

Nature Conservation through Agriculture:

Trends in shepherding systems and what it means for biodiversity in the Balkan mountains, Bulgaria



Organised by

International Academy for Nature Conservation of the

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Agriculture in Bulgaria

- **Hobby** (pensioners, garden lovers - they apply a lot of pesticides due to lack of knowledge)
- **Professional** (people trying to make money from agriculture – generally absolutely inadequate overuse of pesticides due to old machines and lack of knowledge, still low profit)
- **Senseless** (The society does not feel lack of agricultural products, because the markets are full of products coming from China, Argentina, and elsewhere)
- **Out of tradition** (Traditions got lost during the 45 years period of nationalized economy)
- **Lack of knowledge and experience** (the people that were engaged in agriculture during the Socialist Regime are not aware of the economic side of the process. The specially educated people Agronomists and Veterinaries are only theoretically educated and their knowledge is out of date)
- **Lack of investments** (everybody who has 50 000 Euro will invest in trade business to sale cars, buildings or just small café or shop instead of agriculture)

Agriculture for conservation

When we are speaking of Agriculture as a Conservation tool it should be clear that:

- it is the right time to speak about and start initiatives
- it is extensive
- it is traditional
- very difficult to begin
- hardly competitive to the conventional one
- small scale

Agriculture... extensive

Means:

- The livestock is pastured in extensively maintained grasslands, shepherded or free ranging
- Extensive meadows with natural vegetation are mowed once a year
- Livestock is almost not treated with medicaments
- Cultivated plants are randomly distributed in small numbers and plots to avoid concentration of pests

Agriculture... traditional

Means:

- Use of autochthonous livestock breeds that are very well adapted to the local conditions
- Meadows are mowed once a year and after that livestock is released to graze and naturally manure and reseed the grass
- Transhumance is put in practice
- Native adapted species or sorts of plants are cultivated and production collected almost like wild ones
- The pastured livestock is guarded by dogs to prevent depredation

Autochthonous breeds

For mountain terrains FWFF uses Karakachan Sheep guarded by Karakachan Dogs, Karakachan Horse and Bulgarian Grey Cow. These breeds of sheep, horse and cow are very light weight thus not disturbing the fragile mountain soil more than necessary. They are adapted to the mountain climate and terrain and optimally use the mountain grass as food.



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Money for autochthonous breeds

- SAPARD Pre accession Program for agriculture (only 0,2 % or 780 000 Euro are the payments for nature friendly agriculture practices)
- The EU agri-environmental program (300 EUR per horse and cow; 40 EUR per sheep and goat)
- National Gene Fund of Bulgaria provides money for feeding the animals from certain breeds (50 EUR per cow; 10 EUR per sheep)
- Tourist product
- Special products

Problems

- A lot of bureaucracy
- Subsidies go to politically related beneficiaries
- Still unclear things
- Changing rules
- Rare breeds



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Transhumance revival

Transhumance is helping the maintenance of grasslands in lowlands and mountains. Using the same livestock to graze in mountains in summer and lowlands in winter we prevent the abandonment of the mountain pastures and the overgrazing of lowland pastures.



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Money for Transhumance

- The EU agri-environmental scheme (not working well)
- Single Area Payment scheme (working well out of plan)
- Tourist product

Problems

- It is not rationale for small herds
- Hard conditions for people in the mountain
- Big loss of livestock



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Organizations supporting agriculture for conservation Projects

- EECONET Action Fund www.eaf.org
- LIFE+ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm>
- Whitley Fund for Nature www.whitleyawards.org
- Rufford Small Grants Foundation www.rufford.org
- EURONATUR Foundation www.euronatur.org
- GEF – Small Grants Programme www.sgp-bulgaria.org
- Private donors, Zoos etc.

