

HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMING



Mosaic of grasslands, agricultural crops and landscape elements.



Stone piles and bush clusters in rural landscape are important habitats for various wild species.



There is always a place for other plants alongside the crops in extensively farmed arable lands.



Lesser spotted eagle is one of the field-forest mosaic symbols.

WHAT IS HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMING?

The concept of high nature value (HNV) farming emerged in Europe in the early 1990s after realizing the existence of rural landscape biodiversity is dependent on low intensity farming still being spread wide enough in the future. Usually, specially protected habitats and species are the main focus of environmental protection, but in the HNV farming concept a lot of attention is paid to farming itself as that is what maintains these natural values. Often HNV farming is a direct continuation of longstanding traditional farming which is a cultural heritage value in itself. Still, it is important to develop more modern HNV farming forms so that environmentally friendly farming could be viable in today's world.

In order for farming to be recognized as HNV farming it has to have the two main characteristics:

- 1) farming takes place on land which can be classified as high nature value land according to biodiversity indicators,
- 2) farming is extensive - no chemicals, no large-scale technologies harmful to environment, etc

HNV FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The HNV farming concept is incorporated in policy documents - the most significant of those being the Rural Development Programme (RDP). During the RDP assessment, it is required to pay attention to two things from the perspective of biodiversity: one of them is the Farmland bird index and the other - HNV farmlands. According to specific guidelines, the condition of biodiversity in HNV farmlands has to be monitored and the HNV farming that maintains the land has to be analyzed, suggestions for improving the conditions should be submitted. In some EU countries this process has only just begun, but there are countries that have already precisely mapped their HNV farmlands, are familiar with the HNV farming situation and use targeted RDP measures to try and help it.

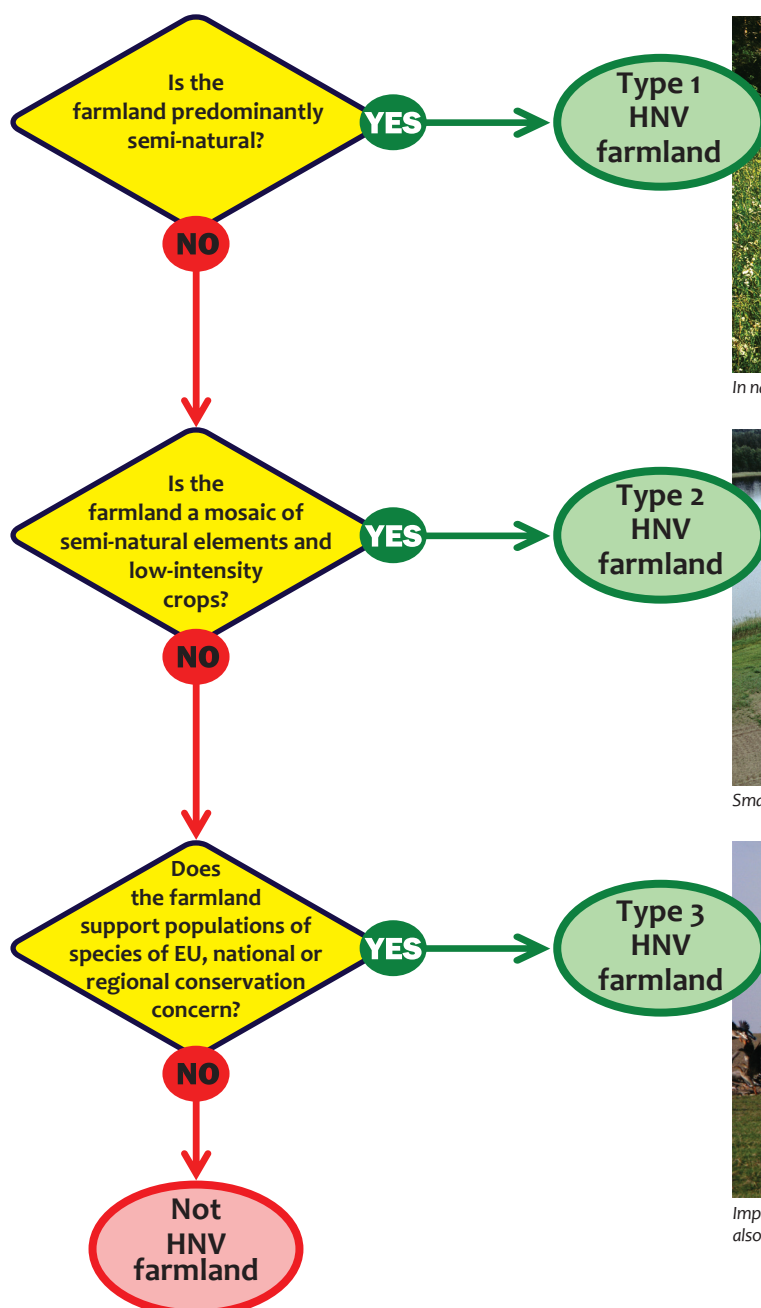
In Latvia, currently a part of the first type HNV farmland receives RDP support - the so-called "Biologically valuable grasslands". Other types of HNV farmlands do not receive direct support, but creation of mosaic landscape is indirectly encouraged by sub-measure Establishment of buffer strips, also the measure Development of organic farming has a positive effect if it overlaps with any of the HNV farmland types.

WHAT ARE HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLANDS?

High nature value (HNV) farmlands are natural or semi-natural grasslands, longstanding orchards and rural landscapes rich in various features that promote biodiversity - stone piles, clusters of trees and bushes, unlabored boundaries between fields, small wetlands, diverse agricultural crops, etc. Ancient farming stretched into forest edges and forests, especially pastures thus creating species-rich park-like transition between the forest and field.

There are three types of HNV farmlands:

- 1) natural or semi-natural farmlands,
- 2) a mosaic of low intensity agricultural crops and rural landscape elements,
- 3) lands that do fall within the first two types, but are especially important for endangered species or supporting a large proportion of some species' European or world population - for example, migratory bird rest areas in arable fields.



In natural grasslands there are dozens of different plant species in just one square meter.



Small arable fields enclosed by field boundaries.



Important migratory bird stay areas fall within HNV farmland also in intensively farmed fields.

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