

Politics

This part of the project analyses the political framework of the obligatory and voluntary set-aside at national and European level and finds out political need for action will be shown to integrate the wildlife-friendly optimized land



set-aside into agriculture policy. Furthermore it's important to give more powerful and professional information about nature conservation and best practise of set-aside in the agricultural landscape to farmers. Other tasks are press work

and media information and the analysis of the conflicts relating to the permitted cultivation of non-food crop and wildlife-friendly set-aside.

How is the project financed?

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LEBENSRAUM BRACHE

(Habitat Set-Aside)

A project for Wildlife-Friendly Implementation of Set-Aside

For further information:

www.lebensraum-brache.de

Background

One consequence of agriculture policy during the last decades was the overproduction of various agricultural commodities. By means of export subsidies, quotas and set-aside programs the European Union tries to reduce production in the Union and to sell the surplus on the world market.



In 1988/89, the first extensivization and set-aside programs were introduced in the European Union. Financial compensations gave farmers the opportunity to take farmland off production or to lower yields per hectare. These programs were voluntary and, without any enforcing character, did not result in a discharge of the agricultural commodities market.



The reform of the Common Agriculture Policy in 1992 introduced set-aside as a mandatory instrument. This was confirmed by the Agenda 2000.

In Germany, about 1 million hectare of arable land

have been taken out of production as a consequence of land set-aside obligations. Roughly a third of this area, however, is used to cultivate Non-Food-Crops for energy purposes. The environmental impacts of Non-Food farming hardly differ from traditional food or feed production.

Nonetheless, the figures presented underline the potential importance of set-aside programs for the shape of the nature and, hence, for the ecological value of our agricultural landscapes as a habitat for wildlife and plants. Unfortunately, aspects of nature conservation and species protection have hardly been considered in the development and implementation of set-aside programs. Just local projects, usually developed by the initiative of engaged farmers, hunters and conservationists, form an exception.

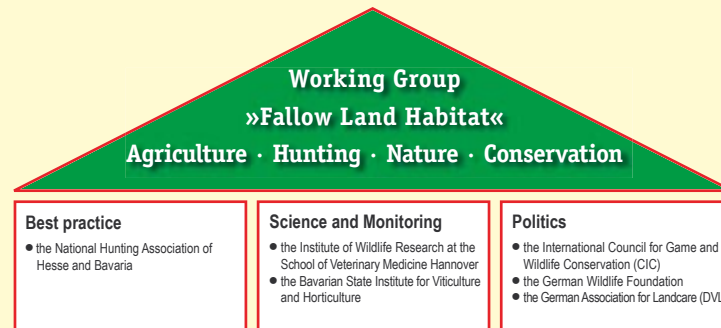
Mandatory set-aside programs in the context of the agricultural market regimes have to be distinguished from voluntary set-aside initiatives in the context of the agri-environmental measures. The latter are voluntary and explicitly pursue goals of nature protection. This form of set-aside, however, is implemented only in very small areas.

The project "Lebensraum Brache" is aiming to integrate aspects of nature conservation and species protection into the obligation at set-aside. Furthermore it's important to improve the attractiveness of voluntary set-aside for nature conservation.

On 26 June 2003 the ministers of Agriculture of the European Union came to an agreement in Luxembourg for a fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy, based on the Commission proposals of January 2003. With view to set-aside the reform is not as fundamental as the Commission proposals, as the ministers approved more or less the existing legal situation for set-aside.

About the Project

Representatives from nature protection, hunting and rural development came together and initialised the project



„Lebensraum Brache“ in spring 2003. The goal of the project is to improve the situation for wildlife in the agrarian landscape by using wildlife-friendly forms of set-aside. Furthermore the project wants to achieve better integration of wildlife friendly land set-aside into the agricultural support system.

Practice

During the project period (2003-2006) 2.200 hectares of arable farm land will be converted into a wildlife-friendly optimized land set-aside. Low-coast seed mixtures will be examined to develop Cover-, Breeding- and Feeding Habitat for wildlife. The sample areas are located in the German federal states Bavaria and Hesse. It is to expect that this type of set-aside will have particularly positive effects on wildlife.



positive effects on wildlife.

The wildlife-friendly optimized land set-aside is supported by the project budget. The findings which will be collect-

ed of the wildlife-friendly optimized land set-aside will be discussed with farmers organisations and other projects all over Germany.

Science and Monitoring

This part of the project group is a cooperation of different scientific sectors (e.g. Plant Sociology, Wildlife Biology and Ornithology). They investigate and document the biodiversity and population development of selected „open land“ species like Partridge, Hare and Skylark on the sample areas in Bavaria and Hesse. Another aim is to test the findings relating to the possibility of transfer to other landscapes.