



EDITORIAL

Farmland Wildlife: beaten at the final, waiting for the next round

This hot summer of tormented football matches has generated interesting parallels with the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

With the shiny green pitches recalling memories of intensively managed grassland, I have wondered a few times, what game Europe is going to play for the next CAP health-check. Surely, the reform's goals are already being discussed by the Commission and it will soon be the time in which ideas are revealed. However, whatever the content of the reform might be, I wonder about the dynamics that we will see in the field over again.

Will France dominate the results of the final, as it historically does, who will score, which Member States will team up against whom, and what will we play for? Will we go to the Council's final, where the environment will have to play the penalties against economic interests or the other way round? Judging from what is happening this summer in the world of agricultural policy, the scenario is not promising.

The state of the environment in Europe is not as green as the German grass, the future of wildlife not as bright as these sunny afternoons.

Pillar I and Pillar II, as they will stand from next year, and for the next seven years, already play a game that is so financially unbalanced from the start, that a true success of rural development measures is unlikely. There is now so much evidence emerging from the draft rural development plans that not only they will be severely under-funded, but that many Member States short of cash have already chosen shallow measures for the environment, leaving much of troubled biodiversity with no help.

Modulation, the best hope for the rural development team to catch up, doesn't seem

to be liked by the referee. It is getting a yellow, maybe a red card and might soon be sent off the pitch all together. If this happens, the weakness of agri environment programmes and Natura 2000 schemes will deepen.

While the WTO is playing its extra time and is in trouble in its own field, the Lisbon agenda has regained strength and setting policy goals that cast a shadow over the weak environmental agenda. Relative high expenditure in structural adjustment seems to be liked by many. Set aside, so valuable for wildlife might be out of the game soon. It is being injured as we speak, by the extension of biofuels and might be finished off by future reforms unless a strong intervention by the Commission saves it.

But what about the goal of halting biodiversity decline by 2010 that Member States collectively set in the Sustainable Development Strategy five years ago? What about the EU Biodiversity Action Plan for agriculture, that seemed to be sure that with a few measures within the CAP we could address the decline of farmland wildlife?

Four years to go to meet the 2010 target, and I can see little sign of key players running for the cup.



Ariel Brunner – BirdLife International
Agriculture Policy Officer
Ariel.Brunner@birdlifeco.net

*The Little Bustard in 2
France: threatened with
extinction by biofuels
and ineffective policy
tools*

*A sustainable path for 2
biofuels in the EU*

*The farmland bird indi- 3
cator as a baseline indi-
cator for Rural Develop-
ment*

*Austrian Farming - a 3
model for the European
Union ?*

Diary dates 3

FARMING FOR LIFE
NEWSLETTER

*“The state of the en-
vironment in Europe
is not as green as the
German grass”*



Case study: The Little Bustard in France: threatened with extinction by biofuels and ineffective policy tools

The French migratory population of Little bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*) has crashed in the last 20 years by over 90%. It is facing imminent extinction and its survival depends on specific habitat management measures. Set-aside fields under grass cover are of key importance for this species. It nests in arable land, which in recent decades has undergone profound changes in its management, through intensification making it unsuitable for many ground-nesting species. Set aside fields, the only land withdrawn from production, is rich in invertebrates, safe from mowing during the breeding season, and represents an excellent refuge for the Little Bustard's "family": displaying males, females and chicks. The expansion of crops for biofuels, encouraged by the EU Directive 2003/30/EC is a major threat to the grassy set-aside fields. Crops for biofuels, such as oilseed rape, sunflower and wheat, are increasingly produced on set-aside fields.

Agri-environmental schemes that paid farmers to manage set-asides for wildlife are not promoted anymore as France has chosen to cut the 2006 budget for these environmentally-friendly measures. This change in the farming landscape is worsening the situation of the Little Bustard and biodiversity in arable lands while cross-compliance, that could represent a way to ease the problem, is not playing its part in resolving the problem. For instance, farmers who grow crops for biofuels

are exempted from keeping 3% of their land as grassy banks, a measure that is compulsory for all other farmers receiving CAP payments.

To save the Little Bustard, France has designated 200 000 ha of arable lands in 11 Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These areas cover 70% of the migratory population of this species. Only 1600 ha however are under agri-environmental contracts, representing less than 1% of the land. To save the bustards from extinction, the SPA area managed as grassy habitats needs to be around 15% or about 30000 ha.



Tetrax tetrax by Stefan Benko

To reach this minimal objective, three main tools are currently not used to their potential. These are:

- Set-aside schemes: the current 10% of compulsory set aside over 200 000 ha could greatly contribute to the solution of the problem. In reality, due to biofuel crop production, only between 2-5% of grassy habitat is generated through this measure. Set aside is already paid by the

Single Farm Payment of CAP Pillar I.

