

CHANGES IN THE EXTENSIVE GRASSLAND UTILIZATION SUBSIDIES IN HUNGARY AT 2000 UP TO THESE DAYS

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Abstract: Assistance of the grasslands has changed several times in Hungary in the last few years. Assistance of these fields is serious, because grasslands are indispensable in the nature- and soil-protection and in the animal breeding. That fact shows its importance, as well as more than 18%-of the agricultural land is grassland in Hungary. The first legislative provision was the National Agri-environment Programme in the year of 1999. The following provisions were the Agricultural and Rural Development Operational Programme and the National Rural Development Plan, which objectives similar to the National Agri-environment Programme. The National Rural Development Plan followed by the New Hungary Rural Development Strategic Plan, between the years of 2007 and 2013, which plan's serious objective is the agri-environment protection (covers grasslands), closely connected with the Natura 2000 environment protection network.

Key words: environment protection, grassland farming, sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

Grasslands takes serious part of Hungary's agricultural area, so these fields has great importance in animal breeding, in forage growing, in landscape conservation and in maintenance the bio-diversity. Next to these facts the grasslands has great economical, nature-conservational a rural development potential. *Table 1* shows the data of agricultural areas of the county Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hungary.

Table 1: The agricultural areas and grasslands in the investigated county and in Hungary in 2004

Denomination	Agricultural area		Grassland area of its	
	(thousand ha)	%	(thousand ha)	%
County of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	388,8	6,63	65,4	16,8
Hungary	5864,7	100	1061,6	18,1

Source: [7]

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 6.16% of Hungary's one.

Main aim of this paper to give survey – as literary review – linking the land use, rural development and nature conservation assistances and applications, according to grasslands, which changed several times at 2000 up to these days. Results of the first measure round, assistance grasslands were summarizing shortly, demonstrating the results of the grass agri-environment applications in Hungary and in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg.

2. LITERARY SURVEY

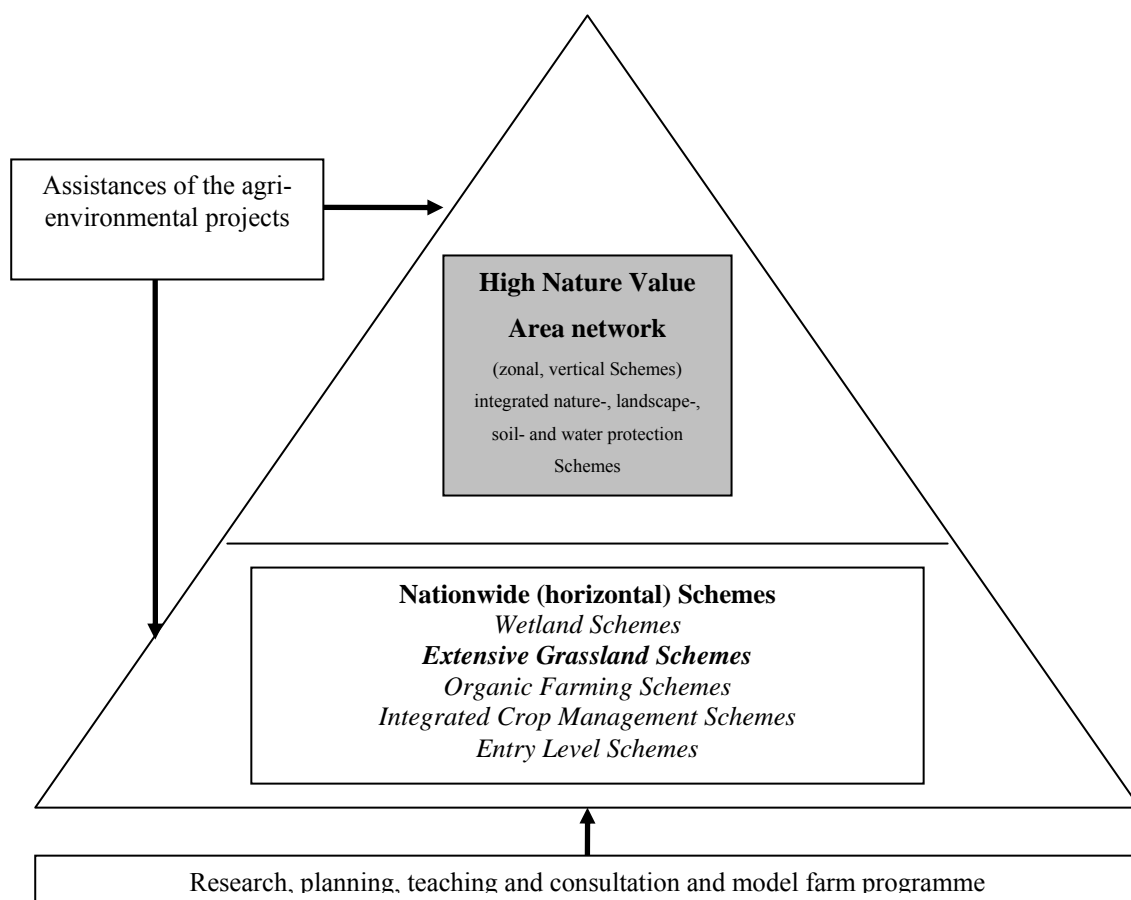
2.1. NATIONAL AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (NAEP)

