



# Common grazings in Scotland

- importance, governance, issues

*Gwyn Jones*

[gwyn@efncp.org](mailto:gwyn@efncp.org)

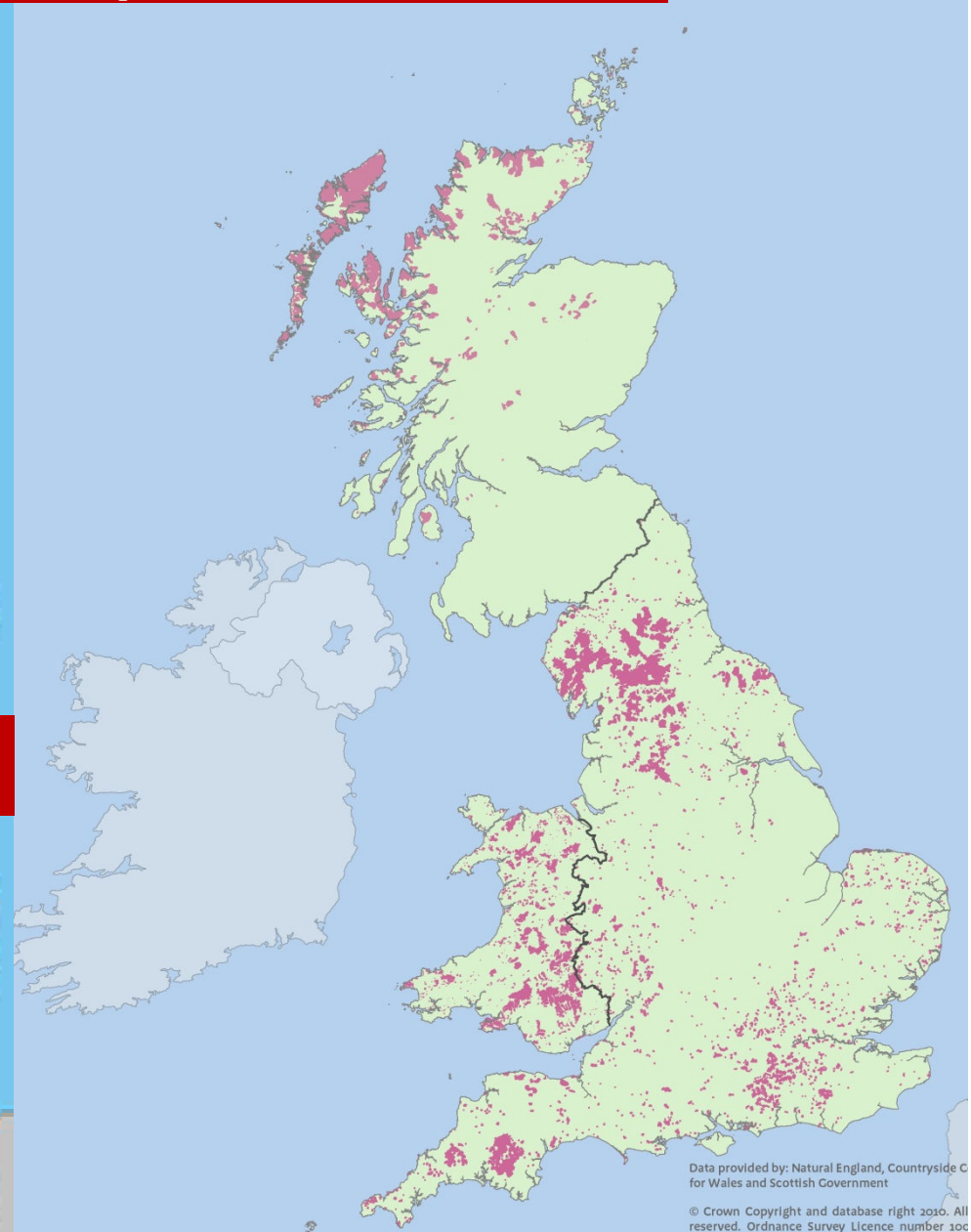
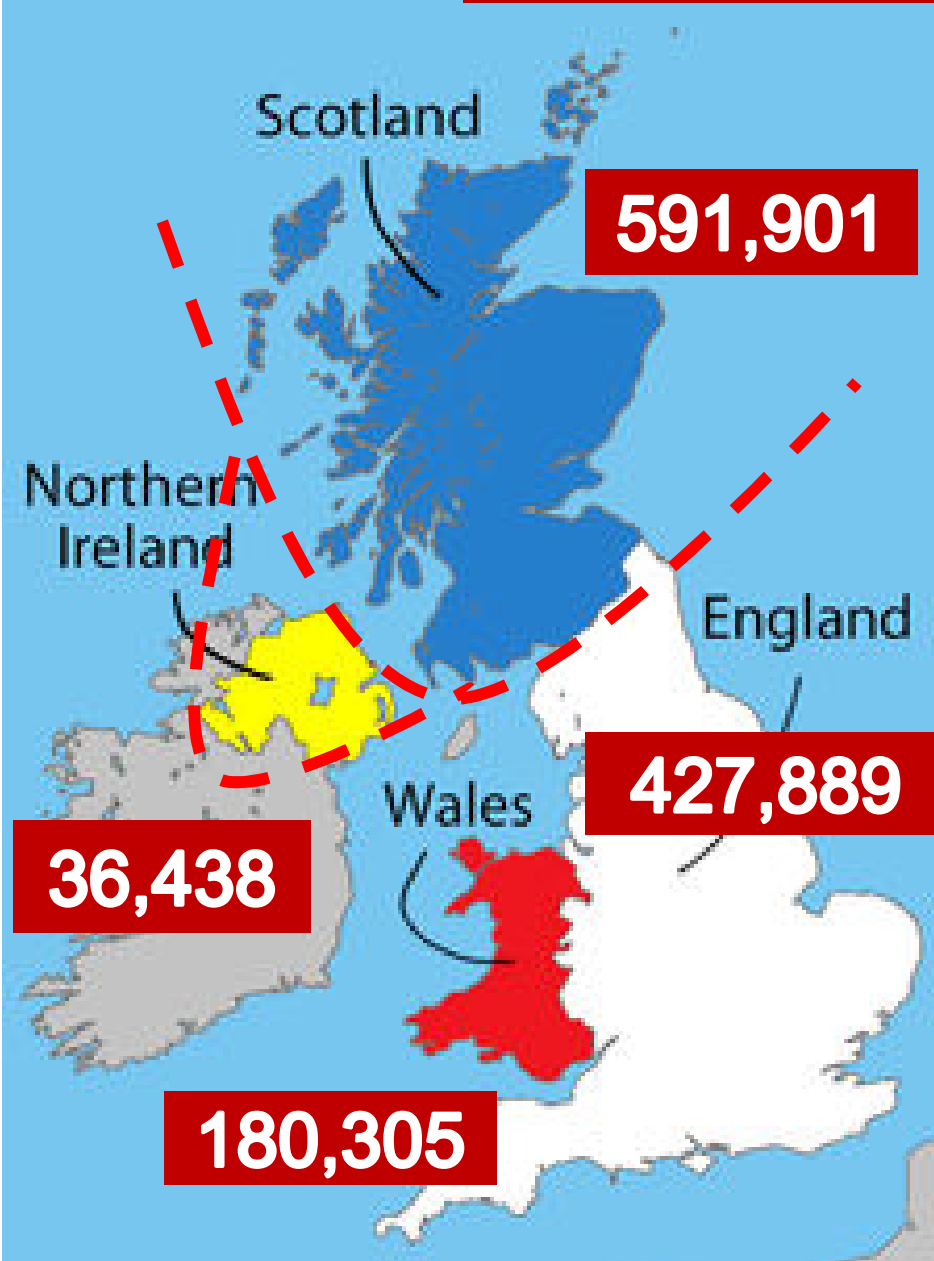


