



Results of the International Conference on High Nature Value farming

on Vilm, Germany 14. – 18.06.2010

- International conference with participants from about 20 European countries discusses experiences and perspectives for an agriculture with high nature value
- High Nature Value farming forms a central element in the multifunctionality of the European agriculture and should be a fundamental issue in the future Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union.

Participants from about 20 European countries met last week at the conference on High Nature Value farming on the isle of Vilm (Germany) to exchange and discuss experiences of the diversity, maintenance and future of High Nature Value farming. One background of the conference is the preparation process of the new Common Agriculture Policy and the issue of management of farmland nature has a particular importance. High nature value farmland (e.g. farmed habitats, species of outstanding relevance, grassland and arable land, orchards and landscape elements) is the most important element in the European agricultural landscape and forms the ecological infrastructure of European landscapes. In the context of a European agrarian model which has to be developed further considering the biodiversity targets, the maintenance, development and support of High Nature Value farmland and sustainable farming should play a central role.

Within the conference at the international academy of nature conservation on the isle of Vilm the High Nature Value farming types as well as aspects of the management, added value and the evaluation and monitoring across Europe were presented and discussed. Experts from agriculture and nature conservation, people of practice and administration, governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations (about 20 European countries) came together, from Portugal to Estonia, from Greece to the UK. As a result the European exchange on this central nature and agricultural issue were brought forward and ideas for enhancing and further developing agricultural policy were discussed.

During the conference examples from traditional and modern agriculture with High Nature Value from all over Europe were presented. The speakers showed in an impressive way how High Nature Value farming shapes the diversity of our European cultural landscape. This was also illustrated during an excursion to destinations near the conference site on the island Rügen - on a farm with direct marketing and in a biosphere reserve with integrated High Nature Value farming.

However, the examples from all parts of Europe show that High Nature Value farming is in strong decline because it suffers big financial disadvantages compared to intensive agriculture (much less CAP support compared to intensive agriculture, additional requirements and bureaucracy). This leads to an income gap which reflects an insufficient or not balanced support of High Nature Value farming by current EU agricultural policy and its implementation at national and regional levels.

Important demands for the further development of the common agricultural policy are strategies for the maintenance of High Nature Value farming, the development of adequate added value chains and the build up of strongly pro-active and targeted advisory systems, examples of which exist in several local projects run by NGOs. A reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy is also needed. A central requirement is strong financial support across the EU through a system of payments targeted at High Nature Value farmland, and complemented by agri-environment schemes for specific farm management as well as by education and advice. Through such a three component model High Nature Value farming could be made economically and ecologically sustainable. It also could become a kind of future model for a larger part of all agricultural farms of Europe and could so put multifunctionality at the very centre of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Organizers of the conference were the Institute for Agro ecology and Biodiversity (IFAB) in cooperation with the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism and (EFNCP) and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN).

For any questions:

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