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# RESULT-BASED NATURE CONSERVATION PLAN IN AUSTRIA

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# THE CONTEXT: NATURE CONSERVATION IN AECM

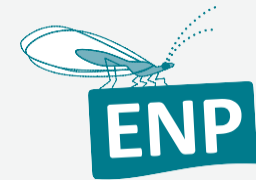
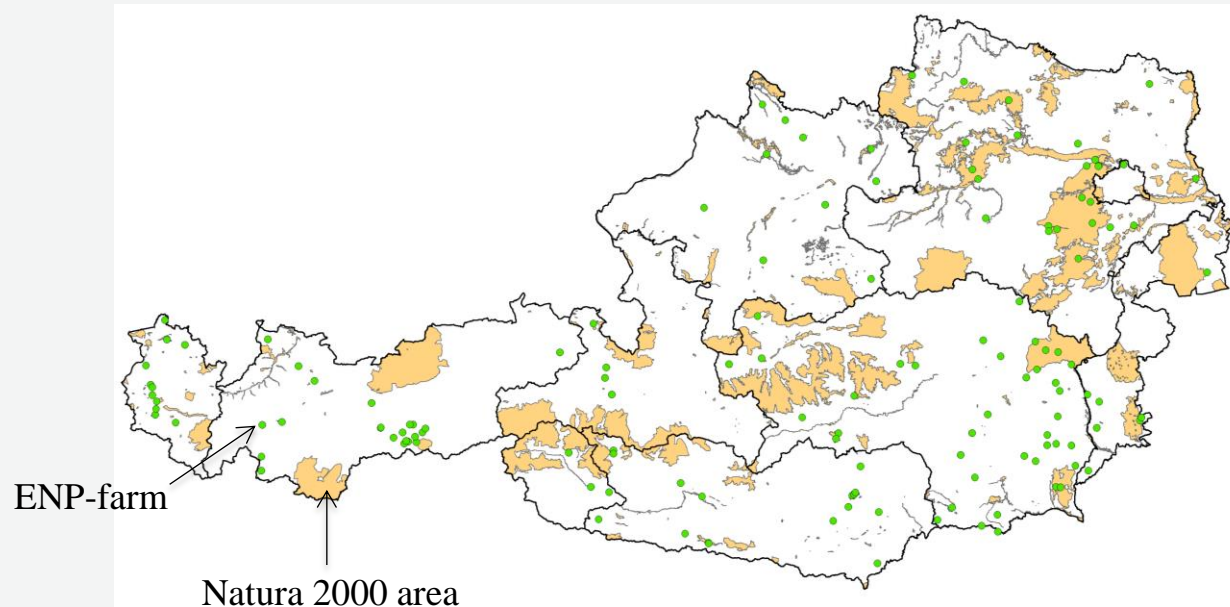
## Farming structure in Austria

- family-farm-based agriculture
- ~ 113.000 IACS-farms
- Austria is a “**Second pillar country**”:  
1/3 1<sup>st</sup> pillar 1; 2/3 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar
- high proportion of **less-favoured areas**  
(3/4 of the area)
- ~ 92.000 IACS-farms (= 81 %) take part  
in **agri-environment-climate measures**
- ~ 18.000 IACS-farms (= 16 %) take part  
in the measure “nature conservation”  
(based on project confirmations by the  
nature conservation departments of the  
Austrian Federal Provinces)

## Challenge Biodiversity

- good natural conditions for  
conservation of biodiversity  
(structures, high share of high nature  
value farmland, topography)
- decline of biodiversity indicators  
(endangered habitats and species,  
e.g. FBI)

# PILOT PROJECT: RESULT-BASED NATURE CONSERVATION



## Result-based Nature conservation Plan

- ~ 18.000 IACS-farms (= 16 %) take part in the measure “**nature conservation**” (based on project confirmations by the nature conservation departments of the Austrian Federal Provinces)
  - 2014: developing the concept of ENP\* by Suske consulting (16 farms)
  - 2017: ~ 130 farms throughout Austria take part in ENP
  - aim until 2020: ~ 200 farms

# WHY ENP? – FACTORS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF AECM “NATURE CONSERVATION”\*

## fostering farmers acceptance

- + public esteem (e.g. competitions/ awards on meadows, positive news, tourism cooperation projects)
- + continuity of contact persons and expert advice; continuity of documentation
- + positive attitudes of advisers toward nature conservation measures and active information management about the participation requirements

