks.

In the cattle sector, there are 14 124 applications in the Paying Agency for 26 195 animals. Interestingly the average number of animals per application is 1.8. The official data says that only 8% of all applications are for herds larger than 10 cattle. Therefore, the majority of the applications are for 1 cow only, which reveals a strong subsistence sector. Furthermore, the registered animals represent only 62% of all cattle in the county.

In terms of land registered for payments, it is notable that 87% of all agricultural land is registered with the Payments Agency (see table 4). The registration goes as high as 92.5% for the arable lands, with 77.5% for the grasslands and only 65% of vineyards being registered. Only 180 farms are larger than 50ha (average size 187ha), while a huge number of 32 200 farms are smaller than 50ha (average size 5ha).

When we calculate the grazing density on the registered land by registered animals (cattle and sheep only) it shows a grazing pressure of 0.56 LU/ha (1 livestock unit is about 1 cow or 8 sheep). This is lower than the grazing pressure on the total grassland area by registered and non-registered cattle and sheep – 0.70 LU/ha; and about half of the grazing pressure of non-registered sheep and cattle on non-registered grassland – 1.18 LU/ha. It would be interesting to get more insights of the full picture especially in terms of the actual farming practices applied on both registered and unregistered farmland, in order to verify this data. It should be mentioned that grazing takes place on other land such as forests, orchards and grassland strips along the roads as well.

Table 5: Agricultural land registered in the Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture by June 15<sup>th</sup> 2007 as compared to all agricultural land (in ha)

<i>Specification</i>	<i>Total area</i>	<i>Of which,</i>				
		<i>Arable</i>	<i>Vineyards</i>	<i>Orchards</i>	<i>Grasslands</i>	<i>Others</i>
TOTAL	294 002	188 333	6 259	7 586	80 875	
Registered land	257 976	174 327	4 068	6 550	62 646	14 155
% of TOTAL	87%	92,5%	65%	86%	77,5%	

## IV. HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLANDS IN MEHEDIN I

Farming systems of high nature value in Mehedin i are to some extent zoned according to the natural conditions in the county. Their economic performance is so low that they are often not even considered agriculture activity. And yet, their efficiency in terms of delivering high nature value as well as livelihoods for local people is quite significant.

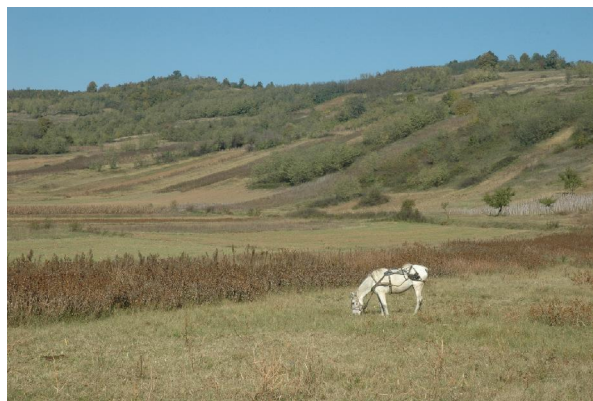
### 1) HNV Type 1: Semi-natural grasslands:

These are broadly divided in three groups represented by:

- Grasslands in hilly areas used for sheep and goat grazing. If we consider the statistics that 80% of the grasslands in Mehedin i are located in the hills, this is the largest HNV area. These are mostly extensively grazed by the villagers' flocks. The same zone has very small patches of arable, mostly directed to the villagers' own consumption and direct sale to neighbours.
- Lowland grasslands grazed mostly by cattle. This is mostly an extensive practice however in some farms the level of intensity may be considered slightly too high to allow high nature values. Therefore, the nature values of lowland grasslands would most probably be best evaluated at the farm level. The cattle feed is normally supplemented with fodder produced on the farm (e.g. lucerne) and purchased fodder.
- Mountain grasslands used for sheep and goat grazing as well as hay-making. These are mostly small patches of grasslands in forested areas and their expected nature value is high, although not officially recorded yet.



