

**GRASSLAND FARMING AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION IN
EASTERN HUNGARY**

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SUMMARY: The environment protection has greater importance in the grassland farming, according to other agricultural sector. The National Agri-environment Porteciton Program (NAPP) and the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) was formed in harmony with the European Agricultural Model, which support the sustainable development and the environment friendly technologies. The subsidized area's about 6 per cent and the supported applications's about 9 per cent proportion from the national volume shoxs the majority of the extensive grassland farming in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. One of the NRDP's most supported target ares are the grasslands, which Program use EU financial sources. The direct useing of the higher subsidies hopefully would serve the problems of our grassland farming and animal breeding and the rural population's living.

Key words: environment protection, extensive grassland farming, importance, rural development

1. INTRODUCTION

Problems of grassland farming are arising now and again. The grassland area has great potential agricultural, economic and nature conservational value and reserve. The NAPP and the NRDP gives possibilities to solve the grassalnd's problems.

The purpose of my investigation is to describe the background of the Program, the evaluation and comparison of the results of 2002 and 2003 year's applications, and the analyses of the applications for the extensive grassland management program in Hungary and in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg. Describing and analysing the NRDP and the Agricultural and Rural Developing Operative Program (NRDOP) as National programs and priorities, which programs are sponsored by the European Agricultural Oriorientational and Guarantee Funds.

2. LITERARY SURVEY

From the early '90-s the great agricultural farming systems come to an end, which influenced well our environmental condition, except for the uncultivated areas. Szabó, (2001b) mentioned among the benefits the less environmental loading with nitrate, the ceasing of the irresponsible use of artificial fertilizers and plant-protecting agents. The environmental policy has to spread over farming and economic regions – which includes the agricultural policy – to succeed the sustainable, environment protectional, economical and social development's angles (Internet 1).

2.1. Agro-environment Protection

According to the Határozatok Tára (1999) and Tar (2002) findings nowadays the rural areas are not only the places of the agricultural production, but they are biological areas, place of the country's people life, which areas we have to be protected and supported in the future. In harmony with it the European Committee created the unified rural development decree (1257/1999 EC decree) (OJ, 1999), respectively that modifying 1783/2003 EC (OJ, 2003) rule. Based on the principle of these rules the Government of Hungary created the NAPP, the NRDOP and using its priorities came into existence the NRDP. Analysing the decisions of the 1999's Berlin Conference's Szabó (2001a, 2001b) one of the most important target on the CAP-reform is to preserve and improve the countryside. The NRDP's SWOT-analysis emphasizes Hungary's unique landscape, natural conditions and the low environment loading. Based on Hungary's strength we have possibilities in land use structures which are adequate to the land conditions. We also have possibilities regarding using the grasslands, the sensitive natural areas and in the cultivating of the uncared grasslands (NRDP, 2003). In my view we have to take advantages of these possibilities as soon as possible. The NAPP's arrangements are assumed in target programs (Ángyán et al., 1999).

According to Szabó et al., (2003) opinions the subsidies of the Program are based on cultivated lands and the farmers could compete for supplementary applies. The farmer who volunteer to join the program, conclude an agreement for five years. In this agreement the farmer accept to execute the target program's regulations, and for these the farmers shall get fixed land based subsidies in the accepted term.

2.2. Connections between the NRDOP, the NRDP and the CAP

The NRDOP aim at the realization of the CAP-reform's „European Agricultural Model”. The NRDOP serve as a basis for the sustainable development and for the improvement of the rural

areas. The NRDP make the NRDOP complete, which relate to period between 2004 and 2006. Its aim is to promote the farmer's profitable production, to increase the circumstances of farmer's life, be in harmony with nature conservation regulations. The NRDOP's first and second priority help the half self-reliant farms, and help to suit the hygienical, animal welfare and environment protectional directions (AVOP, 2004).

2.3. Extensive grassland farming

Maybe the extensive grassland farming has a largest importance for land-protecting and economic reasons from the agricultural systems, because lots of protected species are live in these fields (Ángyán et al., 1999). In relation with Hungary's close to 1.1 million hectare of grasslands I have the next reflections. In Hungary the grasslands are mostly pastures or pastures and hay-fields. Great part of our grasslands produce on very bad and unfertile soil conditions. 70% of the grassland yields low crops, their productivity lags behind from potential yields (Forgó, 2004b), respectively great part of their yields are not productive, and unfortunately we don't utilize its favourable conditions (NVT, 2003). More than half of grassland are extensively utilized, valuable from the viewpoint of nature conservation, they have unique flora, rich insect and bird fauna. One of the NRDP's priorities is the **environment friendly agriculture, the rational land using and the improvement of the rural regions.**

One of the general objects of the Agricultural environment conservation is to make cultivated the non utilized grass- and arable lands with extensive utilization methods and land-protectional functions (NVT, 2003). In the investigated area the proportion of the non utilized, abandoned grasslands is high, which damage the landscape, origin of some agricultural hygienic and human health problems because of the weeds (e.g. *Ambrosia elatior*), pathogens and pests on them.

