La Cañada

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Editorial – Recent seminars in Brussels

Bob Gibbons

Hay meadows and woodland – a landscape rich in wildlife – in the Vercors Mountains, near Château-Bernard in eastern France.

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The integration of forestry, biodiversity and agricultural concerns on High Nature Value open grazed land – Brussels 5th February 2003

This seminar, part-funded by DG Agriculture under its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Information Actions programme, aimed to explore two aspects of the relationship between grazing, open habitats, woods and biodiversity:

- how best to integrate the Rural Development Regulation afforestation measure with the biodiversity needs of open farmed habitats and the socio-economic needs of low-intensity farmers;
- how to use the instruments of the CAP to maintain and promote grazing and other agricultural practices in woodlands and wood pastures where this is beneficial.

Midway through the term of the Agenda 2000 reform was an ideal time to look at how far we have come down the road of integration and what further opportunities there might be to make further progress. This seminar provided an opportunity for around 50 participants to explore a spectrum of different themes, perspectives and geographical conditions in Europe, revealing some unexpected as well as more familiar aspects of the agriculture/forestry relationship. It was an example of the role of the Forum (EFNCP) in bringing together people from different perspectives – farmers, foresters, environmentalists, government officials and others – confronting broad policy objectives and theory with practical experience on the ground. The timing in February sharpened some of the discussion. Not only were we in the midst of a debate about the implications of the Commission's Mid-Term Review proposals, especially on decoupling, 2003 is also the year for the evaluation of the Rural Development Regulation, which is of importance for both agriculture and forestry. Furthermore, a new debate on carbon sequestration and changing land uses in Europe is looming on the horizon. This could have major implications for forestry and marginal farm land in the long term.

Background to the seminar

The Agenda 2000 reform puts the concept of Integrated Rural Development at the heart of the CAP. In their Rural Development Plans, Member States have to take a territorial view of the needs of rural areas, using a suite of possible instruments to move towards a set of coherent goals. Afforestation, agri-environment, Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) and the other measures are all tools to achieve a common set of environmental, social and economic objectives.

In the case of forestry and open grazed

landscapes this is a very new concept. Despite being part of the same landscapes, agricultural land and woods and forests have in the past often been treated quite separately. Countries have had forestry policies and agricultural policies; sometimes forestry departments are not part even part of the same Government ministry as farming. On the national and EU scale, there are agricultural lobbies and separate forestry interests; even environmental NGOs sometimes have separate forestry and agricultural sections.

On the ground, however, the situation has always been much more complicated. In some countries, such as those of Scandinavia, farmers and foresters are one and the same people. In others, farming systems traditionally use woods as a central part of the grazing resource. Latterly, many farmers have been involved with afforestation and other CAP forestry measures. And so, in practice, woods and forests are an integral part of the so-called multifunctional 'European Model of Farming'.

On the other hand, there are still plenty of potential conflict areas. Institutional divisions between forestry and agriculture are difficult to overcome. Grazing has in some areas caused the gradual erosion of woodland resources by preventing regeneration, while in others the lack of grazing has led to forest encroachment and the loss of characteristic and valuable open habitats and landscapes.

The environmental consequences of afforestation can be severe. Plantations of pine and eucalyptus in Iberia and Sitka spruce and other exotic conifers in Britain and Ireland have both been the subjects of highly-charged debates in the last few decades as open areas of High Nature Value (often Natura 2000 habitats) were afforested.

High Nature Value farming areas are particularly sensitive to these important questions. Farming is so economically and socially vulnerable that beneficial grazing practices are always in danger of being lost, whether to abandonment (in the case of wood pastures) or to afforestation (in the case of grasslands and heaths). Afforestation has a degree of permanence and disruption of what went before that sets it apart from the agricultural expansions and contractions of the past. David Baldock summarises the seminar (page 4) and the main part of this issue of *La Cañada* is devoted to the papers presented; it also forms the report to DG Agriculture (a condition of their financial support). All the abstracts of papers are already on the web-site (www.efncp.org) together with as a list of participants and their contact details.

Roles and Instruments for the First Pillar of the CAP – Brussels 4th March 2003

Organised jointly by EFNCP, WWF and Stichting Natuur en Milieu. the aim of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for experts from a range of interests (economic, farming, environment and national implementation of policy) to present their views, interests and concerns on the Commission's proposal to introduce the single payment scheme (see *La Cañada* 16).

Economists and those promoting the free-market predictably felt that in principle decoupling of payments has to be a good thing because support directly linked to production distorts both the farmer 's choice and market prices.

They saw four potential benefits: market orientation, reducing trade distortions, gains for the environment and simplification. Although questioned were raised about the last two respectively by environmentalists and farmers.

Concern tended to be limited to issues to do with the way the new scheme might be implemented, particularly in relation to land transfers and the potential implications of the trading of single payment rights. A particular worry was the implication for land values. Preventing sectors historically outside of the current system of EU support (such as vegetables) being marginalised or disadvantaged also emerged as a consideration (they might want a free-market – but not too free!). Despite these concerns, there was the clear opinion that if this ground-breaking proposal were to be introduced it should be done fully and not partially (either within or across sectors).

Rather large assumptions about the environmental implications were held by this group. They basically assumed that market driven agriculture has to be better *per se* for the environment than subsidised production.

Farmers representatives, with the well-known exception of England and Wales, were wary of the proposals, being sceptical of both where these initial changes were leading (in the context of further reforms) and of the claims that bureaucracy would reduce. They were also sensitive about the degree to which new levels of cross-compliance might be introduced, especially in relation to current definitions of 'good farming practice' and the implications this could have for agri-environment actions. In relation to the environment they could see few clear benefits and predicted a range of possible negative impacts, specifically the continuation of (or certainly little reduction in) intensive production methods in the most fertile and best located farmland and considerable potential for abandonment of production in marginally viable areas.

These same themes were also emphasised by the presentation from France outlining the impacts of de-coupling on the rural social economy. They predicted that there might be a reduction in livestock production based on permanent pastures in the Less Favoured Areas, the maintenance or even an increase in the amount of irrigated production (using single payment rights to underpin capital investments and possibly even increasing production to preserve farm income) and a simplification of crop rotations leading to higher pesticide use. Overall they saw this leading to an even bigger reduction in the number of farmers than would otherwise happen, with consequent effects on rural employment both upstream and downstream. There was considerable concern that the impact studies that had been published by the Commission had all been carried out using macro-economic supply models, all with similar information and none included information on rural social economy or the environment.

The environmental perspectives presented were chosen specifically to present differing views. On the one hand, Birdlife/RSPB welcomed the proposals because de-coupling had been supported in principle since before Agenda 2000 and the current proposals were regarded as the first step on the road to a simpler and more equitable basic support payment for agriculture.

A dissenting a view was presented by us for EFNCP, primarily with regard to low intensity systems especially in the more marginal and economically fragile areas, highlighting the potential reactions by farmers whose enterprises were barely viable (even with production support) but where nature conservation interest was very high. We presented a micro-economic analysis using real farm data from Sweden, Portugal and the UK. These showed a similar pattern of low income both in absolute terms and compared to turnover and expenditures, and a high level of support payments relative to net income. In these situations, the potential for a reduction in farming activity and even abandonment was seen as being considerable. Moreover, the potential cost (which would now have to be delivered through agri-environment payments) of maintaining benign production activities, especially in the livestock sectors, was shown to be very high if the major incentive to produce were to be withdrawn.

The round table and discussions

In a roundtable review of national perspectives (from ministries and interest groups) there was (ironically) almost a consensus:

the outcome of introducing a single farm payment is *highly unpredictable*. From a variety of perspectives, outlined below, doubts were raised about the Commission's optimistic scenario for the environment.

- While some reduction in intensity is likely to occur, the proposal for decoupling with tradable entitlement rights may also lead to the replacement of some currently low-intensity land-uses by more intensive ones, sometimes with significant environmental losses (for example, cereals to horticulture or fruit plantations).
- While a very welcome step in the right direction, environmental cross-compliance is inherently more suitable for reducing the impact of more intensive land-uses, but far less applicable to the maintenance of environmental values deriving from low-intensity farming. Also, its usefulness depends very much on the effective implementation by governments of the EU environmental legislation to which it is directly linked in the MTR proposals.
- Pastoral systems of High Natural Value consist of more than just permanent pasture with a minimum level of grazing. There is a close interrelation between their biodiversity and landscape value, and the production function. It is the latter that leads to the diversity of the former. A strategy for the sustainable future of these systems cannot be based only on regulatory measures, such as those proposed. A more positive and supportive approach is needed.
- A land-use pattern guided more by the market may indeed generate some welcome changes, for example, fragile soils in arid areas currently maintained under cereals by the CAP may shift into permanent pasture or forest. However, it is very questionable whether some of the most environmentally valuable land-uses (both farming and forestry) can be expected realistically to compete in such an environment. Realising their market potential (e.g. for quality, nature-related products) is still a distant dream for many such systems, and otherwise their economic competitiveness is extremely low.
- Policy is not the only driver of action, but it ought to be the safety net for public goods

The main issues

The issues at stake are central to the EU's own environmental goals, as established in cornerstone policies such as Natura 2000 and the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Implementing these policies in the Member States represents a major challenge that depends intimately on how European farming and forestry evolve. Yet, currently, governments are not meeting this challenge. As the main policy influencing these land-uses, the CAP is a critical factor. However, it is an illusion to think that de-coupling and cross-compliance requirements on farmers alone will generate significant progress, for two reasons.

Firstly, it is not farmers who are responsible for implementing environmental policies, but governments. These must be more active in developing legal and practical measures for implementing the EU Directives, in order to establish an effective basis for cross-compliance. Experience to date shows that some system of incentive or penalty is needed if governments are to fulfil their environmental commitments. This could take the form of a reduced level of EU finance for Pillar 1 regimes. In this way, farmers would not be penalised for the failures of their governments.

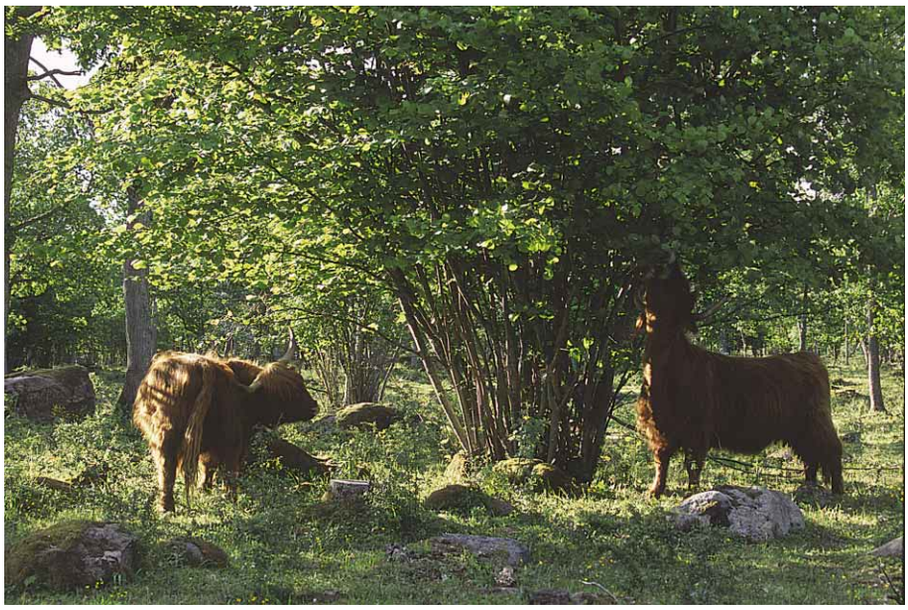
Secondly, it must be stressed that it is not just a question of reducing the impacts of existing intensive agriculture. Over large areas of Europe, land-uses survive that are not only compatible with strict environmental requirements, but that make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of Natura 2000 habitats, controlling fire-risks, conserving soil, etc. The maintenance of these farming and forestry systems is an environmental priority. In some cases, modifications are needed to increase socio-economic sustainability or to achieve a better compatibility with conservation goals.

There is an urgent need to put existing environmentally valuable land-uses much closer to the heart of CAP reform. Essential developments are to shift Pillar 1 support in favour of these systems, as has been attempted to some extent in the beef sector, and to put a far greater effort into developing Pillar 2 measures that help to maintain and adapt these systems on a sustainable, long-term basis.

Currently, the regions with the highest proportion of High Natural Value land-use tend to have the least developed support schemes under Pillar 2. There are several reasons for the unbalanced use of programmes such as agri-environment, but clearly a major factor is finance, and the fact that Pillar 2 requires a considerable input of money from national and/or regional budgets. The poorer regions, which tend to have the highest concentrations of traditional, low-intensity farming, are often not able, or willing, to finance environmental schemes under Pillar 2 on a large scale.

A paper based on the meeting has been produced jointly by EFNCP, WWF and Stichting Natuur en Milieu. It examines the environmental implications of the MTR proposals and discusses how environmental concerns could be addressed either through modifications to the existing package or through alternative approaches. It suggests that reforms must be jointly pursued in the first and second pillars of the CAP at the same pace. The report is on the web at www.panda/downloads/europe/cap2003reform.pdf and hardcopies are available from EFNCP, WWF European Policy Office and Stichting Natuur en Milieu

Eric Bignal and Gwyn Jones



Ola Jennersten

Highland Cattle in a mixed deciduous woodland in Öland, Sweden.

Summary of the seminar on the integration of forestry, biodiversity and agricultural concerns

The state of play

The seminar pointed to an increase in the area of forest and woodland in Europe in recent years, and particularly on marginal, predominantly pastoral, agricultural land. This is occurring through a number of different routes. Natural regeneration, planned or otherwise, is occurring in many regions, often associated with the abandonment of agriculture. In other areas, deliberate afforestation is taking place, generally on a lesser scale than previously, often driven by incentives from the EU and national governments. This formed one theme of the meeting. The fate and future of grazed woodlands, or wood pasture, formed the other.

There were a number of examples of traditional grazing occurring in woodland – many of them involving Highland cattle! Unfortunately, linkages between pastoral agriculture and woodland management seemed to be weakening in many of the case study areas. The integrated management of pasture and grazed woodland, associated with high biodiversity value in the all the areas presented, has been in long-term decline and is in need of revival.

The afforestation debate

Spain, Ireland and France were the three countries where the implications of afforestation were explored, with occasional excursions within the UK. A number of common problems emerged. In Spain and Ireland, in particular, a top-down approach with commercial objectives and a narrow range of tree species, had been adopted, resulting in intrusive planting, frequently insensitive to the local community's preferences as well as the landscape. While the scale and mechanisms for planting varied, in both cases there was evidence of a lack of consultation with local people. Failure to meet environmental and social concerns was not only a matter of the overall objectives, scale and siting of schemes. There were also more specific issues about the selection of appropriate species and need to respect detailed rules concerning tree density, soil treatment and site preparation, establishment methods, and the use of agro-chemicals. The net result had been damage in a number of key sites of biodiversity value and disruption of pastoral agricultural systems, including transhumance. Dislocation could arise from the planting of pastures used privately or collectively or from reduced access, with afforestation taking place on the route to high pasture in several places. It was also pointed out that where pastoral farmland had been abandoned, afforestation was not necessarily the most appropriate future use of the land.

A report from Ireland showed how progress is being made in developing more sensitive and appropriate approaches to afforestation. However, problems remain, such as the tendency to guide afforestation with conifers onto small blocks of agriculturally unrewarding pasture on farms. However, this may be the most valuable area for conservation, even the last remaining patch of semi-natural vegetation on a farm. The seminar provided examples of how codes of practice, if enforced, and backed up with the necessary resources, could become a valuable tool for guiding new planting and provide the basis for a better monitoring and reporting procedure. Methods of targeting planting to suitable sites, avoiding species-rich semi-natural grassland, for example, could be more widely used to reduce the conflicts between pastoral farming and new woodland.

Not all conflicts are likely to be so tractable or easily addressed through improved procedures and consultation. Spain was one country, but by no means the only one, where a significant proportion of afforestation was being carried out by absentee landowners in several areas. Not only were they likely to be less readily attuned to the views of local people and the viability of local livestock farming, but they would absorb a considerable proportion of the economic benefits arising from new planting. When inappropriate afforestation occurs, local communities can experience difficulties in maintaining grazing pastures, a reduced income and only a limited period of significant employment, while at the same time the flow of income from grants and timber sales accrues mainly to remote and often urban owners or organisations.