Picture 6: Sheep and goats extensively pasturing on dry, hilly HNV Type 1 grassland – the most spread HNV farming practice in Mehedin i county



Picture 7: HNV Type 2 farmland with long-stretched, narrow plots of cropland, fallow land, vineyards and young orchards as well as semi-natural vegetation such as grassland and woodland

Table 6: Grasslands distribution and grazing duration in Mehedin i

<i>Grasslands location</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Grazing period</i>	<i>Grazing days</i>
Plains	11	April 15 <sup>th</sup> – November 15 <sup>th</sup>	210 days
Hills	80	May 1 <sup>st</sup> - November 1 <sup>st</sup>	180 days
Mountains	9	June 1 <sup>st</sup> - October 1 <sup>st</sup>	120 days

Source: Agriculture Directorate and Rural Development - Mehedin i County

## 2) HNV Type 2: Mosaic of small-scale cropland, grasslands and perennial crops

- Mosaic of small scale arable plots, orchards, combined with semi-natural vegetation in the plains and lowlands. These areas normally are located near the villages and produce a variety of crops. Usually their crop production is proportional to the animal production. Chemical inputs normally are not used. Some post-harvest grazing may be practised on the stubble fields.
- Traditional orchard gardens throughout Mehedin i. Most of these orchards currently are abandoned. In most cases they have a grass understory, meaning that they are likely to be of HNV.

Unfortunately, neither of these systems has been studied sufficiently in order to assess their specific biodiversity values.

## V. CASE STUDY FARMS IN MEHEDIN I

Two farms were visited during the workshop in Mehedinti in October 2007.

### A. The Cazanes i Goats Farm: owner – Ion Barbulescu

The farm of Ion Barbulescu is located in the hilly parts of the county in the village of Cazanes i. The total farm land is 100 ha of which 20 ha are used for cereal production and 60 ha as meadows. Most of the meadows (50ha) are on 7-year leases from the Cazanes i Town Authority.

In 2003 Barbulescu's farm had a herd of 26 goats. By 2005 the number of goats increased to 100 individuals and currently there are 385.



The prevailing breed is the Carpathian breed and he also has some individuals from the White Banat breed. Both are mainly dairy breeds.

The animals are taken to graze on the pastures from May onwards. They are given complementary lucerne and mountain hay. In winter the animals are sheltered in the sheds and given supplementary corn and barley. A springtime feed source is the Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) flowers which are said to enrich the milk.

The milk production in the case of the Carpathian breed is of approximately 200-250 litres with a maximum of 800 litres per goat per year. In the case of the Banat breed it is 500 litres with a maximum of 900 litres and a fat percentage from 3.5-5.5% with a maximum of 8%. The daily production of cheese in the summer is 25 kg.

The owner sells the cheese on the local market and from the farm.

- The farmer manages 100 ha, however he has leases and ownership documents only for 75% of the total area, the rest being under negotiation.
- There is no collection point for the milk or dairy products in the county, and overall the market is rather unstable.
- There is no slaughterhouse for goats.

Barbulescu submitted two applications to the Paying Agency: One for the state aid of 10 €/animal and one for a SAPS of 50€/ ha for his grassland and arable land.



Picture 8: Goats pasturing on grassland and Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) woodland



Picture 9: Goat farmer Ion Barbulescu

## **B. Adriana Panduru of Strehaia Commune Cattle Farm**

The farm of Adriana Panduru is located in the plains of Mehedin i County in the village of Strehaia. The farmer manages 10 ha in total of which 3 ha are meadows, 3 ha used for lucerne, and the rest is used for wheat and maize production.

There are 5 animals on the farm: 3 cows and 2 calves. The cattle breeds are Brown and Holstein or black speckled. This mixture of breeds in such a small herd is particularly characteristic for the Strehaia commune.

In springtime the animals are taken to graze on the natural pastures. The grazing density even at such a small scale is relatively intensive – approximately 1.5 LU/ha. The land cultivated with lucerne is mown twice. In autumn, the animals are brought to graze the lucerne aftermath. In the winter, their feeding is complemented with the cereals produced on the farm.

This is mostly a subsistence farm and, thus, the milk and dairy products are consumed in the owner's household. However, a small part of their production is sold locally to neighbours and friends.

The price of the living animals sold has dropped during the last two years: from 2000 RON or 570 EUR per male calf in 2005 to just 800 RON or 230 EUR per male calf in 2007.

The herd has become significantly smaller in the last few years because of a combination of low market prices and drought, which resulted in a poor quality fodder crop.

