



BurrenLIFE

Farming for Conservation in the Burren



Building Bridges Between Conservation Bodies and Grassland Farmers



Burren - *Boireann* – Place of Stone

On Stony Ground

c.60,000ha, c.30,000 SAC



Distribution of limestone pavement habitat in the UK and Republic of Ireland.



6,000 years of human activity ...



It is said that it is a country where there is not water enough to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury them ...





...yet their cattle are very fat. The grass grows in tufts of earth of two or three foot square which lies between the limestone rocks and is very sweet and nourishing - Ludlow (1651)

Winterage – reverse transhumance!

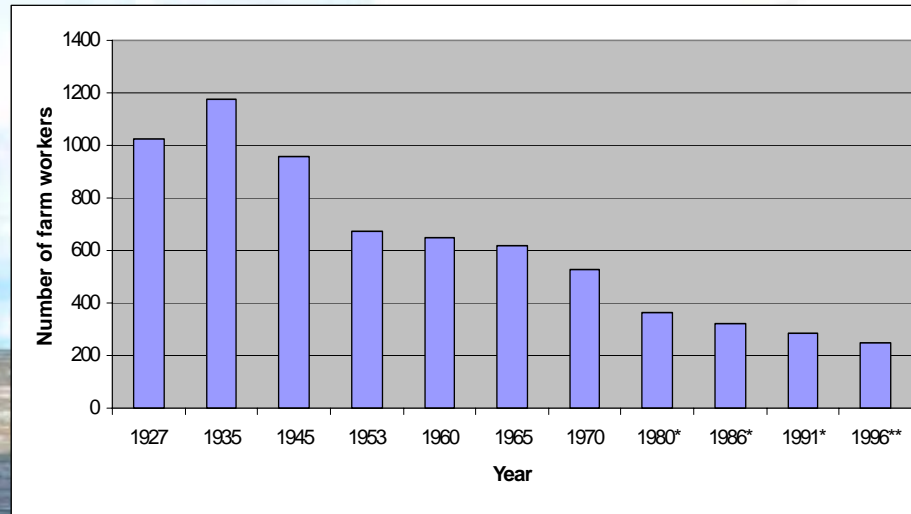












*Number of males employed in agriculture, 1927-1996, Ballyvaughan RD.
(*males and females employed in AFF). Source: CSO*





BurrenLIFE – Farming for Conservation in the Burren

Project Budget: 2.2m, 75% Funded through the EU

Timeframe: September 1st, 2004 – August 31st 2009

Partners: National Parks and Wildlife Service (375,122 euro)
Teagasc (169,900 euro), Burren IFA (12,600 euro)

Project Staff: Four full-time staff

Farmer liaison: 20 Project Farms (3000ha), 500 Burren farmers

burren
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Engaging with farmers – the reality

- For most farmers, socio-economics will ultimately determine behaviour
- Farmers will interpret rules differently and respond accordingly
- Engaging with farmers takes time, effort and long term commitment



Communication:

- Be patient, listen, be persistent



‘Many farmers are bewildered and some angered by the lack of proper consultation before, as they see it, their lands were lumbered with a SAC categorisation. Farmers see all these restrictions as being dreamt up without any research or a proper mechanism for consultation’ (IFJ, 2001)

Being answerable – not being faceless – earning trust

- becoming part of the community



Who is saying something is often more important than what is being said.

Earning your right:

-Making a contribution to the community



Connect people and heritage

- Fostering a sense of pride and purpose



Restore pride and positivity in farming

- Quality food from a quality environment



Advice: Be Relevant, Practical and Realistic

– *Sustainable feeding solutions*



Advice: Be flexible, not prescriptive

– sustainable grazing systems



Create Opportunities:

- Heritage Conservation Work







Lessons from working with the farming communities of the Burren?

- Working with farmers is a long term commitment – no overnight success
- Identifying common ground is the key (e.g. economic, heritage benefits)
- Foster pride & ownership, embrace diversity, allow flexibility



For more information, please visit www.burrenlife.com