Whilst there had been considerable criticism of EU policy on afforestation of farmland in the past, it was acknowledged that there had been improvements in the relevant legislation, most notably under the Rural Development Regulation. Intensive large-scale planting in the EU has declined. There remains a question about how far it is appropriate for the European Commission to insist on specific patterns or methods of planting. There were mixed feelings on the argument that strong or obligatory EU guidelines would be appropriate. There was more consensus, however, that the Commission needs to be flexible where Member States want to initiate an innovative approach to creating woodland. Recent experiments with agroforestry in France showed how a mixture of agricultural and afforestation policy incentives could be used to generate new patterns of land use, combining trees, pastoral and cropping agriculture. There had been no problem in securing Commission approval for the scheme to create a new form of wood pasture under the Rural Development Regulation.

Whereas most new planting schemes have been taking place on marginal farm land where biodiversity interest is likely to be high, it is possible to use the Rural Development Regulation to promote tree planting on productive lowland soils if the economic incentives can be tuned correctly to local requirements. This was seen as a useful way forward; further woodland would be most valuable in areas where relatively intensive farming now dominates.

Wood pastures

Wood pastures have been a widespread land use in many parts of Europe for centuries. Their decline has been part of the broader changes in agriculture, which have produced more polarised forms of production and accompanying uses of land and habitat. What remains are mostly relatively small remnants of a once integrated landscape under a previously stable (but dynamic) form of management. Their value in biodiversity terms was emphasised in presentations covering Estonia, Germany, south-east France, Scandinavia and Scotland. In some countries, wood pastures are a last refuge for once widespread but now rare species. They have been the focus of a stronger conservation interest in recent years. However, conservation legislation does not necessarily capture the range and characteristics of different systems and there have been difficulties in classifying some systems in an accurate and appropriate way, for example under the Habitats Directive.

Whereas the main priority is to maintain the integrity of habitats and the practice of grazing with appropriate animals, this is not always easy. The inherent unprofitability of extensive cattle and sheep grazing is itself a major barrier. In Spain, where the appropriate grazing of

dehesas is essential over large areas, problems of excessive numbers of animals and lack of management were reported. On the other hand, a Scandinavian case study reported that the lack of grazing animals and withdrawal of livestock was the main management problem.

The arguments for and against grazing in woods, particularly by cattle, were rehearsed during the seminar. Grazing was essential in most cases to maintain biodiversity value and to reduce the risk of fires, particularly in Mediterranean zones, and wood pastures also had agricultural benefits, providing forage and shelter for stock. On the other hand, grazing can harm timber production and is actively opposed by hunting interests in some regions.

The growing interest in the maintenance of wood pasture, particularly for nature conservation reasons has triggered projects aiming to improve our understanding of management needs, and to maintain or revive these systems, even where they have been long neglected. The need to implement the habitats Directive had been one motive for this revival. Success often depends on changing the incentives offered to farmers in areas where livestock suitable for grazing is still available, as shown in Sweden. Markets as well as policy incentives can be important. There are opportunities to develop outlets for specialised products from wood pastures at a premium price. A living form of management with real market outlets was preferred by most of those responsible for traditional systems. This was clearly more attractive than treating remnant wood pastures as museums.

Priorities for action

For wood pastures, the first priority is to protect remnant areas and to re-establish appropriate forms of management. This can be approached as a nature conservation exercise, accepting that it will not be agriculturally viable, although a range of products may be saleable. Or appropriate grazing in woodlands can be encouraged as part of farm management, making use of agri-environment and other incentives. The questionable returns from most extensive livestock systems were emphasised often during the day – representing a major policy challenge. The need to pass on skills was also highlighted. There is scope for those who continue to practice this form of management to teach others.

Afforestation, increasingly of a multi-objective kind, will continue in many parts of Europe, both through natural regeneration and planting. Reconciling this expansion with biodiversity priorities is more than a question of steering it away from valued semi-natural grassland, important though this is.

Policies for appropriate afforestation and land-use planning need to intermesh with support for grazing and the maintenance of semi-natural habitats. In principle, the Rural Development Regulation provides a European framework for integration of this kind, which was shown to work better in some regions than others. A more vigorous monitoring and reporting system would help to reveal bad practice and EU support under the RDR could be accompanied by more specific guidelines on planting and environmental impact. There is much to learn from regions where social and environmental safeguards and codes of practice have been developed.

Articles 30 and 32 of the Rural Development Regulation can provide a helpful framework for more integrated forestry and can support a more conservation driven approach, if the priorities and targets are clear. Ensuring that the aims of integration and local sensitivity are delivered in practice is an essential part of making forestry fully accountable to rural communities as well as the environment. This is not simply a question of restricting or regulating new planting. Many speakers pointed to the need to exploit new opportunities, such as integrated farming and woodland systems, to benefit both activities.

However, there was a timely reminder that highly directional strategies for forestry, setting targets to establish a certain area of woodland cover for example, could be counter-productive and incoherent in environmental terms. Based on experiments in the Scottish Highlands, it was argued that integration between pastoral agriculture and regenerating woodland needs a holistic approach reflecting random elements as well as the product of planning. This would be driven more by small-scale and varied decisions made by different owners and users of land and could be more enduring in the long term.

Institutional change is an integral part of a more socially responsive approach to afforestation. Institutions which are capable of working with local people and appreciating their farm management, forest and environmental aspirations on a local scale would be needed in order to reconcile potentially conflicting concerns. Economic incentives alone are unlikely to achieve this.

Finally, there was a debate on how far woodland might replace pastoral agriculture in the hills and on poorer soils if this year's reform of the Common Agricultural Policy occurs as the Commission currently propose. Economic returns from forestry are poor, consequently much depends on the availability and form of grants. If there is significant abandonment of agriculture in Less Favoured Areas, would the early stages of woodland regeneration be compatible with the requirement to maintain farmland in 'good agricultural condition'? This was one of the many questions left unanswered.

David Baldock, IEEP, London:
e-mail enquiries@ieeplondon.org.uk

Forests and forestry in Rural Development

The EU Rural Development Policy

Globalisation of world trade, consumer-led quality requirements, larger expectations by society in relation to the environment, EU enlargement: these are some important realities and challenges facing European rural areas today. These challenges will affect not only agricultural markets, but also local economies in general.

The future of the agricultural sector is closely linked to a balanced development of rural areas, which cover 80% of European territory. The Community dimension in this relationship is therefore clear: agricultural and rural policy have an important role to play in the cohesion of EU territorial, economic and social policy.

The Rural Development Policy puts in place a consistent framework for guaranteeing the future of rural areas and promoting the maintenance and creation of employment. The main features of a balanced approach in the Council Regulation (EC) n° 1257/1999 can be defined as follows:

- strengthening the agricultural and forestry sector (see Box);
- improving the competitiveness of rural areas; and
- preserving the environment and the rural heritage.

The main categories of measures are:

- investments in farm business;
- human resources, e.g. training activities in agriculture and forestry;
- Less Favoured Areas and areas subject to environmental constraints;
- agri-environmental measures;

Council Regulation (EC) n° 1257/1999 Chapter VIII - Forestry

Support for forestry is regulated in chapter VIII of Council Regulation (EC) n° 1257/99 (articles 29,30,31 and 32).

Article 29 describes the general objectives (§ 1 and § 2), the potential beneficiaries (§3), the contribution to international and pan-European commitments as well as the need to base support on national or sub-national forest programmes or equivalent instruments (§4) and, finally, the reference to the forest fire protection plans (§5) in relation to Council regulation (EEC) n° 2158/92.

The most important issues for discussion concerning the implementation of article 29 are in particular:

- the difficulties to put into evidence the contribution of these support measures to the fulfilment of the undertakings given by the Community and the Member States at international level;
- the progress since the presentation of the rural development programmes in 1998/99 for establishing national or sub-national forest programmes as a basis for the support measures;
- the need to reconsider the wording of article 29.5 due to the forthcoming repeal of regulation (EEC) n° 2158/92, as announced by the COM communication on the mid-term review of the CAP.

Article 30 mainly concerns the silvicultural measures. The negotiation phase and the first experiences in implementation of the forest measures by the Member States has clearly shown some interpretation difficulties of the different indents, such as:

- 'afforestation of land not eligible under art.31' which concerns in particular afforestation of abandoned non-forest land, does not include 're-stocking of forest land' after harvesting operations;
- investment in forests aimed at significantly improving their economic, ecological or social value shall be focused on real investment measures and does not including normal silvicultural management operations;
- investment to improve and rationalise the harvesting, processing and marketing of forest products is limited to all working operations prior to industrial processing; the respect of article 47 of Council reg. (EC) n° 1257/99 is in this context of importance as such measures often are 'revenue-bearing investments';
- restoring forestry production potential damaged by natural disasters and fire and introducing appropriate prevention instruments also includes support for infrastructural prevention measures and information campaigns against forest fires as described in article 1.3 b) and c) of Council regulation (EEC) n° 2158/92, as this regulation will expire at the end of this year.

Article 31 deals with afforestation of agricultural land. The evaluation report of Council Regulation (EEC) n° 2080/92 for the period 1994 – 1999 which has been communicated to the Council and the Parliament, gives a detailed overview on the former implementation phase for this type of measure. Most recommendations given in this evaluation report are worthwhile to be considered under the present action-framework as for example:

- encourage farmers to develop diversification projects and complementary activities in relation to forestry, such as agri-forestry or agri-silvi-tourism projects;
- co-ordinating more effectively the application of the afforestation measures, agri-environmental measures and measures for protected areas;
- guarantee the quality of the advice and technical support for afforestation and silviculture in general.

Article 32 payments for maintaining and improving the ecological stability of forests are focused on forest areas where the protective and ecological role are of public interest and where the costs of maintenance and improvement measures for these forests exceed the income from forestry. The amount must be based on the real cost of the measures (between €40 and €120 per ha/year). The measures to be carried out must be specified in a contract between the beneficiaries and the regional authority. This article only gives the possibility to support additional services that the forest owner can provide in relation to the maintenance and improvement of the ecological stability and doesn't cover any possible loss of income that may result from any prescribed management restrictions in protected forest areas.

A number of additional articles in the framework of the Council Regulation (EC) n° 1257/99 are of importance for the implementation of forest measures, and in particular:

- article 38 which specifies that payments may not be made in respect of the same measure under both this Regulation and another Community support scheme;
- article 43 which requires that rural development plans shall include the results of consultations and designation of associated authorities and bodies as well as the economic and social partners at the appropriate levels; this article meets some basic criteria for setting up national forest programmes, e.g. the inter-sectoral approach as well as the participatory process;
- article 48 which asks that the Commission and the Member States ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of rural development programming and that the Member States shall submit annual progress reports to the Commission.

- forests;
- processing and marketing of agricultural products;
- various measures linked to integrated rural development.

Besides this mainstream programming, there is the Community initiative for rural development, LEADER+, which has its own programming and which is designed to encourage pilot approaches to integrated rural development in selected local rural areas (typically where there are between 10,000 and 100,000 inhabitants). LEADER+ is based on a bottom-up approach and implemented by 'Local Action Groups ' which are private/public partnerships responsible for drawing up and implementing a development strategy for the local rural area they represent, with particular emphasis on four priority themes:

- use of know how and new technology;
- making the products and services of rural areas more competitive;
- improving the quality of life in rural communities;
- adding value to local products and making the best use of natural and cultural resources.

The EU Forestry Strategy

The natural and institutional diversity of the European forest sector can be best illustrated by the wide range of ecological, economic, social, cultural and political conditions of the forest sector in the Community.

Forest management in the Union is characterised by a large proportion of private, fragmented, small-scale farm-related ownership structures in most of the countries, whereas the proportion of public forests and forests owned by private forest enterprises is predominant in few others.

Forest policies are implemented within clearly established ownership rights and with a long history of national and regional laws and regulations based on long-term planning.

The European Union is recognising and acknowledging these regional or national characteristics and particularities of the forest sector in adopting a decentralised approach to forest policy, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The responsibility for forest policy therefore lies with the Member States and forest-based commercial activities fall within the open sector of the economy.

There are, however, in the framework of several Community policies, a number of legal measures and financial incentives addressing directly or indirectly sustainable

An estimated statistical picture of the forest measures in the framework of the rural development programmes 2000-2006

Country	Afforestation		Other forestry measures		Total
	in Mio €	%	in Mio €	%	in Mio €
Austria	8	10	73	90	81
Belgium	3.5	24	11.3	76	14.8
Germany	127	30	303	70	430
Denmark	35	84	6.5	16	41.5
Greece	58	31	130	69	188
Espagne	640.5	43	834.5	57	1475
Finland	23	57	41	43	64
France	46	17	227	83	273
Ireland	351	92	31.5	08	382.5
Italy	567.5	60	374.5	40	942
Luxembourg	0.014	01	1.1	99	1.1
Netherlands	4.4	45	5.5	55	9.9
Portugal	347	55	288	45	635
Sweden	0.07	05	1.6	95	1.7
United Kingdom	175	88	23	12	198
Summary	**2386**	76	**2352**	24	**4737.5**

Accession Country programmes (SAPARD)

Country	Max. EU-Contribution 2000-2006 Foreseen in SAPARD for forestry in Mio €	in % of total SAPARD EU contribution
Bulgaria	30	8.3
Czech Republic	0	0
Estonia	1.1	1.3
Hungary	0	0
Latvia	4.6	3
Lithuania	7.7	3.7
Poland	6.2	1
Romania	108	10
Slovak	9.7	7.6
Slovenia	0	0
Summary	**167**	**5**

forest management in such a way that the European Union is nevertheless influencing significantly the drafting of the political map for the forest sector in Europe.

The growing concern of coherence and added value between the forest policies of the Member States and forest-related issues within several Community policies ,as well as the recent international policy developments in relation to overall sustainable development, have been the main driving forces for initiating several policy initiatives by different Community institutions on the design of an EU forest strategy.

Based on a legislative initiative from the European Parliament in 1997 and followed by a Commission Communication on a EU Forestry Strategy in November 1998, the Member States adopted on 15 December 1998 a Council Resolution on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union, which has identified as overall principles for action sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests.

The objective of this EU Forestry Strategy has been to ensure a more dynamic role for the foresters of the Member States at EU level by advocating a better co-ordination between their forest policies and different Community policies having an influence on the forest sector.

The forest policy players in the Member States have to face an increasing number of broader global and cross-sectoral approaches where decisions of several policy networks at different institutional levels are interdependent because individual set goals can only be achieved in a common action or because individual activities significantly affect the interests of others. It unfortunately happens that the responsible forest policy actors are not enough involved in the established institutional structures of such horizontal decision-making processes, but are obliged, later, at the implementation stage, to apply the decisions taken by these general political networks in the framework of their national or regional forest policies without having the opportunity to provide their forestry expertise at an early stage within the general decision-making processes.

Therefore, without any intention to put into question the respect of the principle of subsidiarity, the EU Forestry Strategy has been adopted by the Council in order to be in a better position for dealing with the following policy developments:

- an increasingly complex array of Community legislation;
- a growing tendency in policy making for overlapping responsibilities inside different policy sectors;
- the objective of the European Union to express itself with a single voice on the international forestry scene;
- the need to strengthen the Community internal co-ordination and expertise in dealing with matters relating to the forest sector.

The Forestry Strategy, has been in place for four years but has not yet fulfilled all expectations and objectives in relation to the four challenges mentioned above. The Commission therefore intends during 2003 to prepare an implementation report to analyse the achievements and failures of the strategy and make recommendations for the future. This report could serve as a basis for updating and revising the EU Forestry Strategy.

The conceptual framework of forest measures in the Rural Development Policy

The overall principles of the EU Forestry Strategy, e.g. 'multifunctionality' and 'sustainability' are reflected in a coherent package of voluntary measures giving added value to the implementation of forest programmes of the Member States in their regions. The forestry measures of the rural development programmes should also seek to contribute to more global issues such as climate change and biodiversity.

For the Member States and the Community, the Rural Development Regulation (EC) n° 1257/99 thus emerges as an important vehicle for implementing the EU Forestry Strategy.

In broad terms, the integration of forestry aspects in the Rural Development Policy follows three pathways, in particular for privately owned and municipality forests:

- afforestation of agricultural land (article 31);
- investments to improve the multifunctional role of forestry (article 30);
- improvement of the forest protection values (article 32).

The integrated rural development approach puts a great emphasis on linkages with other policy areas and land uses, as well as on the consideration of specific socio-economic and ecological factors in line with the following basic principles:

- **interdependencies of different sectoral and horizontal policy areas** the need to combine different interests and to achieve economic, social and environmental objectives in a coherent way;
- **regional diversity** an acknowledgement of locally distinctive characteristics and priorities, problems and opportunities;
- **bottom-up approach** an emphasis on active involvement and participation of local communities and self-help, rather than reliance on external action.

Support for forest measures in Accession Countries by the SAPARD programme

The SAPARD programme (Council Regulation (EC) n° 1268/1999) aims to assist the ten applicant countries of central and eastern Europe in making structural improvements to their agricultural and rural environment. To achieve these objective, each applicant country has drawn up a development plan in accordance with the principles of the programming approach used by the Member States for rural development programmes. The plan can include up to 15 measures set out in the SAPARD regulation.

