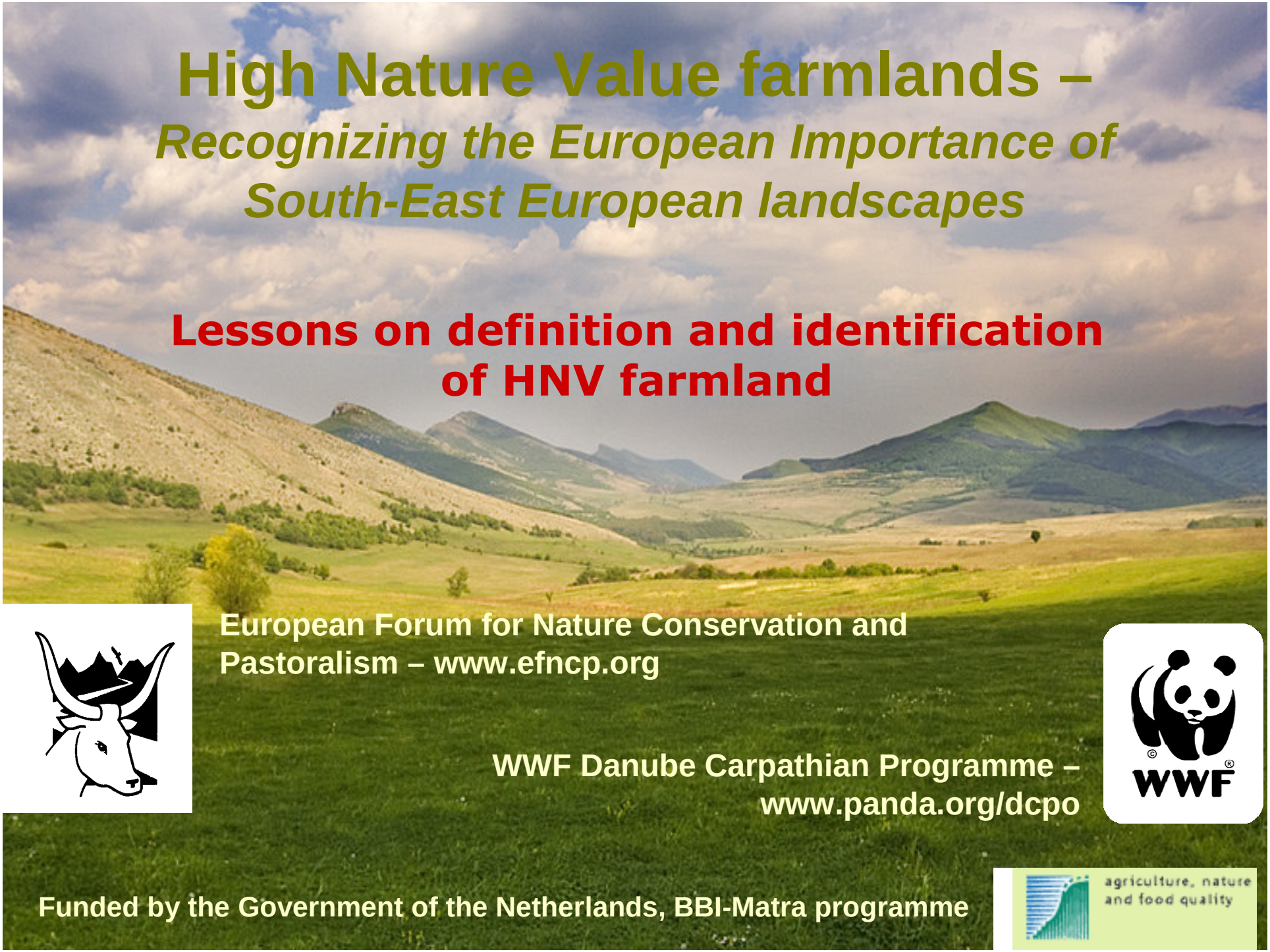


High Nature Value farmlands –
Recognizing the European Importance of South-East European landscapes

Lessons on definition and identification of HNV farmland

European Forum for Nature Conservation and Pastoralism – www.efncp.org

WWF Danube Carpathian Programme – www.panda.org/dcpo

Funded by the Government of the Netherlands, BBI-Matra programme

agriculture, nature and food quality

HNV farming outside Natura 2000 is crucial for halting biodiversity decline:

"Natura 2000 and the **conservation of threatened species will not be viable** in the long–term **without a wider terrestrial**, freshwater and marine **environment favourable to biodiversity**. Key actions include: optimising the use of available measures under the reformed CAP, notably to **prevent intensification or abandonment of high–nature–value farmland**…" *(from Commission communication on **2010 target**)*

EU policy commitments for HNV farming:

1. **Identify** HNV farming in each country.
2. **Maintain** HNV farming and its positive function for biodiversity.
3. **Monitor** approximate extent of HNV farming as one indicator of RD Programme effects.