- Cross-compliance: the compulsory retention of 3% of land as grassy banks allows for too many exceptions that are not contributing to biodiversity protection.
- Agri-environmental measures: to save the Little Bustards from extinction 10% of 200 000 ha are needed. Their implementation depends on French political willingness and the allocation of financial resources. Difficult negotiations are taking place between the Central government and Regions to decide who will pay it and how much money would be allocated. Our estimation for the budget needed for it is around 5M€/year (20 000 ha x 250 €/ha/year) from the CAP's Pillar II.

LPO (BirdLife Partner in France) is involved in an EU LIFE Nature project aiming to reinforce the Little Bustard migratory population between 2005 and 2009 and prevent its extinction. To succeed however, sufficient habitat needs to be restored and managed to allow the released young birds to survive. The future of this species, as of so many other threatened farmland birds, depends on the decisions that will be taken in the coming months by the French government and the European Commission.

Contact: christophe.jolivet@lpo.fr

A sustainable path for biofuels in the EU

On the eve of the Transport Telecommunications and Energy Council's debate on the Biomass and Biofuels Strategy, BirdLife International, EEB and Transport and Environment Network joined forces to hold a stakeholder conference to discuss what role biofuels should play and how the EU can ensure that a drive behind biofuels does not cause unacceptable environmental damage.

In his key-note speech, Commissioner Dimas took a strong stand on the role of biofuels and their sustainability. He argued that in tackling climate change and security of supply, our focus must be on energy saving and efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources. Biofuels should be seen as just one small part of the solution and be approached with due care given to environmental impacts. He gave the Commission's full support to the principle of creating safeguard mechanisms that will ensure the sustainability of biofuels. Officials from DG TREN and DG AGRI in their presentation of the EU Biofuels Stra-

tegy also underlined their commitment to sustainability and an open and constructive dialogue with stakeholders.

Speakers presented an in-depth analysis of a wide range of environmental and social threats and opportunities making clear that these pressures will worsen without a robust policy framework for the biofuels sector.

Presentations from the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership from the UK and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil demonstrated how a certification system for biofuels might work, while the results from a study on the compatibility of certification for biofuels with WTO rules suggested that a carefully designed system that treats all market players equally and is based on thorough consultation could be successfully defended.

Panelists representing biofuel producers, farmers, the oil industry and environmental NGOs, generally agreed on the need for environmental safeguards to ensure that biofuels are produced sustainably, do

not increase environmental pressures, address social issues, and stimulate innovation but that these measures should not put an excessive burden on the biofuels industry. Apart from this broad agreement, a number of questions remained as to how such a policy is going to take shape in the EU, especially with a view to the revision of the Biofuels Directive towards the end of 2006. A strong message emerged that the Commission should take this forward through a new stakeholder process to follow the current internet consultation on the Biofuels Directive that would bring together experts and stakeholders with the aim of developing a workable and effective system of environmental safeguards for biofuels.

Presentations from the conference are available at:

<http://www.eeb.org/activities/agriculture/conferenceresultsAsustainablepathforbiofuelsintheEU.htm>

Contact: ariel.brunner@birdlifeco.net, harry.huyton@rspb.org.uk



The farmland bird indicator as a baseline indicator for Rural Development

The main strength of the new Rural Development (RD) policy is that it is clearly targeted at delivering specific public goods and services, such as a healthy rural economy, better environmental quality and an improved quality of life for rural populations. For such a policy to succeed, and to be able to demonstrate its success, it is vital to create an effective monitoring system that is sufficiently consistent across Member States to ensure that this EU-wide policy can be assessed and improved.

Thus, a promising development in the new RD period is the introduction of a common monitoring and evaluation framework, based on meaningful indicators. Instead of simply monitoring the degree to which various measures are taken up, Member States will now have to quantify the objectives of these measures, and to monitor their outcomes and impacts.

Halting the decline of biodiversity is one of the EU's main environmental objectives and a stated objective of the new RD policy. It is thus important to have a meas-

ure of the state of farmland biodiversity that can be followed to assess the policy's effectiveness. To address this need, the farmland bird indicator (FBI), produced by the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (a partnership involving the European Bird Census Council, BirdLife International, the RSPB and Statistics Netherlands) has been chosen by the EU as a baseline indicator for biodiversity.

The FBI is currently the only available European biodiversity indicator that is already in use and for which data are available from the majority of Member States. Birds are the best studied component of biodiversity, and many species are already counted annually by thousands of skilled ornithologists across the continent. The availability of so much data from a largely voluntary workforce is an asset whose worth cannot be overstated, and means that the FBI is extremely good value, statistically robust and specifically designed to combine data from different countries. Its adoption will allow Member States to describe the state of their farmland biodi-

versity and report on the overall results obtained by RD environmental investment. A similar indicator is currently being developed for forest birds.

