

# Common grazing in Croatia



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Common grounds, Brussels Nov18th, 2015



## Introduction

Legal framework - agricultural land

Gajna, Croatia – example of sustainable grazing as prerequisite for nature protection

Problems/solutions/joint actions



## Geography of

### Croatia :

- plains, lakes and rolling hills in the continental north and north-east (Central Croatia and Slavonia, part of the Pannonian Basin);
- densely wooded mountains in Lika and Gorski Kotar, part of the Dinaric Alps;
- rocky coastlines on the Adriatic Sea (Istria, Northern Sea coast and Dalmatia).

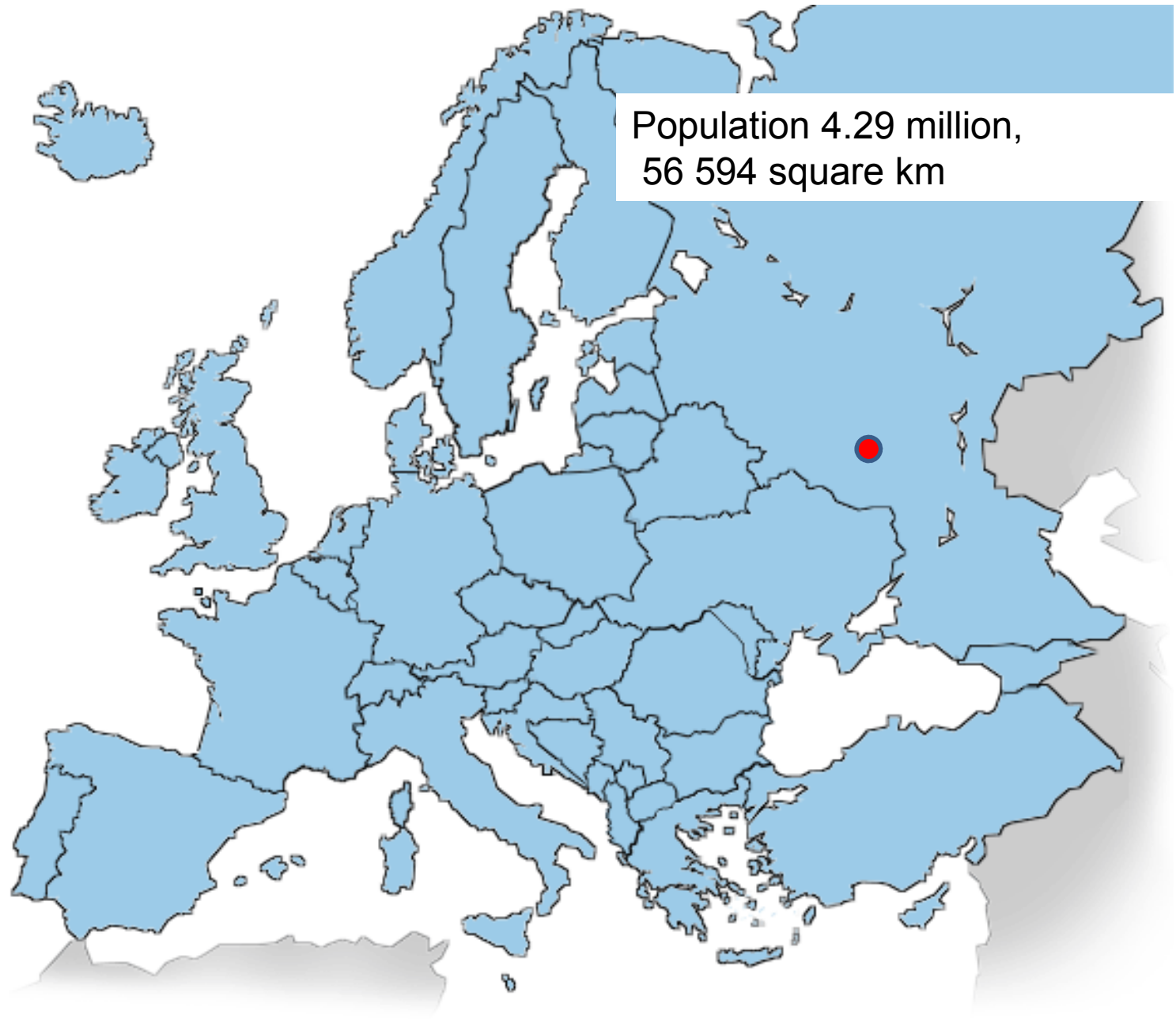




Table 1: Agricultural land as reported by different official sources

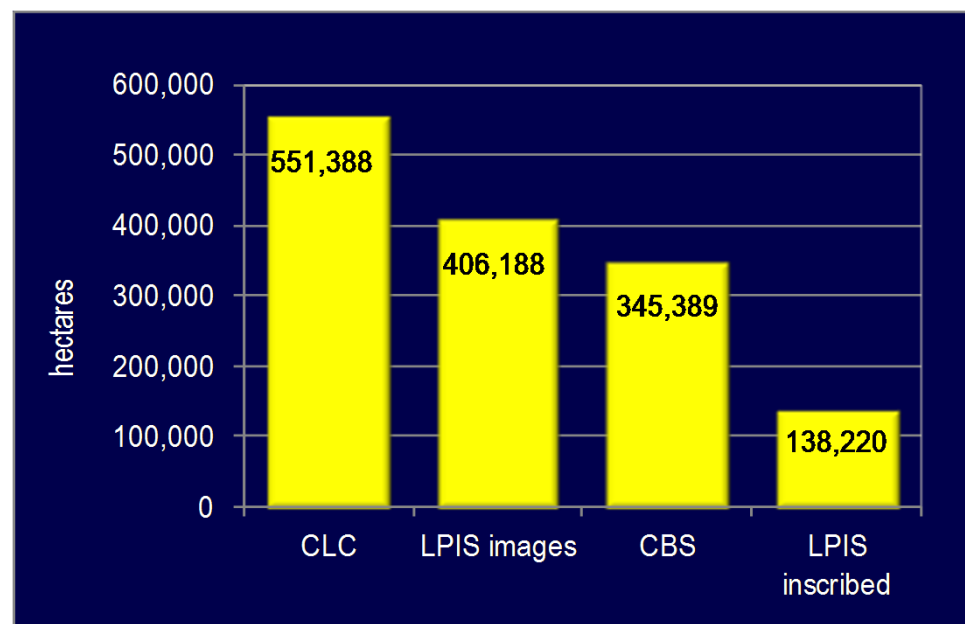
Land category	Classification system	Source	Reference year	ha
Agricultural land	Corine Land Cover	Corine Land Cover	2006	2,536,446
Agricultural land	LPIS	PAAFRD	2012	1,824,965
Agricultural land	Agricultural Census	CBS	2003	1,391,622
Agricultural habitats	Habitats map	MENP	2000	1,386,699
Agricultural land	Utilised agricultural area	CBS	2010	1,334,825 *
Utilised agricultural land	Agricultural Census	CBS	2003	1,077,404
Registered agricultural land	LPIS	PAAFRD	2012	1,004,517

Source: AVALON 2012 –  
Inception report - Consulting  
Services for Support to Agri-  
Environment Scheme  
EU NATURA 2000 Integration  
Project (NIP)

\* It is reported that permanent grassland area is likely to be larger due to the fact that the state-owned land is jointly used by more than one family farm.

The area under permanent grassland is one of the biggest puzzle regarding agricultural land use in Croatia.

But not as big as the puzzle of areas under common grasslands.



: Grassland area according to different official sources

# Legal framework - The only constant thing is the change – from the 90's - 4 complete land reforms – 18 times amending Land Act versions

Act on proclamation of land and similar communities and property communities' common property, 1953 – common pastures formally transferred to State ownership

Croatia omitted the “social ownership” and passed a property restitution law in 1990, and subsequently amended that law in 1991 and 1993 and the 1996 “Law on Restitution/Compensation of Property Taken During the Time of the Yugoslav Communist Government” However, due to series of reason it was mostly not applicable to the land communities since, to simplify it, the State claimed they lacked unbroken continuity and in many cases just transferred the social ownership of the land to the state ownership.

