



Media release

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Developing National Agri-environment Programme for Serbia

Belgrade, Serbia – One of results of the project *Support for Agri-environment Policies and Programming in Serbia* is the publication “Agri-environment Programme for Serbia”, launched today during the conference organized by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia and Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia.

The publication is produced in both Serbian and English and is intended to serve as a reference document to support the future programming of agri-environment measures in Serbia, that is foreseen to be done as part of the EU accession. Special attention is given to introducing the concept of high nature value (HNV) farming and agricultural practices that support biodiversity conservation, and to the definition of concrete agricultural measures for biodiversity conservation. The Publication begins with an introduction to the main changes in Serbian agriculture over the past half century and the resulting environmental impacts. It presents the principles of the HNV Farming and agri-environment concepts, their development over the time, and the lessons to be learnt from EU Member States with regard to their application and implementation. The publication includes indicative map of high nature value farming areas in Serbia.

“Agri-environment Programme for Serbia” presents proposals for agri-environment policies and measures for Serbia, with a particular focus on those targeted at supporting low-intensity farming systems that help to maintain high levels of biodiversity. The final chapter identifies the social, economic and environmental benefits that arise from implementing agri-environment measures. Development of agri-environment programme is an integral part of the EU accession process, which defines it within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and as such is mandatory for all EU Member States. In addition to contributing to protection of biodiversity and traditional agricultural practices, agro-environmental programme encourages rural development.

As publication’s authors stress out, with properly targeted support, HNV farming could yield a viable economic future and modern quality of life for rural communities. Low intensity farming methods, quality food products, traditional crafts and rural tourism could be at the heart of sustainable rural development in Republic of Serbia.

This publication is the result of the project implemented in Serbia in the period 2009-2010. One of the main objectives of the Project was to formulate potential agro-environment mechanisms that will ensure the conservation of high nature value farming areas. The project was implemented through the cooperation of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Natura Balkanika, supported by the Dutch NGO Avalon and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP). Financial support was provided by the Dutch BBI-Matra programme.

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Photos (audio/video material) is available at:

<http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/places/belgrade/projects/?6152/High-Nature-Value-HNV-Agri-environment-Project-for-Serbia>

Notes for editors

High Nature Value Farming - HNVF concept has emerged and was developed over the past 15 years in response to the growing realization that certain types of agricultural production are of great importance for wildlife and biological diversity conservation. HNV farming systems are first time formulated by Baldock (1993) as “predominantly low-intensity systems which often involve a relatively complex interrelationship with the natural environment. They maintain important habitats both on the cultivated or grazed area (e.g., cereals steppes and semi-natural grasslands) and in features such as hedgerows, ponds and trees, which were historically integrated with the farming systems... The semi-natural habitats currently maintained by HNV farming are particularly important for nature conservation in the EC because of the almost total disappearance of large scale natural

Project Partners

About IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

The world's oldest and largest global environmental network, IUCN is a democratic membership union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11,000 volunteer scientists and experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 professional staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

www.iucn.org

Avalon

Avalon is a not-for-profit organisation based in the Netherlands. It was established in 1991 to stimulate the development of sustainable rural development in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). During its early years, Avalon focused specifically upon introducing the concept of organic farming. From 1996, it began to diversify its activities and from 1997–2001, a consortium led by Avalon (together with several CEE and EU-partners) implemented a programme of projects funded by the Dutch government, entitled “*Agri-Environmental Programmes in Central and Eastern Europe*”. These projects were undertaken in the ten CEE Accession Countries preparing to join the European Union in response to the urgent need at that time to introduce, promote and develop the concept of agri-environment payments. The projects made a significant contribution to introducing the principles and practice of agri-environment policy-making in the CEE region and left a clear legacy, including a number of active national Agri-environment Working Groups. These working groups continued to elaborate pilot agri-environment projects for pre-accession funding and full national agri-environment programmes for EU co-financing after accession. This approach was further successfully replicated in Croatia during 2002–2004 and in Turkey in 2006–2008.

www.avalon.nl

IEEP

The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) is an independent policy studies institute established in 1982 with particular expertise in agriculture, the environment and rural development policy in EU Member States and Accession Countries. In addition to working regularly for the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Environment Agency, IEEP undertakes studies for a wide range of national and international organisations. IEEP has over 20 years experience in studying the environmental aspects of EU agricultural policy and first developed the concept of High Nature Value (HNV) farming systems in the early 1990s in conjunction with the Dutch government. IEEP staff members follow environmental policy developments closely and stay in regular touch with relevant officials in the European Commission and national governments.

www.ieep.eu

Natura Balkanika

The Natura Balkanika Nature Society is a regional NGO founded in 2000 to support the revival, protection and promotion of the natural and cultural values of the Stara Planina Mountains and Gornje Ponishavlje region in south-east Serbia. Its activities are primarily directed towards the promotion of environmentally-friendly agricultural practices, the conservation of domestic animal genetic resources, natural biodiversity and local cultural heritage, and providing support for participatory approaches and bottom-up initiatives as the basis for the region's sustainable rural development. Natura Balkanika has acquired a high level of knowledge and experience in the field of rural development and cooperates with a large network of agricultural, environmental and social experts and partner organisations at the local and national levels to implement activities including development-orientated action, research, education and training, and cooperation in various national and international projects.