Measure n°14 of the SAPARD regulation concerns forestry, including afforestation of agricultural areas, investment in forest holdings owned by private forest owners and processing and marketing of forestry products.

This measure is included in the SAPARD programmes approved for six countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic. In global terms, it is foreseen that €167 million, representing 5% of the Community contribution, will be used to support forest activities under this measure. Its importance for each individual applicant country varies from 1% (Estonia) to 8% (Bulgaria and the Slovak Republic) and 10% (Romania).

The main activities to be supported under this measure are: afforestation of agricultural areas, improvement of existing forest areas, investments to improve and rationalise the harvesting, processing and marketing of forestry products and support to forest infrastructure.

In relation to SAPARD, it is necessary to add that:

- applicant countries that have not included measure n°14 as a SAPARD priority at this stage are often supporting forestry activities under national schemes (the Czech Republic and Slovenia) or through PHARE-Institution Building support (e.g. Hungary - Development of the forestry information system);
- programmes without the measure n°14 may nevertheless support activities related to forestry under other categories of measures, e.g. training for forest holders (measure 11), establishment or improvement of forest tree nurseries (measure 1), forest roads or paths (measure 12) and processing and marketing of forest products, which may be wood-based but not timber as such, and includes products like woodcraft, fuel wood and forest berries (measure 5).

The role of the forest measures related to rural development

The forest chapter of the Rural Development regulation contributes to promote sustainable forest management and the multiple functions of forests by taking advantage of an integrated regional approach. This is coherent with the EU Forestry Strategy which is emphasising a decentralised approach to forest aspects in acknowledging the Member States' responsibility for forest policies and in recognising at the same time a considerable impact of some Community policies on the forest sector in the Member States. Furthermore, it should be remembered that forestry and forest-based commercial activities are operating within the open sector of the economy and that their commercial functions are primarily guided by market forces.

Integrated land-use planning for the development of diversified territories is more and more important in the context of a general dynamic strategy for space management in order to preserve the environmental as well as the social and production functions of forests. The Community policy for the development of rural areas, in embracing a broader cross-sectoral concept of rural areas and in adopting a more integrated and flexible approach, provides hereby a sound basis for the multifunctional role of forests.

The forest chapter of the Rural Development Policy contributes for setting up an effective partnership between society and the forest sector, in recognising the role of forests as a key renewable resource and in promoting the integration of all forest functions at the appropriate local and regional level. The forest measures of the Rural Development programmes are not meant to embrace the legal and political framework of the forest policies in the Member States, neither to introduce a common forestry policy through the back-door. These measures are aimed to facilitate and support the implementation of the national or sub-national forest programmes of the Member States in areas where the Member States are identifying a synergy between the forestry incentives in the framework of their national or regional policies and the objectives of the integrated rural development policy as laid down in the Council Regulation.

Forest policies of the Member States are predominantly influenced by global environmental issues, such as biodiversity, climate change and trade & environment aspects, and at the same time, by specific social and economic needs and aspirations which are mostly addressed at the local and regional level.

The linkages and interplay between an increasing number of policy areas, the superposition of international commitments, Community thematic issues and national political actors – and the increasing importance of sub-national and local entities – are all likely to play a powerful role in shaping the sustainable development of the forest sector in the coming years.

Robert FLIES, Directorate General Agriculture, European Commission;
e-mail: Robert.Flies@cec.eu.int

Ancient wood pastures in Scotland

In recent years a long-standing view of ecological history in which clearance agriculture replaced an ancient Europe-wide 'wildwood' has been re-evaluated. On the one hand, it is being increasingly recognized that in many parts of the continent open landscapes, latterly managed by humans, have been in existence since the Ice Age. In others, the agricultural phase of their history at least takes up not a few decades but thousands of years.

On the other hand, it is also becoming clear that the landscape is not, and never was, divided neatly into 'woodland' and 'farmland' and that the continent's traditional pastoral systems utilised a spectrum of habitats from grazed forest though wood pastures to truly open grasslands and heaths.

The relative lack of woodland in some EU countries such as the UK and Ireland (and hence the value of the remnants), and the administrative separation of forestry and agriculture between government departments, are two of the reasons why wood pastures in particular have received little attention in the English-language literature.

What is wood pasture?

Past issues of *La Cañada* have focused on a variety of wood-pasture ecosystems (in Hungary, Spain, Portugal and Scandinavia).

Trees in an ancient wood pasture have not grown up under a woodland canopy, but in clearings in open woodland where they develop their characteristic spreading form. Today, these veteran trees and their

associated deadwood habitats provide biological interest for a range of epiphytic lichens, bryophytes, fungi and specialist insects. By providing biological continuity with the past, the veteran trees are key in defining ancient wood pasture, as they indicate a history of continuous grazing, and so differentiate these ancient wood pastures from present-day over-grazed woods.

In Scotland, the presence of open grown, old or 'veteran' trees is key to this habitat. These ancient wood pastures occur where the woodland and its grazing system have evolved in parallel over historical time to produce a grazing-maintained habitat with elements of both woodland and pasture (wood pasture can be found over a wide range of open habitat types: grassland, bracken, rush pasture and heathland).

The upland Scottish ancient wood pastures show closer similarity to Scandinavian wooded meadows than any other wood-pasture system. They both comprise similar mosaics of wooded and meadow vegetation and are maintained by similar traditional management practices

Wood pasture in the past

The history of wood pasture as a land-use system in Scotland is still uncertain and research into this is currently in progress. However, historical evidence and recent survey suggests that it may have been more widespread than previously thought. Prior to agricultural intensification, the industrial revolution, and the Highland clearances, when pastoral-based agricultural practices were more prevalent throughout much of Scotland, some grazed woodland is likely to have evolved into wood pasture. The trees that are found at remaining wood pasture sites are often very old.

Their presence is often masked by these more recent management practices. Unenclosed examples in remote locations have gone largely unrecognised, as have those where underplanting or regeneration has infilled the wood pastures leading eventually to closed canopy woodland.

As our understanding of this habitat develops, it may become possible to distinguish ancient wood pastures from over-grazed (degenerating) woodland by analysis of the grassland structure and species complement, and other indicators of long-term grazing, such as fungi typical of unimproved and undisturbed pasture. However, post-war intensification of farming will have resulted in the degradation of wood pastures, with regeneration of tree species being limited by grazing pressure, and fertilizing of grassland resulting in impoverishment of the ground flora.

Peter Quelch

Pollarded hazels amongst wood pasture in a Scottish highland glen.

Why graze anyway?

Many of Scotland's native woodlands are grazed by livestock, rabbits and deer, often to the point of destruction, so both foresters and nature conservationists are generally wary of keeping livestock in woods. However, there is increasing interest in grazing within woodland and in wood-pasture systems that may offer benefits to farming and other users of the countryside.

There are four broad objectives where grazing animals could benefit woodlands. These are:

1. to stimulate tree regeneration;
2. to benefit particular species in woodlands e.g. netted carpet moth or the pearl-bordered fritillary;
3. to promote biodiversity value of the habitat (plants, invertebrates, mammals) by opening up the understorey and suppressing otherwise dominant ground flora species (also including some tree regeneration of some or all species present in the canopy);
4. general improvement in biodiversity (as in 3) but also with complete prevention of tree/scrub regeneration in order to create a very open pasture woodland and prevent open areas becoming 'scrubbed over' (The degree of grazing that separates 3 and 4 is on a sliding scale).

The main objective for Scottish upland wood pastures is the third - to achieve a mosaic-type wood pasture, with open wooded areas, small copses and open meadows that are maintained by grazing. The veteran trees and their epiphytes would be kept in humid but light conditions, and there would also be some spontaneous tree and shrub regeneration. Sometimes this state is achieved by chance, (e.g. in some Scottish pinewoods), but many Scottish wood pastures in the hills and mountains are too heavily grazed by domestic livestock and wild mammals (particularly red deer) for this to happen. The other objectives may be of importance in site-specific instances.

The Wood Pasture and Parkland Habitat Action Plan

The future for Scottish wood pasture requires long-term vision. The habitat was created over centuries and will need continued management for centuries to come. The existing Habitat Action Plan for wood pasture and parkland is already in progress (as part of the UK Biodiversity process), identifying actions and resources for maintenance and restoration, particularly sites affected by under-planted trees. The plan also proposes the creation of new sites suitably situated to reduce the fragmentation of the habitat and to ensure that there are replacement veteran trees to maintain the associated specialised flora and fauna.

Much of the wood pasture in Scotland is in a neglected state as a result of overgrazing, underplanting and abandonment. Restoring and maintaining wood pasture to a more favorable condition can be for a variety of reasons, but include to the following points.

Provision of wildlife habitat

The specialist old-growth species already receive limited protection in parklands designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. However, there is considerable scope for restoration and management of the many undesignated wood pasture remnants that would provide additional wildlife benefits. Important species under threat such as the black grouse and red squirrel would benefit from a larger area of wood pasture. Scotland's native red deer would feel at home in open woodland, and, compared with the typical biologically impoverished 'deer-forests' this might improve the size and condition of the animals and perhaps the quality of the venison.

Expanding or creating new wood pastures is also an option, although the biodiversity benefits would, of course, be less immediate. We cannot create instant

Classification and extent of wood pastures in Scotland

Ancient Wood Pastures (AWP), in Scotland, have only recently started to be investigated and there are still many questions to be answered. In an attempt to summarise the situation in Scotland, as it is known at present, ancient wood pastures have been split into structure types as an aid to defining the resource. These are set below.

1. Ancient wood pasture with long established open semi-natural ground flora and an element of woodland ground flora
2. Ancient wood pasture with improved grassland
3. Ancient wood pasture with rank grasses and scrub
4. Ancient wood pasture on arable, urban and other land
5. Parkland and orchards
6. Long abandoned ancient wood pasture with established secondary woodland
7. Ancient wood pasture underplanted with mature conifers or non-native broadleaves
8. Recently abandoned ancient wood pasture with scrub and regeneration
9. Ancient wood pasture underplanted with young conifers or non-native broadleaves

If we use structure as the most important defining criteria of wood pasture, then it is possible for any native woodland type or community to have a wood-pasture derivative, including the minor woodlands.

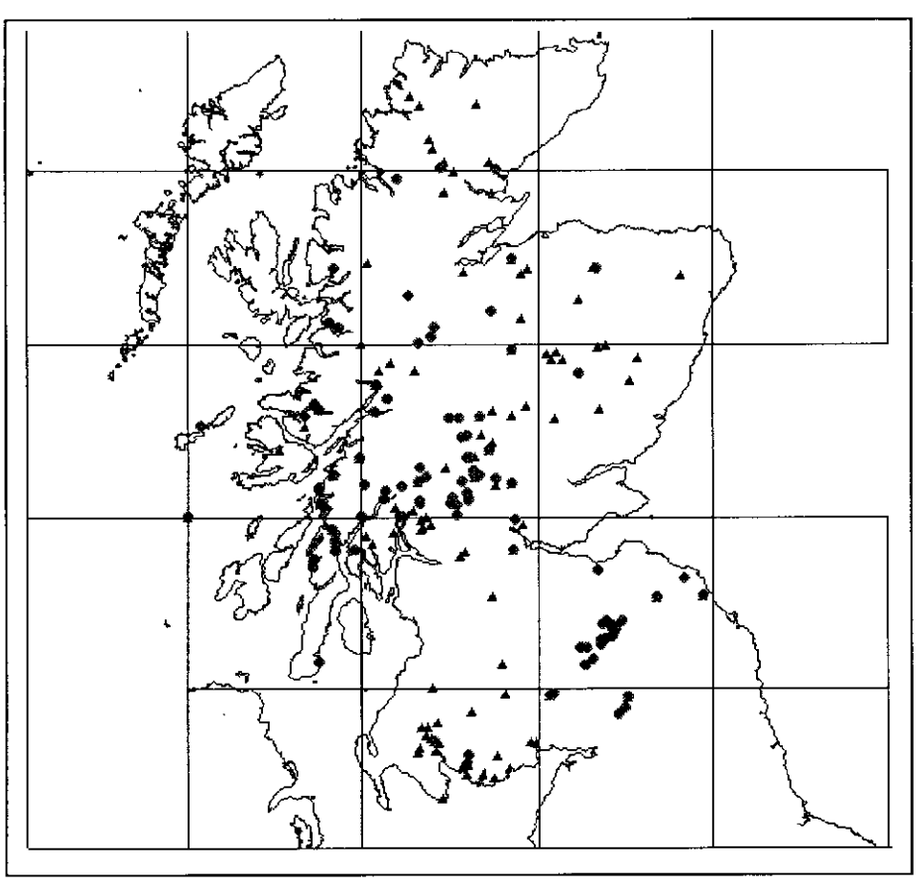
Anywhere where there are semi-natural remnant woodlands, patches of wood pasture structure can occur in a mosaic with ex-coppice, coppice with standards, and near natural structures.

It has been estimated that there is between approximately 7,000ha and 13,000ha of wood pasture in Scotland. This figure does not include infilled wood pastures or those with denser canopy covers.

old growth conditions. New wood pasture would, however, provide a useful linkage in the development of habitat networks. Scottish Natural Heritage is promoting the concept of habitat networks to reduce the fragmentation of native woodland and to encourage integration with other habitats. Wood pasture provides a relatively porous semi-natural habitat, enabling populations of both open ground and some woodland wildlife to extend across 'stepping stones' of suitable conditions.

Promotion of an attractive cultural landscape

Open-grown trees and small patches of open woodland provide habitat for wildlife and shelter for livestock, but they also add to the attractiveness of the landscape. It is often the large vistas and exposed topography that distinguish the Scottish landscape and attracts visitors.



Distribution of known ancient wood pasture sites in Scotland

Wood pasture, however, is a historic cultural land-use, that could provide a compromise between increasing tree cover in sensitive areas and maintaining views and access.

Enabling the demonstration and interpretation of historic land-uses

The land-use history of Scotland is an important part of its cultural heritage and provides links to the lives and work of previous generations. It would be appropriate to re-create and support examples of working wood pasture, demonstrating farming practices and traditional breeds of cattle, sheep and goats, alongside pollarding, haymaking and woodcraft.

Contribution to sustainable land use in the uplands

Wood pasture provided a sustainable sheltered grazing resource for centuries, while providing soil protection and maintaining wildlife and game species. Today, much of the Scottish uplands are overgrazed by deer and domestic livestock, preventing the re-establishment of native trees. On the other hand, where forests are created they usually exclude livestock, quickly alter habitats and replace the farming landscape.

Wood pasture management may offer an opportunity to reunite forester, farmer and naturalist in restoring and maintaining a valued habitat and a sustainable multiple land use. The Scottish Agricultural College is testing methods to establish trees within grazed land. Such trials may suggest ways to restore and create new wood pasture in the hills and mountains without displacing the livestock.

The future of Scottish wood pastures

So far attention to wood pasture in Scotland has been limited to land-use historians, naturalists, conservation bodies, the government agencies and a handful of interested individuals and enlightened landowners.

Work commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage is developing an inventory of existing sites, which will help to increase knowledge of the habitat and to draw it to the attention of the owners of remnant ancient wood pasture.

There is scope under the Rural Development Regulation to develop financial incentives to support wood pasture restoration on private land. Indeed, the Scottish Executive Environmental and Rural Affairs Department has put forward proposals for the restoration of wood-pastures to be included in an updated Scotland-wide agri-

environment scheme. These incentives should encourage estate owners, farmers, and conservation organisations to restore and expand priority sites for biodiversity conservation. Local communities throughout Britain have already been active, particularly in the restoration of old orchards and in conserving parklands. Community woodland groups in Scotland could play a part in conserving wood pasture, combining biodiversity objectives with opportunities for local recreation and environmental improvement.

The development of new wood pastures, as a sustainable multi-purpose land use will require the continued input of research organisations such as the Scottish Agricultural College and The Forestry Commission's Forest Research Agency. Above all, however, it will need the interest and co-operation of innovative landowners who would be willing to put theory and research into practice, marrying the benefits of trees and livestock farming. Both are vital to the long-term management of the Scottish countryside.

The abandonment of marginal agricultural land and the intensification of agricultural practice on the best land is a major threat to biodiversity throughout Europe This shift has only recently started to occur in parts of Scotland but the effects can already be seen. Grazing regimes suitable for the enhancement and maintenance of ancient wood pasture are likely to be consistent with those for other important habitats that made up the pre clearance Scottish cultural landscape.

The EC Birds and Habitats Directive includes the Fennoscandian wooded meadows as a priority habitat. Perhaps this should be expanded to include the Scottish examples of this habitat.

