

Natural Grazing in Podkarpackie Region

The Natural Grazing in Podkarpackie program was introduced to preserve, protect and restore the biodiversity in valuable natural areas in Podkarpackie region, through extensive grazing of livestock in the permanent grassland areas, while maintaining animal welfare and appropriate stocking rate.



Summary

The program “Podkarpacki Naturalny Wypas” was established in 2012 as a public initiative, in order to preserve, protect and restore the biodiversity in valuable natural areas through extensive grazing of livestock in the meadow-pasture areas of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The program is coordinated by the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Local Government). The program currently runs as a long term initiative (2017-2020). Each year an open call is organized in which non-profit organizations (e.g. foundations, associations, NGO cooperatives) and other eligible parties present offers to arrange grazing on specific grasslands by subcontracted farmers, who provide animals (cattle, horses, sheep, goats and deers) and plots of land for grazing. In the pilot year (2012), 7 organizations took part, representing a total of 321 farmers, grazing 5,981 animals on the area of 4,700 hectares. In 2019, there were 7 organizations involved and 715 farmers, grazing on an area of 15,100 ha (about 13,236 animals). The study of Ruda et al. (2019) shows that the program brings measurable benefits. Over half of the interviewed breeders increased the grazed area and number of animals, a significant part systematically performs pasture care activities, or built pastoral infrastructure. The program contributes to the protection of biodiversity in valuable natural areas and brings measurable economic and social benefits.

Objectives

- Preservation, protection and restoration of the biodiversity in valuable natural areas, based on extensive grazing of livestock while maintaining animal welfare.
- Restoration of valuable natural and landscape areas for grazing.
- Maintenance and restoration of architecture associated with traditional pastoral grazing;
- Protection of cultural heritage, supporting and sustaining the traditions, customs and other related elements of folk culture of pastoralism;
- Economic and tourist activation of the Podkarpackie province

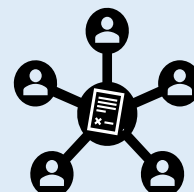


Source. Fot. <https://horb.org.pl>

Problem description

The program responds to the need for economic and tourist activation of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, and in particular for the protection of naturally valuable meadow and pasture areas while maintaining biodiversity. Among the factors justifying the implementation of the Program the most important are: a large share of protected areas in the region (44.9% of the total area), a progressive decline in livestock numbers and the low utilization of permanent grasslands (below 50%).

COLLECTIVE



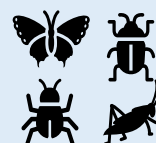
Collective implementation
– the contract is between:
NGO (association)
and farmers

LAND TENURE



Land tenure: some areas which are subject of the contract are rented by farmers. For example the land in National Parks or in the mountain areas, where the farmer is not the owner of the land, but may rent it for the purpose of grazing.

PUBLIC GOODS



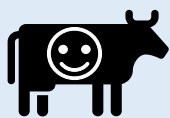
(Farmland) biodiversity



Landscape and scenery



Cultural heritage



Farm animal health and welfare

CONTRACT

It is a public-private contract: farmers are subcontracted by the NGO (association). The NGOs have a contract with the public organization (Podkarpackie Voivodenship Government – Urząd Samorządu Terytorialnego).



Contract conclusion:
Written agreement



Payment mechanism:
Incentive payments

Financing party: Local Government (without EU-funding)



Start of the program:
2012
End: still running

Data and Facts - Contract

Indirect effects:

- Soil quality (and health) - grazing promotes grass propagation, prevents soil erosion, and trampling and leaving droppings stimulate turf development;
- Recreational access - the presence of animals on pastures increases the aesthetic value of the landscape, which contributes to increasing the tourist attractiveness of the region;
- Rural viability and vitality, the program brings measurable economic and social benefits, which contribute to rural viability and vitality.

Participation:

- Number of farms: in 2019 - 715 farmers/ 13,200 animals (70% cattle),
- Area of implementation: in 2019 – 15,200. ha.
- Other participants: in 2019 - 7 associations.

Involved parties: The contracting parties could be NGOs - associations and cooperatives, churches, sports clubs, non-profit companies. In the first year of the program implementation (2012), 7 organizations took part, representing a total of 321 farmers, grazing on the area of 4,700 ha (about 5,981 animals). In 2019, the number of farms was over twice bigger than in 2012 and the number of grazed animals and hectares tripled. Both, NGO organizations and their subcontractors (farmers with grazing animals) must provide a document, which implies the right to dispose of the premises/plots (lease agreement, lending, property right) and of the animals that will be involved in grazing.

Advantages of participation:

- Farmers have the possibility of financial remuneration for the use of land for grazing animals;
- NGOs raise funds for statutory activities and demonstrate activity in priority areas.
- Voivodship self-government contributes to preservation, protection and restoration of the biodiversity in valuable natural areas and to economic and tourist activation of the Podkarpackie Region.

