



Learning lessons from the UK – ALL of them!

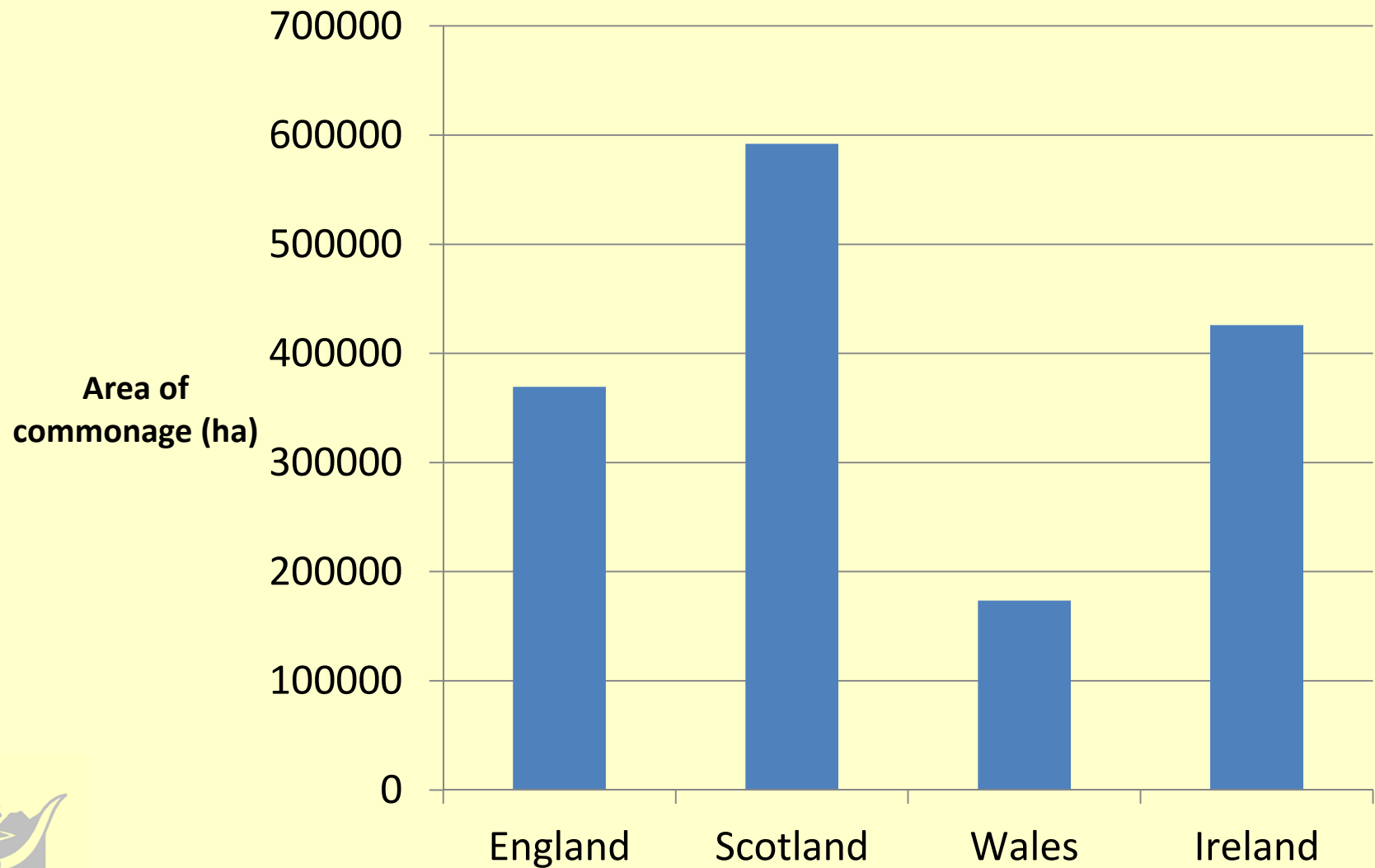
Gwyn Jones, EFNCP



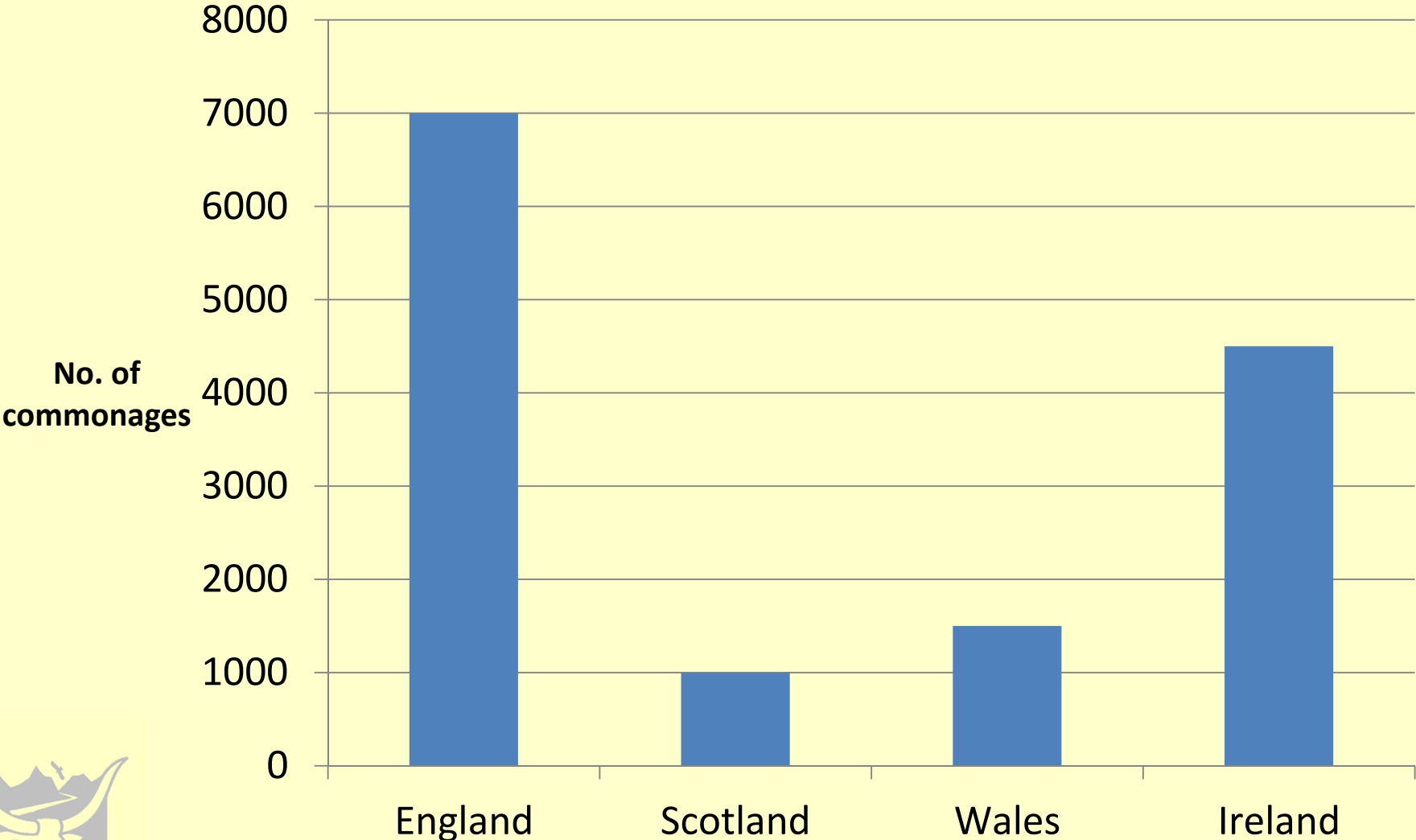
EUROPEAN FORUM ON
NATURE CONSERVATION