EUROPEAN FORUM ON  
NATURE CONSERVATION  
AND PASTORALISM



## The United Kingdom

Around half of all the UK's  
common pastures



# The wider agricultural context

	Scotland
Proportion of farmland	14%
Proportion of semi-natural farmland	20%
Proportion of farmers using them	20%





















## Key facts

- Almost all common grazing still owned by large landowners, State, NGOs....
- Use of common pastures is still based on RIGHTS linked to the tenancy of a certain holding
- Common grazings almost wholly linked to crofting – protected and regulated form of tenure of smallholdings in the north and west of Scotland
- Common grazings rights are recorded in the Register of Crofts; temporary leases allowed and recognised



# The role of the State in governance of crofters' common grazings

- Crofters Common Grazings Regulation (Scotland) Act 1891 – protection and regulation of former insecure smallholding tenure in the North and West of Scotland
- Provides
  - a mechanism for shareholders in common grazings to elect a committee
  - Committee draws up grazings regulations, which set out the number and type of livestock each shareholder can graze (and possibly when) as well as the arrangements for paying for shared costs (e.g. fencing)
  - These are then registered with a Govt. body (with opportunity for people to challenge them)
- Such regulations then have the force of law, i.e. there is no need for unanimity (VERY IMPORTANT!)



# Commons and agricultural support

- Direct payments and Less Favoured Area payments paid to individuals based on their share of the rights and therefore of the forage area (sheepstock clubs are claimants in their own right)
- (Any coupled payments are in general independent of the common pasture)

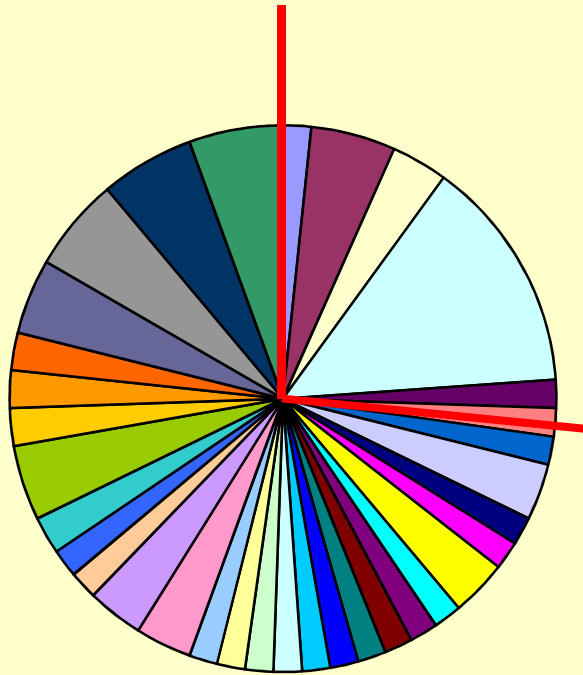




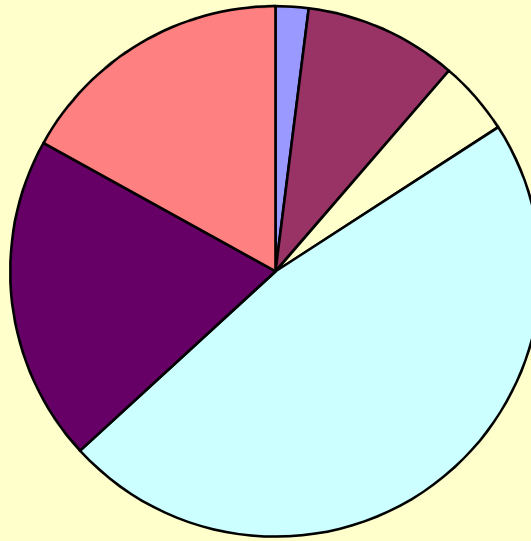
All land eligible for  
support; issue is  
allocation of hectares to  
ACTIVE farmers



