



Lessons for Agri-Environment:
Heritage Council projects and case studies


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Agri-environment Schemes

- *Clear objectives, targets and targeted*
- *Ecological/heritage expertise, including farmer's knowledge*
- *Improved communication and internalisation of scheme's objectives*
- *Integration of cultural heritage*
- *Monitoring*



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The Heritage Council: *tasked with proposing policies and priorities for the identification, protection and enhancement of the national heritage; in co-operation with public authorities, educational bodies and other organisations and persons.*

Previous and ongoing projects

- Study on effectiveness of REPS in Roscommon
- Assessing the potential impact of the mid-term review of CAP on the natural heritage (2004)
- Bere Island Conservation Plan (2003)
- Assessment of Farming Prescriptions under REPS in the uplands of the Burren Karstic Region, Co. Clare
- Management of the Traditional Farm Buildings grants under REPS4
- Case studies of High Nature Value Farming in Ireland: north Connemara and the Aran Islands- in progress.



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Challenging times:

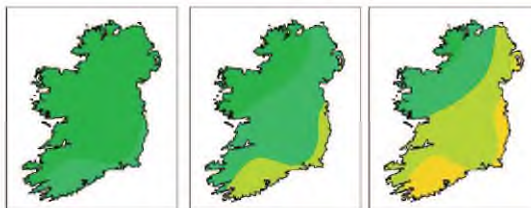
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Source: Irish Times 2009

- *Climate change*

Summer




Source: Fealy and Sweeney, 2007

- *Biodiversity loss*
- *Water quality*
- *Economy*



REPS4 Objectives (Planner's Manual)



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- *Promote ways of using agricultural land which are compatible with the protection and improvement of the environment, biodiversity, the landscape and its features, climate change, natural resources, water quality, soil and genetic diversity*
- *promote environmentally-favourable farming systems, the **conservation of high nature value farmed environments which are under threat**, the upkeep of historical features on agricultural land, the use of environmental planning in farming practice,*
- *to protect against **land abandonment***
- *to sustain the fabric in local communities*
- *to contribute to positive environmental management of farmed Natura 2000 sites.*

European Commission, 2009:

“Status of Europe’s grassland, wetland and coastal habitats particularly poor;

Grassland habitat types are predominantly associated with traditional patterns of agriculture which are disappearing throughout the EU...”

“In general, the conservation status of all habitat types associated with agriculture is significantly worse than other types of habitat”.

“In some parts of EU, related to intensification, in other areas abandonment and absence of management underlying reason for decline”.



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European Environment Agency, 2004

Re: LFAs, Agri-envt, Natura payments:

“...these instruments, however, do not appear to be well targeted at high nature value farmland areas”.

“designated areas alone insufficient to halt biodiversity loss ...”

“ at best, one third of high nature value farmland will benefit from being located in a designated area ...”

Additional policy efforts required....

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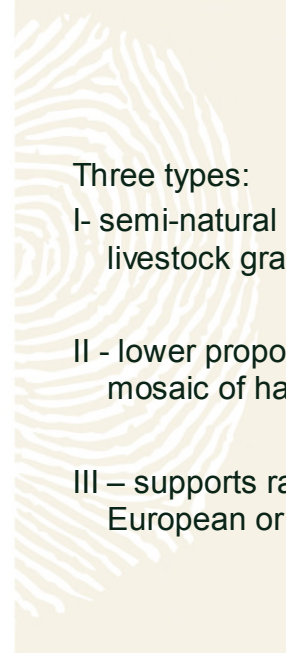
What is high nature value farmland or farming?

High nature, biodiversity value

Long term management

Continuation of farming and specific farming systems

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Three types:

- I- semi-natural vegetation under low intensity use for livestock grazing
- II - lower proportion of semi-natural vegetation, in a mosaic of habitats and/or low intensity land uses
- III – supports rare species or a high proportion of European or world population of a species



European Environment Agency, 2004

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Projects and case studies:




- BurrenLIFE, more later




Bere Island – Working together



Similar and related issues, other places.....



e.g. North Connemara, Aran Islands




- Planning for CAP Post 2013 AES

Bracken and bramble encroachment, Aran Islands

North Connemara, Arans

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- *Challenges and threats faced by communities in maintaining cultural and traditional farming systems, and high nature value, landscape*
- *What are the potential solutions?*
- *Public consultation meetings, field surveys, one-to-one interviews*
- *Still in progress*




Similarities despite differences

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- *economically marginal farming*
- *age profile dominated by older generations*
- *future of farming uncertain, despite farmers' attachment*
- *farming enterprises have simplified*
- *changes to landscape and biodiversity; some recovery from over-stocking; under-grazing also an issue; complex dynamics not yet fully understood*




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Some of the issues arising

- Paperwork
- Lack of freedom to farm adaptively
- Farming the grant and not the farm
- Off farm income necessary
- Insufficient communication about what the measures are trying to achieve (and sometimes not achieving them)
- Level of self-sufficiency has declined
- Top-down approach, lack of ownership



- * Responses to closure of REPS4?
- Current generations may continue to farm but at a different level, firm attachment to the landscape and way of life
- But the next generation?
- Implications for landscape and environment that we need to deal with, and design schemes accordingly

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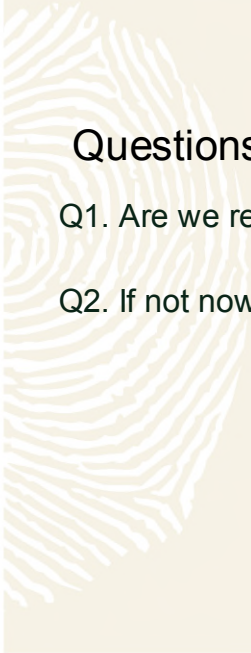
1. National monitoring programme- identify issues highlighted by these projects sooner, and generate more prompt response
2. AES need to consider geographical, ecological and agricultural practice variations and be designed accordingly –one size does not fit all
3. This will require ecological expertise as well as that of the farmer- greater farmer engagement and adaptive management
4. Improved communication to increase adoption/internalisation of the scheme's objectives by participants
5. Requires clarity of objectives and targets



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Questions:

Q1. Are we ready to learn lessons?

Q2. If not now, when?



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