AND PASTORALISM



Commonage land in Great Britain

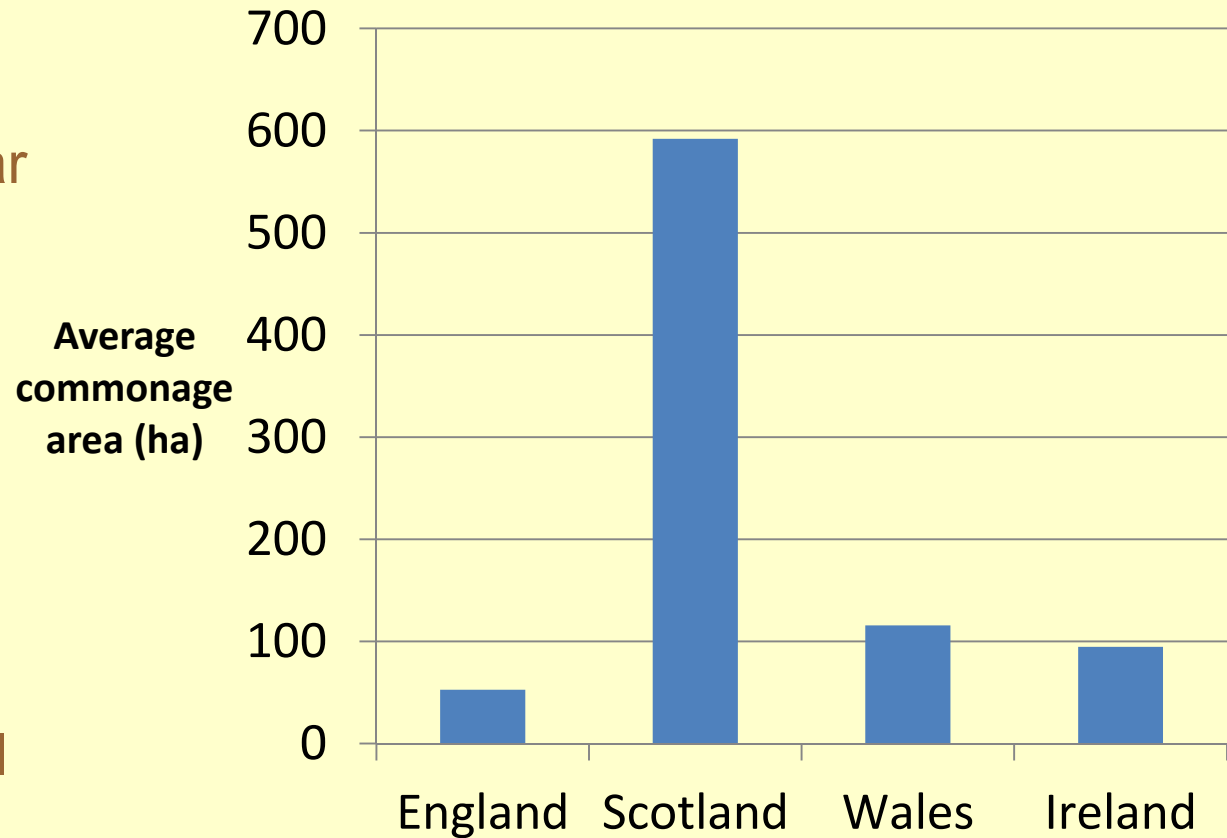


Commonage land in Great Britain



Commonage land in Great Britain

- Scotland – only in NW uplands. Limited number of large units
- England – very similar to Ireland BUT lowland commons mostly not used and upland commons have few shareholders
- Wales – mostly uplands – best model for Ireland???