**The Agricultural Land Act (OG 152/08)** – ammended 21/10, 124/10 and 63/11

Municipalities have been given the right to decide on the lease of the formerly common and now State owned land. (Out of 547 municipalities 75 do not posses state owned land and 74 never created the Program of distribution of the State owned land as required by the 2008 Act)

Amendments 63/11 introduction of so called **Pasturing communities. PCs** - a cooperative – only with people with residence of that or neighbouring municipalities.

The Ordinance on Conditions for Submitting Requirements and Criteria for the Lease of Communal Pastures (OG 135/11)

**Agricultural Land Act 39/13** - Pasturing communities kicked out between two readings in the Parliament – subacts to follow – future of Pasturing communities uncertain. Articles 46 and 47 - biggest differences – any private or legal person instead of PC's ; 5 years instead of 20; proportionally to number of cattle, Agency for agricultural Land taking over the tenders and all procedures from municipalities.

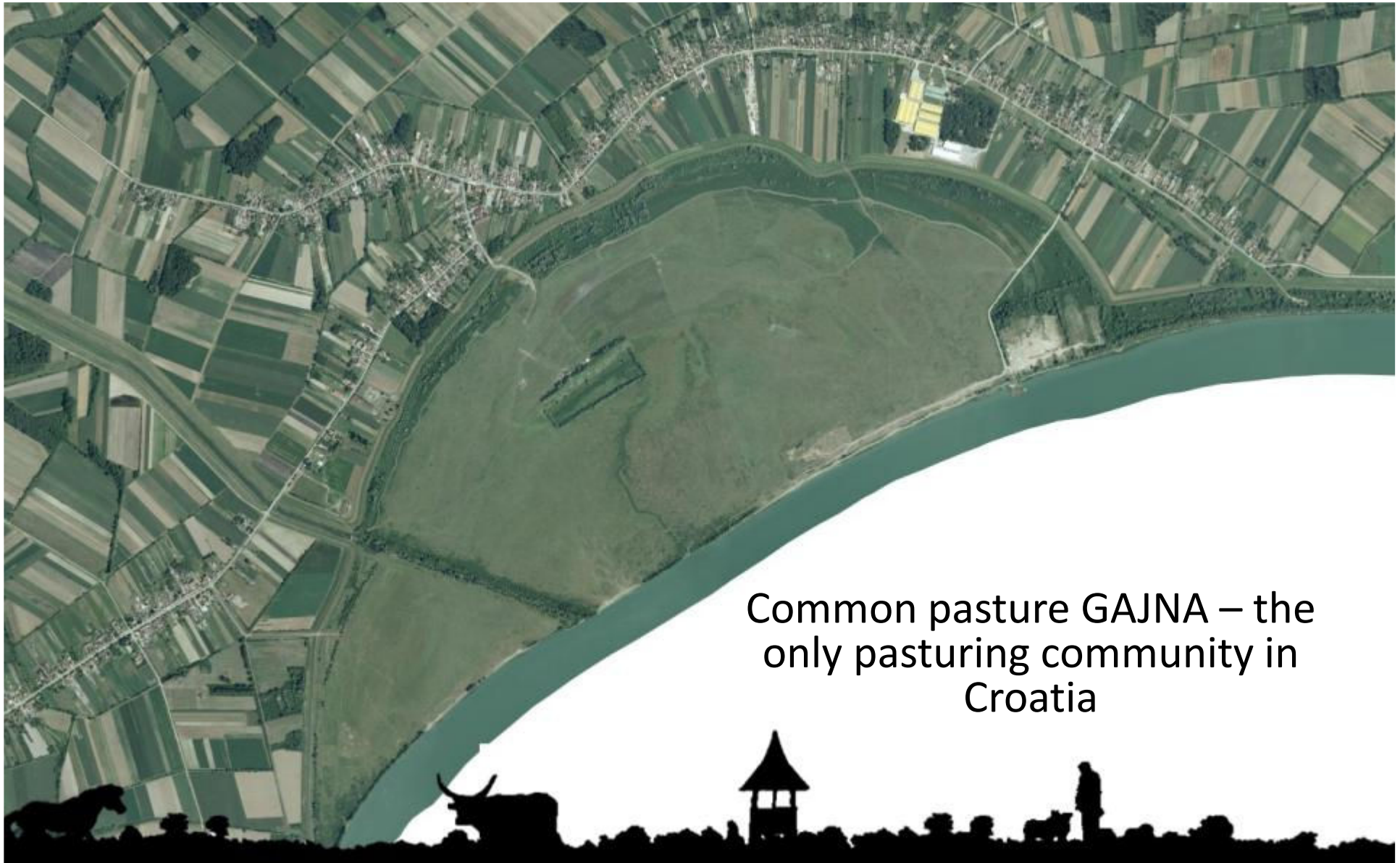
**Agricultural Land Act 48/15** - After long lobbying cooperatives (pasturing communities) again eligible as users of common pastures. New Ordinance on Conditions for Submitting Requirements and Criteria for the Lease of Communal Pastures 68/15.