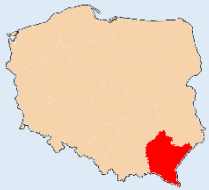


Source: Fot. Robert garstka, Kik Batowice CC-BY-SA-4.0

Management requirements for farmers: The program is addressed to breeders of cattle, horses, sheep, goats and deer in Podkarpacie Region. Animals registered for the program must stay on the farm throughout the entire pasture period - it is assumed to be from May 20 to September 30, i.e. 134 days (it is possible to swap animals provided that the stocking ratio is maintained). The program involves grazing animals in the meadow and pasture areas of the Podkarpackie Voivodenship with a stocking of 0.4 - 1.0 LU/ha. Animals must be kept in compliance with animal welfare norms (e.g. have assured access to water, protection against predators). Animals must be registered in the database of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture or the Horse Breeders Database and / or the regional veterinarian database. On the other hand the contracted NGO organisations must organize at least 4 trainings for farmers, beekeepers, and school pupils concerning specific topics related to biodiversity and ecological awareness. The budget available for organising trainings was 5,800 Euro per year per association, in 2019.

LOCATION

POLAND



Podkarpackie Region
(PL82)



Controls/monitoring: Controls on the implementation of the program are carried out by the voivodship office representatives, which assesses the status of task implementation, effectiveness, reliability and quality of implementation, correctness of spending public funds and properness of record keeping. At least 10% of beneficiaries are controlled.

Conditions of participation: Each year an open call is organized in which non-profit organizations (e.g. foundations, associations, NGO cooperatives) and other eligible parties present offers to arrange grazing on specific areas of land by subcontracted farmers, who provide animals (cattle, horses, sheep, goats and deers) and plots of land for grazing. The tasks of the program must be implemented in the Podkarpackie region.

Risk/uncertainties of participants: The main risk of the associations which take part in the call are that the sub-contracted farmers/other parties will not fulfill the requirements of the contract concerning for example number of animals kept for the grazing season or animal density etc.

Funding/Payments: The funds come from the Local Government Budget of Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The amount allocated to the program is set annually by the Podkarpackie Voivodeship Board. The payment is made to contracted NGOs organisations, which were approved by the commission, and then those organisations transfer funds to the sub-contracted farmers (or producer groups). The amount of subsidy per hectare is estimated on the basis of the expected interest in the program (estimated area on which animals will be grazed) and the funds available for this purpose. The level of payment therefore differs from one year to another and in 2019 was: 120 PLN (ca. 30 euro)/ha of utilized meadows/pastures; 160 PLN (ca 40 euro)/ ha if meadow/pasture it is located in the nature-protected area, 200 PLN (ca. 47 euro)/ha if the meadow/pasture is maintained in an organic system of production, and supplementary 150 PLN (ca 35 euro) payment (additional to the abovementioned) if the land is restored to usage after not being used for agricultural purposes before.

Context features

Landscape and climate: Podkarpackie Voivodeship is located in south-eastern Poland, bordering with Ukraine and Slovakia. It covers an area of 17,844 km², which is 5.7% of the area of Poland. About 35% of the area is covered by forests, and almost 45% of the area belongs to various forms of nature and landscape protection.



Podkarpackie Voivodeship covers three separate physiographic regions. The northern part of the province is occupied by the Sandomierz Basin lowland, the middle part by the Carpathian Foothills, while the southern part includes the mountains of the Low Beskids and the Bieszczady Mountains. Due to its location, the area of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is characterized by a significant variety of terrain, the difference between the highest hills and the lowest places is over 1000 meters. Thanks to the advantages of nature and the environment, Podkarpackie is one of the most popular tourist regions in Poland, particularly attractive because of the beauty of its landscape and the cultural richness. A great attraction of the region are well-preserved sacred and secular buildings. The tourist trail includes wooden temples, palaces and manors leads through 175 villages in the region. Podkarpackie lies at the intersection of North-West Europe's maritime climate and East European continental climate. Its climate is also influenced by its surface shape and physiographic division, which is why we distinguish three climate zones here: lowland - Sandomierz Basin; Podgórze - the Carpathian Foothills; mountain - Beskid Niski and Bieszczady.

Farm structure: Farm structure in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is characterized by very high fragmentation. Farms with agricultural land area of 2-5 ha dominate, and the share of farms with more than 15 ha of agricultural land accounts for only 2.9% of all farms, however their share in the agricultural land utilisation is 31.3%. The average size of farm in 2016 was 4.36 ha. The share of permanent grassland, i.e. meadows and pastures, constitutes about 40% of arable land in the region. Podkarpackie has favorable natural conditions for agricultural production, but cultural landscape and extensive farming also provides a good basis for tourism.

