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The first agri-environmental measures with assurance of ecological results in grassland

The research programme undertaken with Massif des Bauges Regional Natural Park (*Parc naturel régional du Massif des Bauges*) led to a method in which the aim of good conservation of habitats in heterogeneous grassland environments (natural prairie, moorland and rangeland) is transformed into simple indicators of results to be obtained that are easy to adopt by farmers. A new generation of agri-environmental measures based on commitment to results emerged from this work.



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CONTEXT

France and the European Union have set objectives with commitment to results in the conservation of biodiversity. Agri-environmental measures are one of the main instruments in rural areas. Their specifications are generally based on the respect of practices considered as being favourable for the environment. However, in the field the managers of natural areas observe inadequate pertinence between the means recommended and the results achieved and wonder about their difficulties in setting up contractual relations with farmers on this basis. This observation was the reason for the partnership run between the Massif des Bauges Regional Natural Park and a multidisciplinary team (livestock scientists and agro-economists) from the SAD Ecodevelopment Unit.

RESULTS

We developed an innovative method for setting biodiversity conservation objectives in farmers' production design. The specifications proposed cover results to be achieved that are coherent with the conservation objective but that are described by simple indicators that are easily identifiable by farmers, such as the presence of at least 4 flowering plants from the list previously set out (photographic reference) on each third of the field'. This obliged managers of natural areas to identify among the ecological dynamics affecting habitat quality those that farmers can indeed guide or control via their agricultural production activity. The farmers can thus choose the practices and means to be used. Instead of being felt as a set of constraints, biodiversity becomes a fully-fledged production feature of agricultural activity.

Following a proposal by the *Fédération des PNR (Parcs Naturels Régionaux) de France*, the commitments to results have been entered in the national catalogues of the *Plan de Développement Rural Hexagonal 2007-2013* (Rural Development Plan for Mainland France).

PROSPECTS

- Transfer of experience at the national scale for the management of Natura 2000 sites via the network of Regional National Parks (PNRs) and Conservatoires d'Espaces Naturels (Protected Natural Areas).
- Testing of the 'flower prairie' agri-environmental measure outside Natura 2000 sites, at the scale of the Massif des Bauges area.

PARTNERS

Parc Naturel Régional du Massif des Bauges, Réserve Nationale de Chasse des Bauges, Conservatoire Rhône-Alpes des Espaces Naturels, Sociétés d'Economie Alpestre and Chambers of agriculture in Savoie and Haute-Savoie.

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- Agreil, C., Haskell, J., Haskell, J., Meuret, M., Provenza, F., 2008. *Grazing practices and rangeland conservation: towards output-based contracts to improve relevance and enhance technical innovation*. VIII International Rangeland Congress, 29 June - 5 July 2008, Hohhot, China.

More information can be found at:

- www.parcdesbauges.com/agriculture/agri-environnement/les-prairies-fleuries-entre-agriculture-et-biodiversite.html
- www.avignon.inra.fr/les_recherches_1/liste_des_unites/ecodeveloppement_1/actualites/

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