

**VIDEO MESSAGE**  
**FROM HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES**  
**FOR HIGH NATURE VALUE GRASSLANDS CONFERENCE**  
**SIBIU, ROMANIA**  
**SEPTEMBER 2010**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While I am extremely sorry not to be at your conference today in person, I am delighted to be here with you at least through the slightly disembodied medium of this video message.

Finding the right approach towards the future of farming is, I think, one of the most crucially important questions we face. It is essential we develop the integrated approaches that are required to address the complex challenges that underlie our current unsustainable system of food production.

Perhaps the first thing to realize is how agriculture is truly at the centre of our lives, not only through the food it provides, but also in shaping culture and environments in ways that people across Europe have come to value so highly. This is particularly the case in those areas where extensive grazing, semi-natural grasslands and small-scale farming communities survive.

Despite the large scale move towards intensification in recent decades, between a third and a half of Europe's farmland is estimated to be of High Nature Value, including habitats of European importance, such as hay meadows, dry grasslands and wooded pastures. Many of these farmed landscapes have more natural diversity than wilderness areas, but right across Europe much of what remains of these landscapes is under severe threat of abandonment or intensification. It would be a tragedy of incalculable proportions to lose them just as we begin to understand their full value to mankind. Thanks to the efforts of many organizations, including the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism, it is increasingly recognized that these farmlands embody an extraordinary range of economic, social and environmental values.

But we must move from the recognition of the importance of these landscapes to developing effective strategies for conservation. I am convinced that we can succeed, not least through a fresh look at how to design, combine and deliver Common Agricultural Policy farm income

support and E.U. Rural Development programme measures. This is, of course, one of the issues which will be examined by your conference.

Another vital goal is to raise awareness, before it is too late and before we needlessly throw away the things that are of greatest value in terms of our survival on this increasingly damaged planet. Now is a good time to raise this awareness. We are in the International Year of Biodiversity with a critically important meeting taking place in Nagoya, Japan, during October. Europe has been a real leader in these international processes and I hope that action can be taken here in line with global commitments to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, and then to halt it. If Europe is to succeed in this laudable aim, then taking steps to protect her traditional farmed landscapes is essential. And this will also ensure the continued functioning of the vital, additional role they play in terms of food security, carbon sequestration, resistance to climate change and other vital ecosystem services.

Another route to success will be through effective partnerships. This is an additional reason for warmly applauding your conference in bringing together policy-makers, practitioners and, most important of all, the farmers themselves, in formulating recommendations for the next phase of European planning for how the C.A.P. should look post 2013.

It is particularly appropriate that the conference is being held in Romania, whose remarkable agrarian culture is linked to one of Europe's most uniquely beautiful and important landscapes. I am delighted that Romanian policy-makers in the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment are supporting these traditional landscapes. I am sure that in years to come these remaining High Nature Value landscapes will be regarded as key national treasures, and that history will judge positive action taken now to have been based on great wisdom and foresight. I hope the positive example of the Romanian government will be followed by other European countries with similarly valuable farming systems.

As well as developing supportive policies, it is of course vital to deliver them effectively on the ground. Local initiatives are required to achieve this - the driving force coming from local communities, but often catalyzed by NGOs. The Fundatia ADEPT project, which some of you may visit during the conference, is one commendable example.

Ladies and Gentlemen, before I close I must emphasize how sustaining High Nature Value landscapes is not simply a matter for Nature conservationists. These places sustain livelihoods, cultural

continuity, environmental integrity and socio-economic stability for many millions of Europeans living within them. They have a wide range of values that must be reflected in integrated approaches towards their conservation and sensitive development.

May I end by wishing this conference well. I hope – no, I pray - that it will send a strong and effective message to all concerned about how we value these landscapes, and how it is in the interests of wider European society – contrary to the current conventional short-term wisdom that seems to dictate otherwise - to support the small-scale farming communities who have over hundreds of years created what are today among our most precious natural assets and the basis of genuine food and environmental security for the future.