

European Forum on Nature Conservation & Pastoralism

ANNUAL REPORT

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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 organises conferences, workshops and seminars and produces a new newsletter (*La Cañada*) which is widely distributed within Europe. The EFNCP 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 1996-2003 saw the further development of these activities, a crucial time for nature conservation on farmland with the second phase of CAP reforms and subsequent Mid-Term Review of the CAP, enlargement of the European Union and development of Natura 2000. This work has continued in 2004, as detailed below. The report is structured around the five main headers which encompass the Forum's work.

ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT

- During 2004, the Forum was informed that it had been unsuccessful in obtaining financial support from DG Environment for 2004 under their programme providing support for NGOs working in the field of environmental protection (from which, with the exception of 2002, the Forum has otherwise obtained funding in every year from 1997). The 2004 application was rejected by the Commission because of a technicality whereby the Commission would no longer accept the Forum having a membership consisting solely of individuals rather than organisations. As a consequence of this lack of NGO programme support, the EFNCP budget was subject to strict controls during 2004 and a number of the activities the Forum had wished to conduct in 2004 had to be deleted from its planned programme of work. While this was a situation that the Forum would like to avoid in the future, the remaining content of this report

serves to indicate that the Forum was still able to achieve much during the year despite not getting the NGO support grant.

- Partly in response to the Commission's requirement and partly to enhance the network, in 2004 the Forum extended formal Membership of the EFNCP to organisations rather than only individuals (as has been the case to-date). The Forum also initiated discussions on making changes to its legal structure. The current legal structure is exceedingly complex and the Directors have come to the conclusion that a simpler and more transparent structure is desirable. While discussions are continuing on the exact form that these changes will take, it is likely the Board of Directors will become more independent of the Executive Committee.
- Both the above changes are intimately linked to funding. The Board is aware that these will have a net cost, especially at the start, but are also aware that lack of reform is hampering Forum fund-raising efforts. Since its inception, the Forum has been fortunate to receive core funding (i.e. for its basic activities as opposed to project) from a variety of sources (e.g. DG Environment, WWF UK, the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee and English Nature) and for a long period these accounted for the majority of the Forum's income. However, as DG Environment funding in particular has declined over the years, the Forum has become increasingly dependent on income from project work, with all concerned giving some voluntary time to Forum work. Although such an arrangement is workable for a short time, it soon becomes untenable, especially if project work and core functions are carried out by different individuals for any length of time. The Forum is therefore also investigating ways of re-establishing a degree of core funding.

BIENNIAL CONFERENCES

- The Forum is currently seeking funding to allow the Ninth Meeting of the Forum to be held in Pamporovo, Bulgaria in 2005. It is anticipated that this conference will be organised by EFNCP in association with the Sofia office of WWF's Danube Carpathian Project and the Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. Additional funding and support is currently being sought from other interested European organisations. The focus of this meeting will be on *Making High Nature Value farming in Europe's marginal areas socially sustainable*. It is therefore hoped that alongside the usual discussions of policy and science, there will be substantial inputs from rural economists and sociologists.

The Forum's conferences 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 2005 meeting in Bulgaria will build on contacts built up over the years and on the success of recent Forum workshops highlighting the issues facing High Nature Value (HNV) farmers and farmland in Central and Eastern Europe. It is intended that the 2005 conference will adopt a similar structure to previous Forum conferences, especially with regard to incorporating farm visits and discussions into the overall programme.

