

GERMANY

Sustainable use of agricultural land

Location

Mainz, Rheinland-Pfalz

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 2 – Improving the environment and the countryside

Funding (EUR)

€225/ha for species rich grassland with at least 4 key species & €275/ha for species rich grassland with at least 8 key species.
60% EAFRD, 40% national funding

Project duration

2007 – 2013

Project promoter

Landesamt für Umwelt, Wasserwirtschaft und Gewerbeaufsicht Rheinland-Pfalz

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The PAULa scheme's support for species-rich grasslands from Rheinland-Pfalz represents good practice in its approach to implementing a Results-Based Agri-environment Payment Scheme (RBAPS).

Summary

One new and emerging approach involves funding for on-farm nature conservation work through RDP schemes that focus on paying for the results achieved and letting the farmers decide how best such outcomes can be delivered. Germany has been at the forefront of pioneering results-based agri-environment methods.



The 'PAULa' scheme's support for species-rich grasslands from Rheinland-Pfalz (in western/south western Germany) represents good practice in its approach to RBAPS implementation. Based on the occurrence of at least 4 or 8 key species it includes two results-based schemes for species-rich grassland. The species that must be present on farmland under these schemes are listed in a catalogue of key species and results are measured against the key species that are present. There is a list of prohibited actions and the farmer must keep an annual record of management activities and of the results of species monitoring. The schemes require grazing and/or mowing at least once a year – although the timing for these activities is not prescribed.

Results

There is increasing interest in both these schemes from farmers and by 2014 they covered around 1 800 hectares.

The results of vegetation monitoring between 2008 and 2012 showed an increase in species-richness on the plots managed under the results-based scheme.

The evaluation showed high species-richness in these schemes compared to 'normal' grassland.

The plots in the results-based scheme show a greater increase in species-richness compared to other management-based agri-environment schemes where species-richness also increased.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ It was only possible to achieve this positive effect with the support from intensive advisory activities. Farmers wishing to apply for these schemes receive dedicated support from a nature conservation advisor who is independent of the administration.
- ❑ A key success factor is that farmers are free to determine the management of their meadows.
- ❑ Such schemes need to be straightforward to understand.
- ❑ Also ensure that the administrative staff and those controlling similar schemes are sufficiently well qualified and knowledgeable in species identification and ecological understanding.

Context

Alongside food production and their contribution to the rural economy, farmers play a vital role in managing some of Europe's precious environmental resources. This includes biodiversity such as birds, butterflies, bees and flower-rich meadows, as well as clean water, fresh air, beautiful landscapes, and healthy soils. An increasing number of EU rural development authorities now recognise that Results-Based Agri-environment Payment Schemes (RBAPS) provide a useful addition to the different approaches that already exist to help maintain and protect the countryside.

Objectives

The main aims of the PAULa agri-environment scheme 'Kennartenprogramme' involve conserving species-rich grasslands and encouraging farmer-led approaches to cost-effective nature conservation.

Activities

Two results-based schemes for species-rich grassland operate under the overall PAULa AE scheme, and these are based on the occurrence of at least 4 or 8 key species. These two schemes were developed as an alternative to conventional management-based agri-environment schemes. They provide more flexibility for farmers who already manage species-rich grasslands. The schemes have been designed to give them more flexibility in their management in order to improve the alignment of biodiversity conservation with conventional agricultural management.

- The schemes are open to all farmers in every environmental zone within Rheinland-Pfalz from the lowlands to the mountains. The results-based schemes are stand-alone schemes.
- The schemes require grazing and/or mowing at least once a year – although the timing for these activities is not prescribed.
- There is a list of prohibited actions that are considered to conflict with the aims of nature protection (including drainage and the ploughing up of grassland).
- The farmer must keep an annual record of management activities and of the results of species monitoring.
- Regional advisors are available to give advice to farmers on the management needed to integrate their agricultural operations and nature conservation.