In many cases, birds can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of specific RD measures aiming to maintain or enhance farmland biodiversity. Monitoring schemes must be carefully tailored to the objectives of each measure, and to the relevant geographical and time scales. In some cases, of course, the measures taken may make it more appropriate to monitor other groups of animals and plants than birds. There is however no doubt that if Member States take their new monitoring obligations seriously and make the best use of their results, RD will in the future have a much more solid base and achieve a much higher level of effectiveness.

For more information contact: Ariel Brunner@birdlifeeco.net, ian.burfield@birdlife-europe.nl

Austrian Farming - a model for the European Union ?

On the occasion of the Austrian Presidency, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management and BirdLife International promoted a debate on the Austrian agri-environmental model and the lessons that can be drawn from it for the rest of Europe. The event, hosted by the Austrian Permanent Representation and organised by BirdLife Austria also saw the participation of an official from the DG Agriculture Evaluation Unit and from the Austrian Hunting Association.

Results from extensive bird monitoring were presented, showing the strength and, in some cases the shortcomings, of the Austrian agri-environment measures. Austria spends a very significant part of its agriculture budget on agri-environment schemes through a menu of basic "horizontal" measures. Schemes are available for almost all farmers, with a huge choice of measures. These range from

"light green" options, such as field margins and winter stubble to "dark green" schemes involving sophisticated and intensive habitat restoration and management. The impact of some Austrian schemes on biodiversity is well documented and shows that well targeted measures can reverse the decline of threatened species.

There is, however, room for improvement to better use the monitoring results and promote the most successful schemes. The unsuccessful ones will need withdrawing or re-designing. It has been highlighted how agri-environment as a policy tool can only be part of the solution, even when used in the best possible way. Data suggests that a key role in maintaining and restoring biodiversity in plain areas in Austria is played by economic set aside, which is now threatened by the expansion of energy crops. Meadows, as well, are losing their ecological value due to intensification or abandonment.

The remuneration of Agri environment based on income forgone has limited scope in preventing abandonment and the effect of intensification cannot be stopped by agri environment schemes alone.

The lesson to be learnt from Austria is that an important investment in well-designed and monitored schemes represents a major tool of a sustainable land management policy. This can bring tangible results for biodiversity conservation and for rural communities. Agri-environment schemes alone, however, cannot deliver the EU objective of halting of biodiversity decline by 2010. Nature conservation policies, as well as other CAP measures, such as cross compliance and set aside, have to play a key role alongside.

Contact: johannes.fruehauf@birdlife.at

Diary dates

July 18

Agriculture and Fisheries Council: *Debate on the Regulation on Voluntary modulation for Rural Development*

September 18

Agriculture and Fisheries Council: *Exchange of views on the Proposal on the promotion of energy crop production*

September 24-26

Informal Agriculture and Forestry

October 24-25

Agriculture and Fisheries Council: *Adoption of the Regulation on Voluntary modulation for Rural Development*

November 20-21

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

December 14

European Council

December 19-21

Agriculture and Fisheries Council: *poss. Adoption of the Proposal on the promotion of energy crop production*



THE BIRDLIFE EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP



The BirdLife European Partnership consists of 42 conservation organisations with 1800 staff, 1.7 million members and more than 6,000 reserves (covering over 300,000 hectares). A European Programme to conserve birds is implemented by Partners with coordination provided by the European Division staff in Wageningen (The Netherlands) and Brussels (Belgium) working together with the BirdLife Global Secretariat in Cambridge (UK). While many of these are working on agricultural issues connected to bird conservation, only Partners in EU and Accession countries are active in the BirdLife 'Farming for Life' Campaign.

Austria

BirdLife Österreich-Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde/BirdLife Austria
Museumsplatz 1/10/8
A-1070 Wien, Austria
Tel +43 1 523 46 51 - Fax +43 1 524 70 40

Belgium

BirdLife Belgium vzw
Kardinaal Mercierplein 1
BE-2800 Mechelen, Belgium
Tel +32 15 297249 - Fax +32 15 424921

Bulgaria

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB)
P.O.Box 50
BG-1111 Sofia, Bulgaria
Tel +359 2 971 5855 - Fax +359 2 971 5856

Cyprus

Cyprus Ornithological Society (COS)
PO Box 28076
CY Nicosia 2090, Cyprus
Tel +357 2632155 - Fax +357 2383310

Czech Republic

Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO)
Na Belidle 34
CZ-150 00 Prague 5, Czech Republic
Tel +420-257212465

Denmark

Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF - BirdLife DK)
Vesterbrogade 140
DK-1620 Copenhagen V, Denmark
Tel +45 3331 4404 - Fax +45 3331 2435