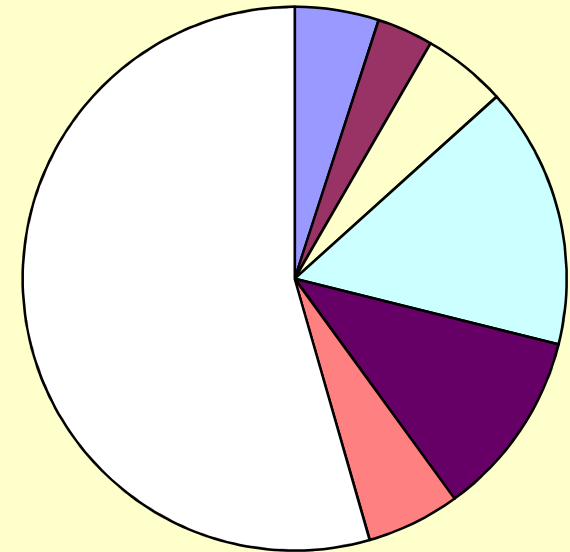
# An actual common grazing on Skye



Shares



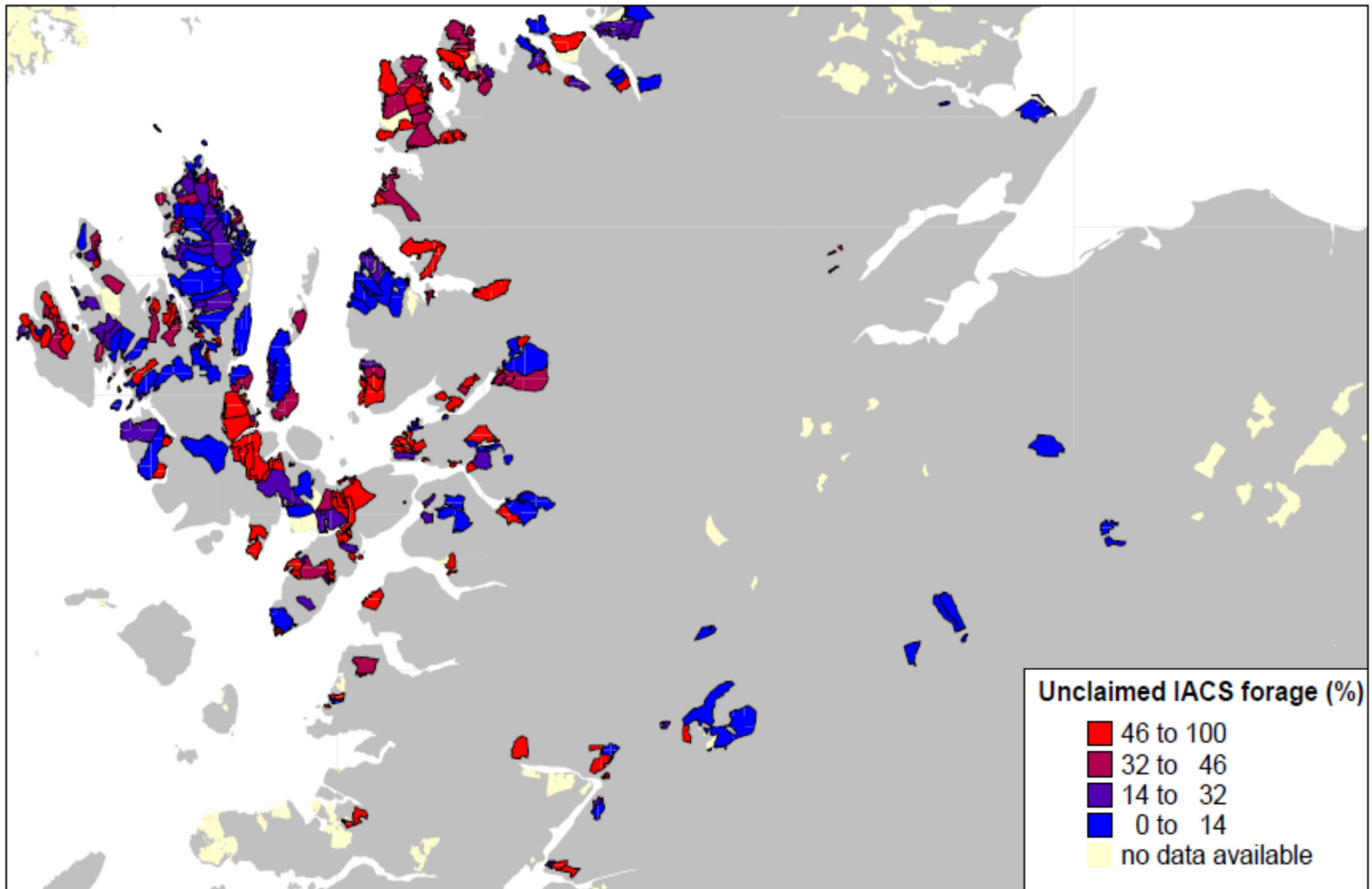
Actual use



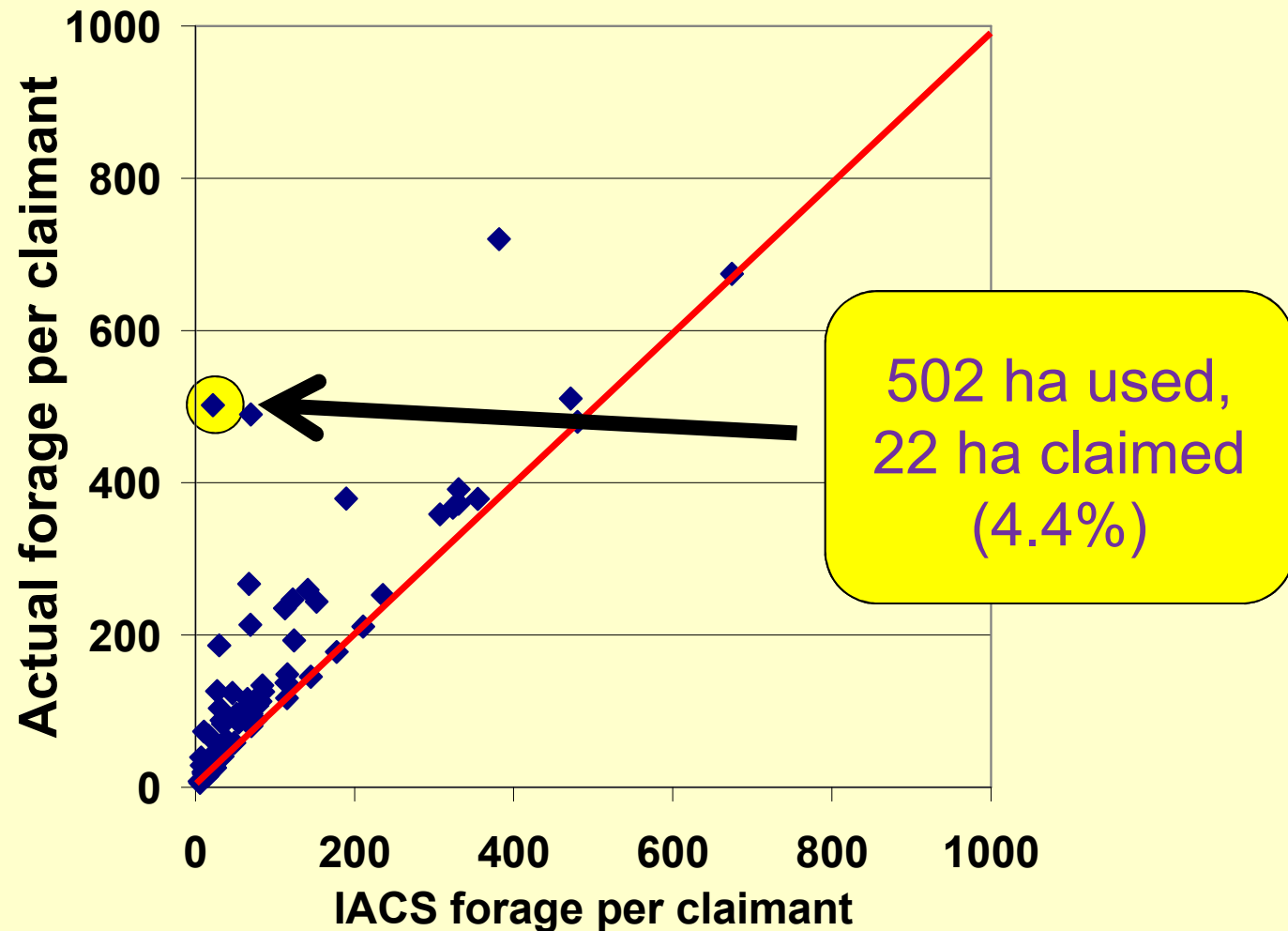
Claims



## Portree & Inverness areas – forage NOT claimed (SFP