

# Program “Flowering meadows” - contracts for protection of biodiversity and water resources by regular mowing of meadows

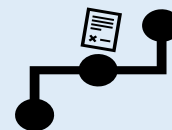
The Program “Flowering meadows” was introduced in 2011 by the company Żywiec Zdrój S.A. to preserve and protect biodiversity and water resources of the Żywiec Region, through adapted mowing of meadows.



## Summary

The program “Flowering meadows” has been introduced in 2011 by the Żywiec Zdrój S.A. company (one of the largest producers of bottled water and other soft drinks in Poland) within their Corporate Social Responsibility policy. Under the program, farmers/land owners in the communes of Jeleśnia, Węgierska Górką, Radziechowy-Wieprz regularly mow meadows respecting certain rules in order to protect biodiversity as well as water resources used by the company. Since 2017 the program has been managed by National Foundation of Environmental Protection Centrum UNEP/GRID-Warsaw. Farmers may take an advantage of the compensation of PLN 2.5 thousand/ha (ca. 580 euro/ha) of mowed area. In 2019, the project covered 52 ha of land owned by 97 farmers. The target area planned for protection is 120 ha of sensitive plots surrounding the water springs of Żywiec Zdrój S.A. As a result of this program, overgrowing of valuable grassland habitats was inhibited, and the infiltration of water was improved. The project allowed to secure populations of plant species subject to legal protection, which are highly threatened due to the abandonment of the use of mountain meadows - e.g. it prevented the extinction of the Spisz saffron in Sopotnia Mała in Polana Monarska.

## VALUE CHAIN



Value chain initiative – the contract is between private company Żywiec Zdrój S.A., UNEP/GRID (foundation who manages the program on behalf of the company) and farmers

## PUBLIC GOODS



(Farmland) biodiversity



Water quality



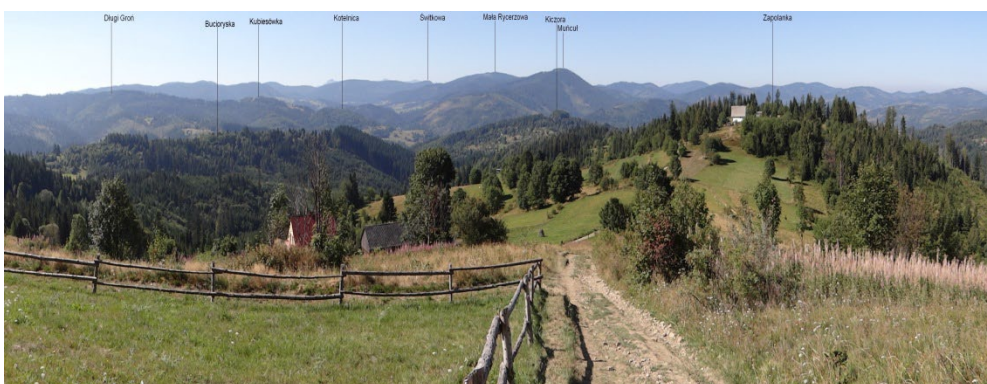
Landscape and scenery

## INDIRECT EFFECTS

The requirements for farmers, except mowing, also include the ecological maintenance of meadows and avoidance of all possible ways of its contamination (e.g. by fertilizing, chemical protection, silage storage, manure spreading, etc.). Therefore, the program also contributes to the protection of the natural environment, improvement of soil quality, as well as protection of water resources against pollution of agricultural origin.

## Objectives

- Preservation, protection and restoration of the biodiversity in valuable natural areas.
- Protection of clean water resources of the region.
- Maintenance and improvement of valuable natural habitats.



Zapolanka, Beskid Żywiecki Source: fot. Jerzy Opiota CC-BY-SA-3.0

## Problem description

Abandonment of mowing accelerates the processes of secondary plant succession in the meadows by the influx of self-seeding invasive plant species and of trees. As a result, this affects the natural biodiversity of meadows, and reduces the water infiltration of these areas. Many species of valuable plants are being displaced from their natural habitats. Mowing meadows has a positive effect on the preservation of these habitats and improves water retention.

