Agriculture and management plans in Natura 2000 sites in Greece

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Natura 2000 Farmland Management and Biodiversity, 29/9 – 1/10 2015
Surface area: ~132,000 km²

Agricultural area: ~52,800 km²

Source: CLC 2000
Surface area of terrestrial N2K: 
~36,027 km²

Agricultural area within N2K: 
7,462 km²

Source: CLC 2000, N2K database
KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THIS PRESENTATION

N2K SITES MAY BE ISOLATED “ISLANDS” IN A WIDER AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

AGRO-ECOSYSTEMS LOCATED WITHIN N2K SITES MAY PROVIDE HABITATS FOR SPECIES

UNWISE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES PUT PRESSURE ON PROTECTED AREAS

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
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Design of N2K network

Connectivity between the N2K sites
Ecological coherence of the N2K Network

- Not addressed yet
- Species oriented?
- Should it accommodate habitat requirements in view of climate change?
- Should there be a designation status?
- Retain existing features

Restore, or create new habitats within the agricultural landscape according to ecological requirements

Should there be an added value for farmers?

We need a working approach to address ecological coherence of the N2K Network – and application!

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Delta Axiou, a N2K site

Extensive cereal cultures 11%

Other arable land 6%

Rice fields 7% (~2,300 ha)
Rice fields in Axios Delta: Flooded from May to September
Feeding habitat for spoonbills, herons and glossy ibis

Feeding habitat during reproduction of cormorants, egrets etc when energy needs are high
A wetland type according to Ramsar Convention
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**Input of fertilizers and pesticides**
- Eutrophication
- Potential toxicity to biota

**Burning of the remains after crop removal**
- Loss of useful nutrients to soil...and biota

**Uncontrolled disposal of pesticide containers**
Opportunities to address the issue

A Structure for protection is in place

A Management Authority operates in the area

Representative from local agricultural organisation in the Board

A process has started within the mandate of the MA

A management plan has been drafted

Design and implementation of good agricultural practices – pilot implementation in rice fields

Meetings with farmers, unions etc

Joint action towards a protocol of environmental management of agricultural produce and agricultural practices

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Protocol of environmental management of rice fields

Measurements of parameters indicative of pollution

Set of actions to use water wisely, to safeguard biodiversity, for integrated pest management, with health and safety considerations

Indicators to monitor environmental management

Design of a training programme to farmers

Marketing plan to promote the rice produced within the N2K site
Opportunities to address the issue

A funding mechanism has been provided for rice fields
by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

AXIS 2 “Improvement of the Environment and the Countryside” Measure, 2.1.4, Action 3.3. “Agricultural practices to protect wildlife”

Support to farmers to keep rice fields flooded in winter (November-January) to provide habitat for birds in Axios delta.
Some findings

Management plan not official yet; still a roadmap to action

Active dialogue with farmers, produces useful insights

  Practical difficulties in implementation

  Need for subsidies target to address these practical difficulties

Discouraging bureaucracy

Low level of support to farmers

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Challenges ahead

Commitment and persistence

A decisive sectoral authority, properly equipped, with trained and activated personnel

A committed and focused management authority backed up with expertise and experience

Multi-sectorial approach and long-term efforts required in order to address threats from uses

Continuous collaboration between stakeholders

Law enforcement

Persistence in conservation through time

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Thank you