Governance of commonage

- Governance first and foremost means GRAZIERS GOVERNING THEMSELVES
- Ireland used to have governance mechanisms (soums/collops implemented somehow locally) but threw them away along with the landlords
- At the same time, Scotland gave grazings committees LEGAL POWERS, i.e. took power away from landlords that way
- England & Wales – local (landlord...) courts mostly abolished after 1925, but graziers later found that they needed to collaborate to govern their common, raise and spend money and, latterly, to apply for schemes



Scheme implementation in the UK

- SPS claimed by the individual on basis of share
- LFA claimed by the individual on basis of share
- VERY IMPORTANT: In every country in GB, the ONLY eligible applicant for AE is a SEPARATE LEGAL PERSON, the grazings committee or graziers' association
- Makes complete sense – scheme is to do with securing outcomes on the WHOLE of the commonage
- SPS/LFA now anomalous – real issues with inactive claimants and (especially?) with dormant shares
- Struggling with how to resolve these, not with implementing

AE!



Getting agreement for agri-environment

- In every country in GB, the applicant for AE is the grazings committee/ graziers' association
 - In Scotland grazings committees established under legislation which have the right to govern the common grazing
 - In England and Wales, graziers' associations, with threshold % agreement (key question is 'can the management be delivered?')
 - It is difficult to imagine how agreement can be reached without a commonage association
 - It would be a missed opportunity to demand collaboration on the one hand and not to encourage shareholders to improve overall governance on the other
 - Getting agreement is a HUGE social challenge; the way the proposals make collaboration more or less essential for HNV farmers in marginal areas is a big, big risk for those farmers and for the management of commonages



What are the lessons from Wales?

- Uptake of AE was really poor
- LFA (Disadvantaged Area) scheme was abolished with expectation that farmers would get more AE, so potential crisis for farmers on commons
- Welsh Government used Technical Assistance support from RDP to appoint 18 Commons Development Officers to work with commoners to apply for AE
- As a result, in the first 3 years of the new Scheme, 65% of all common land in Wales entered
- A REALLY good result!!!



But.....

- This involved getting 181 commons into the scheme and dealing with >300 graziers' associations who expressed an interest
- This was only 12% of all commons, but then smallest commons in Wales are often unmanaged, unlike in Ireland.....
- Budget for Commons Development Officers in Wales was £2million (c.€2.4 million), i.e. €13260 per contract (contract value roughly €25,000 on average, or €5000/yr.)

