Protecting Europe’s core area for farmland biodiversity: Romania’s unique HNV landscapes and the small-scale farming communities that have created them

Saving Transylvania’s Important Pastoral Ecosystems

*Rome Italy, 14 May 2013, Răzvan Popa, Cristi Gherghiceanu*
What are HNV landscapes?

The European context

High Nature Value landscapes deliver important economic vitality for farming communities, as well ecosystem services.

ADEPT is working with other organisations in UK, France, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria and Poland in order to design the best support measures possible and lobby for them at national and European levels.
Why are HNV landscapes so important?
Public goods they provide have a very high economic value

Biodiversity
- Clean air, clean water
- Food quality
- Food security
- Nature tourism

Resistance to flooding, fires, climate change
- Low energy agriculture
- Low energy villages
- Short supply chains

Pollination
- Carbon sequestration
- Agro-biodiversity
Project location: Tarnava Mare, a lowland area of high biodiversity, 85,000ha farmed by 5,000 families in small-scale farming communities
.... one of Romania’s largest farmland Natura 2000 sites
ADEPT does wider work in grassland management and relationships with farmers in 250,000ha area, 44 communes, 240 villages, over 200,000 people.
The high-biodiversity farmed landscape of Southern Transylvania is a European treasure. Tens of thousands of hectares of grassland and forest habitats, and many species, protected at European and global levels.
Some of the most important wildflower-rich lowland haymeadows in Europe …
6210 scrub habitats and semi-dry grassland over limestone or other calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia), with important orchid sites (about 8% of area)

Grassland dominated by Upright Brome (Bromus erecta) and fescues (Festuca species), widespread on south- and west-facing slopes with few trees. These grasslands are often a rich carpet of wild orchids and other wild flowers, including Red Viper’s-bugloss (Echium maculatum), Jurinea (Jurinea mollis), Three-toothed Orchid (Orchis tridentata).
Occur on the steepest sunny slopes.
Dominated by various grasses, especially feather-grasses (*Stipa* species) and the small sedge *Carex humilis*.
Several rare plant species including the Steppe Sea-kale (*Crambe tataria*), Burning Bush (*Dictamnus albus*) and Nodding Sage (*Salvia nutans*), and the dwarf flowering shrub Steppe Almond (*Prunus tenella*).
...with associated wildlife of European importance
Why are these landscapes so rich? Mosaic and connectivity characteristics
This is a cultural landscape also. Villages, land management and nature have maintained their balance.
Village and courtyard structures today are still similar to those of the Moselle villages in 12th century.
How can we give a future to these landscapes and their communities?

- Study habitats / species / landscape, and design measures to conserve prosperity and biodiversity
- Promoting nature-friendly farm management with local involvement and local benefit
- Diversifying, including agro-tourism linked to sales of local products
- Marketing, adding value to local products linked to biodiversity brand
- Education, festivals, community activities
- Policy and information
- Publicity
- Agri-environment grants and other CAP measures
Tarnava Mare SCI: Saving Transylvania’s Important Pastoral Ecosystems

• Project location ROSCI0227
• Project start date: 01/10/2010
• Project end date: 30/09/2013
• Total budget €356.330
• EC contribution: €259.515 (73%)
Progress Oct 2010-May 2013

• PIU members identified in late 2010
• PIU established in mid-January 2011.
• Field teams and monitoring sub-contractors contracted April 2011.
• Field mapping and monitoring methodology was developed in May 2011
• Field studies began May 2011.
• Farm visits, workshops.
• Innovative mowing equipment suited to restoration of dry grassland on uneven terrain has been purchased, and first demonstrations have taken place.
• Implement habitat restoration activities including payments for certain private owners where necessary (for example, where this would allow them to enter agri-environment schemes)
• School activities also in the field
• Monitoring in the clearing parcels
Progress Oct 2010-May 2013 (2)

- Initial mapping and assessment of 6210 and 6240 habitats carried out using innovative mapping and database, which reveals that 6210 and 6240 less widespread than predicted in proposal: 5,800ha. 1,353 ha identified for restoration – much of it overgrazing.
- Assessments of threats completed which have revealed that the greatest threat to habitats is overgrazing by sheep – this has brought about a change in emphasis of conservation action plan.
- Conservation action plan drawn up after period of discussion with experts, local authorities and farmers.
- First two micro-reserves identified, initial discussions held with owners/land-users.
- Flower and Butterfly indicator species and Habitats brochures created.
Organigram of the project team and the project management structure

Beneficiary
ADEPT

EU LIFE Programmes
Desk Officers
Monitor project progress and authorize payments

Contracted staff
ADEPT
- Nat Page project manager
- Senior resident coordinator Cristi Ghergheicu
- Agri-environment officer Razvan Popa
- Communication/PR officer Lenke Ballint
- Book-keeper/office assistant Diana Schuster

1. Biodiversity team.
   Assess habitats, design grassland habitat conservation measures, advise on specific action plans.
   Contracted staff
   ADEPT
   2 x UK staff: Page and Akeroyd
   4 x part-time RO staff: L Rakosy (invertebrates), S Badarau, assistant (flora), C Malos (GIS)

2. Farm implementation team.
   Consultation and agreements with local councils, local communities, farmers. Implement conservation measures.
   Contracted staff
   ADEPT
   1 x full time RO staff: Popa
   2 x part-time RO staff: C. Stanciu, second to be recruited in 2012, when required

3. Communications team.
   Education in schools. Overseeing outside consultants in design and production of publicity materials (species cards, newsletters/brochures).
   Contracted staff
   ADEPT
   1 x full time RO staff: Lenke Ballint
   1 x part-time staff, Daniel Morar. 1 x part-time staff Movileanu

4. Monitoring and evaluation
   Senior resident coordinator and UK Grassland Ecologist
   John Akeroyd who will oversee outside consultants
   Contracted staff
   ADEPT
   RO staff: C Ghergheicu
   EU specialists: Jan Seffer and Viera Stefanova, 2 x RO specialists: S Badarau and C Malos
Action A.1. Field assessments of habitats 6210* and 6240*

Mapping and assessment methodology developed. Sources of mapping data identified, at different scales, including orthophotoplans and 3D mapping.
Maps prepared using contours of 30m and 5 m to assist location of target habitats based on aspect, inclination.

