

# Designing indicators for High Nature Value farming



There is no universally applicable dividing line between HNV and non-HNV farming, any more than between low-intensity and intensive farming. The biological diversity of farmland ranges along a gradient between the lowest and the highest values.

But for a given situation, a judgement can be made of what types of farming should be considered as HNV, on the basis of available knowledge about the land cover, the farming systems in question and their inherent value for biodiversity (see previous step). Ideally a clear differentiation between HNV and other farmland can be made; but realistically, Member States will have to choose between criteria likely to include as much HNV farmland as possible and those which *exclude* as much farmland of lower interest as possible. Based on this judgement, indicators can be designed.

Broadly speaking, indicators of HNV farmland can use **three different types of criteria**:

## 1. Land cover criteria –

- If land is under predominantly semi-natural grazed vegetation, this is the strongest single indication of HNV farmland. Even if the current grazing or management regime is not the optimum for habitat and species conservation, the mere presence of large areas of semi-natural vegetation provides greater opportunities for a range of wildlife than land where this vegetation has been replaced with improved grassland or crops.
- A mosaic of semi-natural farmland and mixed cropping is also a strong indicator of HNV. In this case it is necessary to determine a threshold for the proportion of the farmland area that should be semi-natural in order to be considered as HNV. Some indication that the cropped land is managed at low intensity is also desirable. This may be a high proportion of fallow in the rotation (land cover information), or an indicator reflecting intensity of use on the cropped area (e.g. input use, see point 2).
- Orchards and olive groves with large, old trees and a (semi-)permanent unsown understorey indicate HNV farmland.
- Land cover data at a sufficiently high resolution can also show the presence of peripheral elements, such as semi-natural hedges, patches and water bodies, that can make a significant contribution to the nature value of farmland.

## 2. Farming systems criteria -

- In the absence of reliable inventories of semi-natural vegetation, very low livestock densities per hectare of forage (e.g.  $<0.2\text{LU/ha}$ , although the figure will depend on the area) are themselves a strong indication of predominantly semi-natural forage, and thus of HNV farmland.
- For land under arable and permanent crops, a combination of low nitrogen and biocide inputs per hectare may be considered a good indicator.

## 3. Species criteria -

- Species indicators should not be necessary for Types 1 and 2, as these types of HNV farmland are defined by land cover and farming characteristics which are known to produce a situation inherently valuable for a range of wildlife and biodiversity, regardless of whether certain selected species are present or not. In the case of Type 3 HNV farmland, the land cover and farming characteristics do not suggest conditions of high nature value, so that such farmland is considered HNV only because of the presence of certain species. Generally these will be a limited number of species, but of conservation importance.

Drawing on these criteria, indicators can be designed that distinguish HNV farming from farming that is inherently of less value for nature. Ideally, a combination of land-cover, farming-systems and species criteria should be used, but the combination of necessary criteria depends on the Type considered.

Thus for Type 1, it is desirable to know that the forage resource is mainly semi-natural, but also that the current grazing regime is appropriate. Similarly for Type 2 mosaics, the full picture can only be provided by a combination of land-cover and farming practices data. From these two explanatory criteria (i.e. land cover and farming practices), the species criteria can be assumed in principle. As explained in the following section, data on relevant farming practices are not generally available, and as a result the tendency to-date has been to focus on land-cover data.

For Type 3 farmland, the proof of its HNV characteristics stands on the presence of species of conservation interest, which could not be derived from land cover and farming practices criteria.

## From the Forum ...

- [Scottish Government Health Check consultation – Joint response with SCF to Scottish Government Health Check consultation ...](#) (18 May 2009)
- [Available now: – A comprehensive document on the characteristics of High-Nature-Value farming systems ...](#) (10 Mar 2009)
- [EU Commission: GREEN PAPER on agricultural product quality ... – a response from EFNCP](#) (01 Jan 2009)
- [Scottish Government consultation on the Less favoured Area Support Scheme – Joint response of SCF and EFNCP. PDF-Document](#) (29 Dec 2008)
- [HNV farming – Explaining the concept and interpreting EU and national policy commitments – PDF-Document](#) (13 Oct 2008)
- [CAP Health Check Consultation - a response from EFNCP \(15.01.2008\) – PDF-Document](#) (23 Sep 2008)
- [Consultation on the review of the Less Favoured Area \(LFA\) Scheme 2008 – a response from EFNCP](#) (29 Jul 2008)

## News

- [HNV farming : initiating the debate in France – Paris, France; October 7th - October 8th 2009 - Conference on High Nature Value \(HNV\) farming. Presentations online.](#) (04 Nov 2009)
- [Transhumant animal husbandry as a tool of species conservation – PDF-Document](#) (08 Jun 2009)
- [Common land trends in England and Wales – Milestone report on common land trends in England and Wales now available](#) (22 May 2009)
- [HNV grassland book announced: – "Grasslands in Europe - of high nature value"](#) (19 May 2009)
- [Commission Releases LFA Communication – Reform of the so-called ‘Intermediate’ Less Favoured Area \(LFA\) measure draws closer with the publication on April 21 of a Communication by the European Commission on how to improve the targeting of the measure...](#) (29 Apr 2009)
- [The 2010 target and beyond for Lepidoptera – Butterfly Conservation will hold their 6th International Symposium at Reading University ...](#) (12 Mar 2009)
- [ELN-FAB – European learning network on functional agrobiodiversity](#) (09 Mar 2009)

- [School to promote livestock practices in the Catalan Pyrenees – A project in the middle of the Catalan Pyrenees](#) (09 Mar 2009)
- [Disposal of carcasses – BirdLife proposes amendments to Reg.](#) (06 Jan 2009)



- [La Cañada No. 23 – Les événements du Forum pour 2009. EFNCP events for 2009. Quelle place pour l'agriculture extensive en Europe ...](#) (25 Jan 2009)
- [NATURA 2000 – The EU Commission \(DG ENV\) have developed a series of management models for NATURA 2000 Habitat types.](#) (22 Jan 2009)
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## Map (Overview)



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