In Hungary assistance of the grasslands, and the extensive grassland utilization, was wording at the level of law, in the year of 1999 at 1989. The first legislation measure ordered the using of NAEP [14]. One of the keystones of the sustainable agricultural development, as well as the main scope of the agri-environment is the protection of our natural resources. This protection spread over the soil, the water basis, the genetic means and for the forest- and landscape conservation. The second main scope of the agri-environment to enhancement of the food safety, exemption agricultural produces from pollutants [2].

The NAEP, according to EU objectives, gives aims those farming practices, which based on conserving the landscape, the bio-diversity, protecting the natural means and values. The Program composes the next specific objectives [11; 14]:

- propagate environment friendly farming methods beside conservation natural values,
- formation production structures, adapt Hungary's agro-ecological characteristics, produce high quality, marketable produces,
- continuous improvement of the income position and employment of the village people,
- contribution to progress tourism conditions, to improve landscape and to progress knowledge of rural people.

The measures of the Program are formulated in the next schemes: Entry Level Schemes, Integrated Crop Management Schemes, Organic Farming Schemes, *Extensive Grassland Schemes*, High Nature Value Area Schemes and environmental set-aside, Wetland Schemes, Training and Demonstration Schemes, shows *Fig 1*. The following year's Programmes and assistances based on these horizontal a vertical works.



Source: [2]

Fig. 1. Structure of the National Agri-environment Programme

The payments claiming as land based subsidies in the Program's Schemes. Farmers could claim for financing assistance in supplementary agri-environment Schemes for agri-environment farm planning costs, and supplementary animal approach subsidies respectively (these assistances based on animal units, not on agricultural lands) [10].

Under the programme, support is granted to farmers and other land users who make agri-environmental commitments on a voluntary basis. Payments for the fulfilment of provisions set out in the Programme are to be granted annually per hectare or livestock unit to compensate farmers' additional costs and income foregone related to the fulfilment of the provisions. The farmers contract with the authority for a period of at least 5 years. The Programme originally announced the period between 01.01. 2000, and 31. 12. 2006 [11]. Lack of the adequate political and financial wishes, NAEP really started in the year of 2002 [10].