There is no stable market to stimulate the increase of the number of animals at a local level. As in the previous case, the lack of a milk collection point or an authorised slaughterhouse is considered a significant problem as far as integrating the production in the wider market is concerned. Abandonment is a real danger in the absence of support.



Picture 10: Cow aftermath-grazing on lucerne cropland



Picture 11: Cattle farmer Adriana Panduru

## VI. POLICY ISSUES

HNV farming in Romania is strongly associated with semi-subsistence farming; most of the characteristics of this type of farming are likely to be common to HNV farming. In Romania there are over 4 million small landowners, out of which more than 1.5 million are semi-subsistence. In Mehedin i semi-subsistence farmers are managing 257 976 ha registered with the Paying Agency.

The main issues for the High Nature Value farmlands in Mehedin i, as identified during the local workshop, are:

### 1) Agriculture-related issues

- Abandonment of grasslands, leading to scrub encroachment and biodiversity loss.
- Abandonment and clearing of orchards established during the communist regime, causing soil erosion and grasslands degradation. The orchards were originally established to fix the sandy hills. After the revolution in 1989, the orchards were abandoned and most of them cut down, leading to strong soil erosion. Also, the grass within the orchards was not mowed or grazed anymore.
- The land restitution process resulted in the fragmentation of agricultural land all over the county. In many cases fragmentation has lead to the abandonment of farming or exactly the opposite – intensification of farming practices in order to obtain a certain production on smaller parcels, including removing hedges or buffer strips between properties. Land fragmentation has lead to the non-eligibility

for any payments of many small farms (smaller than 1 ha, or with plots smaller than 0.3 ha), mostly traditionally managed land. Moreover, depending on the location, small plots are becoming more and more subject of transactions as land for building.

- Conversion of wetlands into agriculture land (drainage)
- Invasion of unwanted vegetation, especially Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), on grasslands due to the specific type of soil, going deep up to 2 metres. Treating the Bracken invasion is strongly affecting the grasslands' quality as well. Also, as most of the grasslands in Mehedin i County are located near forests, they are also easily invaded by bushes and young saplings.

## **2) Socio-economic issues**

- Overall there are strong pressures on grasslands resulting from:
  - o Relatively rapid abandonment of grasslands due to ageing and depopulation of rural areas (migration of young people to cities);
  - o Lack of an inventory of HNV grasslands as well as chaotic development (especially buildings as second home or tourism accommodation and facilities) in the absence of a territorial planning leads to rapid loss of valuable grasslands (especially the ones along Danube river). Most of the HNV farmlands is bought/taken over by people who are not farming them which leads to either abandonment or destruction of the habitat;
  - o Mass tourism impacts on valuable habitats which also decrease the available grazing area – from building point of view, but also from converting farming activities to tourism (more and more people are giving up farming and turn into tourism operators).
- The lack of milk collection points, processing units as well slaughtering facilities in the county leaves few opportunities to process and add value to raw materials such as milk, meat or cereals.

## **3) Policy-related issues**

- The overlap of IACS systems with the HNV grasslands is missing – no clear idea yet (Oct.2007) of how many ha or farmers managing HNV grasslands will be paid under NRDP;
- Budget for HNV farmland measure in RO is sufficient for funding only 10% of CORINE HNV farmland map;
- Farmers are badly informed about available support and existing regulations;
- Bureaucracy is hindering application for funds, if even the farmer is fully informed, which is often not the case;
- Local farm advisors and agriculture offices need significant training to be able to provide quality consultancy to farmers.

## **Current policy framework**

The area-based payments provided by Pillar 1 are 50 euro/ha/year. The area registered for SAPS represents 87% of the total agricultural land in Mehedin i, which means that, at first sight, the up-take of direct payments is quite high and the impact will be significant. We can expect some intensification of the agriculture activities on the plains. Fortunately, due to the specific natural characteristics of the HNV areas of the county, which lie mostly in the hilly parts, significant intensification is unlikely.

To be eligible for SAPS payments farmers have to meet the following conditions:

- respecting the set of conditions provided by GAEC
- own or manage minimum 1ha agriculture land (made up of parcels of minimum 0,3ha)
- the agriculture land has to be identified and included in IACS of the Paying Agency.