# Permanent pastures – meadows, continental pastures, karst pastures







Common pasture GAJNA – the  
only pasturing community in  
Croatia

In densely populated and intensively cultivated agricultural area close to the Sava River, there are places extremely valuable for nature and directly dependent on traditional land use (common pastures, flooded grasslands and alluvial floodplain lowland forests)



# Similar grazing practices throughout centuries – continuous communal governance of the land



Late Bronze Age



1970's



1980's



2010's

Local community and NGO BED founded in 1989 - managing the area together - revitalization, biodiversity protection and protection of cultural and natural heritage



Protected as a significant landscape since 1990, 280 ha of typical flooded pasture, alluvial depressions and elevations,

Directly dependant on activities of local community for its survival as a valuable habitat



Indigenous and protected breeds – best caretakers of the pasture – low input, high stamina, natural and cultural heritage, gene pool, best for extermination of invasive plant species, adaptation qualities



**Black Slavonian Pig**



**Slavonian  
Syrmium  
Podolian  
Cattle**



**Tsigai sheep**



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**Posavina Horse**

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**Croatian Shephard Dog**

# Gajna - Pool of biodiversity- Networks – Emerald, Natura 2000 (SPA and SAC), ELBARN

Four leaf clover– *Marsilea quadrifolia* – EU red list



Numerous alluvial depressions harbour over 250 plant species of marshy and pasture flora. It is important bird feeding and fish spawning area.

Sand martin – *Riparia riparia*



Black stork– *Ciconia nigra*



Invasive plant species poses a major threat, particularly *Amorpha fruticosa* – grazing is the only efficient way of controlling it !!!