2.2. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

Hungary finished the discussions about the National Development Plan with the European Commission at the end of 2003. According to Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds, regions and countries covered by Objective 1 – regions whose development is lagging behind where per capita GDP is less than 75 % of the Community average – need to prepare a strategic document, NDP, for the planning period defined by the EU. The European Commission – based on the NDP negotiations with the Hungarian Government – prepares the Community Support Framework (CSF). On the basis of the negotiations on the programming documents submitted by Hungary, which were concluded by the end of 2003, the CSF for Hungary 2004-2006 will be implemented by five Operational Programmes, which are the next: Agriculture and Rural Development Operational Programme (ARDOP), Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRDOP), Economic Competitiveness Operational Programme (ECOP), Environment Protection and Infrastructure Operational Programme (EPIOP), Regional Development Operational Programme (RDOP) [8].

2.2.1. AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME (ARDOP)

Turning over the NDP's ARDOP, schemes of the National Agri-environment Programme has changed, and the applications would be suspended for a short period. Because of these facts in the year of 2004 there were no payments in the agri-environment schemes. The first payments comes – early 2005 – to those farmers, who was rejected in the NAEP for resource gap, or who entered a competition for agri-environment assistance in 2004 [1].

2.3. NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NRDP)

The NRDP includes the next measures in accordance with the EU requirements: Agri-environment, Support for Less Favoured Areas, Financial assistance for meeting the EU environmental protection, animal welfare and animal hygiene requirements, Afforestation of agricultural lands, early retirement, support for semi subsistence farms undergoing restructuring, supporting the establishment and administrative operation of producer groups, Technical Assistance. The basis of the NRDP is the situation analysis, SWOT and strategy devised for NDP and the ARDOP.

The NAEP objectives are in line with NRDP objectives, its target programmes are integrated into the agri-environmental management measure of NRDP. The financial assistance of the grasslands transferred to the agri-environment measure. The measure specific objectives are to protect and improve physical and chemical soil conditions, to preserve traditional low input farming systems and traditional landscapes, to provide alternative use for areas with low potential, preserve valuable grassland habitats and arable land through extensive cultivation methods, on High Nature Value Areas (HNVA) preserving and protecting biodiversity, provision of effective tools for the implementation of the NATURA 2000 network.

In 2003 for the beneficiaries contracted in 2002 in the frame of NAEP the opportunity was offered to choose, step out from the NAEP and apply for the NRDP agri-environment schemes, or to stay in the already operating NAEP scheme to continue the five year contracting period. Over 90% of the farmers have selected the new Agri-environment applications.

The Agri-environment measure contains schemes. The schemes consist of agri-environment measures on arable land, on grassland, in permanent cultures, on wetland habitats, for livestock, and supplementary agri-environment measures. Regarding the various levels of commitments associated with them, the schemes are divided into the following schemes. Among them the grassland financing appears in the entry level schemes (grassland stewardship, endangered breeds of livestock), in the organic farming schemes and in the supplementary agri-environmental measures. *Table 2* shows the grassland financing measurements and conditions.

Agri-environment payments are contract-based incentive aids for the application of environment-friendly methods for a period of at least 5 years, in some cases not longer than 20 years. Agri-environment measures will be applied horizontally throughout the country. The grassland farmers have to suit the Right Farming Practice's requirements. They have to choose farming methods adapted to the local environmental/agricultural conditions with special attention to relevant environmental protection aspects. Such adapted methods provide benefits in terms of soil, benefits for bio-diversity and the wider landscape through the use of appropriate grassland management, increased use of natural substances, for example crop rotation. Any farmer who is controlled by any organic production certification organisation approved, entitled to payments for organic grasslands. From the supplementary agri-environment schemes, scrub control assistance (168.63 Euro/ha) create basic conditions for grassland habitat management [9].