The Romanian GAEC includes 11 conditions. There is no minimum or maximum requirement in terms of LU/ha. However, such requirements are mentioned in the national good farming practices (e.g according to the different types of grasslands) and they served as a baseline for establishing the management requirements for agri-environment measures.

The situation of land ownership/property still represents a problem for accessing the money. A significant number of people are not able to prove the right to manage the land on paper (leases are missing, former owners don't have title, etc). It is still difficult to estimate what percentage of HNV farmland is affected by this.

So far, it seems that not all HNV farmlands are incorporated into the IACS system. This is also due to the fact that HNV farmland identification at national level is being established. According to the good agriculture practices at national level, grasslands covered more than 30% with scrubs are excluded from payment (one of the conditions for agri-environment). This may become a major issue given the fact that more and more grasslands are abandoned recently.

The most directly targeted measure supporting HNV farming systems is the agri-environmental measure with its newly introduced scheme for HNV farmlands. Parts of Mehedin i County are eligible for the HNV packages given that the farmers are meeting the management requirements. There are 4 packages in the scheme:

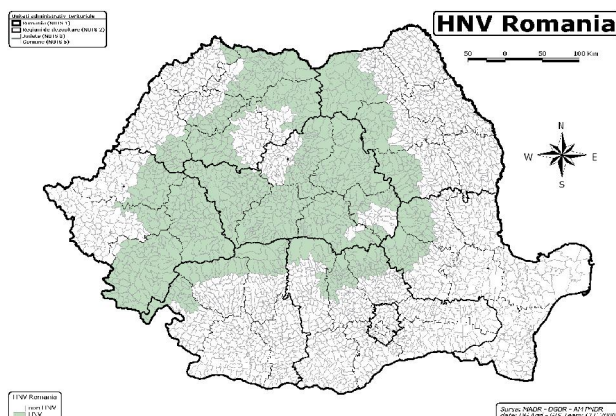
- management of HNV grasslands – a payment of 124 euro/ha;
- support of traditional farming practices - a payment of 58 euro/ha;
- management of grasslands important for birds - a payment of 201 or 101 euro/ha;
- green crops - a payment of 130 euro/ha.

The HNV farmlands scheme is implemented only in pre-designated regions in Romania based on a map produced by the Ministry of Agriculture. The designated HNV farmland regions are located mostly in the mountainous parts of the country. The main objective of this delineation is to focus the limited resources and to gain some practical experience from the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the measure. Comparing this map to the Romanian HNV farmland map produced by the EEA we see that a significant number of HNV areas are left out. Despite the limitations of the adopted approach, the mere fact that a specific HNV scheme was developed in Romania is already considered a significant achievement by the nature conservation organizations and the small-scale farmers alike. In addition, it must be mentioned also that agri-environment in Romania is still at the beginning of the road; its implementation requires significant promotion and training especially at local level.

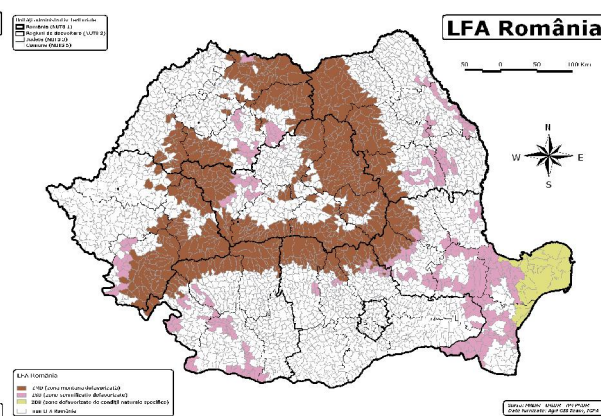
Furthermore, the area is eligible for LFA payments both mountain area (in the North of the county, in brown of map 4) and for LFA other than mountain area. The second type is for specific handicaps due to sandy soils present in the eastern part of the county (see the pink marked areas on LFA map).



The amount of annual payments for agriculture land in mountain areas is 50 Euro/ha. This land has to meet the LPIS requirements of eligibility for parcels bigger than 0.3 ha and total farm area larger than 1 ha.



