

# Agri-environmental indicator - High Nature Value farmland

Statistics Explained

This article provides a fact sheet of the [European Union \(EU\) agri-environmental indicator high nature value farmland](#). This indicator is still a subject to development. The article provides a summary of the current **state of play** and is complemented by definitions, measurement methods and context needed to interpret it correctly. The high nature value farmland article is part of a [set of similar fact sheets](#) providing a complete picture of the state of the agri-environmental indicators in the EU.

## Main indicator:

- Share of estimated high nature value (HNV) farmland in [utilised agricultural area \(UAA\)](#).

## Supporting indicator:

- Estimated area of HNV farmland.

## Key messages

The concept of high nature value farmland refers to the causality between certain types of farming activity and corresponding environmental outcomes, including high levels of [biodiversity](#) and the presence of environmentally valuable habitats and species. High nature value farmland is therefore a key indicator for the assessment of the impact of policy interventions with respect to the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems dependent on agriculture and of traditional rural landscapes.

As environmental objectives become increasingly important for the [Common agricultural policy \(CAP\)](#) and with increasing pressure on resources, complementarity and convergence between the agri-environmental indicators (AEIs) and the monitoring and evaluation framework being developed for the CAP is being sought wherever possible.

## Assessment

A wide variety of approaches and combinations of methods are currently being used across the EU to assess the extent of HNV farmland. Whilst good progress has been made in assessing the extent of HNV farmland, the assessment of its condition or quality still presents a considerable challenge. Due to the variation in data availability across the [EU Member States](#) and regions of the EU and the range of physical situations (territory size, farm structure and systems, predominant land and habitat types), it is not appropriate to impose a common methodology for the assessment of HNV farmland. Use of one single method would restrict the analysis to data available throughout the EU, which would exclude the richest and most relevant data sources, and preclude those Member States which have developed more refined methods from using them, with a consequent reduction in the quality and accuracy of the assessment.

Agreement on the common parameters being measured, and transparency and acceptance of the various methodologies, does allow for comparability and aggregation, provided that methodology appropriate to identifying land fulfilling the criteria for one of the three HNV types in that biophysical situation is used. It is however important that in each territory the same methodology is used for successive assessments, so that trends can be correctly estimated.

AEI 23 - High nature value farmland is proposed as one of the impact indicators to be included in the [CAP](#)

[monitoring and evaluation framework](#) for 2014-2020. As such it will fall under the provisions of Article 110 of the proposed [CAP Horizontal Regulation \( Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1259/1999 \)](#), associated implementing rules, and the legislative framework for rural development. EU Member States will therefore be required to supply values for this indicator (a baseline situation, plus updates at specific points during the period) in the context of the CAP monitoring and evaluation framework. In particular it will be needed for the baseline description of each [Rural Development Programme \(RDP\)](#) territory, and the subsequent evaluation of RDPs.

## Data sources

### Indicator definition

This indicator is defined as the percentage of utilised agricultural area (UAA) farmed to generate high nature value (HNV).

### Measurements

#### Main indicator:

- Share of estimated HNV farmland in utilised agricultural area.

#### Supporting indicator:

- Estimated area of HNV farmland. (Absolute figures are also required so that areas can be aggregated to a higher geographical level).

### Links with other indicators

The indicator high nature value farmland is linked with following other indicators:

- AEI 01 - Agri-environmental commitments
- AEI 12 - Intensification/extensification
- AEI 25 - Population trends of farmland birds]]

### Data used and methodology

The data sources used for estimation of HNV farmland are many. They are varied and depend on the method selected by the EU Member State authorities. They include: [CORINE Land Cover](#) , [Land use/cover area frame survey \(LUCAS\)](#) and other land cover data, [Integrated Administration and Control System \(IACS\)](#) , Land Parcel Information Systems (LPIS), [Farm structure survey \(FSS\)](#) data, species and habitats databases, specific sampling surveys, Rural Development Programme (RDP) monitoring data, designations ( [Natura 2000](#) protected habitats, national nature reserves) etc.

