



# Trends in extensive grazing systems in Europe

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





# How it was

- Local farming had to feed the population
- Farming had to be self-sufficient in nutrients somehow
- Livestock key to moving nutrients even in arable systems
- Semi-natural areas not only a valuable grazing resource, but a source of nutrients
- Economic opportunities limited
- Legal and political constraints



# How things have changed

- Transport and trade creating relative advantage
- Science and techniques reduced dependency on animal manures and the semi-natural
- Intensification of systems and their specialisation became possible (also leading to abandonment)
- Share of farming in GDP declined from 50% to ~2% today
- Economic opportunities outwith agriculture became huge not only locally but across large distances
- Not primarily a result of policy, but policy reinforced and supported



# Effect on semi-natural pastures

- Survive where economic return for intensifying system is not high enough (geographical factors mostly)
- Or where for some reason it cannot happen (poverty, political issues)
- IDEAL-HNV project in Ireland sees the spectrum as being divisible in to three, depending on the geographical and socio-economic context
  - Remnant
  - Partial
  - Whole landscape

# Area around Stansted, England



Hatfield Heath

Hatfield Broad Oak

© 2010 Tele Atlas  
© 2010 Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky

© 2009 Google

## Area in central Sweden

- Overall system has its own socio-economics
- That said, the fate of semi-natural pastures there is largely unrelated to that system's viability
- AECM, reinforced with regulation, might be 'all' that's needed
- Can be very sensitive to signals at the field scale
- (But reintroduction/extension of semi-natural pastures and grazing might be a huge challenge)

Image © 2022 CNES / Airbus

Google Earth

58°22'35.30" N 13°04'19.75" E elev 63 m eye alt 4.97 km

# Area in NW Scotland



Image © 2022 CNES / Airbus

Google Earth

## Area in central Spain

- The fate of semi-natural grazing IS the fate of the system
- Everything about farming can be challenging
  - The return to farming labour
  - The social attractiveness of farming and living there
  - The huge relative opportunities elsewhere or in other occupations in the same regions
  - Abandonment a clear and present danger
- A matter not only for all CAP instruments but for structural policy etc. and a whole range of national policy
- (But ongoing maintenance could have low unit cost)

La Vihuela

Google Earth



# Policy influences on extensive grazing

- Only policy can reward for the provision of public goods
- It can do so by the realistic use of income forgone and additional cost considerations
- Policy regulates the external trade and internal markets which are partially responsible for lack of system competitiveness
- On-farm regulation has but a minor role



# Some reflections for policy

- The issue has a scale which is central to success but seems to be poorly integrated into policy in reality (and often poorly quantified)
  - Area of habitat.....
  - No. of livestock necessary.....
  - Minimum wage & minimum living conditions for those delivering.....
- The issue has a very high degree of reliance on policy and on the integration of a high number of policies, but responses so far are mostly single-silo and modest
- The issue is spatially-differentiated, with political implications (evident....); how can these be overcome?