

European Forum on Nature Conservation & Pastoralism

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2001 - March 2002

Introduction

Europe's natural and cultural heritage is enriched by the wide variety of regional farming systems which work in harmony with local environmental conditions. However, many of these farming systems are currently under threat. The aims of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP) are therefore:

- To increase understanding that certain European farming systems are of high nature conservation and cultural value.
- To ensure the availability, dissemination and exchange of supporting information, combining research and practical expertise.
- To bring together ecologists, nature conservation managers, farmers and policy makers to consider problems faced by these systems and potential solutions.
- To develop and promote policy options which ensure the ecological maintenance and development of these farming systems and cultural landscapes.

The EFNCP is a pan-European non-profit organisation, bringing together non-governmental and governmental participants from several interest areas. It is a network to exchange information, identify conclusions, and inform policy development. To achieve its aims, the Forum holds conferences every two years, organises workshops and seminars, and produces two issues of the newsletter *La Cañada* per year. It also conducts research into the ecological relationships on high-nature-conservation-value farmland and into the development of appropriate policies for such areas.

Between 1988 and 1996, the Forum developed a network of European scientists, conservationists, and policy makers which interacts with farmers, land managers and agricultural departments through biennial conferences (the Fora), a six monthly newsletter and a series of targeted seminars and workshops. The period 1996-2001 saw the further development of these activities between 1996-2000, a crucial time for nature conservation on farmland with the second phase of CAP reforms, enlargement of the European Union and development of Natura 2000.

This work has continued in 2001/2, as detailed below. The report is structured around the five main headers which encompass the Forum's work.

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT

- Obtained continued financial support for Forum's general activities from JNCC (1996-present) and DG Environment under their support for NGOs working in the field of environmental protection (1997/98 - present). Additional support was also obtained for a range of specific activities as indicated below.
- The Forum has always tried to minimise the proportion of resources put into management and administration. In line with this, the Forum recognised in early 2001 that although the work of the Forum continues to grow, it no longer required a full-time post at Director level. The Forum successfully came through the transition to a complete reliance on input from the network participants, in either a part-funded or voluntary capacity.

- In line with EFNCP policy, secured an increasing amount of Forum's budget from project-specific activities.

BIENNIAL CONFERENCES

- The Forum is currently establishing arrangements for the Eighth Meeting of the Forum to be held in Montpellier and the Causses Méridionaux, France (autumn 2002). This conference will be organised by EFNCP in association with SIME, a French NGO and it is intended that additional funding and support will be sought from other interested organisations, both locally at at the EU level. The focus of this meeting will revolve around the environmental and farming system concerns and issues associated with the sheep regime and with approaches to rural development in a High Nature Value area of France.

The Forum's biennial meetings fulfil a major part of the role as a forum. These review progress on basic scientific work and identify further research needs in order to fulfil the requirements of informing policy development and awareness raising. A further role of main Forum meetings is to use the location to bring into the network a new range of contacts as well as maintaining earlier ones - as well as to see, on the ground, examples of high-nature-value farming systems.

The 2002 meeting in France will build on the successes of recent Forum meetings adopting a similar structure, especially with regard to incorporating farm visits and discussions into the overall programme. It will focus on the sheep regime and farming systems and the location in southern France provides a good venue for this, because problems faced by sheep producers there are relevant to those in many mountain areas throughout Europe. There will be an opportunity to consider the similarities and differences between the problems of this karst area, the Burren (scene of the last Forum) and other analogous areas of Europe. The French venue will also aid the building of further French-speaking involvement in work of the Forum overall.

RESEARCH

- *PASTORAL: the agricultural, ecological and socio-economic importance of free-ranging livestock rearing in Europe.* This Concerted Action is funded under the European Commission's 5th Framework programme and conducted in collaboration with partners from throughout Europe. To-date, the Forum has assisted in the organisation, contribution to and dissemination from two workshops: *Extent & Characteristics of Extensive Grazing Systems* (Spain, July 2001) and *Impact of Scale & Accession on Biodiversity Value* (Romania, October 2001).
- *A review of the Irish Rural Development Plan 2000-2005: implications for national heritage.* This project has been awarded to the Forum by the Irish Heritage Council (IHC). Within this project the Forum is assessing the the likely implications for farmers and the environment of a shift to new payments under the new RDP in Ireland. Although different in approach, this work is complementary to WWF's *Nature of Rural Development* studies.
- Forum representatives contributed to a two-day seminar being organised by the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen in February 2002 concerned with *Developing a typology of European farming systems for environmental purposes.* This two-day meeting discussed technical approaches for taking the concept forward, and in particular for defining High Nature Conservation Value farmland on the basis of available (or easily developed) statistical data sets.