Business plan for agriculture for conservation project (example)

1. Writing
buy the
12 000
RSG e

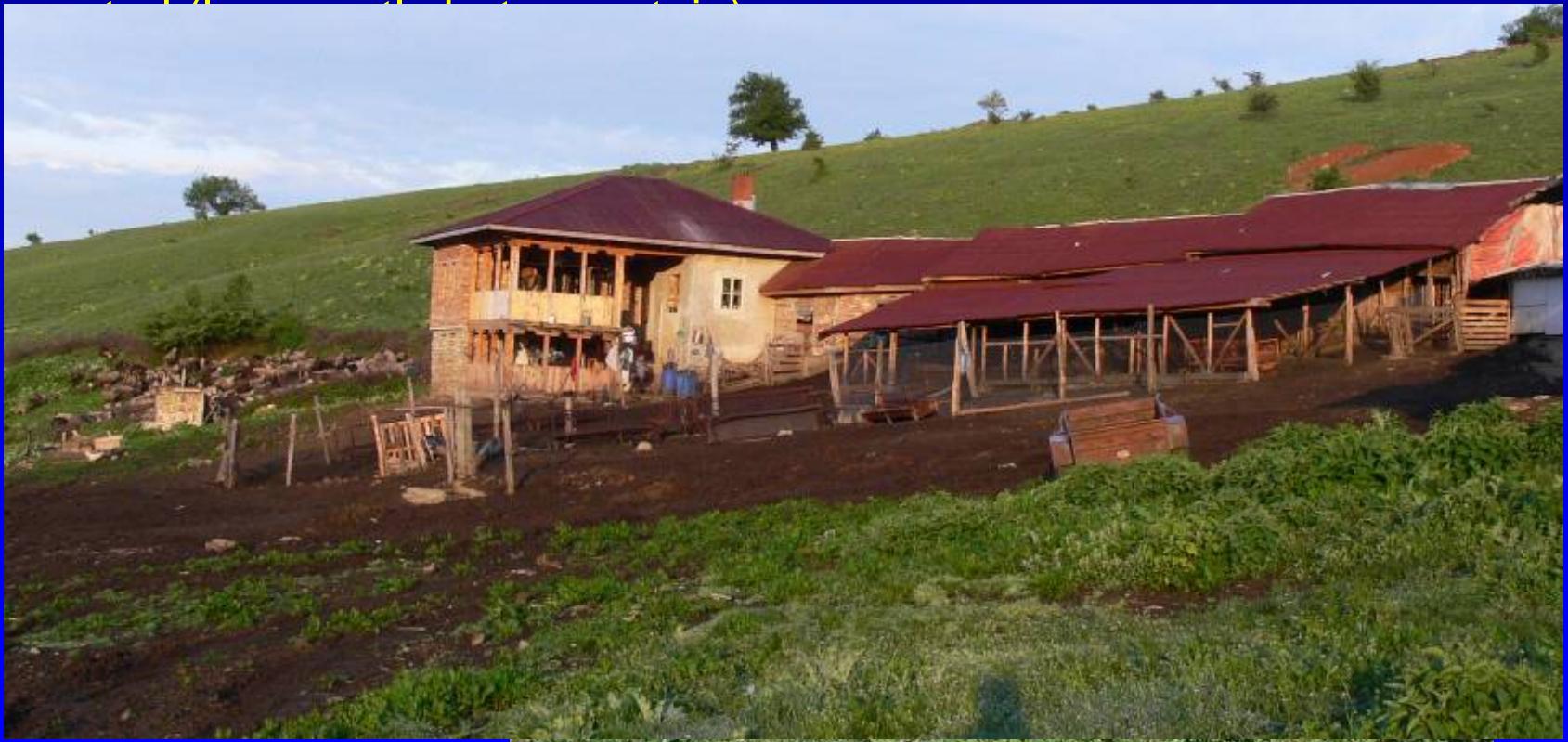
ation to
1 year –
, WFN,



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Business plan for agriculture for conservation project (example)

2. Another one small donor could provide you money for sheep barn and land (the land could be purchased through EAF or LIFE+, or could be obtained through a gift)



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Business plan for agriculture for conservation project (example)

3. After one year the first subsidies could be expected. If everything is well managed one could expect about 15 000 to 20 000 EUR income. This amount is covering more or less the expenses of the farm and is a good precondition for attracting more money for related projects. Especially where co-financing is required (LIFE+ GEF etc.)
4. The initiative is not profitable for general businessmen, but that is why the NGOs are obliged to take action in the current situation. This is because the NGOs' "profit" is the invaluable conservation of biodiversity.