Detailed GIS mapping identified 5979 surfaces with correct aspect / inclination as potential target habitats. 5895 ha. Field testing shows 90% accurate.
We are helping farmers with a combination of modern equipment and traditional management.
We are also identifying critical biodiversity hotspots in order to give them special protection.
Participation of Târnava Mare area farmers in the agri-environment schemes is five times higher than regional average.

Impact:
- 1.390 small farmers on 17,641 ha are receiving a total of over €2.5 m / year through access to agri-environment schemes (an average of €1800 / farmer / year)
- We have contributed to the development of a small-farmer support scheme at EU level
Developing new agri-environment payments for small-scale farmers at national level

Working directly with the Ministry of Agriculture, we have successfully proposed new agri-environment measures effective from 2012.

Impact: additional payments for HNV farmers (assuming 30% uptake):

- 195,000 ha of extensive orchards now eligible throughout HNV area
- Additional 26 communes in Cluj and Bucovina
We have supported forest certification

- 18,000 ha of forest – Forest Stewardship Council assessment and first certification paid for by ADEPT
- Improves income from sustainable timber, and from non-timber forest products
- Encourages owners and administrators to work more closely together

Impact:
- better prices for wood produced under sustainable management by forest owners and administrators.
- Town Halls exempt from environmental taxes and so can spend budget on other community projects (e.g. infrastructure).
BUT: to give the area a future, we are working to create prosperous communities though markets for local products, schools activities and village festivals
Marketing: adding value to local products with biodiversity / quality assurance brand

Traditional land management

High value products linked to brand image - cheese, meat, honey, jams, tourism, crafts
Farmers markets for local products

Local products such as cheese, dried/smoked meats, fruits/nuts, traditional bread, jams/honey

Leading the development of Slow Food movement in Romania

Impact

- Successful markets in 3 cities
- Markets sales rose to over €70,000 in 2010
- Info-centre sales about €2,000/month in 2010 and 2011
- 70 producers directly benefiting
Improving the market for milk by developing Milk Collection Points and milk hygiene

**Workshops practical impact:**
- ↑ cleanliness at milking,
- ↓ time between milking and cooling,
- ↑ discipline at the communal milk collection points by on-the-spot testing

**Economic impact**
Negotiations with processors for better prices linked to quality and quantity.
The Milk Collection Points serving over 170 farmers, and over 700 cows, €40,000/year additional income,

**Biodiversity impact:**
Maintaining 1500 ha of grass by grazing/mowing
În acest loc biodiversitatea și diversitatea culturală sprijină concret economia locală!
Here biodiversity and cultural diversity give real support to village economy!
Developing small-scale village processing units, for community production and for demonstration.
These simple designs are being replicated by other communities around the country.

Village processing units authorized at minimum standards are already being replicated in other areas.

Full design plans for the model food unit will be published in a manual for free distribution to other interested communities.

Impact:
- Replication of village processing units, authorised at minimum level and so sympathetic to small producers.
Solar Dryer

Dried herbs and fruits are sold in markets and direct to tourists.
Helping to develop new products

such a mature cheese – easier to sell, different hygiene regulations
Clarifying EU regulations which can otherwise damage small-scale farmer viability

Clarification so that authorities have the confidence to apply flexible approach to small-scale producers
- Booklet with clear information for farmers, producers and for food inspectors
- Now used by hygiene authorities as a standard document in Romania. EU Commission wishes to replicate.

Impact:
- better links between hygiene authorities and small-scale producers.
- Small-scale producers can continue to operate under more flexible approach from hygiene inspectors.
Schools:
Regular nature classes in 8 schools in the area, about 240 village children, many from very poor families
Helping children to design nature projects
… and also outdoor activities – field trips to find plants and animals, and a summer camp for 25 children was a big success
ADEPT produces community publications.. and a monthly commune newsletter

illustrated and accessible books on history, natural history and culture of area, for schools
... including identification booklets helping school nature projects in the field
Innovative mountain bike trails

We have developed Romania’s first purpose-built mountain bike trail, with nature interpretation signs, the first of a network of trails linking villages.

- educational for local children and other users – the trail was opened with a children’s competition
- will link guesthouses and increase demand for active tourism
Acvila țipătoare mică—Aquila pomarina


… with child-friendly nature interpretation signs
Village festivals are important for creating some optimism about the future.
We are developing agro-tourism as an income source linked to the landscape

Paid visits by tourists to producers strengthens the link between incomes and traditional landscapes/production

...bread-bakers

...charcoal-burners ...

Impact:
tourism up from €15,000 income and 350 visitors in 2006,
to €62,500 income and 6,328 spending visitors in 2010
Direct Orange involvement: team-building weekends have been held in summer months
… including marking and improvement of walking trails
... cleaning rivers – and good picnic lunches for the Orange volunteers
Media profile is important to spread the positive message of the project – good coverage has been achieved in the national press.
Essential ingredient – ADEPT team
Thank you!

Fundatia ADEPT Transilvania

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