

LIFE STIPA PROJECT ROMANIA

Project title: *TARNAVA MARE SCI: SAVING TRANSYLVANIA'S IMPORTANT PASTORAL ECOSYSTEMS (STIPA)* - LIFE09 NAT/RO/000618

Project background

The Sighisoara-Tarnava Mare Natura 2000 site (SCI) covers 85 374 ha of one of the largest lowland areas of High-Nature-Value farmland in the European Union. Following the collapses of the traditional rural economy, grazing was greatly reduced on an estimated 1 000 ha of these habitats, with the less accessible grassland abandoned altogether. This has resulted in the spread of scrubland into these former grassland areas.

Project objectives

The STIPA project aims to improve the conservation status of two priority dry grassland habitats in the Sighisoara -Tarnava Mare SCI: semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) with important orchid sites, and sub-Pannonic steppic grasslands. Both of these habitats are included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

The project aims to establish conservation action plans for the two habitats, by a priority zonation in the area and the creation of 5 micro-reserves in certain hotspots that include simple and practical management agreements with land owners. It is also foreseen to include payments for certain private owners where necessary.

The project will support local communities to continue or revert to traditional grassland management.

To encourage long-term habitat conservation, the project will contribute to the development of an integrated management plan for the broader combined SPA/SCI and to the design of national and regional agri-environment schemes for 2013-2019.

Expected results

- Field assessments of the conservation status of 10 000 ha of priority grassland habitats. With this information - and in consultation with farmers and other stakeholders - action plans for the targeted habitats will be developed;
- Conservation action plans for the priority dry grassland habitats;
- 7 500 ha of grassland habitats under conservation management by traditional farming practices;
- Up to 1 000 ha of grassland habitats restored by grazing and mowing;
- Restoration of 395 ha of dry grassland habitats by eliminating overgrowing trees and shrubs

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Duration of project: 36 months (01/10/2010 – 30/09/2013)

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