- The schemes are open to all farmers with the minimum number of key species present (min 4 or min 8 species). A farm advisor must check the parcels (sections of land) for these species along a transect line before approving the application.
- There is a parallel management-based scheme and the payment rates differ only slightly. Both schemes require virtually the same kind of management process.
- The decision about which scheme farmers should follow is influenced by the RDP managing authority. For example, if the key species are already present on the parcels it is generally considered better to allow the farmer to decide on management through the results-based approach. For other cases where the species richness is near the threshold of species occurrence, including meadows where the indicator species are sparsely distributed on the parcel, the managing authority generally advises farmers to enrol in the management-based scheme until the species composition is sufficient to allow farmers to maintain diversity through a results-based approach.
- The species that must be present on farmland under these schemes are listed in a catalogue of key species (partly species, partly genera), which covers all grassland types in the region - from lowland meadows and pastures in the Rhine valley to the mountainous regions.
- Results are measured against these key species, genera or species groups. This is divided into three lists that are typical of mesic (fresh or moderately wet), wet, or moderately dry grassland. A minimum of 4 or 8 indicator species from this catalogue must be present in each third of a transect across the parcel. It does not matter which of the key species are present or whether the same or different key species occur in the three transect segments. The use of genera/species groups for some species that are difficult to identify, for example small yellow clovers, makes the catalogue easier to farmers to use.

Main Results

There is increasing interest in both these schemes from farmers and by 2014 they covered around 1 800 hectares.

The results of vegetation monitoring between 2008 and 2012 showed an increase in species-richness on the plots managed under the results-based scheme.

The evaluation showed high species-richness (across a wider range of species groups than present in the indicator list including grasses, ferns, mosses etc.) in these schemes compared to 'normal' grassland (>60/>80 species per sampled area in the two schemes compared to around 33 species per sampled area on normal grassland) and the species-richness increased from 2008 to 2012 when the monitoring results were summarised.

The species-richness of grassland under other management-based agri-environment schemes also increased, however the plots in the results-based scheme show the highest species-richness of all those evaluated.

“The main advantage of this type of scheme is that you can see the direct results, and also the success that has been achieved in the areas that receive public funding. There are three key success factors for implementing results-based schemes. Firstly, we need understanding and acceptance of the schemes by agriculture and nature stakeholders. Secondly, we need suitable indicators that are easy-to-use and practical for the monitoring. Thirdly, it is important to have good advice and guidance about how to implement the schemes.”

Dr. Rainer Oppermann: Institute for Agro-ecology and Biodiversity, Mannheim, Germany



Key lessons

The increase in number of RBAPS contracts and extent of grassland under these two schemes shows that farmers are increasingly interested in participating. It was only possible to achieve this increase with the support from intensive advisory activities. Based on discussions with some advisors and farmers there also appears to be a change in the consciousness of farmers – they are becoming more aware of the nature value of their grasslands and have started to record the presence of flowering plants as part of their normal management practices.

There are several success factors for this scheme, including:

1. The scheme is very flexible for the farmers because they are free to determine the management of their meadows;
2. The scheme has been developed in response to farmers asking for greater flexibility in their grassland management to align better conservation priorities with conventional farm practices;
3. The scheme is straightforward to understand;
4. Farmers wishing to apply for these schemes receive dedicated support from a nature conservation advisor who is independent of the administration.

A minor problem in terms of the implementation of this scheme was ensuring that the administrative staff and those controlling the scheme were sufficiently well qualified and knowledgeable in species identification and ecological understanding.

“In Rheinland-Pfalz, one Ministry covers both nature conservation and agriculture. Thus this type of scheme allows us to implement a common approach across both our nature conservation and agricultural activities.”

Inge Unkel from the Rheinland-Pfalz RDP Managing Authority

Additional sources of information

- [Paula Contract Brochure \(in German\)](#)
- [Rheinland Pfalz Grassland Protection](#)
- [Full Project Brochure \(in German\)](#)
- [Grassland Protection Development Programme \(in German\)](#)