The indicator definition proposed here only covers the extent of HNV areas, since in most EU Member States current methodology is not sufficiently developed to provide reliable indications of the condition of HNV areas. However, EU Member States are strongly encouraged to continue developing and refining the approaches used so that quality/condition can be incorporated into future HNV assessments. The percentage of HNV farmland is a common parameter, which is to be assessed within each territory (EU Member State or [NUTS 2](#) region) using methods suited to the prevailing bio-physical characteristics and farming systems, and based on the highest quality and most appropriate data available. Methodological guidance for establishing values for this indicator has been provided in [The application of the High Nature Value impact indicator](#) . For more information see also notes.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Andersen, E., Baldock, D., Bennett, H., Beaufoy, G., Bignal, E., Brouwer, F., Elbersen, B., Eiden, G., Godeschalk, F., Jones, G., McCracken, D.I., Nieuwenhuizen, W., van Eupen, M., Hennekens, S., Zervas, G. (2003). Developing a high nature value indicator. Report for the European Environment Agency (EEA). Copenhagen: EEA.

<sup>2</sup>Cooper, T., Arblaster, K., Baldock, D., Farmer, M., Beaufoy, G., Jones, G., Poux, X., McCracken, D., Bignal, E., Elbersen, B., Wascher, D., Angelstam, P., Roberge, J-M., Pointereau, Ph., Seffer, J., and Galvanek, D. (2007). Final report for the study on HNV indicators for evaluation. London: Institute for European Environmental Policy.

<sup>3</sup>Parachini, M.L., Terres, J.M., Petersen, J.E. and Hoogeveen, Y. (2006). Background Document on the Methodology for Mapping High Nature Value Farmland in [EU27](#) . European Commission Directorate General Joint Research Centre and the European Environment Agency.

## Context

The concept of HNV farmland has been emerging as a policy consideration within the EU for some considerable years. It was included in the original set of agri-environmental indicators developed by the [European Commission](#) following the June 1998 [Cardiff European Council](#) and has remained part of the AEI indicator set. For the 2007-2013 programming period, the [Community strategic guidelines for rural development](#) highlight the preservation and development of HNV farmland systems as a priority ( [Council Decision 2006/144/EC](#) ). This focus was reinforced through the introduction of biodiversity as one of the new challenges for the Common agricultural policy (CAP) within the "Health Check" of the [Common Agricultural Policy](#) in 2009 ( [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 73/2009](#) ). The [rural development legal proposal for 2014-2020](#) includes restoring and preserving biodiversity in areas of high nature farmland within one of the six [EU priorities for rural development](#) . The indicator definition and approach now proposed in this factsheet draws on the previous version of AEI 23 and the experience gained through using HNV farmland as an indicator within the [Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework \(CMEF\)](#) for rural development for 2007-2013.

## See also

- [Agri-environmental indicators](#) (online publication)

## Dedicated section

- [Agri-Environmental Indicators](#)

## Publications

- [Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics — 2016 edition](#) (Statistical book)
- [Agriculture, fishery and forestry statistics - 2014 edition](#)
- [Environmental statistics and accounts in Europe - 2010 edition](#)
- [Farm data needed for agri-environmental reporting](#)

## Legislation

- [Commission Communication COM\(2006\)508 final](#) - Development of agri-environmental indicators for monitoring the integration of environmental concerns into the common agricultural policy
- [Agri-Environmental Indicators](#) , see:

Legislation: [Commission Staff working document accompanying COM\(2006\)508 final](#)

- [Agri-Environmental Indicators](#) , see:

Corresponding [IRENA Fact sheet 26](#)

## External links

- **Publications:**
  - [EAFRD Project Brochures](#)
    - [EU Rural Review](#)
    - [ENRD Magazine](#)
    - [Natura 2000 Newsletter](#)
    - [10 messages for 2010 - Agricultural ecosystems](#)
    - [European Environment Agency - State and outlook 2010: Synthesis](#)
- **Other external links:**
  - European Commission
    - DG Agriculture and Rural Development
      - [Agri-environmental indicators](#)
        - [Agriculture and the environment](#)
    - DG Environment
      - [Nature & Biodiversity](#)
  - European Environment Agency
    - [Agriculture](#)
      - [Biodiversity](#)
  - OECD - [Agri-Environmental Indicators and Policies](#)
  - [High Nature Value Farming - European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism](#)