Much of the research work of the Forum in recent years has revolved around trying to address one issue - the lack of a structured classification, from an environmental perspective, of European farming systems. What is required is a broad typology which can be related to farms - since farms are the units that are the

target of policy and through which management decisions are made. Without such a “common currency” it is very difficult to make progress on policy issues regarding farming and the environment, such as maintaining the status quo, environmental cross compliance, environmental enhancement, or appropriate developments. If we do not have a clear idea of whether European pastoral farming can be divided into more or less discrete systems (from our nature conservation perspective), how can we begin to understand (or influence) management which impacts on these systems through incentives to farmers?

DISSEMINATION

- Produced and distributed issues 14 and 15 of the Forum newsletter *La Cañada*, whose distribution is now 1200 and rising. *La Cañada* is sent to those active in Forum activities, appropriate officials in governments and the Commission, and as part of information provided in response to enquiries about the Forum. It has proven a very effective tool.
- Maintained contacts with a wide variety of interested parties throughout Europe through involvement and representation on other networks (e.g. GAP, Eurosite) and through participation of Forum representatives at a wide variety of meetings, seminars and input to project proposals.
- Maintained a flow of papers and articles for a range of audiences to illustrate the importance of these farming systems (see list at end of this report)
- Establish and develop the Forum site on the internet (<http://www.efnecp.org>). The Forum website has been rather inactive in recent months and the Forum is currently considering ways of increasing activity and effectiveness of the site.
- Arranged a study visit by a group of farmers union representatives from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to the European Commission offices in Brussels to meet with DG Agriculture and DG Environment staff (December 2001). This visit was organised by the Forum and funded principally by the individual farmers union delegates meeting their own costs.

ORGANISATION OF SEMINARS & REPRESENTATION ON EC COMMITTEES

- Held a seminar in Brussels on *A Review of the Environmental Implications of the EU Sheep and Goat Meat Sector* (January 2001). This one-day seminar was mainly aimed at European Commission officials and was organised by EFNCP with support from the Land Use Policy Group of the *GB Wildlife and Countryside Agencies* in conjunction with *BirdLife* and *WWF*.
- The Forum is currently preparing a seminar in Brussels in July 2002 aimed at discussing the benefits (or otherwise) of a shift to decoupled area payments in the livestock sectors. The seminars aim to bring together those responsible for policy development and those dealing ‘on the ground’ with nature conservation and agriculture in high-nature-value areas. There has been strong encouragement from European Commission officials, particularly in DGs Agriculture and Environment, to develop further this successful formula.
- The Forum has continued to provide representation to meetings of the Consultative Committees on ‘Rural Development’, ‘Agriculture and Environment’ and ‘Animal Products’ established by DG Agriculture. Following the decision of the Agricultural Commissioner, Dr Fischler, DG Agriculture restructured its consultative committees, with one of the procedural changes being the incorporation of environmental NGOs into many of the committees. DG Agriculture consulted four European environmental networks with expertise in agriculture to nominate the environmental NGO members of

these committees. These four networks (World Wide Fund for Nature, BirdLife International, European Environment Bureau and the Forum) are working together to provide this input.

PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the newsletter *La Cañada*, publications arising from the work of the Forum in the last year include:

Signal, E.M., Jones, G., & McCracken, D.I. 2001 Comment: future directions in agriculture policy and nature conservation. *British Wildlife* 13 16-20.

Signal, E.M., Jones, D.G.L., Baldock, D (in prep). The Irish Rural Development Plan and Ireland's natural heritage – a critical review. Report to Heritage Council.

EFNCP 2001. Recognising European pastoral farming systems and understanding their ecology: a necessity for appropriate conservation and rural development policies. (*EFNCP Occasional Publication* Number 23) *January 2001*

CUMULATIVE BREAKDOWN OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The Forum operates on a 1 April - 31 March financial year. The following Table shows the relevant information from each of the EFNCP's Financial Statements for the last 6 financial years (1995-1996, 1996-1997, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001). The financial figures provided are in £ sterling.

	Year ended					
	31 March 1996	31 March 1997	31 March 1998	31 March 1999	31 March 2000	31 March 2001
Balance brought forward from previous year	-	26,875	-	24,227	52,167	45,539
Income during year	44,705	61,710	118,069*	159,840	176,079	180,576
Expenditure during year	18,147	60,540	95,031	133,111	183,497	180,544
Operating Surplus/(Deficiency) during the year	26,558	1,170	23,038	26,729	(7,418)	32
Interest during the year	317	565	1,189	1,211	790	864
Retained Surplus/(deficit) for the year	26,875	1,735	24,227	27,940	(6,628)	896
Balance carried forward	26,875	28,610	24,227	52,167	45,539	46,435

* Income for 1998 also included an exceptional item relating to a gift by resolution of the net assets of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism unincorporated, amounting to £28,610

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