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Conservation aspects

- The good point of having an extensive livestock farm is that it is permanently working for the wealth of the biodiversity.



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Conservation aspects

- Many species that are recently threatened of extinction require optimally grazed habitats and extensive livestock breeding



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Conservation aspects



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Conclusions

- The extensive livestock breeding is not a profitable practice due to lack of capital and traditions, but also due to depredation
- The small owners have no the capital and administrative potential
- The capital is invested in more profitable and less risky businesses
- The investor could not take profit if hire personal for livestock breeding
- The extensive livestock breeding is very important for biodiversity, that is why NGOs have to take action and to set farms in certain protected areas or areas with high conservation value which management requires optimal grazing.
- The NGOs “profit” will be the conservation of nature and the money raised from the farm, just have to cover its own expenses
- In the meantime the NGOs have to work on improvement the marketing and creating new products to make the initiatives sustainable even without EU subsidies for livestock.
- But the EU should find the way to subsidize the agriculture for conservation

NGOs take action to help local people in Man-Predator conflict etc.



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NGOs better understand the small livestock breeders



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Poison baits use



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Poisoning



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FWFF's Compensation programme for livestock killed by predators

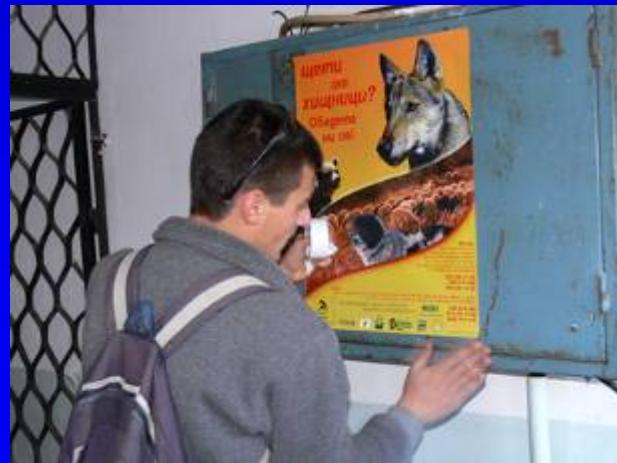
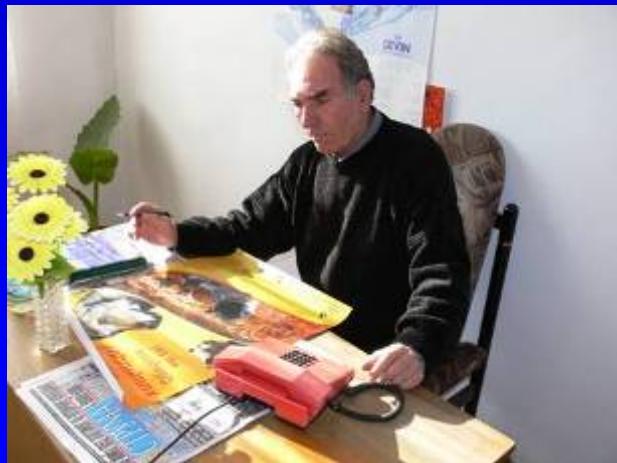
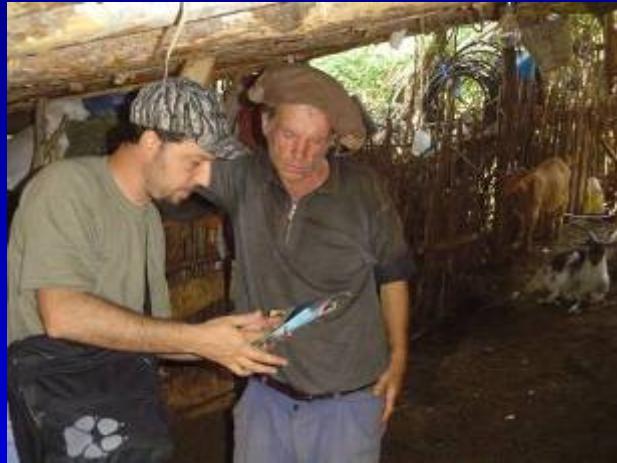