With encouragement, including grant aid towards such management, a high proportion of Scotland's, wood pastures and the wider landscape could be maintained in a sustainable way by farmers, at low cost and in good biological condition. This could integrate the biological cultural and economic objectives within a traditional land-use system

Mike Smith, Scottish Natural Heritage;
e-mail: mikey@eceosteep.demon.co.uk

Deciding on the balance between moorland and woodland in the Scottish uplands: an overview at the landscape scale

Visions

Most people implementing action for nature or landscape conservation have some image in their mind of the kind of landscape they are trying to create. This mental image is often based on theoretical models they have been taught in the past, and provides a 'vision' for them to work towards.

The philosopher Karl Popper in his book, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Popper 1945) cautioned against grand visions for society: theoretical models such as Marxism can be constructed, and humans then made to fit in with them. Unfortunately, this takes no account of the realities of human nature, and if the model does not work in practice then individuals are blamed rather than the model!

Popper argues that the alternative approach, a pragmatic one of tackling problems as they arise, albeit in pursuit of given aims, 'alone makes it possible to apply the method of trial and error to our political actions…….it alone allows us to find out, by experience and analysis, what we actually were doing when we intervened with a certain aim in mind'. (p. 132 Vol. 2).

Although Popper's analysis was directed at social systems, does it not also have some relevance to how we manage 'nature'? If we are working to a Grand Vision, what happens if later research proves it to be wrong, or nature refuses to fit in with it? – see Fig.1.

Perhaps we need to be more discriminatory in our 'visions'. They do have their place in landscape conservation to guide management direction, but they should be flexible and not be too prescriptive – allowing for the vicissitudes of nature!

A **Prescriptive Vision** might be; 'We want 50% woodland, 50% open ground.'

A **Flexible Vision** might be: 'We will put in a mix of species and see what happens'.

Put another way, Prescriptive Visions tend to have **defined outcomes** with respect to habitat and species composition of the landscape, whereas Flexible Visions have **undefined outcomes**.

Visions versus reality

In the past, people were unconcerned about what was happening in the wilder mountains – what happened, happened. Is there now a tendency to go too far the other way, and be too prescriptive, too

Glencoe is in the care of The National Trust for Scotland. What is the balance between treeless moorland and woodland that we should be aiming for on sites like this?

National Trust for Scotland

The Vision:
A WOODLAND NETWORK STRETCHING FROM DEESIDE TO SPEYSIDE
(based on ecological theory of networks)
1. Deer numbers reduced to allow for natural regeneration
⬇
2. Regeneration not sufficient for woodland expansion
⬇
3. Deer numbers reduced further
⬇
4. Still not enough regeneration: scarification carried out
⬇
5. These areas homed-in on by deer – regeneration unsuccessful
⬇
6. Areas fenced off
⬇
7. Mountain hares get in and eat regeneration
⬇
8. Cull of mountain hares takes place + enhancement planting
⬇
9. 'Broadleaved element' fails to arrive: planting of broadleaves
⬇
10. &c
Nature is going to do it our way, like it or lump it!
Nature is not allowed to be wild!

Figure 1 Hypothetical example of a prescriptive vision in the Cairngorm mountains of Scotland. How does this compare with the vision for Oostvaardersplassen, Netherlands (Vakblad 2002)?

Figure 2 Approaches to nature conservation. Different approaches are valid in different localities, and in conservation planning the relevant approach should be identified at the start.

1. The Wilderness Approach – Wild Nature: the Ideal?
The concept:
- No DEFINED OUTCOMES (with respect to habitat/species balance)
- Minimal human intervention (except control of alien species)
- Letting nature 'do its own thing', manage itself (it has managed itself for the past 4,000 million years!)
- Acceptance of natural dynamics (immigrations/extinctions)
- Letting plants and animals characteristic of each part of the planet follow their natural progressions

Applicable to:
- Large areas of land (but not necessarily so, e.g. offshore islands)
- Land where few economic or social constraints

Note: Perhaps we need to move away from the vision of 'wilderness' as being the recreation of some preconceived landscape pattern, towards the idea of it being the allowance of nature to decide the landscape pattern.

2. The Nature Reserve Approach – Wildlife Gardening
The concept:
- DEFINED OUTCOMES (with respect to habitat/species balance)
- Managing nature
- Varies from minimal intervention to full-scale habitat & species manipulation
- Intolerance of ecological succession

Applicable to:
- Areas where nature or cultural landscape conservation is the primary objective
- Islands of semi-natural habitat in an intensively managed landscape
- Conservation of species now rare through man's activities

3. Fitting In
The concept:
- Fitting as much wildlife (indigenous species) as possible around economic activities, e.g. farming, forestry
- Examples: conservation headlands, farm ponds, 10% native trees in commercial forests, wildflower verges

Applicable to:
- Any area of land where conservation is secondary to other land uses

'target-conscious'? Is this not removing the 'wildness' from nature? Being 'prescriptive' does assume a full knowledge of the long-term ecological dynamics of the landscape, but I would argue strongly that we do not have this full knowledge – and perhaps never will!

For example, in upland Scotland there are three possible theoretical models of what the 'natural' woodland cover should be:

1. The climax model, where woodland is seen as the climatic climax, expanding after the ice age to a high percentage cover, and staying there.
2. The cyclical model where, in a given location, woodland cycles between open ground and complete cover.
3. A natural decline model, where woodland cover declines after a post-glacial maximum.

There has been extensive work in Scotland in recent years to 'restore' native woodland in the uplands: the model people have in the back of their minds is 'the Great Wood of Caledon, destroyed by human activity'– so that putting it back becomes almost a moral duty – implementing a grand vision. Consciously or not, they believe in model 1 above.

But what if 'woodland as the climatic climax' model is shown to be wrong, or at least only partially correct? Are we not then in danger of destroying a key feature of upland Scotland, i.e. large expanses of open, semi-natural moorland and bog, with an unbroken vegetation continuum back to the Ice Age? Of converting a wild, open landscape into a 'designed landscape'?

Indeed, a large proportion of these uplands consist of habitats of European importance (dry heath, wet heath, blanket bog, montane heaths and grasslands – all Natura 2000 Annex 1 habitats). Woodland planting often means the replacement of a globally rare habitat (*Calluna* heathland and bog) with woodland dominated by globally common tree species (Scots pine and birch).

What if, in spite of some anthropogenic woodland loss, the landscape would look much the same if humans had not come on the scene, i.e. the vegetation pattern is within the range of natural variation?

Grazing as a natural phenomenon

Perhaps because the idea of woodland being the climatic climax has held sway for so long, grazing animals are seen as 'a problem'. Because they eat trees, there must be too many of them!

However, the oceanic climate of the British Isles can support high herbivore numbers; for example, feral sheep on Hirta, St Kilda, fluctuate between 1/ha and 3.3/ha (on a 4-yearly cycle), mean

1.8/ha. And recent research suggests that, the mountains of north-west Scotland would support a red deer density of 0.2/ha (Miner *et al.* 2002). This latter density of 20/sq km compares with the oft-quoted figure of 4-5 red deer/sq km necessary for tree regeneration to take place.

It could be argued that the absence of predators in Britain means that these grazing densities are 'unnaturally high'. However, in Yellowstone Park, USA, where wolves have been re-introduced, both wolf and deer population densities have increased (Levy 2002) – although this site is not, of course, directly comparable with Scotland.

The general point is that, in oceanic Britain, with little winter snow cover, there is no *a priori* reason why herbivore densities should not naturally be high – and they would be bound to affect vegetation pattern. Frans Vera has recently argued strongly that the role of herbivores on the landscape has been underplayed in mainland Europe, and that the 'cyclical model' of woodland cover would fit the facts best, with considerable areas of open ground (Vera 2000).

Upland Scotland is not directly comparable to mainland Europe, owing to the oceanicity of the climate, the generally infertile soils (particularly the absence of earthworms), the tendency towards peat formation, and the limited range of indigenous trees. Hence, the 'natural decline' model may fit better (Fenton 1997, 2002). Whether the hills of Southern Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland are comparable to the hills of northern Scotland is a point worthy of major discussion.

This then leads to the question of whether traditional livestock grazing systems on the hills (i.e. without supplementary feeding, or seasonal use of improved pasture) can ever lead to overgrazing? Some would argue not(Milner *et al.* 2002). Maybe we should direct our conservation effort more to the lowlands, where there is a definite need for it in intensive farmland, and leave the hills to look after themselves? (subject, of course, to no supplementary feeding of livestock).

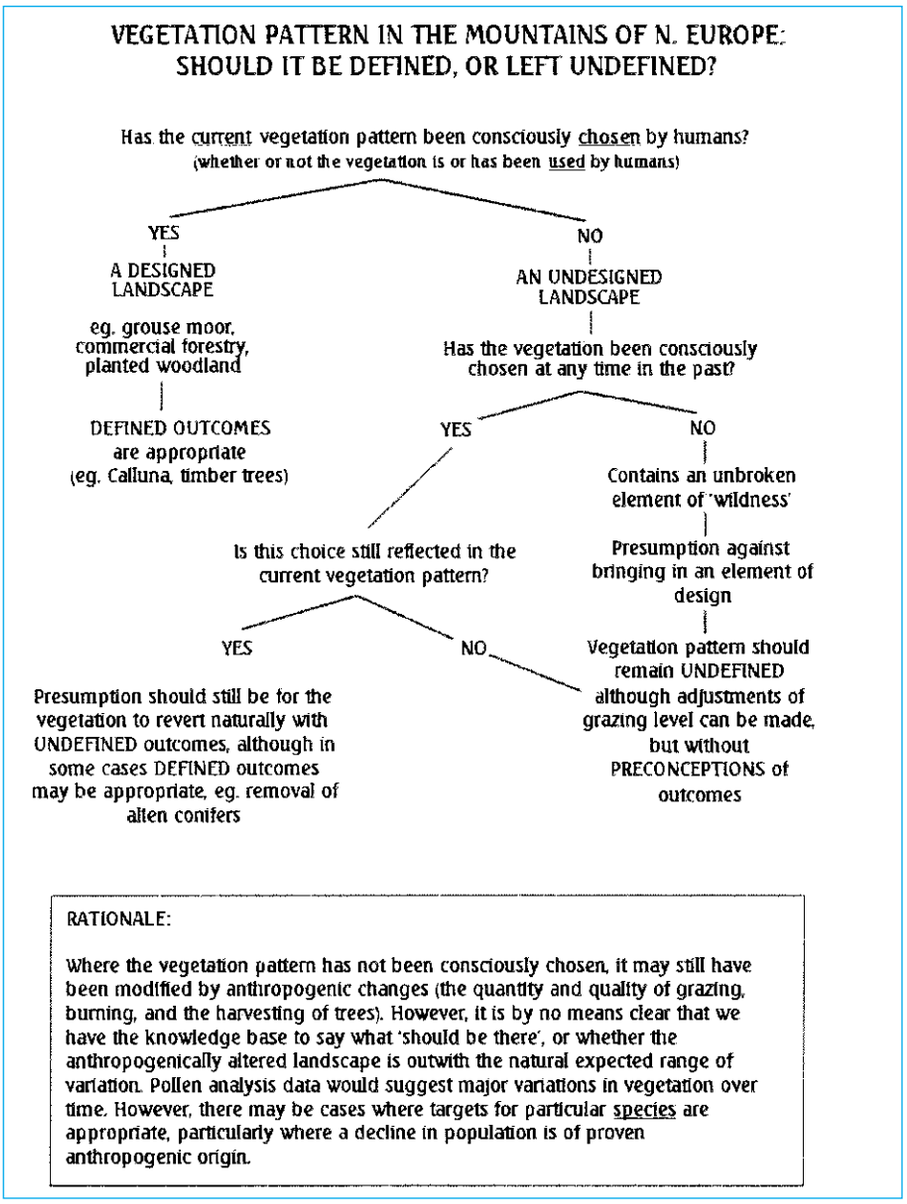


Figure 3 A suggested decision-making process to help decide which approach is most appropriate in the uplands.

Identifying the appropriate approach

Nature conservation is a broad church, and what is appropriate in one place may be inappropriate in another. Three possible approaches are listed in Fig. 2, and in any conservation action it should be decided at the outset which approach is most appropriate, and a rationale produced. To help decide this, Fig. 3 shows a possible decision-making tree appropriate to the uplands.

In conclusion, I am suggesting here that, although there may be a few localities where woodland creation might be appropriate owing to proven anthropogenic loss, i.e. 'defined outcomes' (Approach 2), the general presumption in the wilder uplands of Scotland should be 'flexible visions', i.e. undefined outcomes with respect to the vegetation pattern (Approach 1), with the proviso that any grazing should not be higher than that possible without supplementary feeding or off-wintering of livestock (i.e. within the natural ecological carrying capacity).

This discussion relates to action for conservation. There may be socio-economic reasons for planting woodlands in the uplands, but different criteria will then apply (Approach 3). Current institutional frameworks (indeed, any bureaucracy) fit in well with 'prescriptive visions', with their targets, endpoints, monitoring, &c. But can they cope with 'flexible visions'?

James Fenton,
The National Trust for Scotland;
e-mail: jfenton@nts.org.uk

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Additional thoughts arising from attending the seminar

It is obviously very difficult in practice to get policy-makers and practitioners to think beyond the detail! It would appear that most people seem incapable of looking at the landscape as a whole!

A conclusion I have come to as a result of the meeting is the need for policy decisions for a given area to be based on a landscape strategy for the area. This needs to be based on both an ecological and historical understanding of the forces that have shaped the landscape. Scottish Natural Heritage's Natural Heritage Futures, or the Natural Areas approach in England might be examples. Sectoral strategies (e.g. a forestry strategy) start with the mindset that that sectoral activity (e.g. forestry) is appropriate – which may or may not be the case in a given area; they should come second to the landscape strategy, and brought in where relevant.

In practice, this means identifying the Key Features of an area (eg. whether a natural, semi-natural, cultural, or designed landscape), and basing policy around these. At the moment, each sector follows its own agenda resulting, as we saw from Spain and Ireland, with the forestry sector pushing a forest policy based on its own world-view.

Instead, we need to start by looking at the kind of landscape that is present, and then decide what kind of forestry, agriculture or conservation is appropriate that maintains the key features. Of course this does not mean that we cannot change the landscape for the better in intensively modified landscapes (e.g. intensive farmland).

How this is achieved, and how we agree what are the Key Features of a particular landscape to be conserve is obviously very difficult. This is especially so in deprived areas, where there is strong pressure to increase the economic return from the land. This is where central government and the EU could help by making up any financial shortfalls. In the long-run, of course, it may be cheaper to conserve traditional landscapes, in that they may better maintain tourism, be better reservoirs of wildlife, and provide 'environmental services' such as flood protection.

The lack of any ecological understanding is particularly worrying: if we think that *Rhododendron ponticum* is a problem in Ireland or Britain, it is frightening to think that much of Spain could be covered in self-seeded eucalyptus in a few years time. Maybe we should invoke the Convention on Biological Diversity to put a halt to planting invasive, alien species? There also needs to be much more forestry money in Britain and Ireland devoted to eradicating rhododendron.

James Fenton

Afforestation in Ireland – balancing the interests

The Forest Service is the national forest authority in the Republic of Ireland. It is responsible for the regulatory, control and development procedures relating to national forestry. The overall aim of the national strategic plan for forestry in Ireland is 'to develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximizes its contribution to national economic and social well being on a sustainable basis and in a manner which is compatible with the protection of the environment'.

It is Irish government policy to increase Ireland's forest cover from its present relatively low level of 9.6% of the land area to 17% by 2030. This objective will require the afforestation of 20,000ha per annum from 2001 to 2030. Another objective is to increase broadleaf planting to 30% of total afforestation by 2006.

This ambitious afforestation policy requires the recruitment of agricultural land to forestry. The decisions taken at the time of afforestation concerning the placement and the type of forest will have long-term consequences and take cognisance of the associated threats and opportunities.

Grant-aided afforestation schemes

Ireland has three grant-aided afforestation schemes. The Native Woodland Scheme and the NeighbourWood Scheme have been introduced recently and have not accounted for much afforestation to date.

Table 1 Grant-aided Afforestation Schemes

	Primary Objective
(CAP) Afforestation	Economic
Native Woodland Scheme*	Biodiversity
NeighbourWood*	Recreation.

*There are other elements as well as afforestation in these schemes e.g. woodland improvement, etc.

The amount of maximum allowable grant aid varies:

a) with the type of land that is afforested – it is greater for land enclosed and improved for agriculture – and
b) with the tree species planted – it is greater for broadleaf species than for conifer species.

The amount of annual premium payments also vary in a similar way with the type of land and tree species planted. These payments are greater for farmers than for non-farmers.

