

# Aran Farming Workshops

Exploring High Nature Value Farming

11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> August 2010





# Evening Work Programme



- Overview of Aran's work to date
- Burren farming for conservation programme (€3million over 3 years)
- A Burren type programme on the Aran Islands?
- Island farm representative group
- Next steps



# High Nature Value Farming

- HNV farming = type of extensive farming practiced on Aran islands and similar areas across Europe
- Increasingly under threat from land abandonment and intensification
- EU member states have pledged to support HNV farming
- What can be done on Aran Islands to support this type of farming?

# Work to date on HNV on Aran Islands

Date	Description
Sept. 2008	BurrenLIFE and Teagasc information meetings on Aran Islands, followed by farm visits to Burren
2009	Report commissioned by Heritage Council on case studies of HNV farming on Aran Islands and north Connemara. Series of public meetings on Islands in April and November/December
April 2010	Heritage Council Report completed
Today	EFNCP funded workshops on Islands

# Case Studies on HNV

- Maintaining our heritage relies on maintaining the extensive farming that created it
- Farming under threat



# Case Studies on HNV: Findings

- Aran Islands: Beef production (mainland finishing), vegetables-home use.
- Traditional farm practices in decline: vegetable growing and stone wall building
- In danger of being lost: working Connemara ponies, rye production for thatching
- Scrub encroachment not severe overall but some walls encroached
- Evidence of abandonment on some farms e.g. spread of bracken and brambles
- Farmers proud of their natural and cultural

# Case Studies on HNV: Challenges

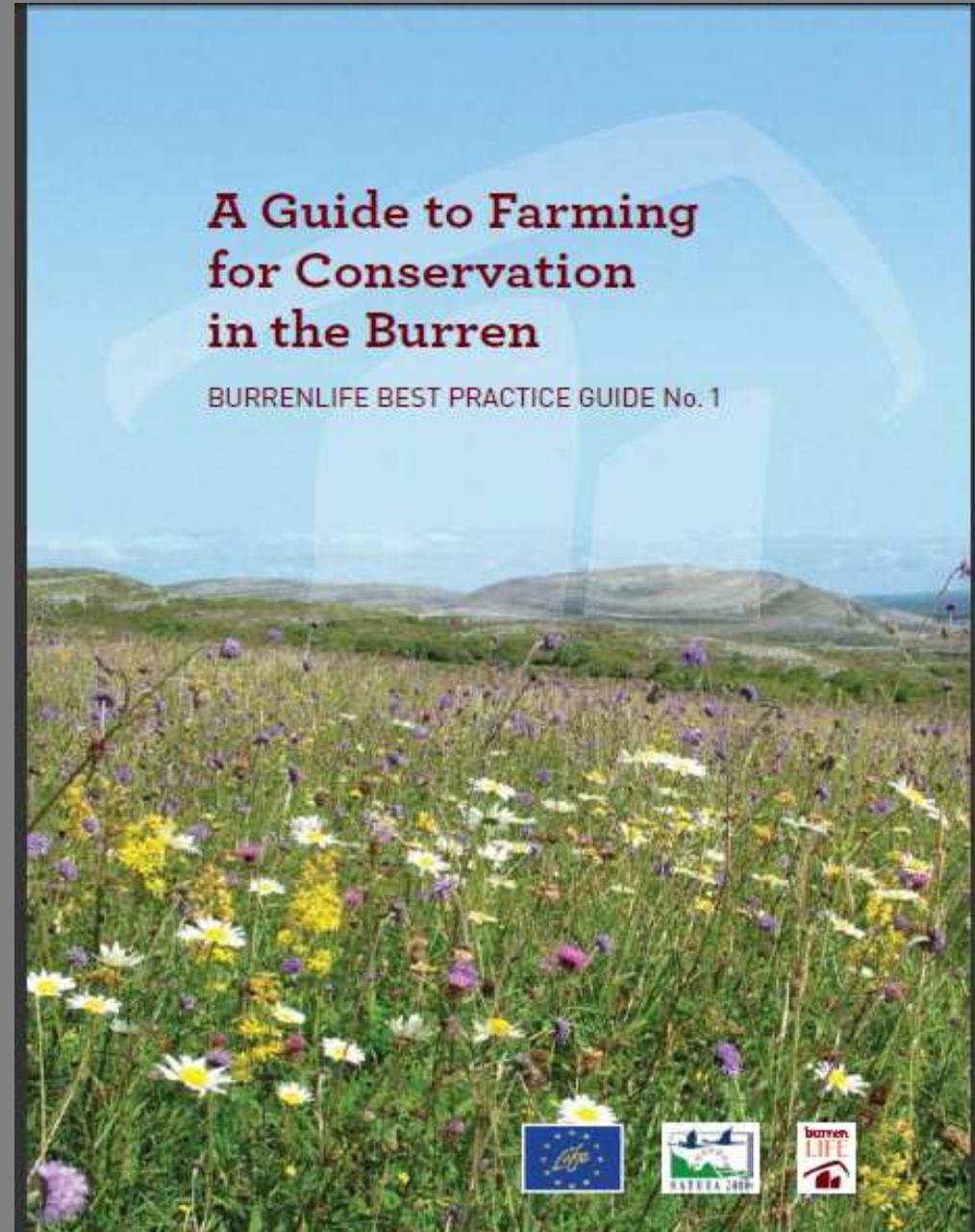
- Difficulty of earning a living: dependent on direct payments (REPS and AEOS closed) and off farm income
- Farming increasingly part time, low product prices, increasing bureaucracy and paperwork.
- Ageing farm population

# Case Studies on HNV: Solutions

- **Communication and better relationships:** farmers involved in developing policy
- **Agri-environment schemes:** tailored to areas, farmers involved in design, simple and flexible, focused on conservation
- **Research:** sustainable grazing; conservation and management of rare arable flowers; controlling scrub and bramble
- **Marketing:** produce from HNV areas
- **Traditional farm skills:** research and support

# Burren Farming for Conservation Programme:

Producing quality food  
and a quality  
environment



# Principles

- Central Role of farmer
- Partnership
- Importance of farm planning
- Being practical and innovative
- Being flexible
- An honest days work for an honest days pay
- Creating real benefits
- Importance of monitoring

# On the ground

- Understanding what we want
- Getting grazing right
- Complementary feeding systems
- Scrub control

# Benefits to farmer

- Our heritage, our legacy
- Creating employment
- Meeting our obligations
- Creating new opportunities
- Investing in our community
- Benefits for society
- Leading the way