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... The wolf full - the lamb alive...



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Karakachan Dogs



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Providing Karakachan Dogs to shepherds



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Visiting the places of livestock depredation



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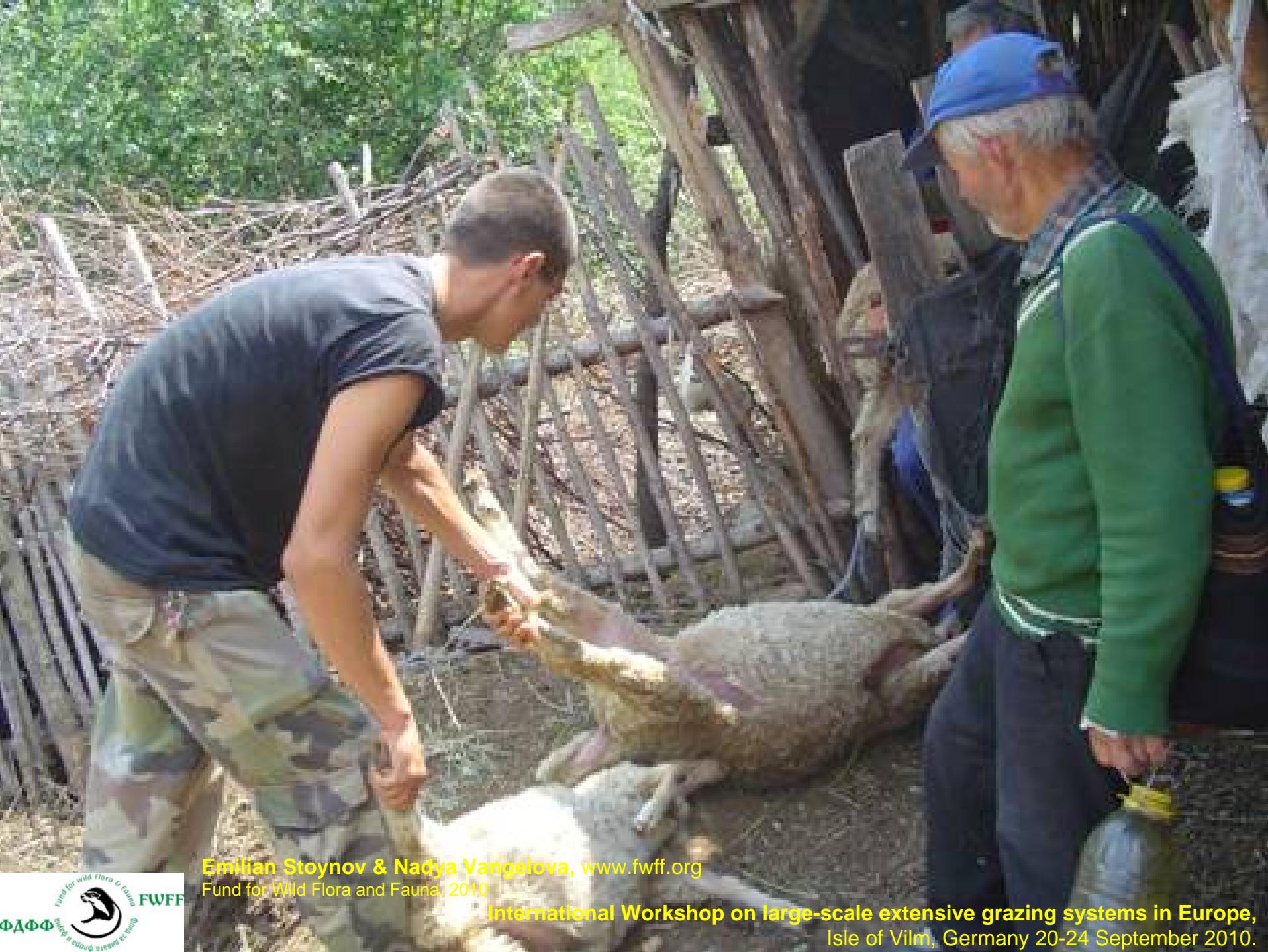