claim, 2009, quartiles)



## Available versus claimable forage per claiming shareholder, Portree & Inverness areas IACS 2009



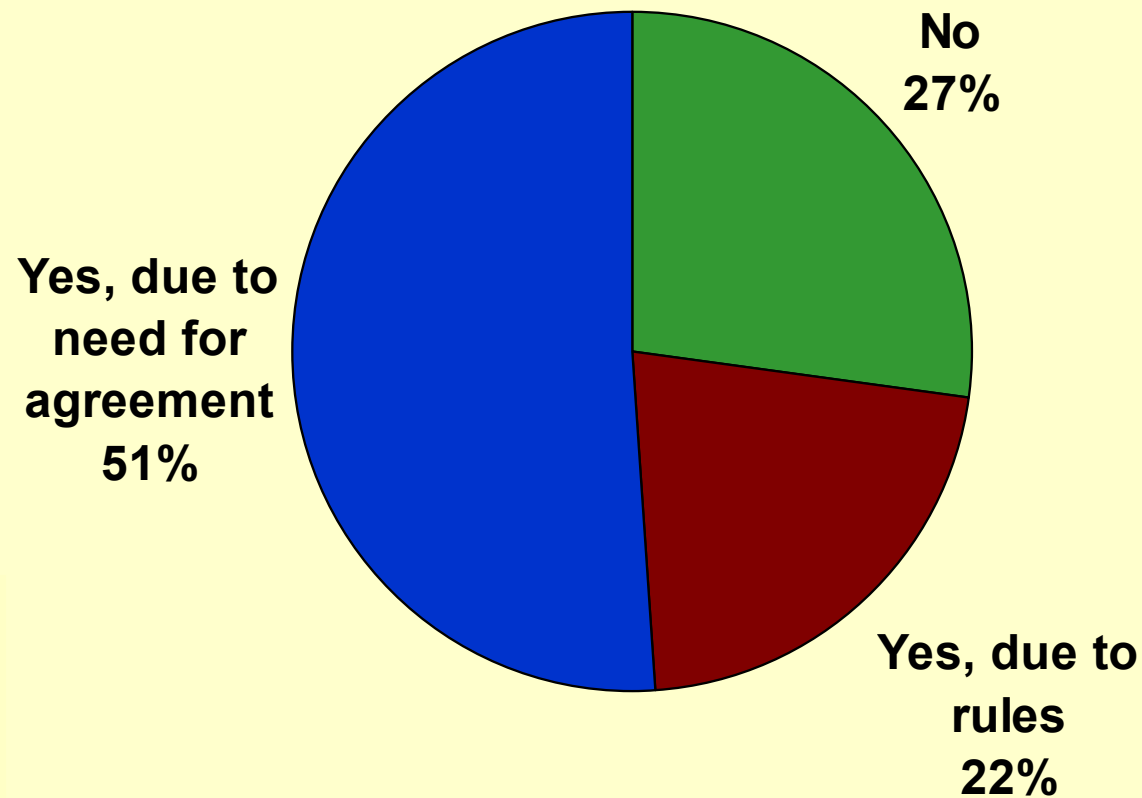


# Commons and agricultural support

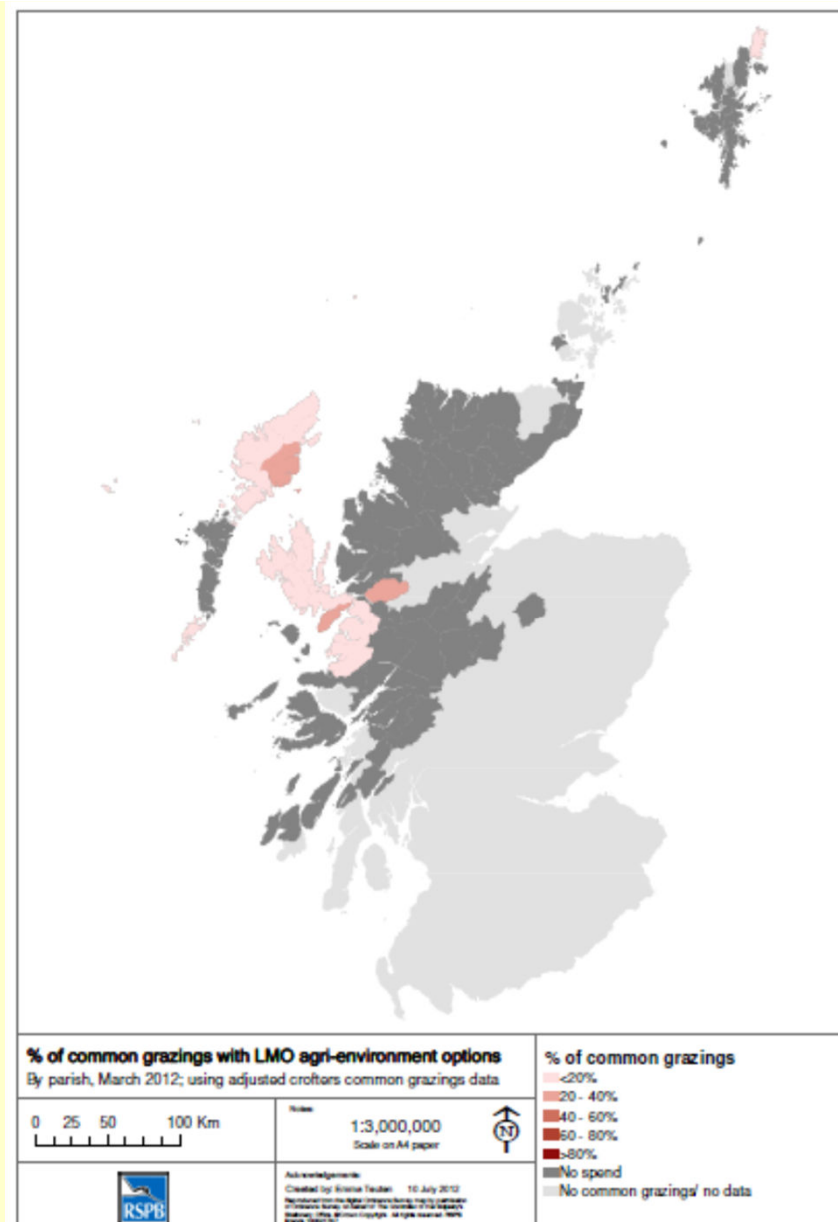