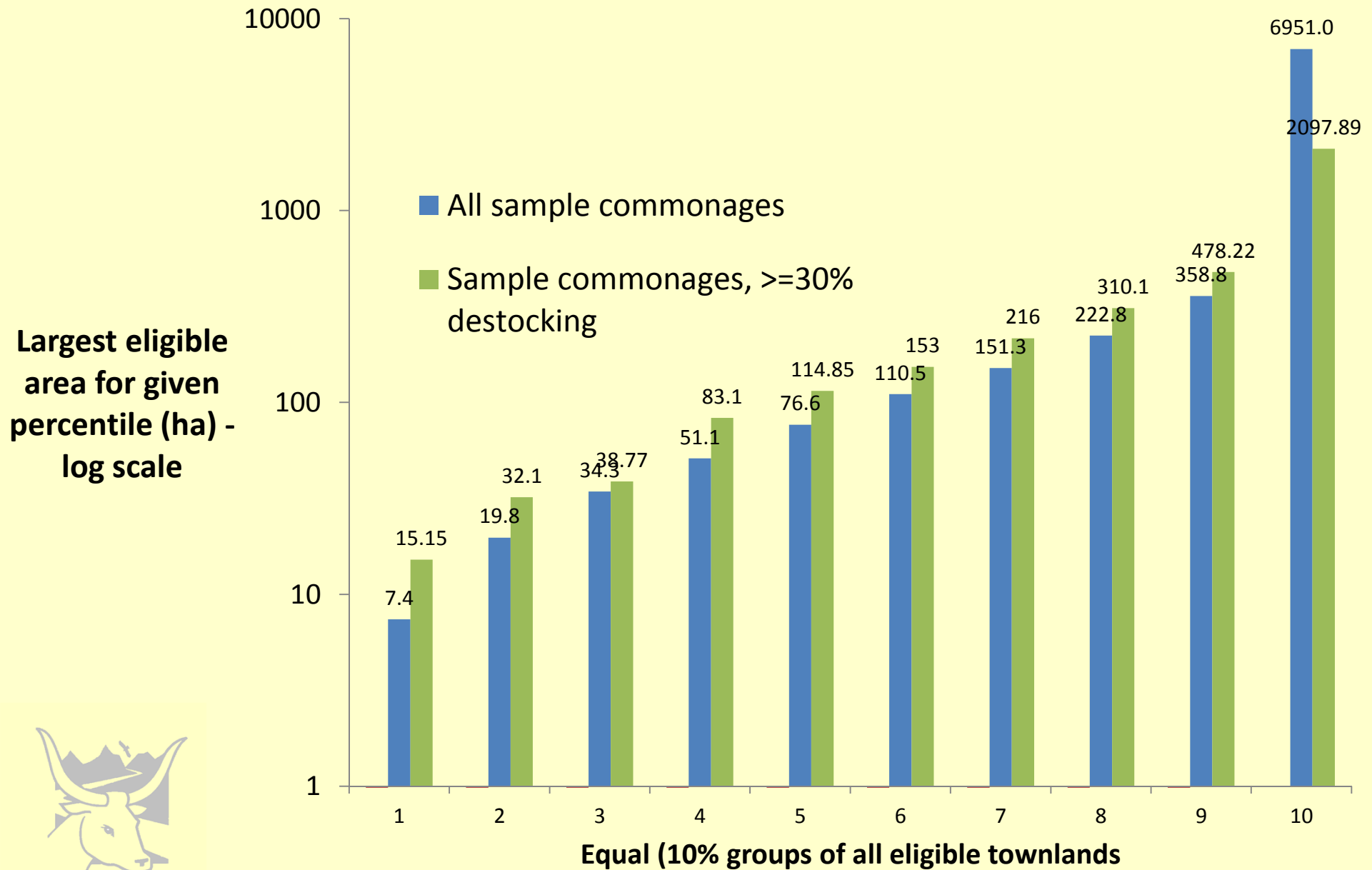


And.....