Prior approval procedures

All afforestation requires prior written approval. Statutory Instrument No. 538 of 2001 European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Amendment) Regulations 2001 gives a legal basis to the consultation process that the Forest Service uses with prescribed bodies and the public.

The prior approval procedures common to all three grant-aided afforestation schemes are as follows.

- The application form and plan for the proposal are completed and signed by the applicant and an Approved Forester. The plan, which includes a map of the proposal, describes species layout, cultivation, fencing, fertilisation, vegetation control, and protection measures. The

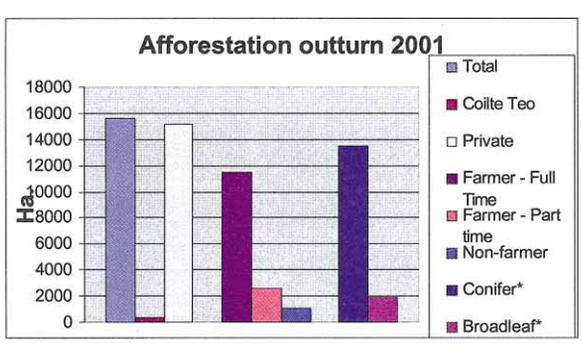

Figure 1 Afforestation outturn 2001 broken down by private/public. The private portion is categorised by landowner types, species are categorised by grant aid category. *(This conifer/ broadleaf breakdown under-reports the level of broadleaf planting and over-reports the level of conifer planting by 850ha each – 850ha. of broadleaf species are planted within conifer plantations for landscape and biodiversity reasons and are not grant aided as broadleaves.)

	Environmental Consideration	Referral Body
1	Water Quality	
1.1	Designated potentially acid sensitive by the Forest Service	Environmental Protection Agency
1.2	Area > 5.0 ha and sensitive for fisheries.	Regional Fisheries Board
1.3	Area Non-sensitive for fisheries and > 40.0 ha	Regional Fisheries Board
1.4	Area >10.0 ha and within a catchment area of a Local Authority designated water scheme	Local Authority
2	Designated Habitats	
2.1	Area within a pNHA, SAC, SPA or National Park	Dúchas The Heritage Service, An Taisce
2.2	Area within 3km upstream of a pNHA, SAC, SPA or National Park	Dúchas The Heritage Service
2.3	Area containing a current REPS habitat requires an ecological report	(Ecological Report)
3.	Archaeology	
3.1	Area contains an archaeological site or feature with intensive public usage	Dúchas, An Taisce
3.2	Area contains or adjoins a listed archaeological site or monument	Dúchas
4.	Landscape	
4.1	Area within a prime scenic area in the County Development Plan or within an area listed in the Inventory of Outstanding Landscapes	Local Authority, Bord Fáilte, An Taisce
4.2	Area with any other high amenity landscape considerations	Local Authority
5.	Size for notification to Local Authority	
5.1	Area greater than 25.0ha	Local Authority
6.	Other Environmental Considerations	
6.1	Specify	As necessary
6.2	Area > 2.5ha advertised in a local newspaper.	Local Newspaper
6.3	Area > 50 ha (mandatory EIA – provision also for sub-threshold levels)	EIA
Note:	Those in bold type require public consultation.	

Table 2 An outline of environmental considerations and the appropriate prescribed consultation body.

application and plan also identify the environmental considerations relating to the proposal.

- The application and plan are processed both by administration and Forest Service Inspectors and are subject to the consultation process outlined in Table 2.
- A letter of approval sets out the conditions of approval and the approved specifications for the proposed development.

The Code of Best Forest Practice and Guidelines.

As a result of widespread consultation the Forest Service has published a Code of Best Forest Practice (the Code) and a suite of environmental guidelines. The Code describes each forest operation, the best operational practice and its potential adverse impacts. The following suite of environmental guidelines details the required operational practices relating to the specified environmental facets:

- Forestry and Water Quality Guidelines.
- Forestry and the Landscape Guidelines.
- Forestry and Archaeology Guidelines.
- Forestry and Biodiversity Guidelines.
- Forestry and Aerial Fertilisation Guidelines.
- Forest Protection Guidelines (including forest pesticides).
- Forest Harvesting and the Environment (including roads).
- Forest Recreation Guidelines are in preparation.

Failure to comply with the Code and the Guidelines extant at the time of approval and with the terms and conditions of the relevant grant-type and individual approval conditions will result in grant and premiums being withheld.

Achieving the objectives

Ensuring that afforestation achieves its objectives and that forests are socially desirable, environmentally healthy and economically viable requires the correct location of forests, good forest design and appropriate forest operations, management and controls

These are achieved by:

- planning and design of each project in accordance with the Code and the Guidelines and the relevant grant and premium conditions;
- the consultation process with prescribed bodies;
- the public consultation process;
- landowners' and foresters' skills and enterprise – there is considerable investment in farm forester training;
- forest Service inspections – all the schemes have a high level of site inspections.

Realising the benefits

Irish forestry is not a stand-alone, self-contained sector but has linkages to, and has to find a fit with, agriculture, rural development, industrial policy, leisure and tourism, trade and the protection of the cultural and natural environments. It is an alternative land use, an agent of landscape change, a wildlife habitat, a carbon sink, an environment for recreation and not least the source of raw material for wood-based industries.

Ireland has a comparatively low level of forest cover. Until recently most forests were owned by the state. Nowadays most afforestation is carried out by farmers as part of a farming enterprise. The increase in forest cover and the increase in farm forestry pose many challenges to ensure that the correct balances are achieved and that the benefits are realised. The economic, environmental and social benefits that accrue from the expanding forest estate increase as forests become more mature and more diverse.

Noel Foley, Forest Service, Rep. of Ireland;
e-mail: tnoelfoley@eircom.net

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Foresty in Ireland – A rural community under threat from blanket afforestation

The practical experience of a local community

The planting of commercial forestry started in Derrybrien in the early 1930s with the purchase of land at Chevy Chase and shortly afterwards at Inchamore. But from these humble beginnings some 70 years ago, we have today about 50% of our locality planted with conifers (65% sitka spruce and 30% pine and the balance various broadleaves).

A strategic plan by the government for the 'development of the forestry sector in Ireland' aims to increase from 9% to 17% of the total land area planted by 2030. In real terms, this targeted 25,000ha per year to the year 2000 and 20,000ha per year to 2030. Although these targets have not been met there is considerable potential for local conflict between forestry and local communities.

For example, the Slieve Aughty Forest Management Unit, a region where the population declined by 50% between 1926 and 1996, there are approximately 30,000ha managed by the state forestry company (Coillte). Sadly, this trend continues with the 2001 census showing a further fall of 10% in the parish.

Supporters of Government policy put forward the following arguments in favour of forestry:

- forestry generates an income from unproductive land;
- attractive grants offset the costs involved in planting;
- forestry provides amenity facilities for communities;
- income and profits are tax-free;
- it provides employment;
- it reduces carbon emissions (and assists our Kyoto commitments);
- it adds to biodiversity;
- it helpd reduce surpluses.

But the critics of Government forestry policy would say that the common theme running through most of these arguments is simply economic gain. They have little or nothing to do with social, environmental or cultural benefits that would accrue to the region.

Other concerns of communities

There are several other issues associated with the afforestation programme that should be mentioned. Drainage of large areas of this part of Ireland creates siltation of rivers and streams and flash flooding; chemical fertiliser and herbicides and insecticides spread by helicopter have no limits or controls that can effectively be enforced and fire-risk increases with implications for potential insurance cover. There are dangers associated with road transportation of large volumes of timber (cf Kyoto also) on substandard roads and this, together with the changed character of the countryside (the closed-in feeling, the indiscriminate dumping of rubbish), is encouraging the remaining inhabitants to sell up and leave.

Eligibility for 'farmer rates'

In order to qualify as a 'farmer' and be eligible for the forestry premiums the applicant must:

- reside within 70 miles of the plantation
- derive at least 25% of total income from farming in one of three years prior to planting
- own, lease or be in joint management of at least 3ha of agricultural land
- practice farming within Ireland

The above conditions, in our view, are unjust from a social viewpoint. If we are to develop a properly planned forestry programme in Ireland, it is essential that the Government are aware that many rural communities are currently under serious threat from the current policy and practices.

Recommendations for the future

- Economics must not be the primary basis for promoting targets and pushing to achieve them.
- The current tax system favours wealthy investors and ignores low-income family farms. Other options should be explored. For example, why not disregard forestry income and profit for people who receive state benefits?
- There should be a ceiling on the amount of afforestation within any District Electorial Division based on social and environmental considerations.
- There could be a higher rate of grant for those living close to the plantation, with a diminishing level for those who live 5km or more away.
- Stop the blanket afforestation of farmland with coniferous trees.
- Replace the current planning and notification proceedures which operate at the moment as these are viewed by us as a complete farce and nothing more than an expensive public relations exercise.
- Review those aspects of the policy that in effect promote absentee landlords and a remote capitalist mindset that jointly contribute to the destruction of rural villages – as has happened before in Ireland's history.

Martin Collins
Derrybrien, Loughrea, County Galway, Ireland;
Mjgcollins@eircom.net

A critique of Government forestry policy

Forestry generates an income from unproductive land
In an agricultural landscape like Ireland, it is generally the most unproductive land that is highest in biodiversity.

Attractive grants offset the costs involved in planting
Who actually gains from such liberal grant aid? Certainly there is nothing to ensure that local communities benefit and the reality is that rural entrepreneurs are best placed to take advantage.

Forests provide amenity facilities for communities
This in fact is much more relevant in an urban setting. In rural areas it is becoming the case that 'open spaces' are valued higher than closed forest.

Income and profits are tax free
Many of the people who have planted land in Derrybrien do not live or work locally and have no involvement with the local shops, school and church. Wealthy investors can register their spouse or partner as a farmer and obtain premiums and grants at 'farmer rates' – this is unsustainable.

Forestry provides employment in rural areas
At its peak in Derrybrien upwards of 14 people were employed full time but today only one person has a full-time job. Mechanisation and new work practices have created major changes in employment trends. The trend of decline has not been ameliorated by forestry.

Forestry reduces carbon emissions
Even if this is true (and there is considerable debate about the value of coniferous trees), is it acceptable for a Government policy to in effect sacrifice a local community in order to compensate for economic growth in more prosperous regions?

Forestry adds to biodiversity and nature conservation
It is quite clear to those that have known the area for years that the blanket planting of Sitka spruce does not add to biodiverty, quite the reverse is true. In the past red grouse and wildfowl were common in the Sleive Aughty mountains, following planting they are virtually extirpated.

Planting trees reduces food production and surpluses
To date virtually all the land planted has been marginal, poor quality farmland of very low productivity. The important EU surpluses created by overproduction will not have been affected at all by the forestry programme.

Forestry and agriculture in Sweden and WWF's rural development projects

Ola Jennersten

In more open wood pastures in Sweden beef breeds produce meat marketed under a eco-friendly 'green' label.

Rural development means having the possibility of living and earning a living in rural areas. Typically, in Swedish rural areas agriculture and forestry are the main influences on the landscape and thereby also the main influences on the biological diversity, for both good and bad. However, today only a small portion of rural residents actually earn their living entirely from either agriculture or forestry. For WWF, the farmer is essential, as the agricultural landscape's wealth of species is largely a result of the disturbance caused by farmers' grazing animals and his cutting of the vegetation. A mosaic landscape of woodland, farmland and wood pasture contains many different biotopes and provides the conditions for many different species. As a generalisation you could say that 30% of species are associated with each biotope so the mosaic landscape has three times as many species as any one alone.

In Sweden, as in most rural areas of Europe, it is becoming increasingly difficult to earn an adequate living from farming activities alone and, as a result, the majority of Swedish farmers today run side activities in order to gain extra income. Rural development must therefore include a range of off-farm income-earning opportunities for those people that are the primary managers of the landscape.

Semi-natural grasslands

The quality of the landscape and how it looks are not only a concern for farmers but also for other rural residents and for the people that use the agricultural landscape for recreation and pleasure. In both agricultural and forestry, people have started talking more and more about the farmer's dual role – as a producer of food and as a producer of a living landscape.

In Sweden, WWF's conservation work in the agricultural landscape focuses mainly on traditional pastures, meadows and above all, semi-natural grasslands – perhaps the agricultural landscape's most species-rich biotope. This biotope requires constant management and as farms shut down and the area of land under agriculture decreases, this biotope and its many species are becoming increasingly uncommon.

In order to save the most important and valuable semi-natural grasslands, WWF starting working with rural development projects based upon farming activities. These actions are usually combined with handicraft production and/or small-scale tourism as complementary income opportunities in those areas where it can be difficult to survive solely from farming.

The central activity in WWF's work with farmers is the production of 'green' meat from cattle that have grazed on semi-natural grasslands. The meat is marketed as naturally grazed beef and has a marbling factor that is higher than normal beef, thereby making it of higher quality. This work is conducted in co-operation with ICA, a major Swedish grocery chain. In regions where it is possible, the whole food chain is included – 'from grass to entrecote', with the objective of maintaining the semi-natural grasslands, producing high quality beef with an added value of conservation, and sustaining local/regional production. Examples of such regions include the Vindel River project in northern Sweden and the Väinameri project in western Estonia.

Model projects of a vibrant landscape

WWF also has model projects in regions with particularly rich and challenging natural grazing. These projects are often started with broad inventories and interviews with the landowners and farmers in order to produce an action plan. Using the action plan as a basis, discussions are then taken up with potential co-financiers and partners. The idea is to find co-financing with the help of external support from the Swedish international development agency (for work in Estonia), the EU (e.g. structural funds, LIFE, Interreg, rural development strategy) or from the local investment programme. Examples of such model project areas include various areas throughout Sweden (Tjust archipelago, Bråbygden in Kalmar County, Närke's bird lakes and rich natural grazing lands, forests on Öland, Roslagen, and Vindel river valley), the Estonian west coast and grasslands in Russian Karelia.

The problems throughout most of the model projects areas are very similar – because of old buildings and overgrown lands, active farming can not expand without large investments. As economic gains are limited, many farmers are not able to pay for the necessary investments and are forced instead to shut down the farm. The solution is therefore to find innovative models – cheap and easy-to-use animal stalls, co-operation between neighbouring farmers in the use of machinery and animal rings, production of niche products such as naturally grazed beef, collaboration in model projects and collaboration seeking external financial support.

Over the last three years, WWF in Sweden has restored and/or improved the management of over 15,000ha of semi-natural grassland, the majority being classed as having high value. This is equivalent to approximately 10% of the Swedish government's environmental objective for high value semi-natural grasslands.

Ola Jennersten, WWF Sweden, Ulriksdals Slott, S-170 81 Solna, Ola.jennersten@wwf.se

Wood pastures in Germany – will they survive?

The historical context

Compared to many other European landscapes such as the Iberian Peninsula, Southern Sweden, the Abruzzo and Appenine Mountains in Italy and many south-eastern European countries, wood pastures in Germany are of peripheral significance, existing in only a few regions and at a very small scale. Nevertheless, there are two important points to make about them. Firstly, the long history they have, and, secondly, the increasing interest in them as possible components of low intensity livestock systems in less favoured areas.

Wood pastures in Germany – and this applies in general to Central Europe – are very much related with agricultural systems that originated in early medieval times. For more than a 1,000 years the so-called 'three-field-system' was the prevailing concept in many central European regions. It consisted of three more or less concentric circles. The inner circle was usually fenced-off to protect farm houses, gardens and orchards; a second circle encompassing arable cultivation in an alternating system of winter- and summer grown cereals and fallow. The third circle, representing as much as 70% of the community surface, consisted of common land of woods, semi-open and open grassland used as pasture for the communal livestock. Housing of livestock and fodder production was more or less unknown until the second half of the 18th century. Therefore, most livestock was kept almost all year round on the common ground or – during winter months – on the harvested and fallow land closer to the village.

Although these were the heydays of pastoralism there were considerable environmental impacts. The pastures were mostly unproductive and had a very low carrying capacity, even at a subsistence level. Livestock-keeping that depended on year-round pasturing caused heavy damage to both the woodlands and the soils. In many regions woodlands disappeared entirely. And even in mountainous areas, such as in the Central German Mountain Range or in the Black Forest, the percentage of real wooded areas declined to less than 20% of the total land surface. Such management was unsustainable and, beginning during the last decades of the 18th century, new models of agriculture were enforced on rural societies. These new systems included elements such as the housing of livestock, production of winter fodder, new crops such as potatoes or lucerne grown on the previous fallow and the division of the commons into private property.

The change to the landscapes was immediate. Pastures were turned into meadows, pasturing in woodlands was legally abolished with infringements rigorously enforced and large areas of low-productivity pasture was afforested to solve the shortage of wood which was the main resource for construction and fuel. One of the social consequences was the disappearance of an entire social class in rural population: the herdsmen.

