



Permanent Grasslands in Bulgaria

Key Issues

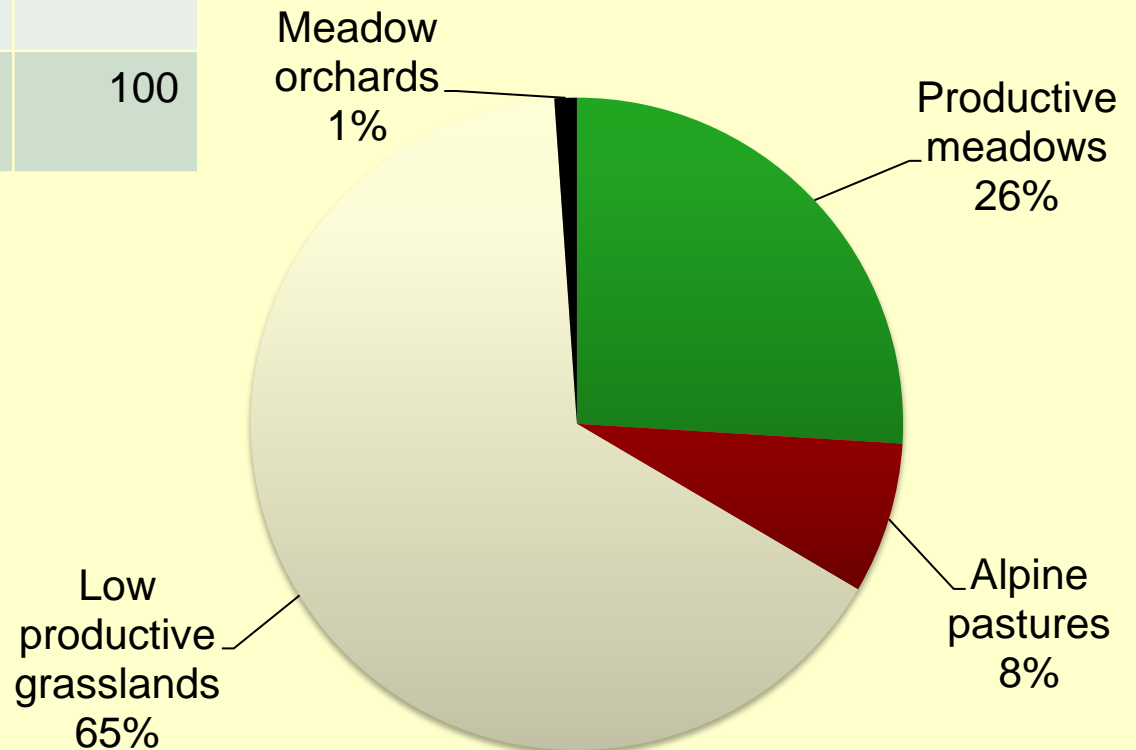


EUROPEAN FORUM ON
NATURE CONSERVATION
AND PASTORALISM



2010	Ha	%
Productive meadows	441 931	26
Alpine pastures	127 799	8
Low productive grasslands	1 113 371	65
Meadow orchards	18 889	1
Pastures and meadows (total)	1 701 990	100

Grasslands in Bulgaria



Comparison of the existing data

LAND USE (000 ha)	Agrostatistics (2009)	SAPS eligible area (2007)	SAPS eligible area (2009)	Difference Agrostatistics/ SAPS 2009 (000 ha)	Difference SAPS/ Agrostatistics 2009 (%)
Arable land	3126	2941	2930	196	93%
Permanent crops	165	129	124	41	75%
Permanent pastures (pastures, meadows and other)	1719	715	436	1283	25%
Family gardens	21	20	3	18	14%
UAA (total)	5030	3806	3492	1538	69%

National definition (2010)

Permanent pastures are defined as utilized agricultural area used permanently for 5 or more years through cultivation (sowing) of grass fodder crops or through natural regeneration that is not included in the farm crop rotation. This area can be used for either grazing or mowing.

Permanent pastures can include :

- Land that is not included in the crop rotation for five or more than five years, or
- Land that is not going to be included in crop rotation for at least five years after the date of change of permanent land use (newly created pastures) .