Table 2: Grassland financing measurements and conditions in 2004-2006

Denomination			Payment rate (Euro/ha)	
Agri-environment measure	Agri-environment measures on grasslands	B.1. Grassland stewardship scheme	a) maintenance of grassland habitats	58.82
			b) conversion of arable land into species rich grassland	290.20
		B.2. Organic grassland management scheme	-	58.82
		B.3. Grassland management schemes in HNVA	-	
		B.3.1. Grassland management for great bustard habitat development	-	125.49
		B.3.2. Grassland management for corncrake habitat development	-	109.80
		B.3.3. Grassland management for bird habitat development	-	98.04
		B.3.4. Grassland development in HNVA	-	294.12

Source: [9]

2.4. THE NEW HUNGARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NHDP)

The Government accepted the NHDP, which Operational Programmes becomes wider compared to the NDP, 15 Operational Programme was accepted in this Plan. The most important objective of NHDP is to expand employment and to create the conditions for long term growth. These measures refer the period between 2007 and 2013 years. This development plan mostly gives attention for improving the environmental conditions and protecting the natural values. Financing and improve the agricultural sector (as well as grassland farming) is the aim of the New Hungary Rural Development Strategic Plan [12].

2.5. NEW HUNGARY RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN (NHRDSP)

In accordance with the EC Regulation, every EU Member State had to make a strategic plan, in line with the institutional regulation. The plan had to be finished, needed in close cooperation with the European Commission, which refers the period between 01. 01. 2007 to 31. 12. 2013. Hungary, as well as the other Member States, sent its National Strategic Plan for the Commission, before pass in the Rural-development Programme [16].

The most important task Hungarian rural development faces is to handle the special situation of Hungary in terms of low rate of income. In the Strategy in 4 Axis, there are 15 main actions defined. Grassland farming assistances are in the Axis II., in the agri-environment assistances. Axis II. share in 32% of the financial plan, which serious aim to develop environmental conditions. Most part of the assistances according to the grasslands is in the

agri-environment, Natura 2000 and forest environment support measure. The main objectives of this main action are fit in the NRDP's objectives, moreover those functions are stressed, which connected to water management programmes, or linked to the climate change and supports organic farming. The Natura 2000 programme will start from September 2007, with the Natura grassland programme. Protecting and using of HNVA fields are the most stressed between the years of 2007 and 2013. In the years of 2004 and 2005, 24,100 enterprises and farmers awarded agri-environmental support totalled 1.4 million hectares. *Table 3* summarize the agri-environment fields and the numbers of the supported farmers.

Table 3: Agri-environment assistances in Hungary

Years	Subsidized area (thousand ha)	Number of supported applications (piece)
2002	80.69*	1320*
2003	89.14*	1667*
2004 and 2005	1400	24000

Source: [4; 5; 13]

* only grasslands

Among the subsidized areas 1089.9 thousand ha were arable land, 306.4 thousand ha were grassland and the total volume of the plantations and wetlands were 81.4 thousand hectares.

I point out that the large number of the subsidized areas and the supported applications from the national data refer to the importance – considering the expansions – of the extensive grassland farming [3].

2.6. NATURA 2000

The main action aims at sustaining the favourable natural condition of Community significance Natura 2000 areas, ensuring protection for the natural value justifying the designation, and promoting and supporting activities sustaining the natural conditions serving as the basis of the designation. One of the specific objectives of the NRDP is to provide effective tools for the implementation of the NATURA 2000 network. This objective similar to one of the NHRDSP's aims forming HNVA fields in line with the Natura 2000 network [13]. The Natura 2000 programme works on special bird protection areas, on marked and approved Natura 2000 areas, on Special Nature Protection Areas, and on stressed important nature protection areas.

Marking the Special Nature Protection Areas (SNPA) ordered by the European Union Habitats Directive. The aim of the marking is to protect serious biotope types, to protect the

wild plant and animal species. In conflict with the special bird protection areas, marking of SNPA fields, were long-drawn process. Under this process, specialist from Hungary and from the EC makes the definitive areas after multiple checking. The proposed list of sites to be included in the Natura 2000 network has been elaborated at the technical level but the national legislative process of designation is not yet completed, this work would be finished not later than 2013. In Hungary, 467 special protection areas and 55 special bird protection areas have been designated. Average extent of the SNPA fields greater than the Special Bird Protection Areas, a few hundred hectares fields frequent [6; 15]. The Natura 2000 network areas both in case of the Special Bird Protection Areas and in case of the SNPA fields, covers important expanse of grasslands.

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