Wood pastures today and in the future

Today, wood pastures belong to one of the rarest elements of Central European cultural landscapes. In general, the remnants of ancient wood pastures are found only in mountain areas where, because of site conditions the impact of the modernisation of agriculture has been limited by nature.

In more recent years extensive pasture systems, including wood pastures have become of increasing interest in the debate on appropriate management strategies for Less Favoured Areas in Germany. Objectives in these areas include: conserving landscapes rich in grassland of high nature value, creating areas of high biotic and structural diversity, guaranteeing a minimum proportion of open land (without trees) in the landscape; and establishing low-input pastoral farming systems that need limited financial support. In this context ,the wooded areas in extensive pasture systems are of economic interest because they replace the need for costly shelters and barns.

In a research project finalised last year and financially supported by the National Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) the role of low intensity pasturing systems in Baden-Württemberg and their ecological significance to management objectives was investigated. The study focused especially on wood pastures. Using bibliographical data, it was shown that from a total of 865 nature reserves with a surface of about 65,,000ha almost 30% of all sites had been originally designated because of their pastoral heritage often including features of wood pastures. But at present, pasturing as an essential ecological driving force is still regularly practised in less than 5% of all the sites; the pasturing of woodlands that formed parts of the reserves had disappeared entirely. Further investigations which included interviews with stakeholders (NGOs, communal and other official authorities, farmers, scientists), surveys of management plans and the analysis of official correspondence revealed the following facts.

Apparently, in several cases, the 'scientific' evidence used to produce the management plans had proved that grazing would not be suitable for achieving the conservation objectives. As a result the focus of management was, and is, on mowing, sometimes in combination with the disposal of the biomass. In this context it should be mentioned that wood pastures and semi-open grazings do not exist in the annex of the EU Habitats Directive.

The management objectives for most wood pastures (even within designated nature reserves) have changed so that they will effectively become areas with natural woodland succession.

In general, forestry bodies that had to be consulted insisted that grazing of woodlands or semi-open commons – even if traditionally practised until recent times – had to stop because of the negative impacts to be expected on the woodland plants. At the same time, these woodlands are more and more being developed into fattening areas for wild boar and row deer and this adds another dimension. The hunting debate has become a very crucial issue. In many extensive grazing projects farmers have been confronted with the argument that grazing livestock has had a detrimental effect on the suitability of the woodland for hunting.

Because grazing as a tool for the management of nature reserves has been very unpopular until recent years, no or very low financial support (deriving from conservation programmes) has been available to farmers as an incentive to manage semi-open grazings (wood pasture).

Also, farmers who do still continue to graze ground with significant portions of wooded or semi-open land are confronted with another (bureaucratic) problem. According to existing EU regulations only entirely open and productive grassland can be regarded as forage area and eligible for funding (e.g. agri-environment programmes and potentially in the LFA). This has the implication that wood pastures will continue to be abandoned or cleared.

The conclusion about the future of wood pastures in Germany has to be that communication between stakeholders has to improve, the ecological value of such ecosystems has to be highlighted by experts and officials and the special

requirements needed have to be integrated into agri-environment schemes, conservation programmes and the rules relating to LFA payments. A main obstacle that has to be overcome is the general resistance of the forestry administration to the idea of wood pastures and semi open-grazings having a dual role, partly for agriculture and partly for forestry. Currently this is not accepted and there is still legislation that can be used to abolish wood pastures.

A full set of references accompany the version of this paper on the EFNCP website.

Prof. Dr. Rainer Luick, FH Rottenburg / Hochschule für Forstwirtschaft, Schadenweilerhof, D- 72108 Rottenburg, e-mail: luick@fh-rottenburg.de

Wood pasture, abandonment and EU enlargement issues in Estonia

The historical context

In Estonia semi-natural vegetation communities occur most commonly in wooded meadows, wood pastures, flood plains, coastal meadows and alvars (windswept limestone grasslands).

Historically, the distribution of wooded meadows and pastures was very extensive, and it is likely that these represented the majority of the areas that were used for animal husbandry in the Temperate Zone.

Around about 100 years ago most of the land belonged to large estates and some small farms. Grazing was widespread with shepherds or young children looking after the animas because most of the pastures were unfenced. Grazing was carried out almost everywhere, with only the land used for growing crops or hay spared the attention of grazing animals. In forested areas, foresters were granted the right to use the forest for pasture on the condition that no goats were allowed into the forest.

During the period of the Estonian Republic (1918-1940) land reform took place and large areas of forest came under State ownership. Barbed-wire fencing was introduced and there was a gradual shift away from 'total' grazing. Permits (together with fines for contravention) regulated grazing in these forests and State foresters maintained the grazing rights. At this time farmers mostly used their own woodlands for grazing. Some woodlands were grazed throughout the summer and also used as a source of firewood – these were called wood pastures. Others were used for hay-making and grazed after the hay crop was harvested – these were called wooded meadows or hay-yards.

The ideology of 'modern' intensive forestry was present but it was not dominant. Trees were still cut by hand and the wood pastures and meadows would never be logged completely bare. This is particularly important, since natural regeneration of the trees was very limited. It was primarily trees that were already revealing signs of desiccation that were cut down. Most of the re-growth from stumps was cut back every couple of years, leaving one or two strong stems to produce new trees from ancient stumps

The Soviet period

In the Soviet period (1940-1990) farmers were evicted from their land and were often deported to Siberia. Large collective farms were created by force. Intensity of forest management increased with large areas felled and an increase in the amount of new planting. At the same time, the intensity of agricultural production increased and associated with this were huge drainage projects, forest clearance and the introduction of new commercial breeds of domestic animals suited to intensive production. Traditional practices such as grazing the forests decreased and the use of wooded meadows (hay-yards) declined to virtually nothing. In 1960, there were 200,000ha of wood pastures recorded.

The post-independence period

When Estonia became independent again a new land reform began with the objective of privatising the land and returning it to farmers. But the rapid and radical shift from State managed and supported agriculture to a market economy, coupled with the abolition of agricultural support, has resulted in a rapid decline in production. The land abandonment associated with this decline has resulted in large-scale over-growth of traditional open landscapes as well as in the remaining wood pastures. This trend continues at the present time.

Because of concern about the impacts of these changes on bio-diversity a support scheme has been developed with the aim of restoring the semi-natural plant communities associated with the traditional forest and farm management practices.

The total annual support paid for this by the Ministry of Environment is 19 million EEK (€1.2 million). In 2001, 1,513ha received management support and in 2002 it was estimated there were 1708ha of wood pastures under active management. Most of these areas are situated in the western part of Estonia and this figure compares with 200,000ha in 1960.

The effect of grazing in the woodlands can be summarized as follows:

- the reduced regeneration of young trees (especially conifers) and bushes is keeping the woodlands more open;
- at the moment with Estonian woodlands in their present state this grazing is positive for biodiversity;
- in some sites grazing (for example, with hardy beef cattle) can be economically more viable than just using the woodlands for producing timber;
- the wood pastures and wooded meadows represent good examples of multifunctional sustainable land use, having economic, social and environmental benefits.

With the enlargement of the European Union it will be essential for the new agricultural policy to ensure that there are possibilities for extensive farming of this kind to continue to be viable. If this is to happen support for rural development, especially agri-environmental measures must increase. Traditional practices like grazing and mowing within woodlands must get sufficient recognition and support under agri-environment (or other) support schemes

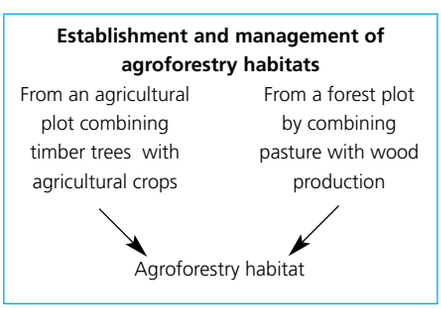
Kaja Lotman, Matsalu Nature Reserve, Estonia; kaja@matsalu.ee

Developing agroforestry systems in France

Establishment and management of agroforestry habitats on agricultural land

Since 17th December 2001, the date of approval by the Commission of the French request for revision 2001 of the PNDR (rural development national plan), an agri-environmental national measure of agroforestry can be contracted by the means of the CTE (Territorial Farming Contract).

As an agroforestry habitat is a deliberate association of trees with livestock or agricultural crops in the same place, the working group on the development of agroforestry habitats in France, decided that it would be better to have a general measure including all the forms of agroforestry.



Agroforestry habitats can be obtained either by planting widely spaced trees on cultivated or grazed areas, or by thinning intensively forest areas in order to introduce agricultural activities such as cropping or grazing. Once established, these agroforestry habitats require periodic maintenance to keep the equilibrium between both productions.

Such habitats reflect both multi-functionality, as they combine cropland and woodland characteristics, and have positive effects on the environmental quality by maintaining human activities on difficult areas.

A judicious use of these habitats, according to the conditions and stakes of the territories where they are set up can simultaneously fit with the individual concerns of the owners or farmers and some goals of the community. Diversified agricultural practices can be used to maintain these agroforestry habitats at a financial and social low cost. And the agroforestry plot will provide short-term (farming) and long-term (timber) outputs.

Proposals for a NATIONAL GENERAL MEASURE

Establishment and management of agroforestry habitats from wood plot (taken from the working group on development of agroforestry habitats)

Principle

This measure consists, for a voluntary farmer, of working on wood plots to create or maintain agroforestry habitats.

General objective

The strong increase of low-value woodland areas is a consequence of agricultural abandonment in difficult areas. This trend has lead to homogenisation of these rural areas, with a reduction of rural population and an impoverishment of natural habitats. The main objective of this measure is to reverse this trend to allow the re-opening of these areas and to develop new farming activities.

Advantages for the environment

The advantages for the environment are various, depending on the initial conditions and the type of agroforestry habitats. The environmental impact can be measured at different levels: the farm, the natural area, and why not even the planet?

- **Soil conservation** Strong thinning permits an increase in the amount of light reaching the soil and allows a faster litter decomposition. This enrichment by active organic matter prevents any risk of acidification. The leaching of nutrients related to the agricultural activities is avoided as it is recovered by the major roots system of the trees and recycled for timber production. In the short run, physical protection against water erosion is maintained by the remaining trees, and the trees generate longer term protection.
- **Water protection** Like any woodland, agroforestry systems share the environmental advantages of forests such as reducing leaching, regulation of water flow and reduced water acidification. As the standing trees are shelter for many biological enemies of crop pests and diseases, a reduction in the use of agricultural pesticides has to be expected. At the farm level, pastoral use of agroforestry habitats will reduce the use of inputs.
- **Biodiversity enhancement** The reduction of tree-canopy cover promotes both horizontal and vertical heterogeneity. These half-open areas increase the ecological conditions associated with edges, gaps or clearings, allowing the development of new plant or animal species. Moreover, selective clearings provide opportunities that favour a variety of woody species.
- **Landscape quality** Landscape analysis combines both our relationship to nature and aesthetic considerations. However, one constant fact emerges: that man always prefers diversity to uniformity. Agroforestry habitats provide patchy landscapes that hikers appreciate for the multi-coloured pathways, the open vistas and the luminosity of the undergrowth. Thanks to their horizontal and vertical heterogeneity, agroforestry habitats are not closed landscapes but ones in which there is a diversity of conditions and scenery. Finally, agroforestry plots become valued places from which the wider landscape can be appreciated.
- **Animal and human welfare** The advantage of agroforestry habitats for livestock or wild fauna does not lie so much in the quantity of forage produced, but more through the season of the year when forage is available. For example, abundant forage production under the protection of trees early and late in the season, or during dry conditions, when vegetation production is low or of bad quality in open grasslands. The trees also provide shelter for animals from sun and wind.
- **Prevention of wild fires** Agroforestry habitats contribute to management strategies aimed at reducing the risk of forest fires. Restricting the growth of ground vegetation (undergrowth, shrubs, trees) makes these systems less sensitive to fire.
- **Maintenance of an activity and a human presence** Management of agroforestry habitats contributes towards the protection of rural economic infrastructure (through resources needed for their upkeep) and helps to maintain the cultural traditions (between man and the forest) in rural areas.

Conclusion

Our principle conclusion would be that even if these kinds of agroforestry habitats need considerable financial support for their development, it is one of the rare solutions available that keeps sustainable agricultural practices in difficult areas. Despite the high costs it still represents one of the most cost-effective solutions and is therefore a very efficient way to use public money.

Patricia Detry-Fouque & Odette Manchon
e-mails: patricia.detry-fouque@agriculture.gouv.fr
odette.manchon@agriculture.gouv.fr

Developing partnerships for the management of wood pastures in south-east France

Located in the south-east of France, CERPAM (Centre d'Etudes et de Réalisations Pastorales Alpes Méditerranée) is the main center for pastoral surveys and for providing management advice. Its activities extend over an area from the Alps to the Mediterranean.

The association was created in 1977 through the efforts of pastoral farmers who wanted to both increase recognition of the role of pastoralism in the Mediterranean zone and also to help them with the future management of their pastures.

The situation of forested areas in south-east France

The area of land under forest in the French Mediterranean region has expanded considerably over the past century and a half. The continuing expansion of forested land, in a variety of stages of development, is only partly the result of re-afforestation policies. Of much more significance is the continuing decline in pastoral farming, leading to the abandonment of former pastures which had been part of the regions traditional farming practices.

The implementation of partnerships as a result of the risk of fire

For much of the historic period the activities of pastoral farmers have been quite separate from those of foresters. It has only been through the more recent risk of fire – which affects the interests of both groups in the south-eastern France – that it has been possible to begin to develop partnerships between forest managers and pastoralists.

But this has not been easy. There were many questions and disagreements. For example, the foresters questioned whether the herds and flocks could effectively control the growth of scrub, whilst the pastoralists had to be sure that managing their animals was technically and economically feasible. So, in both regards, pastoralism had to prove its efficiency.

The impact of the new collaboration between foresters and pastoralists, together with the support now available through agri-environmental programmes, is of great importance for the technical feasibility and economic viability of the pastoral farmers that use wood pastures. Through the various measures that are now available they are able to exploit new pastures (that would otherwise be unavailable) and there are new sources of revenue. Importantly, the latter now explicitly gives recognition to their activities not only for the product that they produce but also for their contribution to wider land management objectives.

An example of a study carried out by CERPAM: Evaluation of a fire-prevention project including participation by animal producers (pastoralists) in the Sine Massif, Maritime Alps

Located in an urban area, the Sine massif is one of the last natural areas in the region near the coast. A recent study by the National Forest Office (ONF) has shown that there is a high risk of fire, and that this threatens the human populations that live in the area. Local Authorities (Munipalities) have responsibility for providing measures to minimise (and prevent) these risks and for protecting both the people living in the area and the firemen that would be involved should a fire occur.

In addition, this natural area also needs to be kept as open land if the local environmental objectives are to be achieved; and keeping the area free of scrub and trees will in turn have other benefits particularly for recreational use and for hunting.

As a result, a collaborative project between foresters (ONF), firemen and CERPAM has developed a management plan for the Sine Massif. This includes recommendations for the creation of a firebreak within the scrub-growth areas and for controlling the development of woodland. To achieve these objectives the plan recommends the introduction of grazing with cattle during the winter and the spring.

Today, animal production and forestry working together to achieve each others' objectives

The collaboration between traditional animal production methods and modern forestry has also been able to achieve wider objectives notably those of environment protection, biodiversity and landscapes improvement.

Two important reasons behind why this has worked (unlike in the past) has been because all the objectives have been made clear from the outset and all of the interest groups have been involved in the discussions from the beginning. Having done this, an evaluation of the feasibility of introducing herds/flocks is made and the potential impact on forest management assessed. In these types of projects, there are contracts agreed between the farmers and the foresters that make quite explicit the obligations of the partners.

Conclusions

In Provence, and throughout much of the Mediterranean, forestry and grazing have been in conflict for a very long time because there have always been herds and flocks seeking pastures. Today, the situation is reversed, with the decline in pastoralism, the forest has been freed of virtually all human and domestic livestock pressure. As a result we now have the situation where the herds and flocks are actually needed by the foresters as a means of ensuring the maintenance and protection of the woodlands. Pastoralists are now working with the other users (the foresters, hunters, ramblers and nature conservationists) to achieve agreed common objectives.

Of course, it is not always easy to carry out these overlapping methods (and objectives) in a harmonious fashion. But it is clear that grazing and forestry now share many more common interests than in the past. The evolution in agricultural, forestry and environment policies seems to show that it is the path to follow and to develop.