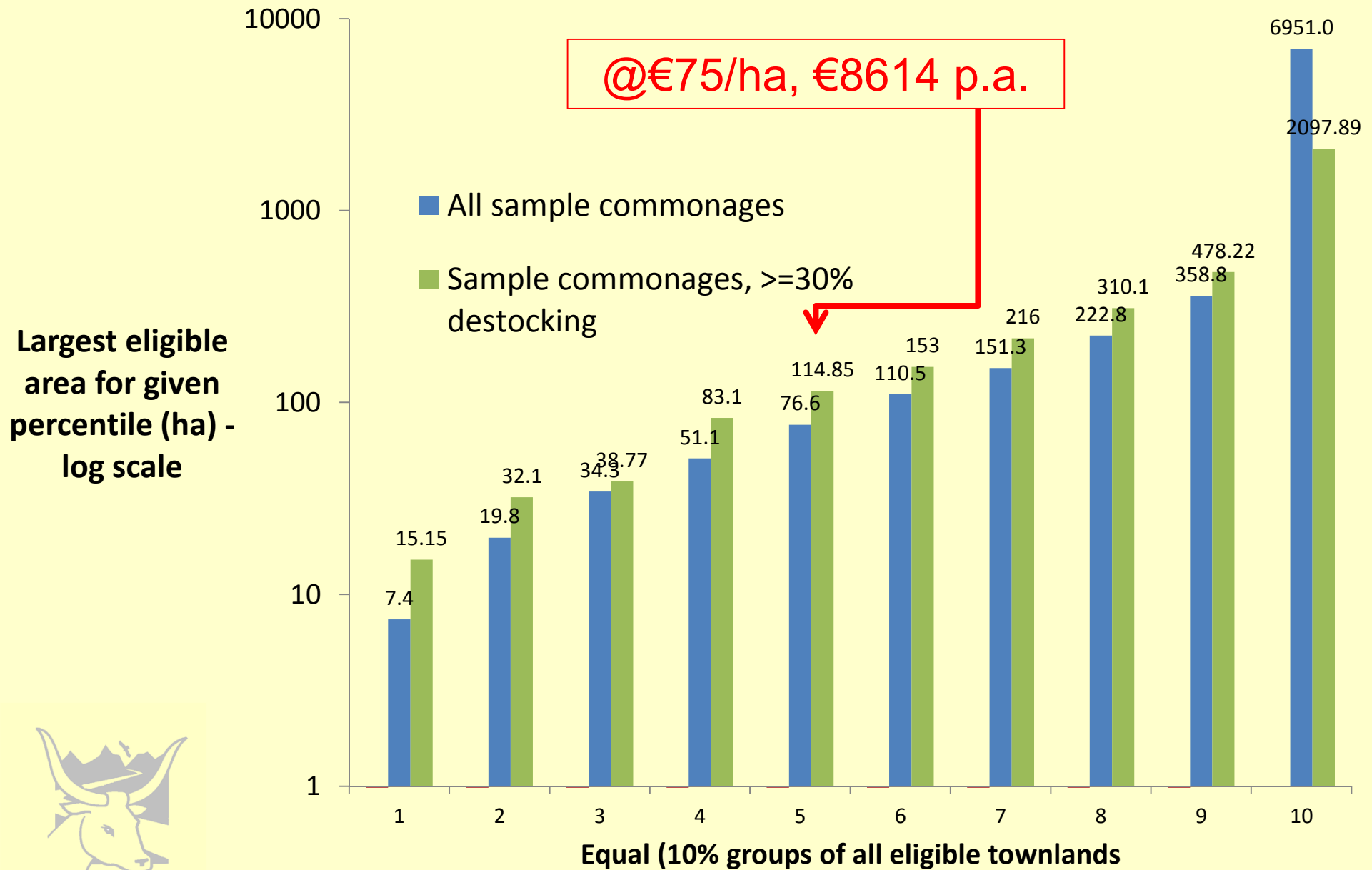
- Getting 65% of all Irish commonage (276,900 ha) into the scheme would mean at least >700 contracts written
- Even with Wales-style conditions, this would need a budget of well over €9,000,000 (less if part-funded by farmers) and the appointment of >70 commonage development officers
- But Ireland is NOT like Wales – there are NO grazier associations, not even ones which are not separate legal persons (as was often the case in Wales). Ireland is starting with a BLANK SHEET!
- In Ireland, 50% of all commonages where >30% destocking required are below 115 ha



And what about legal obligations on the Irish Govt.?



A lot of effort/constraint for little reward?



Look at Scotland, and weep....!

- Remember that the Scottish system is BRILLIANT – legal backing for the grazing committee as the norm for governance, a legal person able to apply for grants, keep livestock etc., with power not just to set soumings but to reallocate unused shares annually.....
- BUT..... Complete lack of organisational/facilitation support in practice
- Result: only 1 common grazings in 20 in AE, which is 3-5 times lower than for ordinary farms, despite having a higher proportion of designated areas etc.
- There has to be SOME way of overcoming the opportunity costs of collaboration on commonages, whether financial or practical, if public policy goals to be met



NOT an argument against managing commons through agreements of the shareholders

- Supporting commonage owners/users to re-establish governance would be a GOOD THING (and they could also apply for other CAP measures)
- Separating commonage plans from farm plans would be a very good thing in general
- Would be good to support the establishment of at least some pilot governance institutions
- Whether or not new governance institutions are formed, the transaction costs of getting agreement on commonage is HUGE! (1.5 x time needed for farm even in Scotland, where they committees largely exist and have legal powers!)
- VERY hard to understand what support will be offered, and failing that, how Ireland can fulfil its Natura obligations (and how farmers can access the funds they need)





**What do
you think?**