Map 3: Administrative map of HNV farmland areas in Romania. Only the mountain part of North-Mehedin i is eligible for HNV payments



Map 4: Administrative map of Less Favoured Areas in Romania

For LFAs other than mountain area, the level of payments varies from 60 to 90 Euro/ha, but the eligibility conditions remain the same.

Overall in Romania due to the characteristics of semi-subsistence farms most of the small- and medium size farms are not eligible for rural development payments. The reasons may be diverse but more often than not there is a combination of the following factors:

- high fragmentation of property - mainly the average size of the farms is under 1 ha;
- no documents for the land managed;
- low buying capacity,
- still relatively isolated areas, disconnected by processing units;
- lack of good information or even a source of information at local level,
- difficulties in meeting the hygiene conditions, etc.

In consequence, there is an urgent need of a national commitment to back the rural development measures supporting HNV farmlands in Romania. Thus, the integration of HNV farmland support is more than necessary, but equally challenging having in mind that the main priority of NRDP is to increase the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry sectors. Besides axis 2, NRDP is, however, providing different support for HNV farmland/semi-subsistence farms.

**Axis 1 Competitiveness:** Although this is the axis supporting the least HNV farmlands, there are measures that are potentially contributing to the HNV farmland:

- vocational training and information: there are 3000 HNV farmers scheduled to be trained on HNV farmland practices and other RD measures;
- consultancy and extension: with high potential to orientate HNV farmers to become local consultants as well as prepare them to become more capable to access the market and diversify the farm activities,
- direct support for semi-subsistence farms (1500Euro/ year/farm).
- the support for processing agricultural and forestry products represents an opportunity for the farmers association in bringing the processing units closer to more remote rural areas.

**Axis 3 Integrated rural development:** This axis plays a very important role for supporting the social aspects of HNV farming systems by:

- Encouraging the diversification of activities on the farm: tourism – the measure contains a list of communes excluded from support for building which is a first step in preventing the loss of valuable farmland under building;
- Encouraging HNV farmers to establish small enterprises for processing of traditional products, develop various services.
- An indirect support is also the support for rural infrastructure to create better living conditions;
- Organising local fairs and festivals to promote local heritage and traditions.

**Axis 4 Leader +:** Here equally important and challenging is the integration of HNV farmland objectives within a local development strategy. One of the first measures initiated concerns the support of public-private partnerships. Support and inclusion of semi-subsistence farmers is mentioned among the objectives of axis 4.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The main recommendations resulting from the Mehedin i case study and workshop are related to the issues of:

### **1. Relevant, clear and timely information provided to farmers**

The lack of sufficient and coherent information to farmers is considered a serious threat to the successful use of the available support for HNV farming in Mehedin i. However, there is a full chain of information providers who will need to be informed and trained before farmers can access easily quality information: local agriculture administrators of rural development and SAPS payments; local advisors, etc. The main training focus should be on the HNV farming systems and their needs and management practices to ensure best results for nature and farming. Farmers will also have to begin to actively look for information and advice.

### **2. Targeted support and training for HNV farmers to meet new hygiene requirements**

Currently, there is a derogation for small farmers to meet the hygiene rules. However, from 2010 they will have to meet all requirements and most of them will require significant investments. The support from Axis 1 should target specifically these HNV farming systems which are most under threat.

### **3. Extend the scope of HNV farmlands package (Agri-environment measure)**

There are three aspects of this point:

- Related to the full coverage of the HNV grasslands
- Related to the inclusion of support for traditional orchards for example
- Issue of small scale mosaic HNV farmlands needs to be addressed as well.

### **4. Use of common land and land used without documents**

A lot of common land or other grasslands are used on the basis of informal agreements. Additionally, in the absence of the owners land is even used without any agreements. While this is potentially good especially in areas where there is no competition for land as it ensures

maintenance; farmers cannot claim payments on such land. This leads to a reduction in their overall payments, but also to skewed information on the actual grazing density on the farm.

**5. (Lack of) certified milk collection and slaughtering facilities in Mehedin i**

This issue will become ever more important when the strict hygiene requirements will be enforced in Romania. Not all farmers will be interested in dealing with direct sales from the farms and the lack of certified facilities will be a serious gap in the marketing of the produce.

EFNCP is a Europe-wide network which raises awareness of the importance of low-intensity farming for nature conservation and aims to improve the way public policies respond to the needs of these farming systems.

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