Estonia

Estonian Ornithological Society (EOS)
PO Box 227
50002 Tartu, Estonia. Visiting: Veski Str. 4
Tel +372 7 422 195 - Fax +372 7 422 180

Finland

BirdLife Suomi - Finland
Annankatu 29 A, P.O. Box 1285
FI-00101 Helsinki, Finland
Tel +358 9 4135 3300 - Fax +358 9 4135 3322

France

Ligue pour la protection des oiseaux (LPO)
La Corderie Royale, B.P. 90263
FR-17305 ROCHEFORT CEDEX, France
Tel +33 546 82 12 34
Fax +33 546 83 95 86, +33 546 82 12 50

Germany

Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU) German Society for Nature Conservation
Herbert-Rabius-Str. 26
DE-53225 Bonn, Germany
Tel +49 228 40 36-0 - Fax +49 228 40 36-200

Greece

Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS)
Vas. Hrakleiou 24
GR-10682 Athens, Greece
Tel +30 10 8227 937 Fax +30 10 8228 704

Hungary

Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society MME/BirdLife Hungary
Költő u. 21, Pf. 391
HU-1536 Budapest, Hungary
Tel +36 1 275 62 47 - Fax +36 1 275 62 67

Ireland

BirdWatch Ireland
Rockingham House, Newcastle
Co. Wicklow, Ireland
Tel +353 1 281 9878 - Fax +353 1 281 9763

Italy

LIPU (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli)
Via Trento 49
IT-43100 Parma, Italy
Tel +39 0521 27 30 43
Fax +39 0521 27 34 19

Latvia

Latvian Ornithological Society LOB
A.K. 1010
LV-1050 Riga, Latvia
Tel +371 72 21 580 - Fax +371 76 03 100

Lithuania

Lithuanian Ornithological Society LOD
Naugarduko St. 47-3
LT-2006 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel +370 5 213 04 98 - Fax +370 5 213 04 98

Luxembourg

Lëtzebuurger Natur- a Vulleschutzliga LNLV
Kräizhaff, Rue de Luxembourg,
LU-1899 Kockelscheuer, Luxembourg
Tel +352 29 04 04-1 - Fax +352 29 05 04

Malta

BirdLife Malta
57 Marina Court, Flat 28, Abate Rigord Street
MT-Ta' Xbiex, MSD 12, Malta
Tel +356 21 34 76 46 - Fax +356 21 34 32 39

The Netherlands

Vogelbescherming Nederland Netherlands Society for the Protection of Birds
PO Box 925
NL-3700 AX Zeist, Netherlands
Tel+31 30 69 37700 - Fax +31 30 69 18844

Poland

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds OTOP
Pulawska 46 m12
02-599 Warszawa, Poland
Tel +48 58 341 2693 - Fax +48 58 341 2693

Portugal

Sociedade portuguesa para o estudo das aves (SPEA)
Rua da Vitoria 53 - 3º Esq
PT-1100-618 Lisboa, Portugal
Tel +351-21 213 220430 - Fax +351-21 213 220439

Romania

Romanian Ornithological Society (ROS) / BirdLife Romania
Str. Gheorghe Dima 49/2
RO-400336 Cluj Napoca, Romania
Tel / Fax +40 264 438 086

Slovakia

Society for the Protection of Birds in Slovakia SOVS
Mlynské Nivy 41
SK-821 09 Bratislava 2, Slovakia
Tel +421 2 5542 2185 - Fax +421 2 5542 2186

Slovenia

DOPPS - BirdLife Slovenia
Tržaška cesta 2, PO Box 2990,
SI-1001 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Tel +386 1 426 58 75 - Fax +386 1 425 11 81

Spain

Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife)
Spanish Ornithological Society
Melquiades Biencinto 34
ES-28053 Madrid, Spain
Tel +34 91 4340910 - Fax +34 91 4340911

Sweden

Sveriges ornitologiska förening (SOF) Swedish Ornithological Society
Ekhagsvägen 3
SE-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel +46 8 612 25 30 - Fax +46 8 612 25 36

United Kingdom

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
The Lodge, Sandy,
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK
Tel +44 1 767 68 05 51 - Fax +44 1 767 69 23 65



Edith Verhoestraete

The FARMING FOR LIFE NEWSLETTER is produced with financial support by VBN (BirdLife NL) and is compiled by BirdLife International staff, it complements European Division's regular newsletter *Brussels Briefing*.

For more information contact: Ariel.Brunner@birdlifeco.net or bleco@birdlifeco.net
Editor responsible Claire Papazoglou: Claire.Papazoglou@birdlifeco.net

European Division - 67, Avenue de la Toison d'Or, B-1060 Brussels (Belgium) - Tel +32 (0)2 280 08 30 - Fax +32 (0)2 230 38 02
Website: www.birdlife.org/eu - Farming for Life campaign website: www.birdlifecapcampaign.org