

HNV Link: High Nature Value Farming: Learning Innovation and Knowledge, Bulgaria

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- **Scale of activity:** European
- **Actor/s:** farmers, environmentalists, researchers, NGO local authorities, professional association.
- **State of activity:** Started in 2016 up to April 2019
- **Keywords:** high nature value farming, innovation, small farms, biodiversity conservation, networking



Summary

HNV Link project and network is dedicated to developing and sharing innovations that support HNV farming systems and communities by simultaneously improving their socio-economic viability and environmental efficiency. The project collects innovations in high nature value farming that are focused on market organization and initiatives, social interaction and engagement, technical and technological improvements and innovative implementation of the existing policies. The Bulgarian Learning Area is Western Stara Planina covering the municipalities of Berkovitz, Varshetz, Godech, Georgi Damianovo and Chiprovtsi.

Description of activities

High nature value farmland encompasses areas in Europe where agricultural activities support, or are associated with, exceptionally high biodiversity. These farmlands are also important for cultural heritage, quality products and rural employment and are priority sites in European agriculture conservation. Long-standing threats to these nature friendly farming systems include abandonment, degradation, economic and social marginalization. The challenge is to increase the socio-economic viability while maintaining their natural values, including ecosystem services they provide to the society.

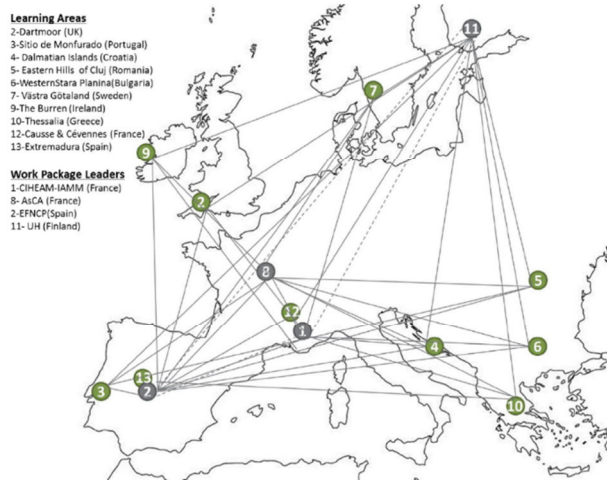
HNV Link project focuses on collecting, developing, transferring and disseminating innovative solutions of all kinds for supporting high nature value areas through improving both socio-economic viability and environmental efficiency.

HNV farmlands are also a marginal farmland type in conventional research and development, and their innovation needs and solutions are rarely discussed in academic fora. This project created a thematic network that operates at both grassroots-based and transnational levels and aims to make a difference by connecting farmers, research, and innovation actors in line with the EU innovation vision.

HNV Link project includes 13 partners from 11 countries and links ten areas where HNV farming systems are prevalent and where some innovations for these systems have been made.

These are HNV network's learning areas: Western Stara Planina region, Bulgaria; Dalmatian Islands, Croatia; Tessalia, Greece; Causses& Cevennes, France; The Burren, Ireland; Sitio de Monfurado, Portugal; Eastern Hills of Cluj, Romania; La Vera, Extremadura, Spain; Vastra Gotalan, Sweden; Dartmoor, the UK.





Each Learning area brings together farmers, professional associations, NGOs, local authorities and education and applied researched institutes and has something to teach others: existing collaboration, successful project compilation, innovative approaches to adding value to products. Each Learning area is facing its unique set of challenges as it adapts to the changing socio-economic and rural development environment.

The project activities carried out so far include “Baseline Assessment” and “Collection of Innovation at grassroots level” for each LA describing the “innovative territorial setting for HNV-farming”. Then an “HNV Vision” as a sustainable desirable future for HNV farming in each learning area has been developed, and the related challenges to be overcome in terms of “HNV innovation gaps and needs” were identified.

The main deliverables of the first phase of the project are:

- A report of the reviews of existing research and experiences on HNV farming innovations;
- An inventory of grassroots innovations in each learning;
- An analysis of conditions for success of innovation process;
- An interactive atlas of the HNV situations in the learning areas and Compendium of Innovations;
- A compendium of innovation experiences, needs and lessons, etc.