Main types

- **Productive pastures** - permanent pastures on soils from 1st to 7th soil category with dense grass cover used for grazing of livestock. They can also be mown as an alternative to grazing or as a method for environmental conservation or weed control.
- **Meadows** - permanent pastures on soils from 1st to 7th soil category with dense grass cover used for silage or hay making by mowing or by livestock grazing.
- **Meri (commons)** - permanent pastures near settlements used for livestock grazing or mowing as a method for environmental conservation or weed control.
- **Low productivity pastures** - permanent pastures (including meadows and meri (commons)) on soils from 8th to 10th category (poorest) which usually are not fertilised, cultivated, reseeded or drained. They can be used for extensive grazing (up to 1 LU/ha). Such pastures are usually not mowed or are mowed extensively.



LPIIS eligibility rules in BG

Three main groups of physical blocks:

1. **Agricultural land** in which the registered physical blocks are **eligible for SAPS support** - natural pastures and meadows; pastures and meadows in arable land (secondary vegetation); forest meadows and pastures.
2. **Non-agricultural land in which agricultural activity is possible.** It includes the following sub-groups: non-arable land, forest territories, urban areas, water areas and wetlands, transport infrastructure, bare and eroded terrains, etc. The registered physical blocks in this group are normally not eligible for support. If they are managed, they can be potentially recognized as eligible for support after on-the-spot checks. This category can include three key Corine Land Cover classes: 321 – Natural grasslands; 322 – Moors and heathland; 323 – Sclerophyllous vegetation; and also 333 Sparsely vegetated areas and 411 Inland marshes – The area claimed can be eligible for support only after on-the –spot check.
3. **Other land in which agricultural activities are not allowed** (and is even prohibited).



LPIIS eligibility rules in BG for permanent pastures

Eligible if:

- *There are not more than 50 trees and/or shrubs per hectare with a height over 50 cm (for dwarf pine and juniper - regardless of the height) that are not compactly situated (mosaic landscape);*
- *Tree and/or bush vegetation density allows free grazing of farm animals;*
- *Buildings, facilities, rocks, rocky areas, eroded or bare areas are mosaicly dispersed and occupy not more than 10% of the total area of pasture, after the exclusion of the ineligible areas*

Ineligible is:

- *the area in the permanent pastures covered with trees or bush vegetation, buildings, equipment, rock, rock sections, eroded or bare areas.*
- *Pastures or their parts, where a.m. areas together or separately cover more than 100 square meters.*



LPIIS eligibility rules in BG for permanent pastures

- The **low productivity grasslands** may have up to 75 trees and/or shrubs per hectare and the dispersed buildings, equipment, rocks, rocky areas, eroded or bare areas may be up to 20% of the total area of the pasture.
- **Landscape features are eligible** for support when they are a result of human activity and are a part of the claimed agricultural area and are not more than 2 m wide: green hedgerows; three belts; stone walls, etc.



LPIS eligibility rules in BG



Photo : Bioselena foundation

- Total area 16,2 ha – organic pasture in Dobrodan - Central Balkan
- Excluded from SAPS eligible layer for 2010
- In 2009 same pasture was eligible (only 1 ha was considered ineligible)



LPIS eligibility rules in BG

- Pasture – 8.7 ha out of which 4.7 ha considered as ineligible
- Only the arable area was considered eligible
- No explanation why.



Photo : Bioselena foundation

GAEC 4.1 and 4.2. and related problems

- National standard 4.1: Farmers using permanent grassland (pastures and meadows) should maintain minimum stock density 0.15 LU/ha or mow grasslands at least once per year (till 15 July in the lowlands or till 15 August in mountain LFAs).
- National standard 4.2: Permanent pastures should be cleaned from unwanted vegetation. Aggressive and resistant plant varieties, such as bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), hellebore (*Veratrum album*), *Ailanthus altissima* and *Rubus fruticosus* must be kept under control.
- In HNV farmlands, Natura 2000 sites or protected areas, it is allowed to leave mosaic trees and bushes (or groups of them) up to 25% of the total grassland area, depending on the previous status of the grassland.







Our recommendations

- Update LPIS and permanent pasture data to reflect real situation on the ground, bringing all permanent pasture that is in farming use into the baseline permanent pasture area and SAPS eligible area.
- Change eligibility criteria for SAPS further – The leading eligibility conditions should be if land is used for grazing and/or mowing irrespective of the number or share of trees, shrubs, stones, rocks, etc.
- Change GAEC rules further – The GAEC rules should allow certain percentage of the pasture to be purposefully unmanaged each year – eg. The 2008 Bulgarian NGOs proposal was for 30% of pasture area.