Anne-Laure GOUTY, CERPAM, MIN Fleurs 6 - Box 58, 06 296, Nice, Cedex 3, France
Cerpam06@free.fr

Social issues in Spanish forestry – maintaining the livelihoods of low-intensity farmers

Integration of farming and forestry to date

Traditionally, livestock grazing has been of huge importance in Spain, although the type of livestock and the spatial distribution of grazing have changed over time. It is worth considering two sets of High Nature Value grazed lands, in the Spanish context:

- those located in hill, poor soil plateau or mountain areas and which are grazed extensively in terms of numbers of livestock per hectare;
- those in lower areas, also interesting in biodiversity terms, but within which both the intensity of grazing has increased dramatically and its completely 'open' nature been lost.

These low-lying areas are often linked with the uplands as they provide vital livestock wintering, birthing and milking locations, without which upland grazing becomes untenable. In the Atlantic part of Spain these lower, more fertile areas are the base for many dairy farms which have sustained an integrated relationship with biodiversity until the current threat and reality of complete intensification.

The different biogeographical regions present in the Iberian peninsula produce potential for highly diverse forest vegetation. For example, over 60 mainly broadleaved, deciduous species characterize the potential forest vegetation of just the Altantic fringe (Vazquez 1986).

During the 20th century, a completely segregated management philosophy dominated forestry thinking. Afforestation did not include any integration with grazing and fuel-wood production meant the tree-species employed were predominantly fast or medium growing. Between 1940 and 1983 (when processes of regional devolution commenced) over 3.5 million ha were afforested, of which only 0.9% employed native, slow growing species whereas over 41.9% were planted with quick growing species. During the same period very little was done to provide new grazing areas or maintain existing ones, in fact, public forest services only influenced 270,000ha. Thus, gradually, many High Nature Value open grazing areas were gradually lost to blanket afforestation, employing techniques such as terracing, subsoiling and complete enclosure.

If little attention was paid to livestock interests in this period, none at all was paid to environmental issues – reflected in the choice of species used and the erosion caused by forestry techniques (for example, subsoiling causing erosion of up to 200Tm/ha; Pablo *et al*. 1991).

In lowland areas, the principal problem for integrated forestry, biodiversity and agricultural concerns in High Nature Value areas has been the gradual loss of farmland and the intensification of management on what remains. Forestry has had direct and indirect effects.

a) Retiring farmers have been encouraged to afforest their land rather than make it available to neighbouring farms trying to remain viable.
b) Tenant farmers with no legally established right to remain on the land could be forced to leave by landowners when the income from forestry (mainly due to public subsidies) has surpassed the rent a farmer can afford.
c) Forestry has been promoted as an option following the introduction of the EU measures to stop milk production.
d) Forestry activities can have important repercussions on neighbouring farmland
e) The money offered and the conditions placed on agri-environmental measures mean they are can not compete with forestry incentives.
f) In some areas, small forested properties are now owned by descendants of farmers who migrated to towns. Such small-scale landowners lack the silvicultural and commercial expertise to adequately and independently manage the land once felled and thus either abandon it or place management in the hands of foresters. There is no public policy to systematically check for agricultural potential and act in consequence.

Some changes have been introduced into Spanish forestry policy and practice which could make integration of farming, forestry and biodiversity almost visible on the far horizon. These include:

- the introduction of environmental criteria in forestry plans;
- the introduction of truly integrated forestry plans and practice in some areas;
- the use of a greater variety of species for forest planting.

In the North Atlantic fringe, however, fast-growing pines and eucalypts still dominate planting, (the area planted with eucalypts multiplied by four in Galicia in the 1990s). Apart from the influence of a very strong local forest lobby, there are cases in which EU Forestry Regulations have been implemented to carefully maintain the predominant financial interest of pine/eucalypt plantations: for instance, implementation in the Basque province of Bizkaia, offers higher initial subsidies for plantations of slow growing species, then adapts the rest of the subsidies offered to the specific needs of fast-growing species.

The social and environmental implications of forestry to date

The main result of afforestation is the loss of farmland; this generates the following social issues.

- Loss of biodiversity, according to the type of farming substituted by forestry and according to the type of forestry introduced (species, techniques...). For example, the introduction of eucalypt plantations in the highly flora/fauna species rich dehesa areas of Extremadura, the introduction of pine and eucalypt plantations in the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve in the Basque Country (Tellería, J.L. & Galarza, A. 1990), forestation of former dairy farms (EHNE, 1999).
- Loss of grazing resources for low-intensity farming resulting in the abandonment of grazing in some areas, intensification of grazing on remaining lands and/or the importation of feedstuffs and fodder for animals.
- Use of EU afforestation funds can cause conflict between tenant farmers and landowners.
- Loss of job hours in rural areas: this is a highly controversial issue as the job hours available in each sector depend on the type or model of management employed, something which is spatially and temporally very variable (see, for example, Marques Fernández 1977; González *et al.* 1989). This subject needs further analysis as does the question of the overall loss/gain of income in rural areas following subsitution of farming by forestry, particularly where absentee landowners siphon off money from rural areas.
- In areas in which upland grazing is only partially lost through afforestation, new problems can arise: lower grazing pressure overall encourges growth of scrubby vegetation, and the return or increase of animals such as wolves makes pastoralism less attractive.

Afforestation payments are basically to replace those activities that produce surpluses at an EU level, but in Spain take up by low-intensity (environmentally benign) farmers has been high.

Grazing reduces fire risk through elimination of annual biomass that otherwise

accumulates. In addition, the loss of livestock farmers in rural areas (e.g. Cataluña) means there is less 'free' fire-vigilance.

Ideas for maintaining livelihoods of low-intensity farmers in the context of forestry activities

Forestry is obviously not the only factor influencing the livelihood of low-intensity farmers, but there are a number of ways in which forestry could have a positive impact in farming and thus help maintain the livelihoods of farmers. Some practical measures are needed, to ensure land for farmers.

- Public authorities have still to recognize that the most sustainable forms of farming are those with a balanced link to the land. Once the land resource is lost, whether to forestry or other uses, farmers have to import energy equivalents to the local resources lost, with a negative impact on sustainability. Thus sustainable development strategies must address this question.
- Effective rural land use planning and legislation is urgently needed to ensure farmland does not continue to be freely encroached upon by other uses, including forestry.
- Mechanisms must be introduced to maintain a market for land at farm prices and not at urban prices and to guarantee tenant farmer access to land. Such mechanisms exist in some EU Member States and an EU initiative on access to farmland is required.

Only when these fundamental issues are addressed can policies that promote integration of grazing, forestry and biodiversity be realistically contemplated.

The Rural Development Programme assessment process

Some fundamental questions need to be asked of the programmes.

- Do projects and proposals really benefit local interests or rather do they imply the introduction of external interests in rural areas with little benefit for local inhabitants? Specifically, do public funds for afforestation benefit local inhabitants or do they mainly benefit absentee landowners ? Equally, are the resulting forestry products employed in local industries or are they exported from rural areas? What is the job loss or gain of afforesatation policies for local inhabitants?
- Do projects and proposals benefit the farming community or marginalize it in economic and land-access terms? Does afforestation substitute farming or is there an integrated and integrating approach?
- Do projects and proposals benefit the relationship between farming and the environment in a social context, or do they push farming further along the road towards insustainability? Is intensification the only way to try and maintain a farm in an area in which land is continuously lost to forestry?
- A critical review of this is needed regards forestry in Rural Development (see also pages 24-26). How can powerful forest lobbies be countered to reach more balanced programmes (without, naturally, forgetting the potential of forestry as part of activities and well being). In other words, how can 'participation' be redefined or rebalanced?

In particular, the afforestation funds made available by the EU should be completely revised to include farming and environmental objectives:

- Firstly, afforestation should respond to social interests in both socio-economic and environmental terms. Its production limiting value is very little in Spain.
- Low-intensity grazing should be allowed within afforested areas both to provide grazing resources, to reduce fire risk, to provide free fertilisation, and to keep open recreational corridors.
- Afforestation funds should not be given to farmers and/or landowners when other farmers need land to meet sustainability objectives (for example, reduce their livestock headage per hectare).
- Public funds should not be available to public authorities for upland planting when extensive grazing resources areas also are needed by local farmers.
- Serious consideration should be given to the question of payments of afforestation subsidies to absentee landowners. If an absentee landowner posseses lands that could be farmed or forested, what is really the best socio-environmental option for public funding?
  - no funding given the absentee nature of landownership
  - funding because even if ownership is absentee, use is given to the land
  - funding conditioned by social factors such as direct transference of the funding to local inhabitants who work the land (as forestry or farms accordingly), even if they do not own it.

Greater attention needs to be paid to the techniques and species used in afforestation projects, particularly their integration with traditional grazing areas and infrastructures (watering points, for example), the use of tree species that supply 'servicies' other than quick growing timber (biodiversity, shelter, shade, mast, fencing material, nectar sources for honey bees, grazed areas as natural firebreaks, etc)., control of techniques that generate erosion, etc. Local implementation of afforestation regulations should not prevent use of a wide variety of woody species.

- Clearer and different statistical monitoring is necessary to evaluate the integrating nature of the forestry species employed in social, enviromental and farming terms. It is not particularly interesting to just know whether conifers or broadleaved species have been used, but rather, the growth rate of the species, whether or not they are derived from local seed banks, whether they are meliferous or not, etc.
- Attention also needs to be paid to the conditions of forest workers in social, health and safety and economic terms. Although this is not something that is needed only in EU-funded afforestation projects, it is particularly urgent given the public nature of the investment subsidy.

Helen Groome, Euskal Herriko Nekazarin Elkartasuna, Concha 11, Karrantza E-48891 (inguru@ehne.org)

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Forestry measures in Spain: a personal view of where the CAP goes wrong

Around ten years ago, 'policy makers' in Brussels decided to give new impetus to farmland afforestation in the EU by introducing Regulation 2080/92. Their simple rationale seemed to be that planting trees on farmland would reduce production surpluses and be good for the environment, while providing alternative employment for farmers. Spanish governments have a history of promoting afforestation, and responded to the EU Regulation with an ambitious programme aimed at planting up 800,000ha of farmland.

The grants were set a generous level regardless of land type, with 20 years of payments to compensate for a supposed loss of agricultural income, and any land with some recent farming use was eligible. Not surprisingly, vast areas of marginal farmland of little economic value have been afforested. Some government representatives claim this as a resounding success, pointing out that Spain accounts for most of the farmland afforestation in the EU. The original targets, in terms of hectares and Euros, have been met to a large extent.

But can policy-making, execution and monitoring be reduced to this level of simplicity, when leading to such major changes in land use and affecting many peoples' livelihoods? Does this frenzy of afforestation have any more meaningful objectives, whether social, economic or environmental? What has it all been for, and has it served its original purpose? Could public money spent on afforestation be better spent on other aspects of rural development?

The simple answer is that, officially, we don't know, because there has been no effective monitoring or evaluation of the programmes. All the new Rural Development Programme has to say in its ex-post evaluation of the previous seven years of afforestation is that it was a success: no discussion of concrete objectives, no analysis of effects.

However, working in the rural world during the same period, talking to farm advisors, NGO environmentalists, university experts, reading journals and observing changes in the landscape, one gets a feel for how things have gone. This article is based on these 'anecdotal' sources, because they are all we have.

The evidence is that, whereas the CAP forestry measures might look like a reasonable idea on paper, their execution in Spain has caused widespread environmental damage. The socio-economic benefits of the new plantations are highly questionable. Far from providing alternative employment and keeping farmers on the land, afforestation has tended to favour absenteeism.

The afforestation programme has drawn strong criticism from NGOs, and created frustration among environmental authorities, and often confrontation between these and their agricultural counterparts. Some NGOs dedicate a considerable part of their limited resources to campaigning for changes to forestry programmes.

After ten years of confrontation, the afforestation programme for 2000-2006 has been scaled back considerably, the incentives weighted to encourage planting on arable rather than grassland and the rules improved in some regions in an attempt to steer planting away from Natura 2000 habitats. But couldn't all the damage, wasted money and confrontation have been avoided from the outset with better preparation and a process of public and expert participation? Perhaps the latter would have lead to a very different sort of land-use programme, with less emphasis on tree-planting?

As with many other parts of the CAP, it is the way measures are formulated, introduced and implemented that leads to so much conflict on the ground. Too often, decision-making is guided by the influence of specific interest groups and their demands for a slice of the CAP cake, rather than to achieve clearly defined objectives.

Forestry programmes and what's wrong with them

CAP forestry measures in Spain can be divided into two areas: afforestation of farmland and management of existing forest land. Most stakeholders probably would agree on the need for both sorts of measures, but in different forms and with different aims. It is the design and execution of the measures that generates so much criticism. The following are some of the issues that need to be resolved.

Socio-economic issues

The optimistic scenario is that afforestation favours a diversified rural economy, with forest products, recreation and tourism developing alongside agricultural production. This leads to new sources of employment, while contributing to a reduction in agricultural surpluses.

- To look at it positively, the afforestation programme in Spain has injected some additional money into rural areas and has stimulated the development of a new sector, in the form of tree nurseries and tree-planting businesses. The forest management measures help to provide temporary employment for forest workers and to finance fire-fighting services.
- Other than these points, the optimistic scenario has not come about, and many people are critical of the programmes, not only environmentalists but also some farm advisors and farmers' groups. The criticisms run as follows. The great majority of the land planted in Spain is very poor, marginal land previously used for extensive grazing or occasional cultivation. In many cases, the land was already in a state of semi or total abandonment. One of the main aims and justifications for the EU programme, reducing agricultural production, therefore becomes immediately irrelevant. It seems to have taken EC officials ten years to realise this was happening. Such absurd situations sap the credibility of the CAP.
- Forests in Spain have little or no economic viability for wood production, other than fast-growing exotics in wetter areas, so the new plantations do not offer alternative employment for farmers. The EU subsidy is the only economic reason for planting trees. The same money could just as well have been used to finance other forms of land management, such as agri-environment schemes (these are still very underdeveloped in Spain).
- Similarly, the new nursery and planting businesses depend entirely on the subsidised programme for their existence. The programme has thus created a new lobby group to defend its existence. If the subsidies go, so do the new businesses that depend on them. Afforestation is thus no more sustainable than many 'Pillar 1' regimes.
- The programme has proved attractive to landowners living in cities as a way of securing a 20-year income with minimum involvement in the land, but less so to full-time farmers. Rather than keeping people on the land, afforestation payments keep people away from the land, including pastoralists who are displaced from their extensive grazings.

Environmental issues

Clearly forests can generate many environmental benefits, providing wildlife habitats, soil protection, water retention and a carbon sink. However, policy makers

need to learn that these benefits are not an automatic result of planting trees on farmland. Even though the programme gives priority to native tree species, there are many other factors to consider.

These vary from one region to another. For example, afforestation has been widely taken up in Extremadura, a region that already has around 30% forest cover and vast areas of dehesa. According to the region's Rural Development Programme, ensuring natural regeneration of the dehesas by improving grazing patterns and reducing the stocking densities is an important priority. Yet in practice, measures for addressing this problem are insignificant compared with the regional afforestation programme.

Similarly, measures that finance forest management are not necessarily beneficial environmentally, it all depends what actions are undertaken, how and when, and whether they respond to environmental needs.

The main environmental issues include:

- The most widely reported environmental impact of farmland afforestation has been the loss of valued open habitats (grass and scrub habitats), including some on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive and of importance for Birds Directive species. No nationwide monitoring has been undertaken, but an NGO in Castilla la Mancha found that around 10,000ha of one steppe habitat had been afforested within a few years of the programme starting. Reports of similar impacts in other regions have appeared in the press. The aggressive techniques commonly used (scrub clearance and subsoiling prior to planting) greatly exacerbate the impacts.
- Yet, if well targeted, the afforestation measure could make a valuable contribution to natural values by financing the recreation of forest habitats. An obvious example would be riverine woodlands, which have been cleared extensively from Spain's rivers (sometimes with support from EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, as a supposedly environmental measure!). Irrigated crops along rivers, such as highly subsidised tobacco or maize, could be replaced by 'new' riverine forests, acting as important ecological corridors.
- One of the environmental aims of farmland afforestation is to fight soil erosion. Yet causing soil erosion is a widely reported impact of the scheme. Research has shown that scrub habitats can provide very effective protection against erosion. The common practice of ploughing up scrub habitats and subsoiling before planting has a massive impact on soil structure and exposes it to severe erosion, at least during the 15-20 years it takes to establish tree cover in a very dry climate.
- It is very questionable whether the mechanised ploughing up of grass and scrubland and planting of very slow-growing species can make a positive contribution to carbon absorption, yet this is one of the aims of the programme. Meanwhile, the European Environment Agency has criticised Spain for greatly exceeding the increase in emissions of greenhouse gases permitted under the Kyoto agreement.
- Farmland afforestation has overshadowed agri-environment programmes since the early 1990s – governments find the former more simple to design and implement, while farmers understandably are more attracted to the generous 20-year payments and simple conditions. The five-year agri-environment contracts have little appeal in comparison. Hence the situation referred to above, where afforestation takes precedence over agri-environment schemes for the dehesas of Extremadura. Agri-environment programmes still have under 10% of the Spanish RDR budget, compared with 17% for forestry measures (afforestation and forest management).
- Although no comprehensive monitoring has been undertaken, NGOs in many Spanish regions are highly critical of forest management practices, including those undertaken in public forests with FEOGA support. Typically, management is geared towards production, rather than conservation, and impacts on habitats and species resulting from insensitive felling, scrub-clearance and planting seem to be widespread. One of the most widespread actions financed under the CAP forest management programmes is opening up forest roads. These are criticised constantly by NGOs all over Spain. For example, two officially proposed Natura 2000 sites in the north of Extremadura have recently suffered significant impacts from six new forest roads, affected Black vulture breeding sites. The measure acts as a 'CAP forest road subsidy', encouraging the opening up of roads that are not rational in socio-economic or environmental terms.