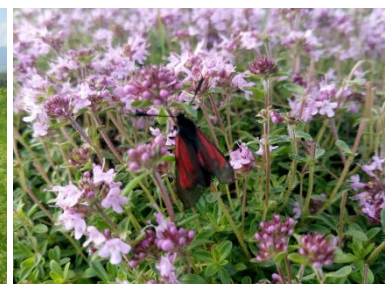
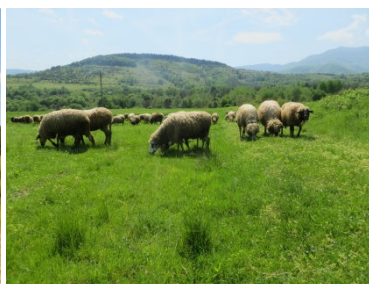
They can be found at: <http://www.hnmlink.eu/outputs/>.

Outlook

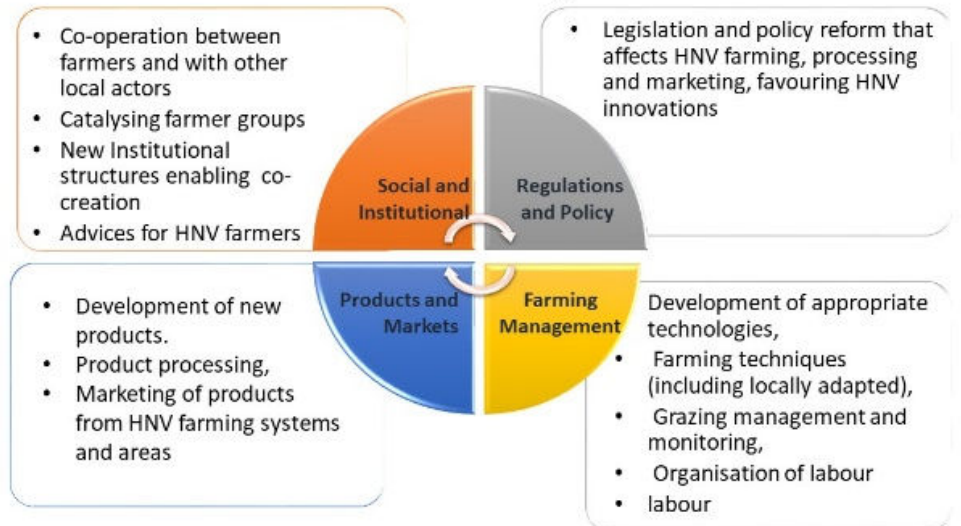
Challenges. The project uses the four innovation themes identified by the EIP Focus Group on HNV farming: 1) Social and Institutional Innovation. 2) Regulatory Framework and Policy Innovation. 3) Products and Markets Innovation. 4) Farm Techniques and Management Innovation. These themes are often mutually supporting, and many examples of HNV innovation include aspects under multiple themes.

For each of the themes the partners identified the HNV innovation needs and gaps to be addressed for securing the future of these farming systems. Some of those needs are:

- Social and institutional innovation needs: improved functioning of public institutions, especially in their approach towards HNV farmers and farming systems
- Regulatory and policy innovation needs: Adapting rules and regulations so that they do not prejudice HNV farmers and farming systems. This includes a wide range of rules, such as CAP eligibility rules for pastures, and rules for food hygiene and animal health. Often it is national or regional interpretation of EU rules that is rigid and non-innovative, as in the case of food hygiene rules as they are applied to artisan cheese dairies and on-farm slaughtering in some countries
- Product and marketing innovation needs: on farm processing, differentiation of the products from HNV systems, direct sales and product diversification that can improve the economics of HNV farming, add more value to the products, and retain more of this value on the farm.
- Technical and management innovation needs: technical developments both in HNV farming and in processing systems that are adapted to HNV farming needs. Management and planning of large-scale and/common pastures is a particular area of concern, especially for the integration of objectives such as production, fire prevention, animal health and biodiversity.



LA innovations for development of HNV farming



Source and contact

Information gathered at: the European Rural Parliament 2017 Market of initiatives (20 Oct. 2017)

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Available on Forum Synergies' website: http://forum-synergies.eu/bdf_fiche-experience-172_en.html

Next steps. The objectives of the next “using phase’ of the project (2018-2019) are to use HNV-Link network as a kind of “experimental innovation support service instrument” that will strategically address those challenges through innovation brokerage activities (peer learning exchanges, innovation transfer, communication dissemination activities, advocacy, etc.) and learn from these ten different innovation processes