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Ziemeļu Ministru padomes
birojs Latvijā



TRINET Workshop

Building Nordic-Baltic and European partnership in grassland farming for biodiversity

Co-organised by the Latvian Fund for Nature and the Weideverein Ramsargebiet Lafnitztal, with co-financing from the Nordic Council.

Sigulda, Latvia, Oct. 11-12 2007

Thursday Oct. 11

Introduction 10- 10.15

Opening words

- Inga Racinska (Board member, Latvian Fund for Nature)
- The TRINET philosophy and purpose of the workshop (Anton Gazenbeek, Weideverein Ramsargebiet Lafnitztal)

First morning session 10.15-11.45

Theme: restoring abandoned grassland and reviving traditional grassland farming use: some practical case studies

Speakers:

Latvijas Dabas Fonds – Latvian Fund for Nature – Ivars Kabucis, Chair of the board

Topic: situation and management of grasslands in Latvia – general overview.

Sami Timonen, Pohjois-pohjanmaan Ympäristökeskus – North Ostrobothnia Regional Environment Centre, Finland

Topic: Restoring and managing Baltic boreal coastal meadows in North Ostrobothnia. Less than 200 hectares were managed by grazing or mowing in 1995; through sustained restoration projects and recurring management efforts this has been raised to over 2000 hectares. This positive trend is based on co-operation with local farmers, land owners (most areas are owned by private people or landowners organizations), private contractors, state authorities as well as nature conservation NGOs. Agri-environment support has been crucial. A regular monitoring scheme of plant and bird species and habitats was established, which provided useful data for improving the detailed land use management measures and rules, together with agricultural and environmental authorities and farmers.

Ralf Strohwasser, LIFE projects "Südlicher Chiemgau" and "Rosenheimer Stammbeckenmoore", Bavaria, Germany

Topic: How farmers and machinery pools got involved in the restoration and clearance of overgrown litter meadows in the Chiemgau district. How and why the practice of using material from mowing litter meadows as straw in local stables, was revived. Why farmers are currently still interested in maintaining and mowing litter meadows. Grazing of wet grasslands as instrument for landscape management – where are there opportunities for success, when is the outcome poor?

Daniel Green, Svartadalen, Sweden

Topic: Restoration and management of the grasslands and floodplain of the Svartadalen river valley, the problem that farmers had no use for the hay from mowing, how this was solved by starting an initiative to market 'green meat' from grassland management.

Each speaker 15 + minimum 30 minutes discussion

11.45 -12.00 Coffee break

Second morning session 12-13.30

Theme: managing grassland for biodiversity: choosing the best techniques

Speakers:

Murel Merivee, LKK, Estonia

Topic: the different grassland management tools used in different areas and projects within Estonia. Heterogeneity as overriding objective of Estonian grassland management. Which management combinations have been most effective and useful in which kind of habitats? The best way to achieve heterogeneity is being variable in the management techniques.

Eckhard Jedicke ARGE Rhön, Germany

Topic: Building a win-win-strategy for farmers and nature conservation by low-density grazing on a large scale (up to 100 hectares) year-round (instead of in summer only): experience in the biosphere reserve 'Rhön'. The concept of 'semi-open pasture landscapes', and how conflict with NATURA 2000 (where various grassland types are defined as meadows, i.e. for mowing, so that nature conservation authorities resist attempts to include them in grazing management) can be an impediment for grazing projects. Advantages and disadvantages of grazing and mowing.

Roger Gustavsson, LRF Sydost – Southeast Sweden Farmers Association, Sweden

Topic: How a livestock farmer thinks and decides when he (or she) plans land use, and how these decisions are based on a long tradition and knowledge of what's best for the cattle and the land. Discussion of Swedish government programmes available to farmers in order to save or increase the biodiversity of specific areas. How farmers' and government plans correlate, even if they have different underlying agendas.

