Common grazing in Bulgaria

Best practices for sustainable use of common grasslands in the Western Balkans and Europe
SEE Round Table
15 April 2013, Sofia
Definition of common grazing in Bulgaria

Act on ownership and use of agricultural land para.2(d): “traditional practice of the inhabitants of settlements with small livestock grazing farms on public “meri” and pastures, including by forming one or more “collective” herds for grazing”

• Prior to 2007 based on historical regulations and mostly, informal

• CAP support prompted changes to common land distribution and use, introduced the GAEC requirements, indirectly encouraged the establishment of associations of land users and the setting of use levies

• In 2009, the rights for state meri were transferred to municipalities
In 2011 the pastures and commons managed by the municipalities

- are almost 72% of all pastures in Bulgaria
- can be for “common” or “individual use”
- First the pastures for common use have to be defined, for use by the livestock of the ‘small farms’; only then should individual use allocations be made, using a tender procedure
- The decisions are taken by the Municipal Council
Change in the area of pastures, commons and meadows

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastures, commons and scrubs (ha)</td>
<td>-4880</td>
<td>-5663</td>
<td>-3063</td>
<td>-4406</td>
<td>-12366</td>
<td>-27020</td>
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Dairy farms in Bulgaria (01/04/2013)

Total number of dairy farms: 53,479

Total number of cows: 331,096

Number of farms in 3rd (lowest) category: 49,905

Number of cows per category of dairy farms:
- Category 1: 192,206 (58%)
- Category 2: 129,620 (39%)
- Category 3: 9,270 (3%)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastures and commons managed by municipalities (ha)</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2008 to 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State pastures and commons</td>
<td>1 269 06,7</td>
<td>1 183 11,5</td>
<td>- 8595,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal pastures and commons</td>
<td>2 970 63,0</td>
<td>5 446 16,7</td>
<td>247553,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed by the municipality (Art.19)</td>
<td>4 860 79,5</td>
<td>2 214 29,8</td>
<td>-264649,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 100 49,3</td>
<td>8 843 57,9</td>
<td>-25691,4 - 2,8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MAF, CRL*
Change in pastures and commons (2008/2011) by regions
Dairy Farms 3rd category by region as of 01/04/2013

- Общ брой крави
- Общ брой стопанства
- Среден брой крави в едно стопанство
## Pastures and commons in Natura 2000 sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastures, commons and meadows in Natura 2000</td>
<td>608018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>municipal</td>
<td>366 520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>101 273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private</td>
<td>116 762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>22 528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastures and meadows in Bulgaria</td>
<td>1 372 355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source – LPIS, 2010*
Pastures, meadows, and meadows, by type of ownership
Pastures and meadows in Natura 2000, by type of ownership
Municipal pastures and meri in Natura 2000, by type of ownership
At the same time:

- In LPIS system 821,507 ha of grasslands and scrubby pastures are considered as non-agricultural land.
- Only 333,818 ha of pastures, commons and meadows are claimed for SAPs in 2012.
- This is only 8.6% of the total agricultural area eligible for SAPS support.
Rules for distributing ‘meri’

- List of ‘meri’ in GAEC prepared by mayor

- And a list of livestock farmers that use the meri

- Farmers provide certificate from vet on type, no. and age of registered animals

- Min. area per farmer is determined on the basis of a min. area per animal (i.e. a high stocking rate)

- Priority is given to registered associations on land for public use

- Then, tenders procedures can be opened for individual use
Some observations...

- CAP support brought changes in the traditional way of use of commons which are not reflected fully in the legal arrangements – a lot of imbalances exist in the interpretation of the legislation

- A lot of mismatch exists in the current terminology
  - Cadastre properties /LPIS physical blocks and agricultural parcels
  - Way of permanent land use/LPIS classifications

- Data should be unified and public access should be provided

- Municipalities do not have accurate data on Natura 2000 pastures and commons
Some observations...

• Negative experience exist in administering the distribution, with the entire area being allocated to individual use and nothing for public (or the opposite)

• The common use of municipal pastures is unlikely to continue since farmers are unwilling to cooperate and to take group responsibility for the use of “commons” – they prefer to use it individually