High Nature Value Farming-
a view from the ground
What is HNV farming?

There is a lack of common understanding and picture of what HNV farming is and what it looks like.

Low intensity farming systems using semi-natural pastures, meadows, woodland as well as semi-natural features.

Systems that favour the dynamics of natural processes and create opportunities for biodiversity to flourish over large, contiguous areas.

Estimate of the Distribution of HNV Farms
(Paracchini et al., JRC-IES & EEA, 2008)

Where?

HNV Farmland is most strongly present in the Northwest, southern and eastern regions of the EU. Highest concentrations found in the more marginal areas.

Poorer natural production conditions for farming. Many areas have HNV farming as predominant land use.

Provides a “cultural landscape”, long established in Europe.
What defines HVN?

Landuse patterns and types
Site conditions and types
Adapted vegetation and fauna
Breeding of plant and husbandry varieties
Structural elements
Mosaic in space
Mosaic in time
Three Broad types recognised at European level by Regulation 1698/2005

HNV Farming Type I

Farmland with a high proportion of semi natural vegetation
HNV farming Type II

Farmland with a mosaic of low intensity agriculture and natural and structural field margins, hedgerows, stone walls, patches of woodland or scrub, burns and rivers etc.
HNV Farming Type III

Farmland supporting rare species or a high proportion of European or World populations
Why is HNV farming important?

Public Goods

Genetic Diversity

Natural and cultural heritage

Indicator function
Sympathetic Land Management - The cornerstone of HNV farming

Grazing with appropriate livestock at suitable stocking rates

Traditional mowing of hay meadows

Leaving areas fallow

Use of seaweed etc. for fertiliser

Cutting rushes or undertaking habitat restoration
Threats to HNV systems

- Lack of adequate member state recognition and appreciation of HNV farming
- Lack of specific support within the present CAP reform proposals
- The economic viability of HNV systems, not least in comparison to other farming systems
- Little recognition of the pride and satisfaction HNV farmers are able to draw from their approach to farming
EU Policy

- Each Member State should identify what “HNV Farming” means in their own national context.
- They should support HNV farming by including appropriate measures in their own national rural development programmes.
- Monitoring is needed to assess the impact of support measures on the extent and quality of HNV farmland and systems.
The Emperor's New Clothes?
“Conserving what is left is more important than getting back what was lost”

(Kleijn et al 2011)

Biodiversity is usually higher on farmland that is managed at a low intensity.

Often “natural” appearing vegetation discloses a record of long-term grazings—eg forests and coastal systems.

Reintroductions—costly and controversial.
The Present situation?

“I am concerned there is a skills shortage in the industry in this country. Stockmen's sons stopped following in the fathers footsteps in the 80's, and now there are too many folk who are divorced from the land”

(Andrew Elliot, HNV farmer, Durness, Sutherland, North-west Scotland)
Our Challenge?

HNV farming cannot compete on returns from the market alone—how do we add value to what we do in our daily lives and routines?