

# Grasslands in Europe of high nature value

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KNNV Publishing



# Grasslands in Europe

## of high nature value

Grasslands are an important part of European nature. This is illustrated by the fact that about 50% of the endemic plant species of Europe are dependent on the grassland biotope. Natural grasslands grow where trees cannot establish, in high mountains, on rocks, salty flood plains and sea shores. Most of our grasslands are part of traditional agricultural landscapes. Modern intensive agriculture is a threat to the survival of semi-natural or biodiverse grasslands across the whole of Europe. Biodiversity-rich grasslands are still quite common in the Central and Eastern European countries. In other regions in Europe, these grasslands are much more localised or mainly found in protected areas.

Since the 1990's, biodiversity-rich grasslands have been given special status as High Nature Value Areas (HNV areas) and are thus integrated into EU agricultural policy. Within the recent Rural Development legislation, HNV grasslands are mentioned as areas in Europe which need special attention.

An international team of grassland experts prepared this book. Each of them describes an area characteristic for their country. These 24 case studies give the reader a clear impression of the full variety of grasslands in Europe, from Turkey to Ireland and from Sweden to Spain. These geographic case studies are preceded by thematic chapters on the history of agriculture, the fauna of grasslands, the grassland communities, and the connection between grasslands and climate. The final part assesses whether or not current EU land-use policy will conserve these HNV grasslands for future generations.

This book is written for both specialists and non-specialists, the latter including politicians and policy makers. Specialists are provided with an up to date knowledge of the variety of grasslands in Europe. The non-specialist reader may learn that although these grasslands are quite dispersed and localised, it is still possible to locate and visit these beautiful habitats in several places in Europe. Land owners, particularly the farmers who have managed the biodiversity-rich grasslands for centuries, will find arguments to seek support, including finance, from European society. In this way, the book supports the process of incentivising farmers who manage these grasslands sustainably through so called "low input" farming practices.

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