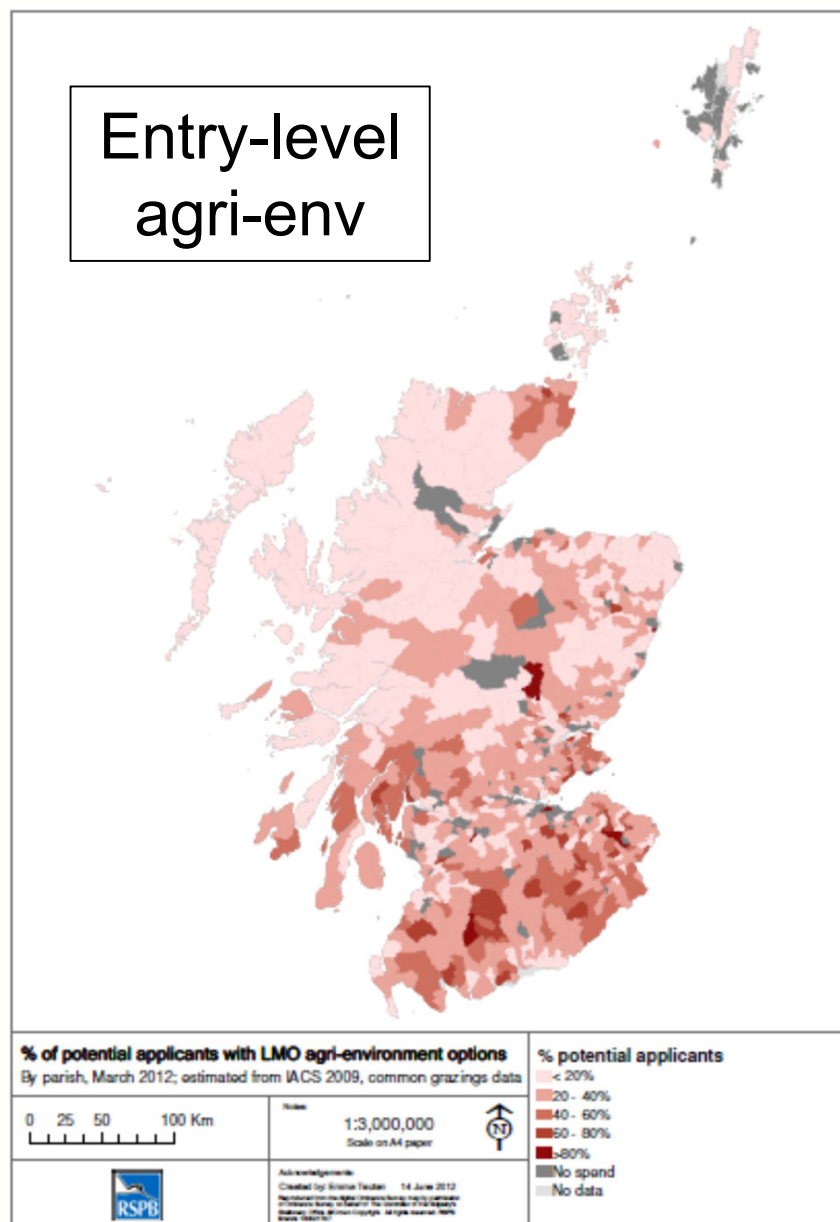
- Direct payments and Less Favoured Area payments paid to individuals based on their share of the rights and therefore of the forage area (sheepstock clubs are claimants in their own right)
- (Any coupled payments are in general independent of the common pasture)
- For measures relating to the grazings themselves (investments, agri-environment....), there needs to be a **LEGAL PERSON** who can apply and who can deliver the commitments, i.e. a grazings committee