Each speaker 15-20 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

13.30-15.00 Lunch

15.00-16.30 First afternoon session

Theme: restoring and managing floodplain grasslands, with reference to river and flood management and the Water Framework Directive

Speakers:

Peder Thomsen, Sydvestjysk Landboforening - SouthWest Jutland Farmers Association, Denmark

Topic: How farmers in the Varde river valley successfully switched from intensive grass pellet production to extensive mowing and grazing as part of a river restoration project (Operation Engsnarre). This extensive grassland farming is now supporting important bird populations. Why were farmers willing to change, what advantage did it bring them and how have they fared since the project?

Anton Gazenbeek, Weideverein Ramsargebiet Lafnitztal, Austria

Topic: The strategic decision of the water authorities to implement a 'passive flood protection' programme, anticipating the Water Framework Directive, in the Lafnitz valley and what the consequences for grasslands were. How the Weideverein and grassland farmers learned by trial and error what the best livestock husbandry regime was in the new water management framework: combining hay mowing and grazing, fodder provision, experimenting with state-of-the-art winter and summer stables. How economics of livestock farming influenced land use (mowing/grazing) choices.

Martin Königsdorfer, Donautal-Aktiv e.V., Germany

Topic: Re-introducing nature-oriented grazing to a Danube river floodplain in Swabia mainly converted to arable farming but designated flood retention zone and bird protection area (SPA). Creating win-win situations for agriculture, water management and nature conservation - how and why farmers are motivated to participate, and to switch to grazing. Constitution of a grazing society. Whole-farm approach and support from local agri-environment programmes.

Each speaker 15-20 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

16.30-17.00 Coffee break

17.00-18.30 Second afternoon session

Theme: building bridges between conservation bodies and grassland farmers

Paul Evans, Natural England/Yorkshire Dales National Park, UK

Topic: how the National Park, charged with producing a public good (biodiversity and landscape), and livestock farmers, faced with pressure on viability and overgrazing, got together in a partnership project in the Yorkshire limestone country to revive upland grazing with hardy beef cattle for the benefit of species-rich grasslands. Whole farm approach: surveying farms for their nature and biodiversity potential and advising the farmer on what he or she could do to realize this potential. Improving farm infrastructure to permit nature-oriented grazing – investment in fencing, water supply, shelters. Constitution of Limestone Country Beef Producers Group and links with Rare Breeds Survival Trust, Grazing Animals Project.

Annigun Wedin, Kalmar County Administration, Sweden

Topic: cooperation between local authorities and farmers concerning farmland with high nature value. Experience in Kalmar County since 1990: alvars, fens and coastal meadows. How the Kalmar local authorities successfully achieved modifications to the national agri-environment programme to better respond to nature-oriented grassland farming needs.

Brendan Dunford, Burren Project, Ireland

Topic: Multi-partner initiative, which includes the Burren Irish Farmers Association, to maintain the limestone pavement landscape of the Burren district through nature-oriented grazing. Discussion of the realities of persuading farmers to adopt conservation farming practices on marginalised/abandoned grasslands, using traditional methods with a modern flavour.

Kimmo Härjämäki, Association for Traditional Rural Landscapes in Southwest Finland.

Topic: Networking experiences from South West Finland and the local-level implementation of agri-environmental schemes. The importance of the traditional rural landscapes in South West Finland, especially those with grassland (shore meadows, wooded meadows, wooded pastures, grasslands on calcareous substrate etc). The Association for Traditional Rural Landscapes and its ManTra project. Experience in working with farmers, how to get them involved, why they are willing to get involved. Which agri-environment (AES) schemes are available for farmers to manage traditional grassland landscapes and how farmers are convinced to join them.

Each speaker 15 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

Friday Oct. 12

First morning session 9-10.30

Theme: supporting nature-oriented grassland farming – agri-environment etc

Eckhard Jedicke ARGE Rhön, Germany

Topic: Factors for success of co-operation between farmers and conservationists in developing and expanding nature-oriented grassland farming initiatives in the Rhön district. Direct marketing of produce from grassland management: the experience in the Rhön.

Latvijas Dabas Fonds - Latvian Fund for Nature, Inga Račinska – Board and leader of LIFE-Nature project “Restoration of Latvian floodplains”, Latvia

Topic: Analysis of Rural Development Programme in Latvia 2004-2006, as it related to grasslands. Based on a case study, evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Rural Development Programme and its measures (agri-environment etc).

