Use of Grasslands in the Republic of Serbia

Best practices for sustainable use of common grasslands in the Western Balkans and Europe

SEE Round table
15 April 2013, Sofia, Bulgaria
Agricultural land

- Agricultural land covers approximately 66% of Serbia.

- Climatic, orographic and geological heterogeneity means soils in Serbia are extremely heterogeneous. Soils divided into eight fertility classes based on their suitability for agricultural production, where the first four classes represent the best soils, and classes V-VIII include the areas mainly unsuitable for tillage.

- It is estimated that about 45% of total territory belongs to land classes IV –VIII (not suitable for profitable crop production) and which are used as home gardens (for vegetable or fruit production) or as grasslands.
Grasslands

Semi-natural grasslands are 28.3% (1,424,546 ha) of all agricultural land and it is the biggest single type of agricultural land cover;

- Meadows cover 613,630 ha;
- Pastures cover 810,916 ha

(Data from the Statistical Yearbook 2007)
Legal Framework

• Law on return of village property on common grasslands ("utrina"), Official Gazette of R. Serbia, No 16/92;

• Law on Agricultural Land, Official Gazette of R. Serbia, No 62/2006, Article No 74

• Common grasslands are classified as agricultural land (non cultivated)

• Common grasslands are not eligible for governmental support
Legal Framework

• Common grasslands are state property, but used by village communities;

• Grasslands owner/user are obliged to agree conditions for grasslands use (area in question, yield, stocking rate, use of water and measures for improvement of grassland production), according to the Law, but this is not applied in practice.
Korišćenje pašnjaka

Član 74.

Vlasnik, odnosno korisnik pašnjaka dužan je da utvrdi uslove i način za korišćenje pašnjaka (površinu, prinos, kapacitet korišćenja za pojedine vrste stoke, korišćenje vode, mere za unapređenje proizvodnje i potrebna sredstva).

Vlasnik, odnosno korisnik pašnjaka dužan je da o uslovima i načinu korišćenja pašnjaka obavesti lica čija se stoka napasa na pašnjaku pre početka korišćenja pašnjaka.

Lica čija se stoka napasa na pašnjacima dužna su da se pridržavaju načina i vremena ispaše stoke koji su određeni uslovima i načinom korišćenja pašnjaka.

Vlasnik, odnosno korisnik pašnjaka dužan je da na vodama za napajanje stoke, koje se nalaze na pašnjacima, dozvoli napajanje stoke i držacima stoke koji te pašnjake ne koriste, a prirodno su upućeni na iskorišćavanje voda na tim pašnjacima.

Na korišćenje pašnjaka u državnoj svojini koji su vraćeni selu na korišćenje primenjuje se zakon kojim se uređuje vraćanje utrina i pašnjaka selima na korišćenje.
Importance of Common Grazing

• Common grazing is not as widespread as it was a few decades ago. It is important for marginalised rural areas, where traditional livestock systems still survive;

• Some common grasslands, mostly in vicinity of villages, are faced with overgrazing, but most are abandoned - unmanaged and ungrazed – leading to succession.
Most of the High Nature Value Farmland types in Serbia are semi-natural pastures.

1. Deciduous forests with high proportion of grassland cover
2. Winter nomadic pastures on ruderal lands and stubble
3. Semi-natural meadows or meadows with sown mixtures used for hay production
4. Semi-intensive grazing of highland semi-natural grasslands in forest zones and natural grasslands above the forest zone
5. Extensive nomadic grazing of highland grasslands
6. Extensive grazing of closed village pastures
7. Combined use mountain grasslands
8. Deciduous forests lopped for winter forage
9. Marginal grazing on land with light sandy, salinised or hard soils
Grassland HNVF has tremendous value not just for biodiversity conservation but also for diversification and rehabilitation of rural economies in Serbia.

FAMOUS GRASSLAND AREAS TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN SERBIA
Pilot Pasture Management in the Stara Planina Nature Park

- STAR PROJECT, Sub program 4 – Maintainance of SPNP pilot pastures

Pasture restoration was achieved through local grants. A total of 49 small grants were approved (29% of all approved projects) in the amount of RSD 24 million (approximately EUR 240,000).

From June-October 2010, 2,250 ha of pilot pastures (Mucibaba, Vrtibog, Kovacevo, Ponor) were grazed by 400 livestock units.

In 2011 the pilot pastures were grazed by 532 livestock, an area of more than 3.000ha.
5 pilot grasslands identified during the project preparation phase (2006 – 2008)

1. Muchibaba
2. Ponor
3. Kopren
4. Vrtibog
5. Kovachevo
What are the inter-relationships?
Herd of 150 Busha cattle moving the 15 km from Gornji Krivodol to mountain pastures

7th of July, 2012. Organized by: Stara Planina Nature Park management authorities; Public Forestry Enterprise „Srbijašume“; STAR Project; „Natura Balkanika“, watched by more than 110 tourists
Post-2014 Pilot Agri-environment Scheme should:

1. Protect and maintain genetic diversity on agricultural land:
   - HNV farmland
   - Endangered local farm animal breeds
2. Encourage the expansion of organic farming

which should help rehabilitate pastoral farming systems and bring abandoned grasslands back into use

An EU project in the 4th component on land management should give support in next few years to combat land abandonment
Proposed Agri-environmental schemes in the draft NAEP