RESEARCH

During 2004, the Forum completed input to:

- *Transhumant: A review of the role of transhumance in mountain ecosystem processes and dynamics* This Accompanying Measure was funded under the European Commission's 5th

Framework Programme. The project was coordinated by ALTERRA in the Netherlands and was conducted in collaboration with a number of partners from throughout Europe. The overall objective of this project was to summarise the current status of transhumance in European mountains and its influence on the component fragile ecosystems. The Forum assisted with the organisation of one workshop and one larger conference and with the production of a book summarising the outcomes of these meetings. The conference for this project was held in Landquart, Switzerland in May 2004 and the book summarising the project findings was published in September 2004. Further information on the project can be found at http://www.alterra-research.nl/servlet/page?_pageid=793&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30 while details of the book can be found at: <http://www.landscape-ecology.org>

The Forum also continued input to the following research projects during 2004:

- *PAN: Thematic Network on Cultural Landscapes and their Ecosystems*. This Thematic Network is funded under the European Commission's 5th Framework programme. The project is coordinated by the University of Bergen and is conducted in collaboration with partners from throughout Europe. The Forum will assist with the organisation of two of six workshops over a three year period and will contribute to these and help with the dissemination of the outputs. During 2004, meetings of the network were held in Hanover (March 2004) and in Bergen (September 2004). Further information on the project can be found at <http://pan.cultiland.org/>

New research projects to which the Forum contributed to in 2004 include:

- *Assessing the potential impact on the Natural Heritage of the mid-term review of the CAP*. This project is being conducted under contract from the Irish Heritage Council and involves the Forum working in collaboration with a freelance economist and a landscape character expert. Reference farms in HNV farmland areas in Ireland are being used to examine both the economic and non-economic drivers which will influence farmers' responses to the reform. Information is being collected through a combination of interviews and a workshop in Athlone in December 2004.

In 2003 and 2004, the Forum increased its focus on how the movement of agricultural support from the first pillar to the second pillar of the CAP will affect farming systems of high nature conservation value. This is especially relevant to the Mediterranean areas, to peripheral and mountain regions and to the recently acceded countries of central and eastern Europe.

DISSEMINATION

During 2004, the Forum:

- Produced and distributed issue 18 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. Issue 18 of the newsletter was a double-issue and contained overviews of the meetings and workshops with which the Forum was involved in 2004.
- Produced a chapter on *Farmland and high nature value areas* as part of a European Environment Agency sub-report on *Halting Biodiversity Loss in Europe*. This writing was done under contract to the European Centre for Nature Conservation in the Netherlands.
- Continued to participate in the Biodiversity Expert Group charged with reviewing the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, and contributed especially to commenting on the Action Plan for Agriculture (which was considered along with other Action Plans at the Stakeholders

Conference concerned with *Biodiversity and the EU: sustaining life, sustaining livelihoods* which was organised by the Irish Presidency and the European Commsison in Malahide, Republic of Ireland in May 2004).

- 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 and seminars. In particular, in April 2004, the Forum was invited to a workshop for the Global Pastoral Programme (GPP) in Nairobi, Kenya hosted by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). The Forum's experience with tools, arguments and strategies used to convince policy makers in Europe is of potential use to the GPP and it is hoped that the Forum and the GPP will collaborate in the future.
- Started to update the content of the Forum website (<http://www.efncp.org>) to reflect recent activities. This process will continue in 2005 at which time it is also hoped to address general presentational quality issues of the site in order to improve its effectiveness.

ORGANISATION OF SEMINARS & REPRESENTATION ON EC COMMITTEES

During 2004, the Forum:

- Held a seminar in Brussels on *The Impact of Decoupled Payments on High Nature Value Farming Systems* (January 2004). This one-day was seminar mainly aimed at European Commission officials and was organised by EFNCP with support from DG Agriculture's Information Action programme. Papers connected with this workshop are available on the EFNCP website <http://www.efncp.com>
- Held a seminar in Brussels on *The impact of Accession on High Nature Value cattle systems in Central and Eastern Europe* (March 2004). This one-day was seminar mainly aimed at European Commission officials and was organised by EFNCP with support from DG Agriculture's Information Action programme. Papers connected with this workshop are available on the EFNCP website <http://www.efncp.com>
- Set in motion the preparations for a seminar in Brussels in early 2005 concerned with *The potential impact on High Nature Value farming areas of the European Commission's proposed changes to Less Favoured Areas*. This seminar will be organised by EFNCP with support from Euromontana, the Scottish Crofting Foundation and others.
- The Forum has continued to have representatives nominated to attend meetings of the Consultative Committees on 'Rural Development', 'Agriculture and Environment' and 'Animal Products' established by DG Agriculture. Four networks (World Wide Fund for Nature, BirdLife International, European Environment Bureau and the Forum) are working together to provide the environmental NGO input to these meetings. Regular cancellation and short-notice rescheduling of these Committees by DG Agriculture has, however, made it difficult for the Forum representatives to attend many of the meetings in 2004.

PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the newsletter *La Cañada*, publications arising from the work of the Forum during 2004 include:

- Bunce, R.G.H., Pérez Soba, M., Jongman, R.H.G., Gómez Sal, A. & Austad, I. (2004) *Transhumance and biodiversity in European mountains*. International Association for Landscape Ecology, Wageningen, The Netherlands. 307 pp
- Signal, E., Jones, D.G., Kearney, B and O'Leary T (2004) *Assessing the potential impact on the Natural Heritage of the Mid-Term Review of the CAP*. Interim and Draft Final Report to the Irish Heritage Council, Kilkenny, Ireland.
- McCracken, D.I. (2004) *Farmland and high nature value areas*. Chapter prepared for ECNC/ETC/NPB input to European Environment Agency sub-report on Halting Biodiversity Loss. 18 pp

CUMULATIVE BREAKDOWN OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Between March 1995 and April 2003, 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 8 financial years and the period 1 April 2003-31 December 2003. Financial figures are in £ sterling.

	Year ended								1 April 2003 to 31 December 2003
	31 March 1996	31 March 1997	31 March 1998	31 March 1999	31 March 2000	31 March 2001	31 March 2002	31 March 2003	
Balance brought forward from previous year/period	-	26,875	-	24,227	52,167	45,539	46,435	50,812	43,121
Income during year/period	44,705	61,710	118,069*	159,840	176,079	180,576	92,596	63,794	103,637
Expenditure during year/period	18,147	60,540	95,031	133,111	183,497	180,544	88,509	71,756	112,361
Operating Surplus/(Deficiency) during the year/period	26,558	1,170	23,038	26,729	(7,418)	32	4,087	(7,962)	(8,724)
Interest during the year/period	317	565	1,189	1,211	790	864	290	271	197
Retained Surplus/(deficit) for the year/period	26,875	1,735	24,227	27,940	(6,628)	896	4,377	(7,691)	(8,527)
Balance carried forward	26,875	28,610	24,227	52,167	45,539	46,435	50,812	43,121	34,594

* Income for 1998 also included an exceptional item relating to a gift by resolution of the net assets of the EFNCP unincorporated, amounting to £28,610

In 2003, the Forum's financial year changed to a 1 January - 31 December. The following Table shows the relevant information from the Financial Statements for the 2003 and 2004 financial years. Financial figures are in £ sterling.

	Year ended	Year ended
	31 Dec 2003	31 Dec 2004**
Balance brought forward from previous year	46,055	34,594
Income during year	132,126	52,636
Expenditure during year	143,784	98,730
Operating Surplus/(Deficiency) during the year	(11,658)	(46,094)
Interest during the year	197	238
Retained Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(11,461)	(45,856)
Balance carried forward	34,594	(11,262)

** Note 1 extracted from financial statement for Year ended 31 December 2004: *Going Concern - The company experienced a deficiency this year after the grant applied for in respect of the 31st December 2003 accounts was not fully received. This was due to a lower level of eligible expenditure actually undertaken compared to the grant accrued for in the 31st December 2003 accounts. This was an isolated occurrence and is not expected to happen again. In the period since the 31st December 2004 the company has been able to return to a positive net asset position through some fully funded projects. The board therefore feel confident that the company can continue in existence for the foreseeable future.*

ENDS