3. EXPERIENCES OF THE NAPP IN THE COUNTY OF SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG

Evaluating the target program achievements in 2002 and 2003 in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, is indispensable to know the national data, as a base for comparison. The data are shown in the *table 1 and 2.*

Table 1: The agricultural fields and grasslands in the investigated area in 2002

Denomination	Agricultural area		Grassland area of its	
	(thousand ha)	%	(thousand ha)	%
County of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	393	6,7	66,4	16,89
Hungary	5865,4	100	1061,2	18,09

Source: KSH (2002a); KSH (2002b)

In the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg the ratio of grasslands is near to the national average, which ratio is based on the agricultural areas. The grassland area of the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg covers the 6.26% of Hungary's one. The value of the subsidized area increased to 5.6% in the investigated county and to 10.5% in Hungary respectively from 2002 to 2003. The ratio of the subsidized grasslands (5.95%) decreased compared to the national subsidized grasslands in the year of 2003. 7.57% in 2002, 7.99% in 2003 of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county's grasslands received government subsidy in the extensive grassland farming program (*see in Table 1*). The obtained government subsidy has changed completely the same as the subsidized grassland areas in the two investigated years.

Table 2: The data of the extensive grassland farming project of the NAPP

Denomination	Subsidized area				Number of supported applications				Obtained subsidy			
	2002		2003		2002		2003		2002		2003	
	thousand ha	%	thousand ha	%	piece	%	piece	%	million Ft	%	million Ft	%
County of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	5.03	6.23	5.31	5.95	138	10.45	149	8.94	40.25	6.23	53.1	5.95
Hungary	80.69	100	89.14	100	1320	100	1667	100	645.51	100	892.27	100

Source: FVM (2004); FVM Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Hivatala (2003); Internet 1 and private calculation

It was calculated from the *Table 2*, that there is 36.45 ha of grassland area for each supported application in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in the year of 2002, and 35.64 ha in the year of 2003, which accounts for the small farm sizes in the county. The decreasing of the average applied grassland areas was smaller than the national value, which shows the majority of the target program. I point out that the share of the subsidized areas (6%) and the share of the supported applications from the national data refer to the importance – considering the expansions – of the extensive grassland farming (Forgó, 2004a).

The animal approach subsidy is closely connected to extensive grassland farming program, which has changed considerably in 2003. I think that is important to stress the increasing of the applicable animal species, with getting in the goat, horse, deer, poultry and bee. According to FVM (2004) data in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg 42585.6 thousand HUF subsidy was paid under this regulation, which comes to 8.6% of the national value (495575.3 thousand HUF). In 2003 could apply for subsidy for their disposable livestock's ecological or extensive keeping, between 40 and 10000 HUF/head amount.

The payment of the 2004 year's land based subsidies slid through 2005, the land based payments are stalling.

4. POSSIBILITIES OF THE GRASSLAND UTILIZATION APPLICATIONS

As the Agricultural Environment-protection provision prescribes, the farmers have to involve the „Sensible Farming Practice” on their whole farm, which is regulated with the 4/2004 (I. 13.) FVM decree. As the decree prescribes, the animal density would not rise over 1.8 animal unit (AU) in case of cattle, sheep, goat and wild species; in case of poultry, the 1.4 AU; and in case of swine the 1 AU. On the hay-fields, the farmers have to collect the hay not later than 30 days after cutting. Burning of grasslands is not allowed.

4.1. Agricultural environment-protective base program

From 2004 the grassland subsidies are applicable in the NRDP's Agricultural environment-protective base program's grassland farming target program. The target program is distinguished the grasslands by their sensitivity. The NAPP set this distinguished subsidy as a target, but unfortunately due to the lack of the financial resources and the absence of the political will, this fractioned subsidy doesn't exist. In the horizontal grassland farming program serves the existing grassland's protection, on the other hand it serves the about 250 000 ha unfertile arable land's reversion (NVT, 2003). Typical forms of the sandy grassland farming can be found in the Kiskunság, Nyírség, Belső-Somogy and in the Kisalföld. The great variety of associations and the number of the protectable species stress their importance.

4.2. Application

Concluding the five year's agreement available between 1. September and 30. October in every year, the farmers could register for the government subsidies between 1. April and 15. May. The Agricultural environment-protective program's target area 269700 ha up to 2006, its

financial source 100.04 million Euros in 2005, 123.89 million Euros in 2006. In percentage 80 comes from EU, 20 is nationally sponsored. This amount considerably increased from the 2002 year's (2,5 billion HUF) and from the 2003's (4,5 billion HUF). The claiming conditions are the following: verifying the ownership or the leasing of the lands; verifying 5 years professional practice or professional qualification. The competitor has to make a soil test. In case of the animal hosting subsidies the competitors have to verify their livestock by the Breeder's Organization. The Paying Agency process the applications on regional level, the subsidy is awarded in the Central Office.

Farmers could apply for complementary subsidies, which are supporting the agricultural environment-protective plans; covering the laboratory tests charges. The complementary animal breeding subsidies are supporting the building or reconstruction of the fences, gates, electric fences, avenues and hedges.

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