# Do common grazings have more problems getting into schemes than hill farms?

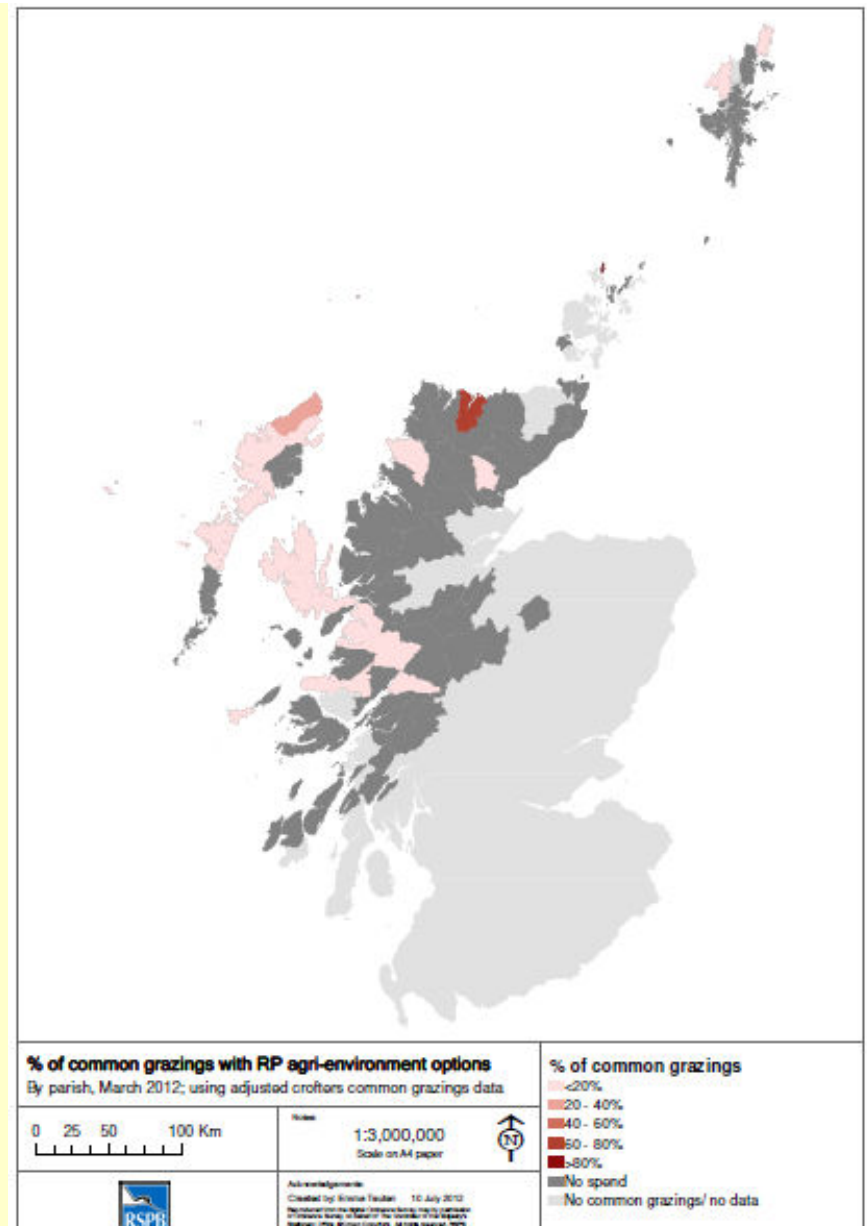
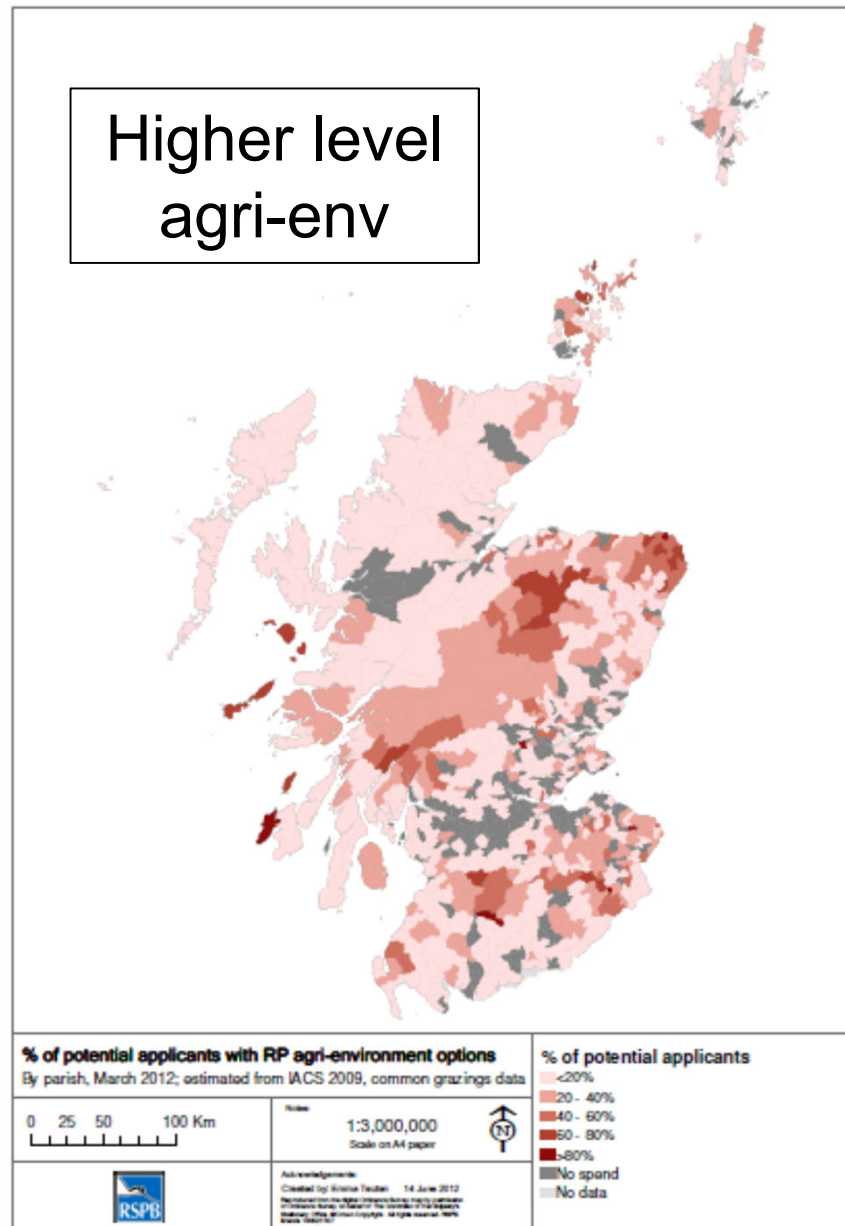


## Entry-level agri-env



% by parish participating in scheme of..	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
..all potential applicants	25%	12%	23%	34%
..potential common grazings applicants	2%	0%	0%	0%

## Higher level agri-env



% by parish participating in scheme of..	Mean	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
..all potential applicants	16%	0%	12%	23%
..potential common grazings applicants	4%	0%	0%	0%



# Crofting Cattle Improvement Scheme



	Breed of Bull Supplied	
	Continental	Native
<b>Flat Rate Hire Fee (All Bulls)</b>	<b>£1,302.26</b>	<b>£1302.26</b>
<b>Flat Rate Hire Fee (if wintered in Township)</b>	<b>£937.62</b>	<b>£989.70</b>



# Challenges to common grazing systems

- Only about 50% of common grazings are regulated and have committees in office - losing out on support and unable to enforce workable, effective governance
- Lack of capacity/focus in NGOs to work on common grazings issues
- Reduction in use of shares - some 'rationalisation' but challenge of labour requirement/costs
- Schemes and rules not designed with common lands in mind
- Animal movement rules can be more complex (but not necessarily – works ok in Scotland)
- Area payments which are not linked to actual use create new inertia and penalise activity
- Advisory systems ignore common lands or at least avoid them because of their added difficulty