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Collecting the carcasses



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The Compensation...



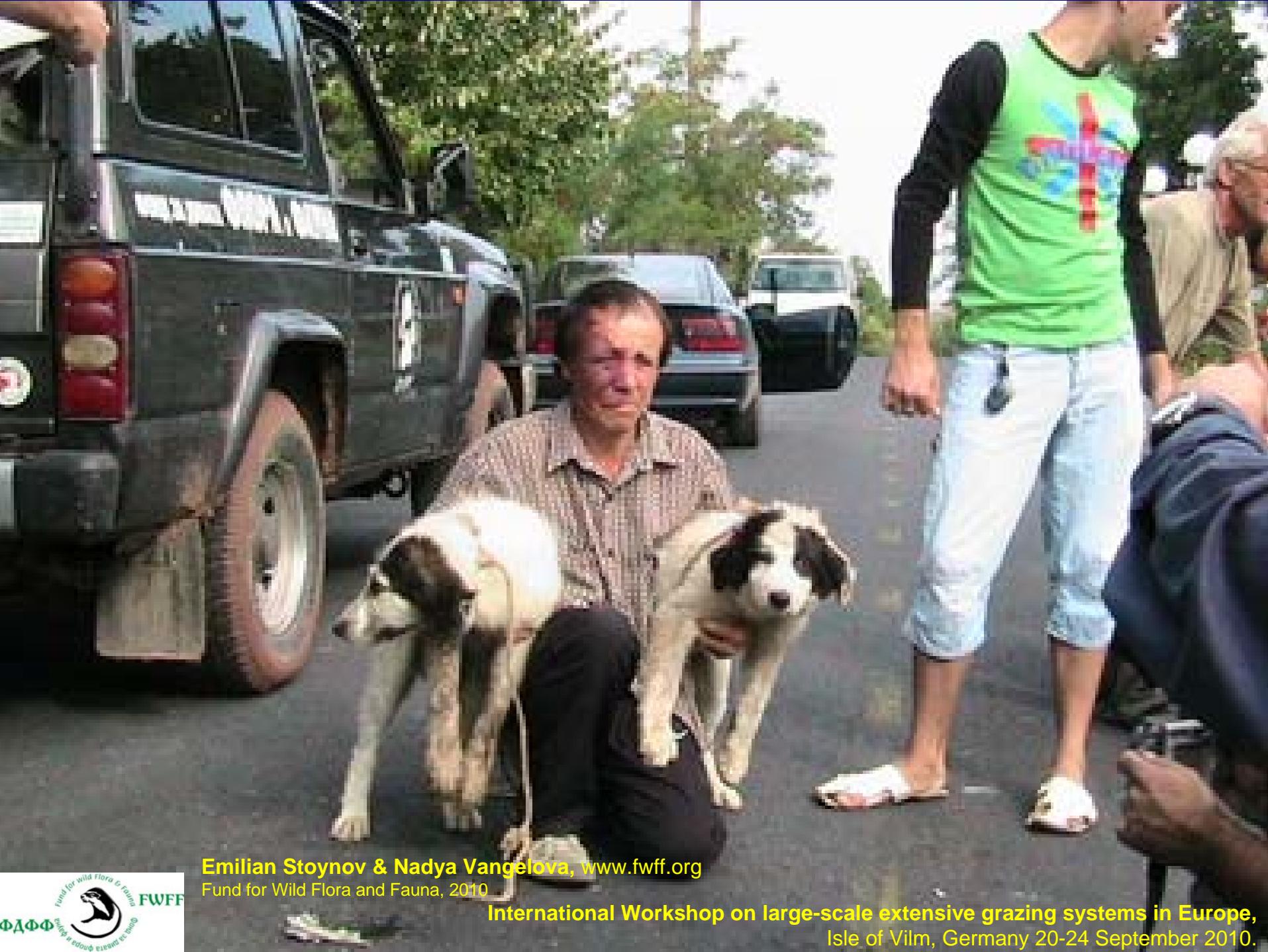
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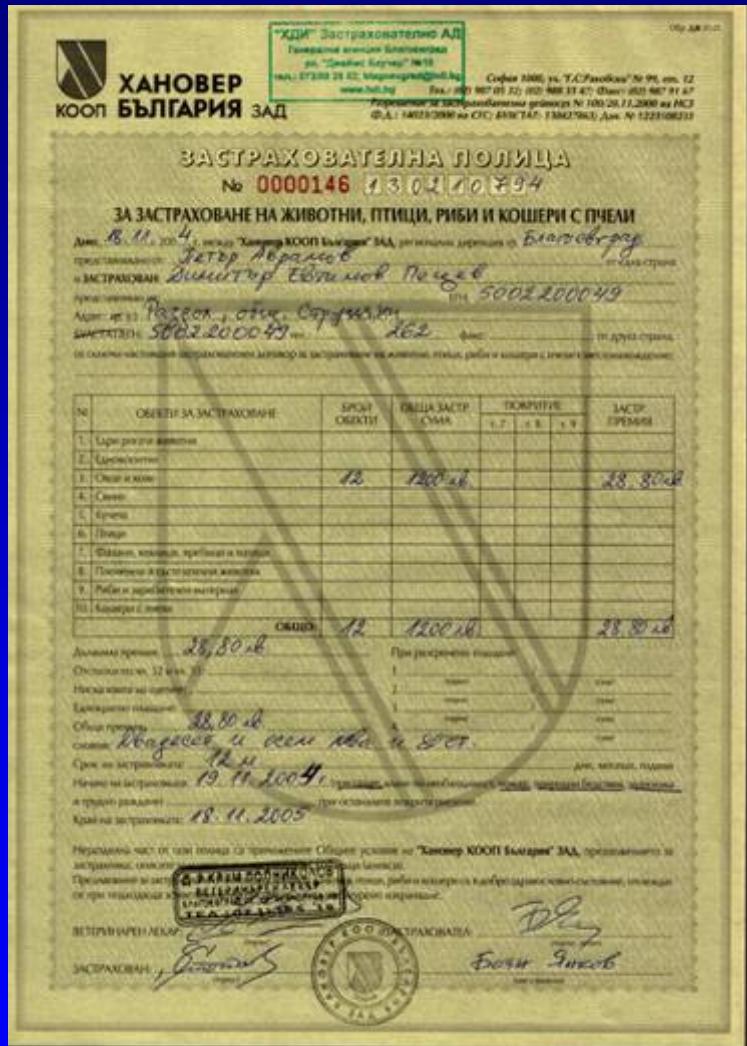
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- In 90 % of the cases the affected livestock breeders do not cover the criteria for compensation



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Insurance



- 2 % of the value of the animal
- Lack of tradition
- Lack of information
- Incompetence of Insurance companies
- Lack of interest of the Insurance companies as it the product is not profitable