Contact: <http://www.rolnictwo.wrotapodkarpackie.pl/index.php/podkarpackie-naturalny-wypas-ii>

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

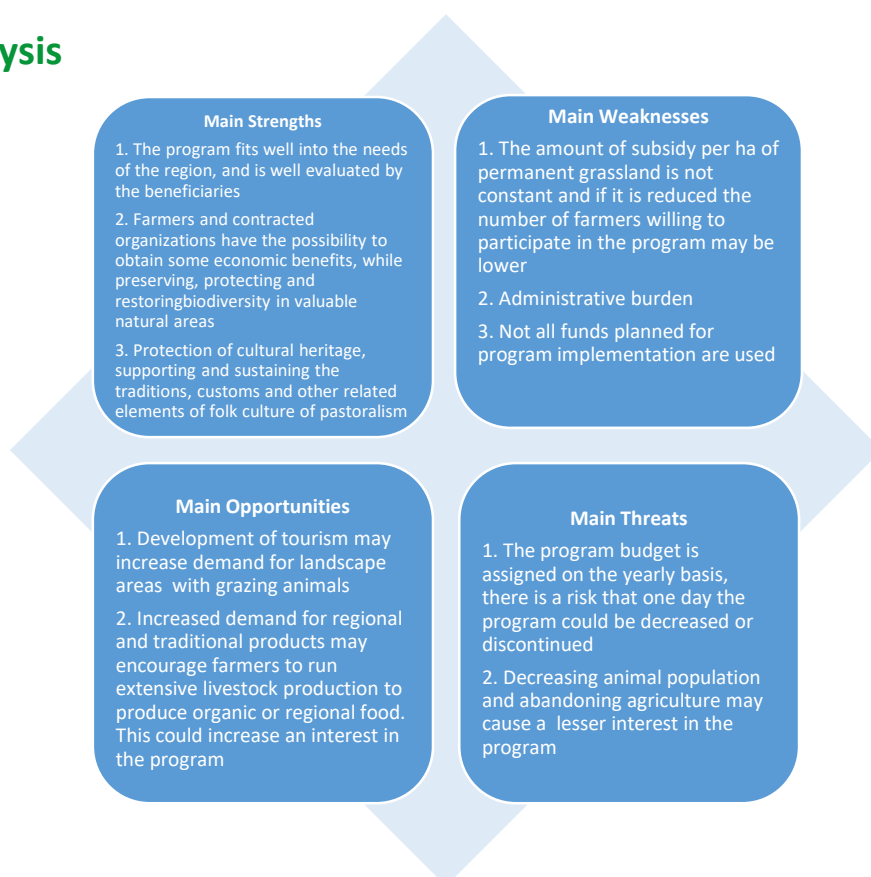


The Natural Grazing in Podkarpackie program presents a successful contract solution. The contract solution is judged successful, as the number of participants increased over the years. The program is implemented continuously since 2012. The study of Ruda et al. (2019) shows that the program brings measurable benefits. Over half of the interviewed breeders increased the grazed area and number of animals, a significant part systematically performs pasture care activities or built pastoral infrastructure. The program contributes to the protection of biodiversity in valuable natural areas and brings measurable economic and social benefits.

Reasons for success:

- Farmers have the possibility of financial remuneration for the use of land for grazing animals;
- High share of grasslands, tourist attractiveness of the region as well as fragmented, extensive structure of agriculture favors the implementation of the program.
- NGOs raise funds for statutory activities and demonstrate activity in priority areas.
- Voivodship self-government contributes to preservation, protection and restoration of the biodiversity in valuable natural areas and improvement of economic and tourist activation of the Podkarpackie Region.

SWOT analysis



Main external factors influencing success

Political/governance, economic/market, social, technological, legal and environmental factors can all have a strong impact on the success of contract solutions. In this case study an in-depth analysis found that the following, selected factors were of specific importance.



Legal: In Natural Grazing in Podkarpackie Region information about land ownership has to be provided, while farmers solely have to prove their right to graze animals in the area. For this they are not required to be the landowners or even its tenants but it is sufficient if they have the owner's written consent for grazing animals.

➡ A compromise which facilitates the program implementation and enhances the acceptance of the farmers.

Regional political will towards new instruments:

The initiative bases on a public initiative that was established in 2012 by the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (local) government in order to support the realization of the Region Development Strategy, where **preservation and protection of biodiversity** is one of the **priority actions**.

➡ The program is coordinated by the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. As its implementation and effects were positively assessed, it was decided to continue financing it for the long term perspective, in 2021-2025. **The program will be continued in the future. Funds for its implementation are secured in the Voivodship's budget.**

Economic: Natural Grazing in Podkarpackie Region represents a contract solution able to prevent and turnaround the abandonment of agricultural activity due to its boosting effect on agricultural income. Farm structure in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is characterized by very high fragmentation and large share of small farms. Due to the low incomes from agriculture, during past decades, a progressive decline in livestock (cattle and sheep) numbers was observed as well as a decreasing utilization of permanent grasslands (below 50%). On the other side, the region is faced with comparatively low levels of GDP per capita and a high unemployment rate, leaving agriculture as a distinctively important sector, which still employs about 30% of working people in the region.

➡ The possibility of financial remuneration for the collective use of land for grazing animals represents a clear support for farm income and the program is experiencing growing interest of farmers.

Social: The role of the NGOs

The collectives can be set up by NGOs - associations and cooperatives, churches, sports clubs, non-profit companies. The NGOs raise the funds for statutory activities and demonstrate activity in priority areas, however they also take the risk that the sub-contracted farmers will not fulfil the requirements of the contract, which might discourage them to participate in such initiatives.

One farmers said that *"It would be easier if farmers could be treated as direct beneficiaries of the program and not run the program through NGOs. This is difficult because organizations are less motivated and bear the risk"*.