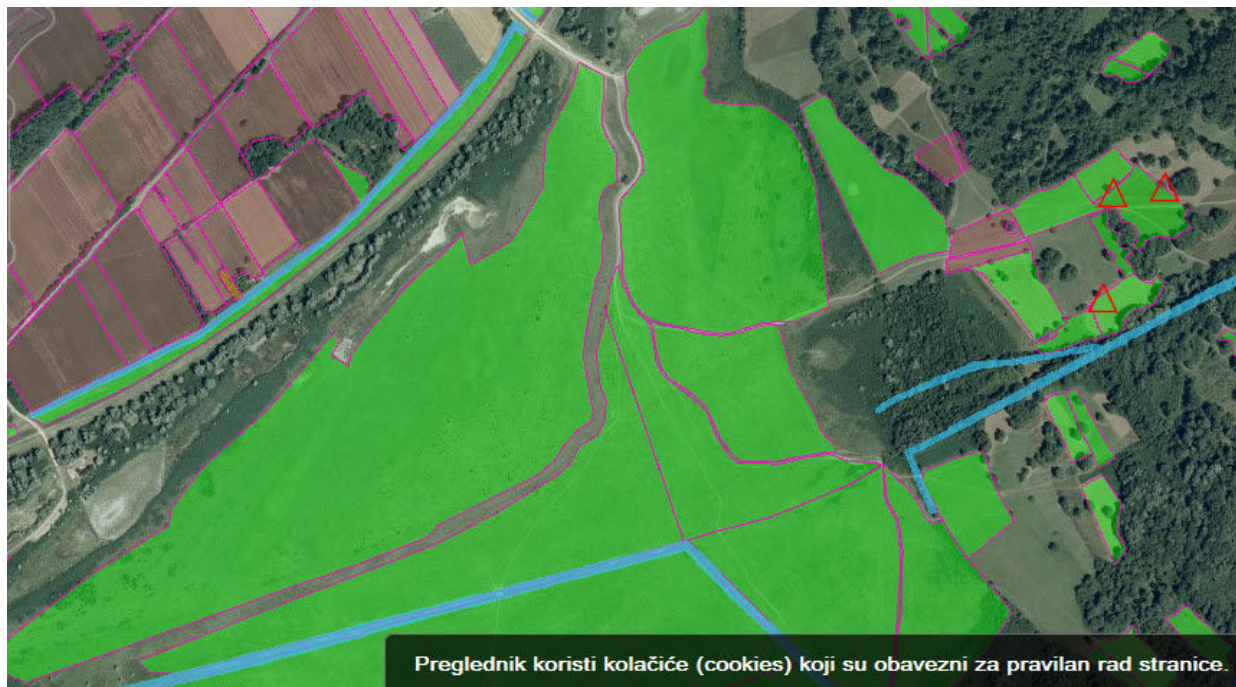
## Gajna – place of the first Pasturing community in Croatia

Eco-cooperative Gajna was founded in 2007- re-registered as Pasturing community in 2012. Management plan created for Common pasture Gajna in 2012.- approved by Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection



*Pašnjačka zajednica osnivanje 25.02.2012.*





June 2015 - For the first time common pastures regulated and encribed in LPIS – although in small proportions

Individuals given an ideal portion of common pastures according to the number of cattle they own.

Out of 10.406,10 ha of common pastures in land register belonging to - 4.750,77 ha is assigned - 45,65 %.

228 claims – 1 cooperative and 227 individuals

## Differences in LPIS –

9 Individual enscriptions at Bara Dvorina common pasture

Cooperative enscription at Gajna common pasture – 1 cooperative with 15 members

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## Most important threats for common grazing in Croatia

1. Unclear legal regimes in governance and land tenure of former common grounds + overlapping of jurisdictions (water and forest companies, municipalities, nature protection bodies, local communities...) impeding eligibility for subsidies

Without a solution of land eligibility rules for CAP support in particular, even the most perfect set of EU or national subsidies would be wasted. An organizational structure that can administer the agri-environment measures and payments to farmers is still undercapacited. Lack of coordination between Land Agency and Payment Agency

2. Disappearance of the last generation of pastoralists, population decrease and isolation in the rural areas , social stigma

Economic and the the social conditions in areas where common grazing still exist are very unfavourable, most of them being in the so called Areas of special state concern. These areas are in most cases also affected by the war in the 1990's and have suffered additional war related depopulation. The traditional knowledge of extensive grazing regimes and conditions is disappearing since there is no transfer of knowledge to the younger generations. Shepherding wears social stigma as a practice of the poorest.

3. Developmental pressures – intensive agriculture, unsustainable tourism, land purchase

Croatia is not an exemption in transitional societies and is affected by the new type of economy favoring the interests of capital and big corporations.

# Future – uncertainties and certainties



## What is uncertain?

- Legal – How will the new Ordinance on Conditions for Submitting Requirements and Criteria for the Lease of Communal Pastures shape the future of common grasslands ?
- Financial – subsidies in 2015/2016 – will they be paid or not for common pastures? Uncertainties already voiced at Paying Agency – common pastures difficult to control

## What is certain?

Links , mutual understanding and sync between policies and actors involved are very weak but pivotal for finding viable solutions. Economic support most important and urgent but should be followed with sets of measures aimed at support towards sustaining social and cultural values connected towards common grazing.