



***PAN-EUROPEAN BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE  
DIVERSITY STRATEGY***

Geneva and Strasbourg, 2 March 2005

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**COUNCIL FOR THE PAN-EUROPEAN  
BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY STRATEGY**

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Ninth meeting  
16-17 March 2005  
Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg  
Room 11, 9.30 am

**UNEP/EEA/EC JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE (ISPRA)  
COOPERATION ON IDENTIFICATION OF  
HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLAND**

*Document prepared by the  
European Environment Agency and UNEP*

## **Introduction**

In the Sixth Environment Action Programme, the European Union in 2001 committed itself to halt biodiversity decline by 2010. Conserving high nature value farmland is key to achieving this target. The PEBLDS Council will recall that in the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity, the European environment Ministers also agreed to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and, as a sub-target, to identify high nature value farmland in the pan European region and take adequate conservation measures. However, pan-European data on distribution and conservation status of high nature value farmland are currently lacking.

## **Collaboration between the EEA and UNEP**

As a contribution to the pan-European and European Union processes, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) commissioned a study on agriculture and biodiversity and a study to quantify and delineate high nature value farmland areas in 2003. The outcome was an EEA-UNEP Joint Message, *High Nature Value Farmland*, released in 2004, in which preliminary data on the distribution and conservation status of high nature value farmland and the current targeting of policy instruments were presented. According to the joint UNEP/EEA report, preliminary estimates show that roughly 15–25 % of the European countryside qualifies as high nature value farmland. The largest areas are found in eastern and southern Europe.

In addition to the report, the EEA has over the last years been involved with the technical aspects of defining HNV farmland and the development of an HNV farmland indicator. In 2004, the EEA finished the background study underpinning the EEA-UNEP Joint Message. The study aimed to provide a framework for compiling compatible information on HNV farmland across Europe and to lay some of the foundations for longer-term improvements in data. The project identified three broad categories of farmland as being potentially of high nature value and defines HNV farmland as:

*“those areas in Europe where agriculture is a major (usually the dominant) land use and where that agriculture supports or is associated with either a high species and habitat diversity or the presence of species of European conservation concern or both”.*

To provide input into possible work and discuss coordination with other organisations in 2005, the EEA hosted an expert meeting in November 2004 in which 25 experts from all over Europe participated. The objectives were to review technical options and approaches for extending and improving the current HNV farmland data sets – also in the new Member States and to assess options for the targeting of CAP policy instruments on HNV farmland. The conclusion of the meeting was that in terms of the collection of more reliable data in the future, there is still a lot to be learned and to be done and that cooperation between international organisations and with/between countries is essential.

## **Collaboration between EEA, UNEP and the JRC (Ispra)**

Regarding the coordination of future work, it was decided that UNEP will pay particular attention to policy issues, the establishment of a focal point (such as a website) for exchange of information among stakeholders, and extending the activities to include the non-EEA countries in the activities. The role of the EEA will be to provide technical advice on the further identification of HNV farmland, help keep analytical approaches coordinated and provide links to experts at national level as well as international organisations. As to the updating of the land cover analysis on the basis of CORINE Land Cover 2000 and the extension of coverage to EEA 31 member countries, it was agreed that this work is suitable for the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC-Ispra) in cooperation with national experts and with advice from the EEA.