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<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Sub-Schemes</th>
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<td>(1) Organic Farming</td>
<td>(1) Organic farming support</td>
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<td>(2) Traditional Breeds</td>
<td>(2) Conservation of autochthonous breeds</td>
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<td>(3) Restoration of Traditional Shepherd Systems (Mountain Pastoralism)</td>
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<td>(3) High Nature Value Farming</td>
<td>(4) Restoration and management of undergrazed HNV grasslands</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(5) Restoration and management of overgrazed HNV grasslands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(6) Maintenance of habitats of protected species in arable parts of</td>
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<td>Important Bird Areas</td>
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<td>(4) Landscape Features</td>
<td>(7) Maintenance of traditional orchards</td>
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<td>(5) Soil and Water Protection</td>
<td>(8) Crop rotation for soil and water protection</td>
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<td>(9) Control of soil erosion catchments</td>
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Source: “Agri-environment Handbook for Serbia” (Avalon, IUCN, IEEP, Natura Balkanika)
Links to other measures in the IPARD Programme

• *Investments measure*: Support to farms for investing in improvement of farm conditions to meet EU sanitary, veterinary and hygiene requirements is very important for ensuring the future sustainability of the farms receiving support from the AE measure.

• *Technical Assistance measure*: Support from the TA measure will be very important for providing information and training to potential and actual beneficiaries of the AE measure. Additionally, support to advisory services to farmers should also be provided.

• *Local action groups* (if implemented): LAGs should be encouraged to work pro-actively with HNV and other small-scale farmers to address specific socio-economic issues particularly related to avoiding land abandonment and improving living conditions in marginal rural areas.
UN Joint Programme Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development project

is contributing to definition of related IPARD axis 2 and 3 measures.

PRIORITY AXIS 2: Preparatory actions for implementation of the agri-environmental measures (Support to organic farming; to autochthonous endangered breeds of farm animals; to HNV grasslands)

PRIORITY AXIS 3: Development of rural economy (Improvement and development of rural infrastructure; Diversification and development of rural economic activities; Improvement of training
**Selected agri-environmental schemes and scope of their pilots**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agri-env. scheme</th>
<th>Pilot level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scheme 1: Organic farming</td>
<td>Implemented for pilot sub-sectors - fruits and vegetables, cereals (including forage crops and grasslands), and medicinal herbs. Organic livestock is not going to be supported directly but indirectly it can benefit from organic payments for forage crops and grasslands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheme 2: Autochthonous endangered breeds</td>
<td>Implemented for endangered autochthonous breeds. Support will be provided for breeds having status of endangered breeds according to EU definitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheme 3: High Nature Value grasslands</td>
<td>Implemented in pilot regions: The scheme will be implemented in protected areas only as designated by Serbian legislation. The protected areas will be selected according to the importance of grasslands (pastures and meadows) for biodiversity conservation in the region. The basis for the selection will be the identified HNVF areas</td>
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## Scheme 3: High Nature Value Farmland (HNVF)

| **Rationale** | Traditional extensive grazing practices have created many important semi-natural habitats, although many of these are now under threat from abandonment or from introduction of more intensive farming practices. The continuation of these low intensity traditional farming methods is essential to maintain biodiversity across large areas of the countryside, both in upland and lowland areas, which will also maintain the character of the landscape.

Serbia identified its potential areas of HNV farmlands in 2010. The map, although a preliminary one, indicates that approximately 19% of the total agricultural area in Serbia is potentially of High Nature Value.

The pilot AE measure aims to support HNV grasslands in areas with proven biodiversity value such as protected areas. |

| **Environmental Objectives** | • To prevent the further loss of HNV grasslands and associated species through abandonment, conversion to arable land and other crops, or over-grazing;
• To conserve and maintain HNV grasslands and associated species through the maintenance or re-introduction of traditional management practices on semi-natural grasslands;
• To protect biodiversity and to ensure protection, maintenance and/or recovery of habitat and bird populations to favourable condition; |

| **Pilot Scope** | The scheme will be implemented in protected areas only as designated according to the Serbian legislation.

The protected areas will be selected according to the importance of grasslands (pastures and meadows) for the biodiversity conservation in the region. The basis for the selection will be the HNVF map produced by the Environmental Protection Agency |
## Scheme 3: High Nature Value Farmland (HNVF)

| Specific eligibility requirements | • Farmers (physical persons) or small enterprises have to manage at least 1 ha of grassland, (owned, rented/leased);  
| • Farmers have to have agreement with the respective Management authority of the protected area (or the Environmental protection agency) defining the minimum and maximum stocking rates, preferable period of grazing, removal of invasive and non desirable plant species and other grassland management requirements |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minimum mandatory standards       | • Any ploughing or other cultivation of the pasture is forbidden;  
| • Burning of the grass of the pastures is forbidden |
| Management Requirements           | • Respect the minimum and maximum stocking rates;  
| • Maintain traditional (seasonal) grazing period on the pasture of approximately 4 months between the 1st June to 1st of October;  
| • Ensure rotational grazing on the pasture to avoid over-grazing;  
| • Use of chemical fertilizers an plant protection materials (including herbicides) on the pasture is forbidden;  
| • Traditional use of organic manure is allowed on the pasture up to maximum equivalent to 30 kg N/ha;  
| • Any type of re-seeding of the pasture is forbidden – except with the written permission of the relevant managing authority where some portions of the pasture are degenerating or are accidentally damaged. In this case only native species must be used for seeding;  
| • Any invasive vegetation must be cut and removed from the pasture |
## Scheme 3: High Nature Value Farmland (HNVF)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Payment rates</th>
<th>Estimated payment rates: 150 Euro/ha</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Baseline (2010)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area of potential High Nature Value in Serbia (according to the HNVF map)</td>
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<td><strong>Output</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3600 hectares of High Nature Value grasslands supported</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Number of farms managing High Nature Value grasslands supported</td>
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