

Agriculture Working Group break-out

Participants were: Angela Andrade, Julie Ewald, Krešo Krapinec, Mari Ivask, Marina Rosales, Piet Wit, Viktor Šegrt, Vilma Alina Šoba

1. Perdix net

- a) Julie Ewald opened a theme on the importance of getting more information from other countries regarding issues concerning Grey Partridge populations. Discussion was about how to become active on social medias to get more people informed and involved in partridge decline problems. Viktor Šegrt mentioned two big partridge populations on the Adriatic coast near Zadar in Croatia and Niš in Serbia and how they use partridges sustainably for dog training and field trials without shooting and still making appreciable income. The way of using partridge coveys and pairs is to find them in 15 minutes of dog running, flush them, simulate a gun shot with a starting pistol and get the dog steady on the flush. Usually there are over 500 dogs per day during the field trails in the spring and autumn, and a few dozen trainers every day for 6 months. Field trails and training days are forbidden during the breeding season, from the end of February to the beginning of August.
- b) Angela Andrade brought up the subject of investigating how ecosystem services in general could provide biodiversity and vice versa, which might be of great interest going forward. It might be worth raising awareness more widely that the PARTRIDGE project is exploring these things – with habitats, monitoring of insects and simple soil monitoring.
- c) It was also pointed out a big problem for Grey Partridges in the Balkan region is a ban of crow, magpie and fox hunting from the end March to the end of July. Nobody can explain why they did such regulation and it ought to be changed.

2. Farmer Clusters

- a) Discussion started with the question of whether there was there any specific EU directive regarding soil protection and the answer was – no. Piet mentioned that there is a professor in Bonn University who's been working on something similar. Piet also gave a good example of how you can get response from farmers within EU directives if they get some benefit from it. The Grey Partridge is a good umbrella species – accommodating different approach in different countries. Perhaps the PARTRIDGE project could use the relationship it has with the farmers on the demonstration sites (possibly also the reference sites) to look at the question of soil conservation.
- b) Krešo pointed out the problem with Agri-environmental schemes which are not implemented properly and can't be implemented in all EU member states. Viktor mentioned that there is different problem with implementing AES in Croatia and as an example he said that there are over 1.5 million hectares of unmanaged land which used to be agriculture land (and basically was not treated with any kind of pesticide for more than 25 years). As a result there was shrubby succession and loss habitat in that way for native European species as Grey Partridges and hares. As solution he said that in new EU financial perspective 2021 – 2027 it would be way better to start land consolidation and get EU

funding to the farmers to mulch these areas in 2-5ha size leaving natural conservation headlands who are presently everywhere. Vilma Alina Šoba from Slovenia said that there are areas in Slovenia where they can use present AES but it must be checked separately for each state in the Balkans.

- c) Umbrella species – discussion moved to which species is the best in Europe as an umbrella species for agriculture. There was discussion of both Lapwing and Grey Partridge. It was felt that the best umbrella species is Grey Partridge, since farmers and hunters can gain biological and financial benefits from Grey Partridge and will be more willing to get involved.

3. Horizon 2020 possibilities.

It was concluded that 2019 is the last year for some possible projects. There were a few possibilities and we will just have to keep our eye out to see if there is anything useful announced.

4. INTERREG, involving co-financing.

The initial discussion was about different co-financing in different EU countries. In Croatia and Slovenia it is 85%. After that, discussion was about the possibility of joining in one big project with ESUG – GWCT support. Vilma presented a great idea about a project to look at how the monetary proceeds from hunting are distributed in different countries– for example hunting law regulations in the Balkan region mean that landowners don't have hunting rights to hunt on their private land. As a result of which they can't sell hunting rights and they lack motivation to manage game on their privately owned land, which is definitely not good. These sorts of issues will effect how well hunting can contribute to sustainable use of quarry species in individual countries.