Policy solutions: reactive or proactive?

Over the years, authorities in Spain, cajoled by NGOs, have tried slowly to address some of the most serious impacts of afforestation and of inappropriate forest management. This has been done through reactive, controlling mechanisms, such as prohibiting the planting up of Natura 2000 habitats, or at requiring impact studies and approval from environmental authorities in the case of forestry actions in these or other sensitive sites. These attempts have had varying success, depending on the regions and the individuals involved.

Rather than introducing blanket, poorly defined measures, that then have to be controlled and restricted with considerable costs and conflict, a more positive and probably more effective approach would be to take greater care in the design of measures, building in clear objectives and mechanisms for delivering them from the outset.

For example, possible ways of dealing with the issues outlined above could include:

- Develop clear objectives and targets, and measures for delivering them. So, if objectives include reducing agricultural surpluses and improving the environmental balance of land-uses, these need to be translated into more concrete targets at regional level (which crops to reduce, which land is appropriate for habitat recreation, which sorts of habitat are most in need of recreation?).
- Environmental land-use strategies are needed to guide policy implementation. These would identify appropriate land-use changes, such as highly eroded land that needs to be withdrawn from cultivation, or river valleys appropriate for restoration of riverine forests.
- Targeting payments is an obvious way of pursuing concrete objectives. This could include higher rates of payment for afforesting land identified in land-use strategies, or lower rates for absentee landowners.
- Rather than pursuing afforestation as an aim in itself, programmes could be re-orientated towards the sustainable management of non-cultivated land (about a half of all forest land in Spain is in fact scrub or grassland). In some cases this could mean tree planting and tree management, but in others it may be more appropriate to manage land for natural regeneration of the land cover, even though this will not lead to high forest for many decades or even centuries in some environments, or through light grazing as a fire control measure.
- To avoid competition and conflicts with the agri-environment programme, it may be better to develop a single land-management scheme, under which afforestation and forestry management became options alongside other approaches to land and habitat management under a broader agri-silvo-environment programme.

Conclusions

It is easy to argue that the problems with

forestry programmes in Spain are the fault of the Spanish authorities and their crude, non-participative implementation, but this would be naive. The reality is that when a measure such as Regulation 2080/92 is introduced at EU level, national and regional interest groups quickly get wind of the payments potentially on offer. Governments come under pressure to implement the scheme with vigour, especially from those most likely to benefit (in this case, large landowners). Any attempts to exclude certain types of land for environmental reasons are met with indignation from landowners, who claim discrimination against their 'right' to payments from the EC (such a conflict occurred in Extremadura in the early 1990s, for example).

In the case of the forest management measures, it is the departments and companies responsible for building forest roads, tree-felling, replanting and fire-control that have established a quasi-right to the funds, rather than those involved in forest habitat conservation, for example. As so often with the CAP, it is the flow of money everyone is interested in, rather than the purpose of the scheme.

Once established, programmes develop their own momentum and vested interests build up around them. A new association was formed recently in Extremadura in defence of afforestation schemes, made up of landowners and forestry companies committed, they say, to sustainable development. In a region with such high forest cover, it is debatable how much more is needed in the interests of sustainable development.

But surely times have changed since 1992? Are forestry measures not incorporated in the Rural Development Regulation, forming part of integrated, balanced programmes for rural areas? The EU Regulation now requires reassuring things such as ex-ante evaluations of effects, involvement of stakeholders in the design phase, target setting and taking account of environmental policies.

Well in practice, little has changed in Spain, other than a welcome scaling back of the afforestation programme. Forestry measures are still separate, in practice, from other parts of the Rural Development Programmes, with a dynamic all of their own. Environmental integration consists of little more than assurances that Natura 2000 habitats will not be damaged. What is still fundamentally absent is a pro-active approach to generating environmental benefits from forestry measures.

Natura 2000 is particularly in need of attention: current official site proposals cover 8.5 million ha (17% of the national area), but could rise potentially to as much as 15 million ha (30% of Spanish national territory) by the time both Habitats and Birds Directives are considered satisfactorily implemented. A major concern is how to finance management and conservation measures over this vast area.

Yet much of the land in Natura 2000 is forest land (including scrub habitats), and is therefore a potential beneficiary of the forest programmes. Rather than trying to create new budgets for Natura 2000, would it not make more sense to remodel the forest programmes as conservation programmes? For example, in the Castilla y León Rural Development Programme, forest management is allocated €238 million, and finances actions that are widely criticised by NGOs for their environmental impacts. The budget for environmental actions (the budget line used for Natura 2000) is little more than a tenth of the forestry budget (€28 million).

So there is a considerable budget already available, in fact, the forestry measures absorb almost 20% of the total public funding under the regional RDR programmes. But this money needs to be spent on a different type of forest management: less road building, more habitat conservation; less tree planting, more sensitive management of existing semi-natural vegetation. The basic problem is, as always with the CAP, this means taking the money away from one group of people and putting in the hands of another group.

Finally, on an optimistic note, one local outcome of the forestry seminar organised by the Forum in Brussels may be a workshop in Extremadura to discuss dehesa management strategies, and alternatives to current afforestation policies. University experts and NGOs intend to organise the workshop for a small group of government officials and stakeholder representatives, in order to have a frank exchange of views and to explore the possibilities for modifying existing policies. If the workshop goes well, it could develop into a more permanent forum which could help to prevent conflictive forest measures in future.

Guy Beaufoy, Finca Cabrea, E-10430 Cuacos de Yuste, Spain
00 34 927 172362
Gbeaufoy@worldonline.es

The afforestation programme in Extremadura region of Spain and the environment

- The last eight years has been marked by an extensive afforestation program across all of the European Union (EU); in Extremadura 80,000ha of land has been afforested with a range of commercial tree species planted across a wide variety of former agricultural land.
- Because of these rapid changes over such an extensive area of land, an environmental evaluation of the changes has begun with the objective of helping to understand better the impact on biodiversity in areas that now have a high proportion of land planted with trees.
- In an on-going study, areas have been sampled to systematically record information on parameters such as tree species used, method of afforestation, the location of the afforestation and the development of forests in Extremadura between 1994-2000. The transformation of the vegetation in the afforestation areas is being recorded and the effects on the potential erosion control ability of the soils.

As the study only began two years ago only preliminary results are available. However, we can already make some initial conclusions about:

1. Environmental indicators of the dehesa vegetation communities. Particularly the importance of the geophytes (bulb plants).
2. The elimination of previous vegetation communities that results from the afforestation process.
3. The stimulation of nitrogen-loving plants in the afforested areas.
4. The impact on the surface horizons of the soil.

The study is continuing and more details are available from:
Ana Belen Lucas Pimienta and Francisco M. Vázquez Pardo
Department of Forest Production
S/n/06800 Merida, BADAJOZ, Spain
Fvasquez50@hotmail.com; Ablucas@aym.juntaex.es

COMMENT
The CAP and de-commissioning

The early days of set-aside enabled a few to put all of their land into 'permanent' set-aside. I have regularly visited a former intensive arable farm in southern England that has been under this scheme for about ten years. To my knowledge, no official monitoring has taken place but much of the land is now unrecognisable as farmland and has abundant wildlife. Situated adjacent to wildlife-rich woodland and hedgerows, the speed at which the transition has taken place is astonishing. The evolving, largely unmanaged mosaic of rough grassland, scrub and young woodland sits comfortably in the surrounding landscape. The farmer still lives there but I believe that the farmhouse is now the headquarters of a completely unrelated business.

So what has this to do with current debates about the Common Agricultural Policy?

Two recurring criticisms of the CAP have been that:

- despite its objectives and measures it has done little or nothing to cut agricultural production, particularly in the more intensively farmed areas;
- in the less intensively farmed areas (agriculturally Less-favoured Areas or LFAs) it has failed to halt the decline in farming, the destruction of rural communities, and the loss of wildlife associated with the diverse habitats created and sustained by traditional pastoral farming. In fact, in many instances throughout the EU it has contributed to the abandonment of farming.

Some extremist pundits (often economists, but also some ecologists) feel that if farming is not sustainable in the LFAs, then we should abandon farming there and let the high-productivity areas produce our food.

Quite naturally the rural communities that would be affected and many ecologists, are vehemently opposed to any 'down-sizing' and the debate continues unresolved. But if we think laterally about the concept of managing abandonment; or should we call it 'de-commissioning' (as in the fishing industry) it is possible to take a broader view. How would it fit in with an overhauled, rather than a scrapped CAP? If de-commissioning were an option in agriculture, where would it be most effective?

If we look at the LFAs de-commissioning or abandonment would probably:

1) have little effect on the problem of over-production;
2) have a disastrous effect on the rural communities that are so heavily dependent on agricultural activity;
3) have a negative effect on the wildlife that has evolved with and been sustained by pastoral farming systems.

However, if we look to de-commission within the intensively farmed areas – even by a comparatively small amount, it would:

1) have a much more dramatic effect on CAP;
2) have little effect on rural communities that here are less dependent on agriculture;
3) have a massively beneficial effect on the wildlife/ecology in the local area through the natural re-generation of wildlife habitats on some of the most fertile and productive land in Europe.

So how might this idea of de-commissioning work? Just as agri-environment schemes are designated, with an appropriate EU Regulation so too could 'Areas for the De-commissioning of Agriculture'. Targets for the number of hectares desired could be set for areas and/or sectors, e.g. arable, dairy and sheep/beef production. Farmers could apply to join the scheme, putting forward their proposals. Some management might still be necessary – such as hedge-cutting around boundaries and the maintenance of land drainage where surrounding land was affected. Limited alternative use of the land (e.g. rough shooting, pony treking, etc.) might be permitted.

Currently it is possible (through the RDR measures) to convert large tracts of land to forestry; but take-up is generally low except on 'poor' agricultural land. However, a different set of rules and payments might well change all that. For example, the National Forest Project covering more than 500 square kilometres in the English Midlands, aims to increase the amount of land covered by forest from 7% to 30%. Since its inception in 1995, 2,300ha – of mostly farmland – have been planted up. Here, woodland grants, other payments and support at around £8,000 per ha have already attracted many farmers and each year applications far exceed available resources. Some farmers have now planted up most of their land.

To be effective a de-commissioning scheme would need to require farmers to include most or all of the farmland. Otherwise, it would be quite natural for them to increase production on the remainder – thus defeating one of the objectives of the scheme

We should not forget that the general principle of taking land out of agriculture is not entirely new. Farmed land has been officially 'abandoned' before. Indeed, much is now made of the rich wildlife to be found on UK Ministry of Defence land – formerly farmed land. Furthermore, given the right incentives it is unlikely that there would be any shortage of farmers willing to give up food production – we only need a limited number – and the benefits for wildlife would be disproportional to the number of farms/farmers.

Perhaps the CAP should split its priorities in relation to agricultural intensity – in the LFAs focussing support on retaining the pastoral farming systems, the farming communities, traditional breeds and a rich wildlife.

Elsewhere, in the intensively farmed areas a completely different approach is required. Although cross-compliance and incentives to ensure good environmental practices within farm management will still be important, where high productivity is required we may have to accept that we can retain only a limited range of associated wildlife. Here, the CAP should combine support for production, with a 'realistic' provision for the environment and wildlife, and a targeted de-commissioning scheme.

If combined with other evolving changes to the CAP, de-commissioning high productivity land could produce huge benefits, by significantly reducing production, by contributing to the protection of farming and rural communities in the LFAs, and by conserving the wildlife and semi-natural landscapes associated with them.

John Clarke, Ivy Cottage, Lower Kemmerton, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 7HY
Jclarkekem@btinternet.com

Noticeboard

PASTORAL: the agricultural, ecological and socio-economic importance of free-ranging livestock rearing in Europe.

This Concerted Action was funded under the European Commission's 5th Framework programme and conducted in collaboration with partners from throughout Europe.
During the course of the project, the Forum assisted in the organisation, contribution to and dissemination from four workshops: Extent & Characteristics of Extensive Grazing Systems (Spain, July 2001), Impact of Scale & Accession on Biodiversity Value (Romania, October 2001), Ecological principles and nature conservation value (Scotland, June 2002) and Rural Policies in Europe: Delivering More for Pastoralism? (France, December 2002).
A series of eight Information Notes and accompanying video were produced as part of the output from the project and are intended to provide a brief introduction to some of the issues facing pastoralism in Europe today:
PASTORAL (2003) An introduction to European pastoralism. PASTORAL Project Information Note 1. 4 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) The need for a typology of European pastoral systems PASTORAL Project Information Note 2. 5 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) The nature of European pastoralism PASTORAL Project Information Note 3. 6 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) Examples of European pastoral systems PASTORAL Project Information Note 4. 9 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) Trends and threats to the viability of European pastoral systems PASTORAL Project Information Note 5. 6 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) Potential policy approaches to support European pastoralism PASTORAL Project Information Note 6. 5 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) Gaps in the understanding of European pastoralism PASTORAL Project Information Note 7. 5 pp.
PASTORAL (2003) European pastoralism: farming with nature PASTORAL Project Information Note 8. 8 pp.
Further detailed information on the PASTORAL project and European pastoralism can be found at: www.sac.ac.uk/envsci/external/Pastoral/default.htm. Copies of each of the Information Notes can be downloaded direct from the project website (www.sac.ac.uk/envsci/external/Pastoral/default.htm) or obtained by e-mail from the Davy McCracken (d.mccracken@au.sac.ac.uk). A copy of the 40 minute video produced as part of the output from the project is also available from the same e-mail address.
The PASTORAL project was funded by the Commission of the European Communities RTD programme Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources under project reference QLRT-2000-00559. The content of the Information Notes and video does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission and in no way anticipates future Commission Policy in this area.

Ola Jennersten

Over the past three years, WWF Sweden has instigated management of over 15,000ha of semi-natural grassland in Sweden and Estonia.

8th Conference of the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism

Rural Development measures and the future of pastoralism: regional problems, future management possibilities and policy realities
Reminder: It was originally intended that this meeting would take place in Montpellier in the Autumn of 2002 (see article in *La Cañada* 15 and Noticeboard in 16). However, severe delays in receiving responses to funding applications submitted by the Forum and its French partners meant that the decision had to be taken to postpone the meeting until 13-17 September 2003. The focus and venue of the meeting remains the same as indicated in *La Cañada* 15 although more up to date information is available on the website (see below). Initial expressions of interest, or requests for further information, can be sent now to: Jean-Pierre Biber, Bureau NATCONS, Steinengraben 2, CH - 4051 Basel; tel: 00 41 61 271 92 83; fax: 00 41 61 271 04 74; e-mail: Jean-Pierre.Biber@natcons.ch
The Conference Fee is €590 and this includes accommodation and all meals including the Conference Dinner and the field excursion. We propose making available a small number of places (maximum of 15) at a reduced rate of €320 for delegates that do not have any financial support, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe.
There are a number of budget airlines now flying to Montpellier and Nîmes.
Expressions of interest, or requests for further information, can be sent now to Jean-Pierre Biber (see below) and he will advise on the arrangements for confirming bookings and paying the conference fee.
More details and the programme can be found on the website - www.efncp.org

The European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism brings together ecologists, nature conservationists, farmers and policy-makers. This non-profit-making network exists to increase understanding of the high nature-conservation and cultural value of certain farming systems and to inform work on their maintenance.
www.efncp.org

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Editors of this issue of *La Cañada*: Eric Bignal and Gwyn Jones, Kindrochaid, Gruinart, Bridgend, Islay, Argyll PA44 7PT UK
Telephone & Fax: +44 (0)1496 850330;
e-mail: ericbignal@cali.co.uk