In this project we focused on the **identification** and **maintenance** of HNV farming, and **tools** needed to do this effectively.

First step for each country is to describe their main HNV farming systems:

- The predominant type of **land cover**
  - Semi-natural vegetation (fields and features)
  - Size and diversity of parcels (mosaic)
- The way this is **managed** by the farmer
  - Livestock densities and feeding regime
  - Use of inputs
- The species and habitats that benefit.
- The socio-economic situation of the farming system.

These descriptions should provide essential information for deciding:

- Which types of farmland will be targeted by HNV payments
  - Not by designating "HNV areas" in the manner of Natura 2000…
  - but by indicators applied at the farm level (e.g. semi-natural pasture + LU/ha)
- What farming activities in particular should be encouraged by the payments
  - Grazing regimes, shepherding
  - Permanent understorey in orchards

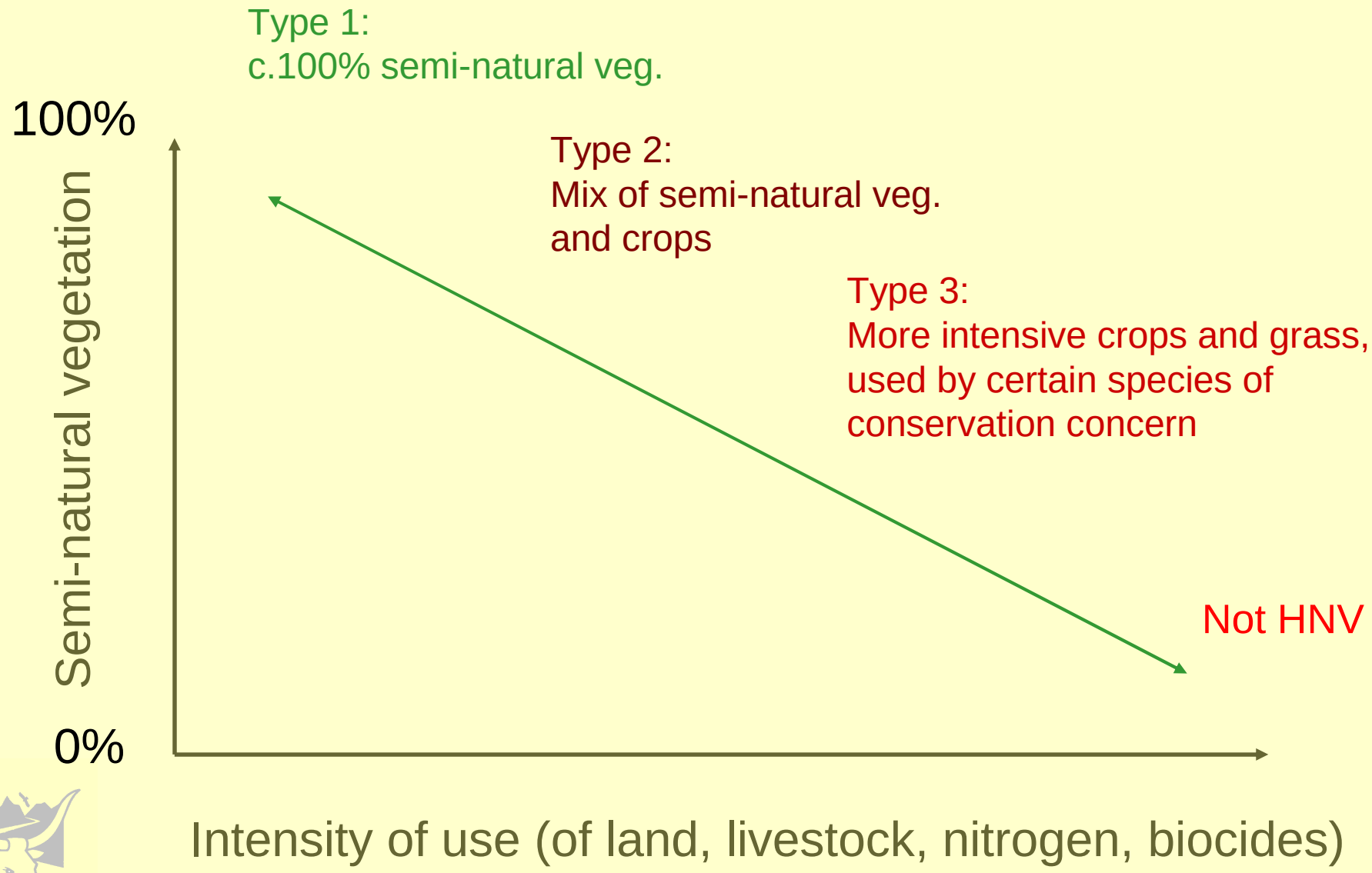
These descriptions should provide essential information for deciding:

