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EXAMPLE

HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLAND ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDENTS

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HNV-LINK PROJECT



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Preface

Many of Europe's most endangered habitat types and species are dependent on farming practices that have evolved in specific regions according to their particular environmental conditions. Such practices are usually of low intensity operating within resource constraints of the regions, and they form the backbone of regional rural cultures. The concept of High Nature Value (HNV) farmland developed in the early 1990s from a growing recognition that the conservation of biodiversity in Europe depends, among other factors, on the continuation of traditional low-intensity farming systems. Nowadays, HNV farming is recognized as including both those traditional farming systems, as well as other types of low intensity farming that provide habitat for biodiversity associated with farm landscapes. HNV farming and the farmland associated with it, are present in all European countries, with a diversity of types and extent.

HNV farmlands have many values – outstanding and unique natural diversity, cultural heritage and identity of regions, unique and high quality products, employment in marginalized regions, local production with minimal environmental impact – but most of these belong to public goods that are not supported by market systems. Many of HNV farmland regions undergo abandonment or transformation into intensive production systems. The challenge is to improve the social and economic sustainability of HNV farming without losing the HNV characteristics. For this, HNV farmland needs to find its place in education and advisory services as part of the overall sustainability challenge.

This compilation of assignments belongs to a HNV farming educational package, which also includes three sets of presentation slides, thematic literature database and two/three HNV farm cases. It is produced under HNV-Link, a project funded by the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme, for developing and sharing innovations that support farming systems in areas of exceptional nature values across Europe. HNV-Link involves a consortium of 13 partners throughout Europe and focuses on 10 HNV farmlands across Europe for developing and spreading innovations (www.hnmlink.eu).

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High Nature Value Farmland in my country

Type: In class

Suggested target group: Master level

Students in agricultural sciences / ecology

An international course (including also students from outside the EU or Europe)

Duration: 1-2 weeks: Introducing the task (and necessary background to it), 1-2 weeks for individual work, from 30 min to 1 hour for reviewing the results in class.

Objectives:

To get acquainted with a concept of High Nature Value farmland in own country.

To gain an overview of the HNV farmland situation across the countries represented in the course.

Methodology:

Step 1: During a class session, present the concept of HNV farmland, its relevance in conservation and/or rural development, and its three types (see Assignment 1) and give students the task for individual work.

Step 2: students work on the task during 1-2 weeks using all sources available for their respective home countries (in national languages and English).

Step 3: During a class session review and discuss the key results. This can be done in several ways.

1. Students from different countries work in pairs or small groups and draw similarities and differences among their countries. For this, the teacher can ask them to prepare one slide summarising their national case.
2. The teacher can ask the student to think of 5 keywords that would best describe their HNV farmlands (e.g. livestock, labour intensive). Collect these discussing together similarities and uniqueness of situations. Make sure that all the key aspects come up leading, if necessary, towards the ones that may get missed. For example, issues of "livestock", "pastoral", "extensive" most probably come up but "locally unique products" or "regionally typical products", "Products of Designated Origin", "policy objective" may get missed. Use the flipchart, whiteboard, Prezemo or Flinga or any other tool to collect and visualise the results.

Task: Based on information found for your country, produce an essay of appr. 2 pages (font TNR 12).

Examples of what you might include, if available:

- what are the types of HNV farmland in your country, where are they situated (you may attach a map), what are the trends;
- why are they important, for what species or species groups (give examples);
- what are farming practices that create and maintain HNV farmland;



- what are specific challenges for the continuous existence of HNV farmland.

If you come from a country without a developed concept for HNV farmland (Eastern Europe, non-European country), you may instead search for:

- what are agricultural habitats important for biodiversity in your country (for example, traditional or multiuse farming systems, farming without or with minimal outside inputs);

- what are species associated with agriculture (give a few examples, perhaps, an estimated species number by major groups);

- legislative and other tools of protection (some species may be on the Red lists nationally, for some there may be action plans, specific on-farm conservation programmes etc.)

Draw a brief conclusion (and, possibly, also 5 keywords) and add sources of information. For some countries, information may be scarce, in which cases you should demonstrate what sources you have tried out and what was the outcome.

Supporting resources:

Internet, self-search in own languages

Notes to teacher/facilitator:

The author has successfully run this for many years. Students from countries outside Europe may require additional guidance what to look for (for example, traditional multifunctional systems, which exist in nearly all parts of the world and which tend to support high levels of biodiversity).

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