## diminishing farmers acceptance

- challenge on fertiliser balance because of restrictions on the use of fertilisers on the whole area, i.p. for farms with a high share of livestock (use of manure)
- requirements on the delay of cutting time and renouncement of fertilisers because of possible loss of earnings
- mandatory combination with other AEC-measures because of the impression of further farming restrictions
- fear of losing control over the area in cause of transferring it to new protected areas
- fear of sanctions because of unwittingly non-compliance with the commitments
- premiums that do not sufficiently compensate the restrictions

# RESULT-BASED CONTROL SYSTEM

*common approach in nature conservation:*  
**obligatory measures, only rarely information about the objectives**  
e.g. 2 times mowing / no fertilizer / fixed regular times

*general objective of nature conservation:*  
**high diversity on the grassland**

*implemented measure to achieve the specific objective:*  
**decided by the farmer together with the ecologist**

*specific objective decided on the spot:*  
presence/absence of certain species, structures or habitats

Key motivators for result-based nature conservation:

- Farmers are interested in nature, but not in abstract commitments.
- Having measures in mind, but learning how to think in terms of objectives and results.



# THE KEY OF THE SYSTEM

content of personalised  
farmer's "logbook"



specific objectives  
*on the spot*

qualitative indicators  
*on the spot*



additional information & advice on  
nature conservation knowledge

evaluation, discussion & conclusion  
of the pilot project in 2019

quantitative control  
criteria *on the spot*



control by random sampling  
of 5 %/year & sanction

# THE PILOT PROJECT: PROCESS & CONTROL

Application of the interested farmer: three-step selection process in close coordination with the nature conservation departments of the Federal Provinces



Visiting the parcels with an ecological expert, determining & documenting the specific objectives & control criteria on parcel-level, calculating the premium based on classic list on AEM, - 5 %, + EUR 70



Registration for the participation in RNP & submitting the details to the consulting firm & to the Nature Protection Departments



Farmers receive a personalised “logbook” containing specific objectives, control criteria & additional information for the personal documentation



Midterm inspection by the ecologists (control criteria + qualitative objectives) in 2017



Midterm evaluation of the pilot project in 2017 (farmers, ecologists, consulting firm)

# ACCEPTANCE AND INTERIM EVALUATION

- farm-individual objectives decided on site for both plants *and* animals
- compared to “nature conservation”, ENP-areas rank above-average within Natura 2000 areas
- optimal for farmers who are well-informed, interested in a nature conservation perspective, and exceptionally committed to ecological management activities
- well suitable for:
  - ✓ combating undesired species such as *Rumex obtusifolius*, *Veratrum album* or *Pteridium aquilinum* as well as neophytes
  - ✓ managing very dynamic nature conservation areas, e.g. fallow arable land with many mobile ruderal species
  - ✓ livestock farming with meadows, pastures, and mowed pastures
  - ✓ management activities for the regeneration of endangered habitats
  - ✓ combining 2 divergent objectives on one area, e.g. late mowing for nesting habitats and at the same time early mowing for combating indicator species of fallow land
  - ✓ implementing specific animal-ecological objectives by means of expert consultation
  - ✓ implementing nature conservation objectives on more intensive farmland due to higher flexibility



# CHALLENGES & BENEFITS OF ENP

- not suitable for all agri-environment-climate topics; in particular not for AECM concerning climate and groundwater
- not suitable for all types of farming; appropriate for grassland, permanent meadows (some arable land and vineyards)
- suitable only for farms up to a certain size (because of monitoring efforts)
- implies a higher administrative effort and higher costs (e.g. on site visits and coordinating the on-spot objectives between farmer, ecologist, and nature conservation department)

- + benefits of management activities can be experienced directly: visible results
- + more autonomy and higher flexibility in management activities for farmers
- + clear biodiversity objectives: higher acceptance by the for the needs for specific management activities
- + expert advice and individual consultations as an investment in awareness and education: farmers feel more responsible and do better understand the interrelations between management activities and objectives for the farmers
- + verifiable control criteria which are uninfluenced by external effects for high control safety for the farmers
- + multipliers and best practises



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## Questions?

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