

Winner case study of the CEEweb Award
in the *Stakeholder cooperation in nature conservation* category

Habitat conservation through traditional farming

ADEPT Foundation

Brief description of the case

ADEPT has developed its landscape conservation approach and activities within the Târnavă Mare area, Natura 2000 SCI since 2007. This complex landscape of 85,000 ha with many Habitats Directive grassland, scrub and forest habitats and associated species, is managed by about 5,000 small-scale farming families. It cannot be protected by “Protection Orders”: a Natura 2000 management team cannot maintain the complex management over such a large area. Successful management of the area relies on continued current farming practices.



But these practices are threatened by lack of economic viability, leading to abandonment or intensification which will destroy the habitats.

ADEPT used a variety of funding sources: agri-environment schemes; assisting improvements in milk quality, quantity, price; branding, marketing, farmers markets. These have brought an additional €2.5m of income, for about 2,500 farmers and producers, establishing long-term economic incentives to continue traditional management. The commercial developments are now self-sustaining, and the agri-environment schemes are repeated in the 2014-20 RDP period, offering sustainability of results.

Detailed description

Type of case: Strategic cooperation

Location: Tarnava Mare

Habitats/species managed: Several Habitats Directive habitats especially 40A0, 6210, 6240, 62C0, 6510, 6520

Duration: 01/05/2007 - 01/05/2014

Activities carried out in the framework of the cooperation including concrete tools used:

1. Tarnava Mare was Romania's only pilot project for the HNV grassland agri-environment measure in 2007. This led to simplified application process and effective management criteria for the Habitats Directive grassland habitats. Owing to farm advisory services, the SCI has twice the average uptake for agri-environment grassland measures.

2. In addition, the farm advisory team provided milk hygiene training and improved equipment in 8 villages in the area; and helped the village grazing associations negotiate better prices with processors.
3. The ADEPT farm advisory team developed a Târnava Mare logo, creating a brand linked to consumer perception of the natural landscape. The team also helped local small-scale producers create farmers' markets.

Results:

Short-term:

1. 30,000 ha of HD grassland under a-e schemes. Over 2,000 farmers receiving incentives to maintain grasslands under practical but effective management guidelines.
2. Milk hygiene training and improved equipment has raised price per litre of milk received by producers by 25%, giving additional income of €350,000 per year to over 200 dairy farmers in the area. This halted the decline of cow numbers, which was a threat to traditional grassland management especially haymeadows: every cow represents 1ha of hay meadow maintained.
3. Marketing including farmers' markets has added value to products: 40 producers are now earning over €75,000 per year from Târnava Mare branded products.

Long-term: The project has established financial mechanisms which can then maintain themselves. Results are sustainable because the activities are strongly linked to the identity of the area, which has led to local pride, an important factor for resilience and sustainability. The apathy of the local population, and unwillingness to take part in community activities, has been replaced by a markedly more enthusiastic response to community development ideas. This is largely because, over 5 years, ADEPT was able to prove that these activities genuinely delivered benefits (not just words). In addition, potential benefits of Natura 2000 to local people are understood not only in the area, but more widely in Romania. Much publicity resulted from our Natura 2000 "local benefits" award in Brussels, May 2014.

Benefits and motivation of partners (businesses, green NGOs):

1. Grassland a-e measure brought an additional €2m of income, for 2,300 farmers, 30,000ha of grassland under good management
2. Incentives for meadow management. As a result of the milk collection (quantity and quality) improvements, additional income of €350,000 per year to over 200 dairy farmers in the area. It has also halted the decline of cow numbers.
3. Incentives for small producers with local/nature brand. At markets, 40 producers are now earning over €75,000 per year from Târnava Mare branded products. Sales at the information centre managed by ADEPT brought an additional €15,000/year.

Situation before the project

Most of are is made up of HD Annex 1 habitats (wetlands, scrub, grasslands and forest) and associated WBD and HD Annex 2 species, existing in a mosaic. Their protection depends on protecting the entire mosaic landscape. This complex landscape is managed by 5,000 small-scale farming families. Sustainable results could only be achieved by working with farmers, supporting continued current farming practices. Continued management was threatened by lack of economic viability. Abandonment was occurring. 30% of haymeadows were no longer mowed, becoming low-biodiversity scrub, or used for sheep grazing which was also having a negative impact on biodiversity.

Breakdown of traditional management was because the farmers no longer had the economic incentives, or confidence in the future, to continue.

More information:

<http://www.fundatia-adept.org>

www.discovertarnavamare.org

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/awards/application-2014/award-winners/socio-economic-benefit/index_en.htm