

Results-based agri-environment payment schemes to protect mountain grasslands

In the Târnava Mare and Pogányhavas regions, Romania, mountain grasslands' species are endangered due to the deterioration of habitats. To protect the biodiversity of these mountain areas, the Fundatia ADEPT worked with the Romanian government to test the efficiency of results-based agri-environment payment schemes.

Farming and habitats' restoration

In the Târnava Mare and Pogányhavas regions, Romania, species-rich grasslands habitats constitute part of Romania's extensive High Nature Value (HNV) farmland. These grassland habitats have some of the highest floristic diversity recorded in the world and support substantial populations of rare vertebrate and invertebrate fauna. However, 5,000 ha of this area is threatened by overgrazing in most accessible sites and the abandonment of less accessible grasslands (causing spreading of thorny scrub). The effects of the deterioration of Romanian dry grasslands are obvious but still easily reversible by the re-establishment of traditional management.

MORE INFO

[Fundatia ADEPT](#) - a biodiversity conservation and rural development NGO based in Saschiz, Romania-worked alongside with the Romanian government to preserve and improve the status of dry permanent grasslands (mainly hay meadow and pasture) in these two regions, by testing the suitability and practicality of results-based agri-environment payment schemes (RBAPS). The RBAPS have been used to finance management regimes which produce good quality hay and protect wild species in the long-term.

Activities carried out

Project experts conducted studies to test the eligibility of the grasslands proposed by farmers for RBASP. To this end, experts selected and tested 30 species or species groups as indicators of HNV meadows, as they only grow in hay meadows managed at low intensity, and are associated with high plant and animal species richness as well as good quality hay.

Fundatia ADEPT signed three-year contracts with 73 eligible farmers and issued the payments (one in 2016, one in 2018).

During a three-year period (2016-2019), farmers were asked to record yearly the presence (or not) of species belonging to the list and mow the meadows at least once a year, with a first cut after the 10th of June in order to allow controls to take place. In return, farmers received payments € 213 – 259 per ha according to the number recorded of species.



Credits: Fundatia ADEPT


Resources and uptake

The [project](#) was developed between 2015 and 2019 and financed by DG Environment and Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, with a budget of € 145 000.

At the local level, the project has proven to be very popular among farmers, who appreciate the flexibility it offers and have sent many applications to take part into it. Through RBAPS, farmers have the freedom to manage their grasslands according to the local conditions and weather, and they are directly rewarded for the service they provide for nature.

The European Commission financed [other pilot projects](#) for the adoption of RBASP in Ireland, United Kingdom and Spain. Similar schemes are also carried out in France, Germany, and Switzerland.

Innovative aspect



Instead of typical agri-environment schemes - which pays for the implementation of management specific practices- result-based agri-environment schemes pays for the “results”: the presence of certain species as indicators of good quality meadows. In such a way, the role of farmers is less constrained by EU/national prescriptions in how to set appropriate management practices and it rather valorises their expertise, knowledge of the territory and capability to adapt their practices over time.



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