

Scottish Environment LINK's views

HNV farmed areas must be eligible to receive support through all parts of the CAP. These areas tend to have a higher proportion of semi-natural features and in some cases may not be included in the eligible area. As part of the CAP negotiations, Scotland should press for a new tool to be added to the existing mix of environmental regulations and incentives to give basic support to HNV systems with conditions attached to maintain the environmental benefits they provide.⁵ Targeted agri-environment schemes will also continue to play a vital role in ensuring all farming systems can deliver environmental benefits. Local projects⁶ in HNV areas have shown the importance of a proactive approach to working with farming and crofting communities. The aim should be to improve the economic returns for those working on the land while maintaining the environmental benefits they provide.

Scottish Government needs to carry out further research on HNV – identifying the HNV systems and the specific practices providing environmental

benefits. The reasons for decline of farming activity and how environmental benefits can be preserved need to be identified. Research should look at the wider importance of HNV for sustainable development – the relationships between land and economy, agriculture, environment, heritage, culture and community.

A large proportion of Scotland is currently classified as “Less Favoured” in agricultural terms. LINK would prefer to see it regarded as of potentially “High Value” in terms of the environmental goods produced. If the CAP were better directed towards the production of public goods, Scotland should receive much higher levels of European support than is currently the case due to our large proportion of HNV farming. Scotland needs to recognise the enormous significance of HNV systems and the risk that if they are lost, we will not only fail to meet International and European commitments such as the 2020 biodiversity target but will lose an important part of our culture and diversity.

Notes

1. Swales, V. and A. Moxey (2008) Targeting CAP support at High Nature Value farming and crofting systems
2. JRC, EEA (2008) Mapping High Nature Value Farmland in Europe
3. SNH Commissioned Report (2010) Assessing the economic impacts of nature based tourism in Scotland
4. Eg, SAC Rural Policy Centre (2008) Farming's retreat from the hills
5. EFNCP, BirdLife, Butterfly Conservation Europe, WWF (2010) CAP reform 2013- last chance to stop the decline of Europe's High Nature Value farming
6. Eg, Machair Life + Project; Balmacarra Estate, NTS

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