## CONTRACT

It is a market sector-oriented contract. The contract partnership is private – private: Żywiec Zdrój S.A. – UNEP/GRID (NGO) – farmer



**Contract conclusion:**  
Written agreement (contract)



**Payment mechanism:**  
Incentive payments

**Length of the contract:**  
1 year, renewable



**Start of the program:**  
2011  
**End:** still running

## LOCATION

### POLAND



Żywiec Region, PL225



## Data and Facts - Contract

**Participation:** In 2019, the program covered 52 ha of land owned by 97 farmers. Since 2017 the number of farmers and area covered by the program tripled.

**Involved parties:** The funding body: company Żywiec Zdrój S.A. - one of the largest producer of bottled water and other soft drinks in Poland. Organisation managing the program - The UNEP/GRID-Warsaw Centre (NGO – the branch of National Foundation for the Environmental Protection in Poland) – which is a member of the GRID (Global Resource Information Database) network, established by the UN Environment (United Nations Environment Programme – UNEP). Beneficiaries: farmers having land in the areas covered by this program.

**Management requirements for farmers:** The program is addressed to farmers/landowners having their land in the communes of Jeleśnia, Węgierska Górka and Radziechowy-Wieprz of Żywiec Zdrój Region. For the contracted farmers, besides mowing the plot twice per year (July and September), it is forbidden to use pesticides and fertilisers including sewage (manure, slurry), they are not allowed to perform drainage works and land excavations, to collect surface water or wastes, to bury dead animals, to build silage piles, and to wash motor vehicles.

**Controls/monitoring:** The program implementation controls are carried out by UNEP/GRID. The control covers implementation of the required activities, as well as environmental monitoring of mowed plots.

**Risk/uncertainties of participants:** The main risk of the program is that farmers will not fulfil the requirement of the contract. However this risk is limited by regular controls and support services offered by the foundation UNEP/GRID.

**Funding/Payments:** The program is financed by the Żywiec Zdrój S.A company, within its CSR policy. The target budget allocated to the program covers yearly 120 ha of land (ca. 70,000 Euro). The program is managed by the partner institution - National Foundation of Environmental Protection Centrum UNEP/GRID-Warsaw, who signs agreements with farmers. The foundation also offers additional services of mowing the meadows upon farmer's request. The amount of subsidy is settled at the level of 2,500 PLN (ca. 580€) per hectare.



Source: <http://www.kwietnelaki.karpatylacza.pl>

## Context features

**Landscape and climate:** The case study region – Żywiec is located in the Beskids - medium-high mountains within 800-1400m above the sea level. The landscape is characteristic for this type of mountains overgrown with beech, oak, spruce, pine and fir, as well as scythe in the highest parts. In the Beskids, there is a temperate, cold mountain climate with continental features. It is characterized by high weather variability, significant rainfall and strong and frequent winds. Precipitation in the Żywiec Region reaches on average 828 mm per year. The average annual temperature is 8° C.

**Farm structure:** Agriculture, due to natural conditions, is not of great importance in the region. Agricultural land accounts for about 35% of the Żywiecki province area, forests for 52%. The average farm size is 4.5 ha, which in consequence makes the agriculture of the region one of the most fragmented in Poland. Tourism, which is becoming an important source of income for local people, is starting to play an increasingly important role in the economy of this region.

Contact: <http://www.kwietnelaki.karpatylacza.pl/>

## SUCCESS OR FAILURE?



The program “Flowering Meadows” represents a successful contract solution implemented on the basis of a private initiative within the Corporate Social Responsibility policy of the Żywiec Zdrój S.A. company, producer of water and soft drinks. The program is implemented continuously since 2011, and in 2019 it covered 52 hectares, out of 120 hectares targeted for the program. The number of farmers participating in this initiative increased over the years, and the initiative is positively evaluated by residents of Żywiec region. As a result of this program, overgrowing of valuable habitats was inhibited, and the infiltration of water was improved. The project allowed to secure the populations of plant species subject to legal protection, which are highly threatened due to the abandonment of mowing of mountain meadows.

### Reasons for success:

- The location of water springs of Żywiec Zdrój S.A. in this area and the company's policy aimed at socially responsible production and environmental protection is a key factor in the success of this program.
- The program is also successful thanks to the activity of the UNEP / GRID-Warsaw Center foundation, which, in cooperation with Żywiec Zdrój S.A., manages the program and very actively encourages and supports farmers from protected areas.
- Farmers receive fair financial remuneration for maintenance and mowing of the meadows.

### SWOT analysis