- What payment levels are needed in order to maintain the particular activities.
- What species and habitats are intended to benefit.
- Both essential to justify the payment schemes in terms of “public benefit”.
- Both need to be monitored to see if the schemes are effective.

To help in this work on definition and identification, HNV farmland is considered in 3 Types:

- Type 1: Predominantly semi-natural vegetation that is grazed and/or mown (grassland, scrub, forest or mixture).
- Type 2: Low-intensity arable and/or permanent crops in mosaic with semi-natural vegetation.
- Type 3: More intensive farmland that supports populations of certain species, mainly birds.

The three main Types of HNV farmland



How have these HNV farmland types been identified and supported in Romania and Bulgaria?

- Descriptions of HNV systems are very general and mainly Types 1 and 3.
- Analysis of characteristics is not detailed (e.g. discussion of different pasture types, livestock regimes).
- But better than many others especially in EU15.
- And broad support schemes have been established.

Type 1: identified through inventories of semi-natural grassland. Good approach for all countries to follow if:

- Complete survey of whole country.
- All farm parcels identified as either semi-natural or not, and cross-referenced to LPIS.
- All types of semi-natural grazed vegetation included (e.g. including wooded pastures).
- Work also to identify appropriate grazing regimes (e.g. LU/ha), veg. structure, for each type.
- When support measures are applied, all semi-natural grasslands on inventory are targeted.

Type 3: by definition, this is identified by the presence of species populations

- Both countries count farmland within Important Bird Areas and Natura 2000 as HNV farmland.
- In Bulgaria, also an inventory of Natura 2000 habitats used by a selection of farmland species (butterflies, reptiles, mammals).
- Is the selection of species the right one? Is the quality of inventories and the delineation of areas sufficient?

Type 2: widespread in eastern and southern EU

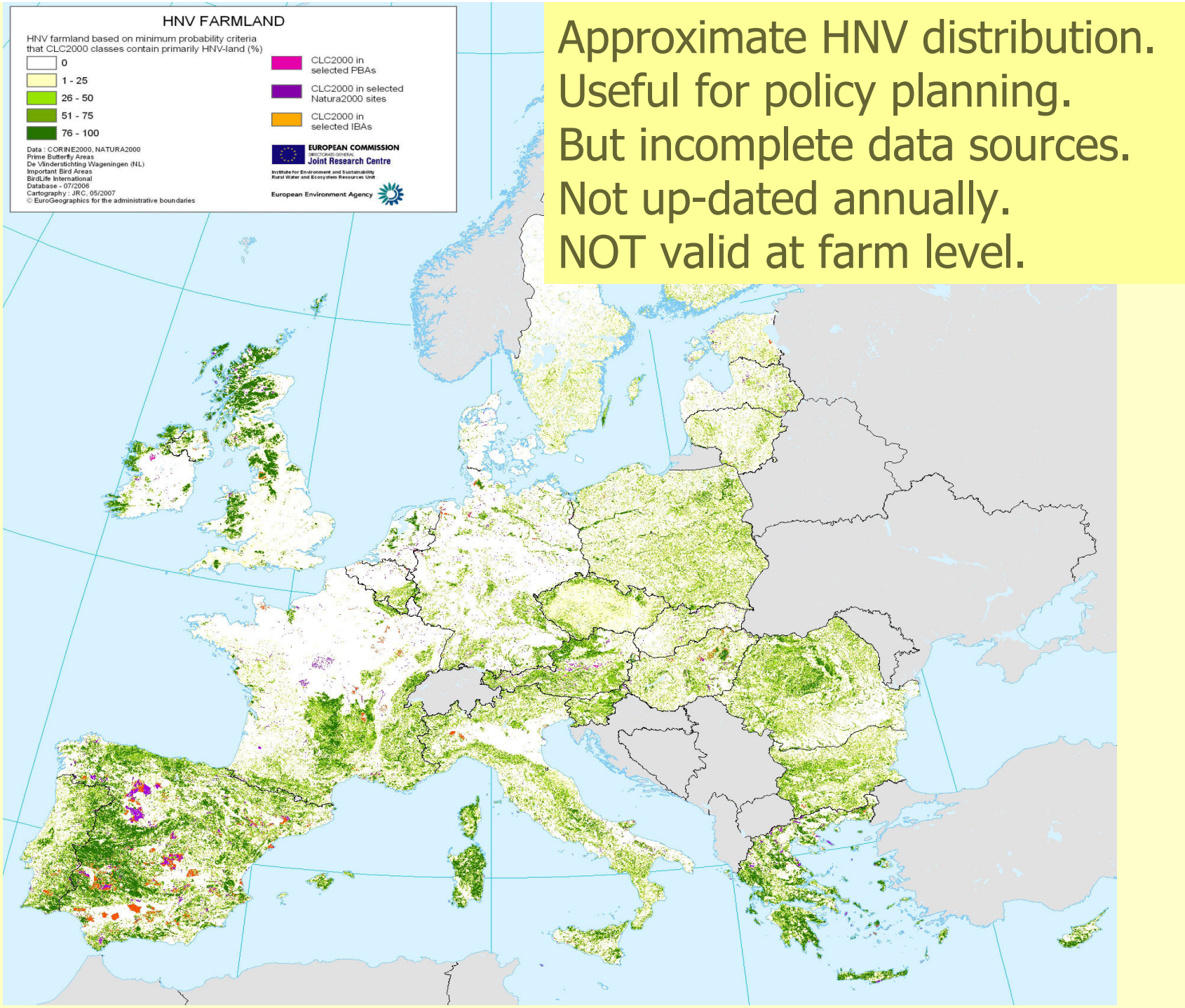
- Low-intensity farmland mosaics, orchards.
- No explicit attempt to define and identify in RDPs, e.g. using DG Agri approach.
- Some Type 2 will be covered by Type 3 approach but only in IBA/Natura 2000 sites.
- But large areas exist outside sites, e.g. around villages. How important for biodiversity?
- Possible land-cover indicators: mosaic (number of parcels/ha) + % of land under semi-natural veg.

