

Biodiversity in rural areas – Including biodiversity aspects in rural development plans in relation to the proposed new Common Agriculture Policy

Situation assessment:

Agricultural land use in Europe has a significant impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services on and outside Natura 2000 sites. EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its 'second pillar' funds – distributed by Member States through the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) – thus indirectly affect rural biodiversity and ecosystems. RDPs should contribute to the conservation of rural biodiversity and (mainly small-scale) traditional agricultural practices also through High Nature Value (HNV) farming, as it has been proposed in the Community's Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development, 2007 – 2013¹. As it is the case with many other EU planning processes, by December 2013 Member States should upgrade RDPs and the result will have fundamental effects not only on rural communities, but also on rural biodiversity and ecosystems. Besides, other funding mechanisms under CAP, which hinder achieving targets of HNV farming and EU's Biodiversity Strategy, should be assessed especially in the frame of the greening of the CAP.

Objectives:

- National Rural Development Programmes maximize benefit for sustainable agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources benefiting biodiversity in farmed landscapes both within and outside Natura 2000 sites, and supporting the small-scale farming communities that have created HNV farmed landscapes, and whose continued existence is essential for the survival of these landscapes
- HNV farmed landscapes, strong providers of public goods and ecosystem services including biodiversity, is acknowledged to exist outside Natura 2000 too, and supported by the EC in order to meet EU 2020 targets
- Stakeholders are more aware of HNVs and their ecosystem services in the CEE region
- Increased CEEweb profile in Brussels in the field of HNV farming within biodiversity and rural development policy discussions by participating relevant meetings providing recommendations and cases studies
- Active contribution to the work of other NGOs and networks' (e.g. EEB, IFOE, ELO, etc.) activities in this field by participating in meetings, policy planning processes and planning and implementation of joint activities
- Subsidies harmful on biodiversity and ecosystems are eliminated from future CAP

Activities:

- Assist member NGOs through CEEweb's Rural Development Working Group to elaborate their approach to the development of Rural Development Programmes in their MSs, to maximise benefit for sustainable agriculture and sustainable use of natural resources and support the small-scale farming communities that have created HNV farmed landscapes
- Organize a kick-off meeting for 10-15 CEE NGO participants in spring 2013 to bring them all up to date on the proposed measures available under the new, recently forming CAP, which can be shaped in order to support HNV farming both within and outside Natura 2000 sites²
- Prepare case studies in at least four CEE countries involving CEE NGOs on CAP policy

¹"To protect and enhance the EU's natural resources and landscapes in rural areas, the resources devoted to axis 2 should contribute to three EU-level priority areas: biodiversity and the preservation and development of high nature value farming and forestry systems and traditional agricultural landscapes; water; and climate change." (OJ L55/20, 2006)

² **Pillar I:** eligibility of grasslands (problems with trees etc.); definition of permanent grasslands

Pillar II: short food chains (linked to direct sales and local markets); small farmers/producers, innovation in rural development (how to use the new innovation measure to benefit sustainable and low-input farming and small-scale farming communities); young farmers; environmental and climate schemes in practice, and their use for the benefit of nature conservation areas (e.g. Natura 2000 sites); Natura 2000 payments.

Perverse payments/regulations which are unintentionally harmful to local communities and biodiversity

implementation problems/successes under current RDPs

- Organize at least two workshops in the CEE region in the second half of 2013 for 10-15 participants from relevant ministries and NGO participants from 3-4 CEE countries drawing on the case studies, to find the most useful approaches to be proposed for post-2013 RDPs and conclude them in EU and MS level policy recommendations
- Based on the workshops and case studies, compile a study and consequent policy recommendations on the best possible integration of HNV aspects to future RDPs. Subcontracted.
- Disseminate policy recommendations supported by case studies and organize meetings between NGOs and relevant 3-4 CEE ministries (Agriculture and Rural Development, Environment, etc.)
- Organize a high level meeting, "Developing Rural Development Programmes that support High Nature Value Farmland landscapes and communities" in late 2013 with European Commission and MS level policy-makers to present and discuss findings, case studies and policy proposals
- Disseminate the results on CEEweb's website and within EU NGO networks

Medium and long term results	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO experiences and views on maintenance of HNV farmed landscapes are brought together, leading to concrete policy recommendations • Unified CEE NGOs policy recommendations feeding into CEE Member State RDPs • Increased NGO capacity in CEE countries to on EU and national level agriculture policies as well as on local communities to maintain HNVF landscape • Increased contribution of CEEweb to relevant EU level policy-making • Enhanced cooperation between ministries and CEE NGOs on RDP development • CEE NGO proposals are reflected in Member State RDPs • Increased cohesion in policy forming between EU NGOs and CEE positions reflected in EU NGOs work • RDPs contain adequate tools for benefiting rural biodiversity • Subsidies harmful on biodiversity and ecosystems are eliminated from future CAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least four case studies on current national RDPs implementation • Study on the best possible integration of HNV aspects to future RDPs • Policy recommendations on the improvement of RDP measures in terms of HNVs and its channelization to future national RDPs • One kick-off meeting for 10-15 CEE NGO participants to build capacities in relation to agriculture policy implementation • Two workshops for 10-15 CEE relevant ministry representatives and NGOs from 3-4 CEE countries during second half of 2013 on lessons learnt on recent RDPs • One high level final meeting with EU and national policy makers to present findings and NGO policy proposals in Oct/Nov 2013 • CEE views channelled at relevant meetings in Brussels and in the CEE region (EC Rural Development Working Groups, NGO working groups, etc.) for and reports of these events to CEEweb constituency • Dedicated webpage under CEEweb's website for dissemination of the outcomes of the meetings and information • Experience exchange with other EU NGOs