



Youth and young farmers' workshop

Brussels, 11-12 December 2013

Group 9

Conservation and biodiversity projects: farming and ecosystem preservation

Funded by the



ENRD *Connecting Rural Europe*
<http://enrd.ec.europa.eu>

Main issues and challenges identified

The decline of biodiversity and the difficulties of ensuring the resilience of EU ecosystems are important challenges that global agriculture faces and need to be addressed, so that they keep delivering the essential services on which our societies depend.

The conservation of soil, water and biodiversity resources and the maintenance of healthy agro-ecosystems are key to maintaining EU agricultural productivity and long-term food security.

Specific issues mentioned were:

- ✓ Interest of conserving breeds and seed varieties endangered to extinction (more resistance, linked to a traditional agriculture).
- ✓ Intensive farming does not necessary confront biodiversity conservation, but the question of, "how to produce enough food for 9 billion people by 2050 and maintain our ecosystems?" is difficult to answer and needs a combined effort from different sectors.
- ✓ Conflicting objectives and lack of synergy between and within pillars, axes and measures. Some targeted support is needed to keep biodiversity.



Main obstacles identified and support needed

- ✓ Boosted production does not necessarily mean huge amounts of land being converted to agriculture.
- ✓ Delivering biodiversity and ecosystem services through the agricultural sector cannot be seen in isolation from the delivery of other environmental, social or economic objectives.
- ✓ There are difficulties to get support to do "unproductive" or alternative farming and such activities are not considered profitable enough (such as growing and commercialize herb, mushrooms or spices from small holdings).
- ✓ Integrating specificities of small-scale projects in administrative procedures has a high cost in terms of human resources and tools needed to manage the "case-by-case" approach. Where should the cost-effectiveness threshold be set?
- ✓ Situation varies in different parts of the EU, according to local conditions. Some Member States will require the maintenance of existing farming systems and land management practices, while others will require changes to be made, particularly within more intensive farming systems. In some cases, there is a need for highly tailored and

targeted policy measures that focus on the specific management needs of a particular species or habitat in a particular location. In other situations a few simple requirements that can be applied across the whole farmed landscape are needed.

Further research is still needed to better understand the complex mechanisms linking agricultural production, food consumption, environmental protection and social aspects.

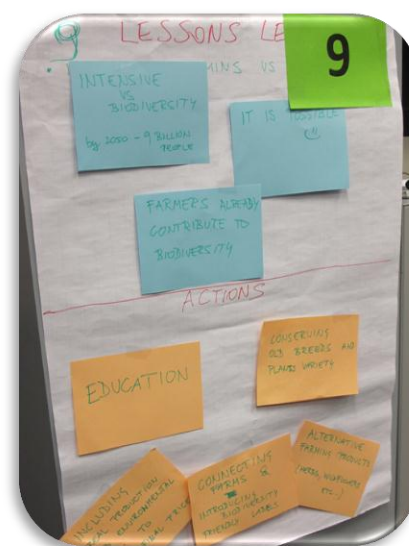
Lessons learnt

A greater focus on overall sustainability and a more careful approach to land planning and management is needed, with a range of policies that maximize the societal benefits obtained from land. A sustainable use of natural resources is an essential premise for a long-term agricultural productivity, as well as for the provision of other goods and services.

Possible actions

Policy/financial issues

- ✓ Sufficient budget should be clearly ring-fenced for schemes targeting wildlife conservation. Agri-environment schemes must be simple and give enough money to beneficiaries.
- ✓ Some types of relatively “unproductive” (but sustainable) agriculture must continue. EU should support High Nature Value farming systems for the benefit of farmland biodiversity, landscapes, historical heritage and traditional high quality food, which are fundamental components of the cultural identity of each European region.
- ✓ European policy should assist farming in adapting to climate change. This can include measures such as research, training, advisory services and, in justified cases, capital investment in areas such as water use reduction, pest and alien species control, erosion prevention etc. Many of these measures are already or will be addressed in Rural Development Programmes, but are in need of a greater budget allocation. Young farmers may be a specific target group for training activities, as they are often ready to accept new challenges and are receptive to change.
- ✓ Rules should be established to ensure coherence and synergy across axes and measures, as well as full accountability of spending. Mechanisms should be defined to build win-win packages of measures for environment, business and quality of life. Provisions should be introduced to ensure that sufficient environmental capacity is included in LAGs.



- ✓ RDPs should clearly demonstrate how measures correspond to stated strategic objectives and additional rules should be included in the programming process to ensure coherence along the whole chain from the overarching EU objectives to individual schemes.

Biodiversity branding & promotion

- ✓ Positive externalities/market goods issues: reward farmers for producing non-market goods (HNV debate, CC adaptation, flood management), reducing the amount/proportion spent on production.
- ✓ Consumer education and better marketing can give a higher price to the products from local, high quality markets. Sensitisation is needed in order to integrate the real production costs in the price. A label may help adding value for products that are "biodiversity friendly".
- ✓ Promote what farmers already do to preserve biodiversity! When starting a new activity, try to connect the kind of farming being undertaken with biodiversity aspects.