Aivis Reinholds, Ministry of Agriculture, Latvia

Topic: Situation of grassland farming in Latvia. How Latvia's Rural Development Programme 2007-13 is using the possibilities offered by the EU to support farmers who adapt to Natura 2000 and Water Framework Directive requirements.

Alois Wilfling, Oikos –Institut , Austria

Topic: Experience and methods in Styria (Austria) in connecting agri-environment programmes and farmers: Holistic farm nature management plans; giving technical information on species and habitats to farmers, visiting and surveying farms for their nature and biodiversity potential and advising the farmer on what he or she could do to realize this potential. Promoting agri-environment to farmers, using data bases to cross-link agri environment measures to different nature management activities, getting the right mix of agri-environment contracts to achieve win-win outcomes which fit the farmer's entrepreneurial strategy.

Each speaker 15 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

10.30- 11.00 Coffee break

Second morning session 11-12.30

Theme: supporting nature-oriented grassland management through direct marketing of quality produce to consumers

Wim Verstedden, Veeakker farmers' network, Belgium

Topic: Setting up and operating shops, owned and run by a farmers' cooperative, in two Belgian cities to directly market meat from multifunctional farming to the urban consumers (how to bring the niche products to where the consumers are, without relying on middlemen, how to acquire and hold on to a customer base). Challenges, obstacles, successes and lessons.

Lennart Gladh, WWF Sweden

Topic: Green 'KRAV' label for niche marketing of labelled beef from semi-natural grasslands direct to consumers. How was this originally set up and how is it working?

Paul Evans Natural England/Yorkshire Dales National Park, UK

Topic: Niche marketing: channels (butcher's shops, restaurants, internet); importance of quality as marketing argument; research on long-term economic viability of nature-oriented upland grazing and what must be focused on to achieve viability (marketing strategies; quality characteristics like taste/healthiness in terms fat or omega 3 levels/tenderness and other eating qualities etc)

Each speaker 15-20 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.30 First afternoon session

Theme: new horizons - the newest member states Romania and Bulgaria; what could the impact of climate change be? (using food miles and sustainability as argument in favour of local grassland farming; are bio-energy crops a threat or opportunity?)

Peter Pal, Green Agora, Romania

Topic: Traditional use of grasslands in the Odorheiu district and the Carpathians in general, projects to support them. Perspectives for grassland farming in Romania as a result of EU accession. Are there any programmes in the national rural development programme which can help extensive and traditional grassland farming? How are farmers reacting, and what motivates those who participate in initiatives to continue traditional extensive grassland use?

Svetla Nikolova, Agrolink, Bulgaria

Topic: Examples of nature-oriented farming in grasslands and agriculture working in favour of nature and landscapes in Bulgaria. Agrolink as organisation composed of farmers, agronomists and botanists devoted to minimising the environmental footprint of Bulgarian agriculture. Agrolink project "Biodiversity and agriculture" and information campaigns (brochures on farm biodiversity). Perspectives after EU accession. Implementation of the CAP second pillar in Bulgaria and its support for grasslands.

Wim Verstedden, Veeakker farmers' network, Belgium

Topic: Farmers voluntarily building up a closed cycle and maximising use of local fodder (grass-fed livestock, use of hay from floodplain meadows as winter fodder, reducing forage input from outside the farm or the region) then using food miles/ecological footprints as arguments to promote the sale of products from these livestock. CAP and food regulations (prohibition of on-farm slaughter, etc) which hamper such initiatives.

Peter Reischer, Weideverein Ramsargebiet Lafnitztal, Austria

Topic: Biomass for fuel and energy: an opportunity or a threat for grassland farming? Theoretical comparison between first-generation biomass crops and second-generation biomass sources. Could grassland farming yield raw materials for biomass energy? Illustration of practical consequences of biomass energy 'boom', using the Lafnitz district as case study.

Each speaker 15 minutes + minimum 30 minutes discussion

15.30 – 15.45/16.00 Coffee break

15.45/16.00 - 17.00 Closing session

Discussion about conclusions and follow-up activities

Dinner will be outside the hotel

An excursion will be organised for October 13th