Orchards example (Bulgaria):

- Traditional orchards considered as Type 2 HNV.
- Bulgaria has a national support measure based on simple parcel-level criteria:
  - Trees >25 years old <10 metres apart
  - Permanent (or nearly) grazed/mown understorey
- This follows the HNV indicators approach presented by DG Agri.
- No additional inventories or maps, just LPIS + confirmation of age of trees + grass.
- EU objectives for HNV are met effectively and fairly by targeting at farm level (but exclusion of <0.3ha size).

Conclusions (1)

- Definition of HNV farming systems and associated biodiversity is lacking (as in most countries). Important!
- "Identification" in BG and RO follows route of grassland inventories + Natura 2000 + species distribution.
- This top-down mapping does not define HNV farming systems. It is an exercise in spatial targeting of support:
  - There are concerns about the justification for this, and the exclusions that result.
  - Good for biodiversity? Fair to farmers?



Approximate HNV distribution.
Useful for policy planning.
But incomplete data sources.
Not up-dated annually.
NOT valid at farm level.

Conclusions (2)

- Within these mapped areas, HNV farming still has to be distinguished from non-HNV.
- Effectively this is done when farmer applies for payment – e.g. LU/ha, age of trees – through LPIS/IACS plus farmer's commitment.
- So, State identifies **land cover** (e.g. semi-natural veg.) and farmer confirms that **management system** is HNV.
- LPIS is the obvious tool for bringing together **land cover** and **farming system**. Inventories of semi-natural pasture (all types) should be merged into LPIS.

Conclusions (3)

- For mixed farmland (Type 2), HNV cannot be limited to Natura 2000 – the HNV approach aims to maintain a broad base for biodiversity.
- Applying agri-environment measures on farmland in IBAs/Natura 2000 is good in itself, but not HNV approach.
- So, Type 2 should be addressed in the same way as Type 1:

  1) Identify relevant land cover using basic criteria of mosaic (parcels/ha) and % semi-natural features.
  2) To receive HNV support, farmers commit to low-intensity practices (thresholds on N use etc.).

Conclusions (4)

- Currently two approaches to identifying HNV at EU level:
  - Mapping of land cover and species (EEA)
  - Farming indicators (DG Agri)
- Entirely compatible approaches, and need to be brought together in LPIS.
  - Land cover to show semi-natural veg. and mosaics (inventories integrated with LPIS).
  - Farm systems indicators to show LU/ha and other management parameters.
  - Species data for identifying Type 3 HNV only.