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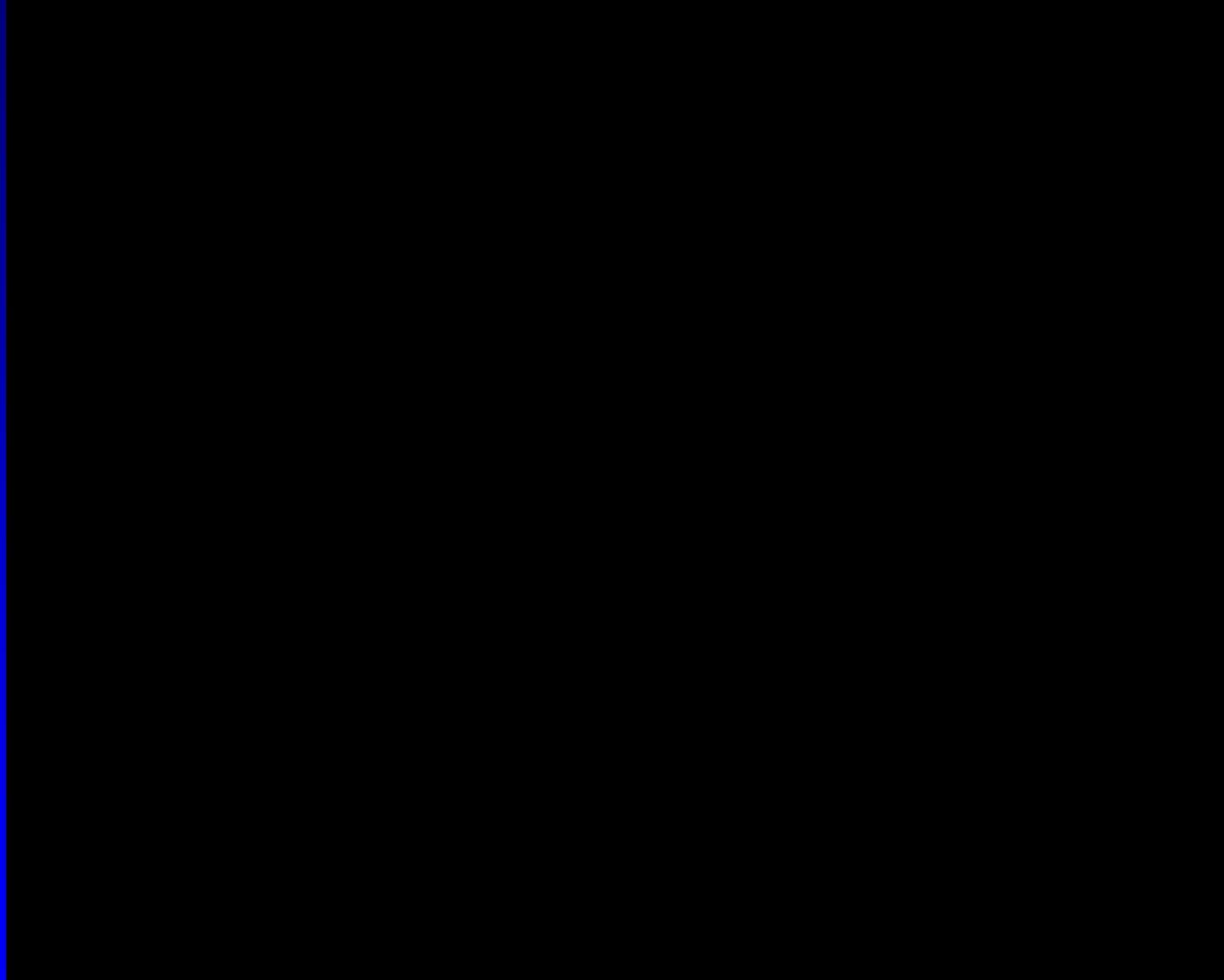


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Thank you for your attention!



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