

## FRANCE

### Biodiversity's restoration, preservation & enhancement

#### Location

Northern Cantal

#### Programming period

2014 - 2020

#### Priority

P4 – Ecosystems management

#### Measure

M2.1, M4.1 & M7.6 combined with M10.1

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 595 788

EAFRD: M2.1.4: 15 000

M7.6.2: 4 800

M10.1: 420 066

National/regional:

M2.1.4 + M7.6.2: 17 300

M10.1: 138 622

Note: M1, M4.1.2 & M7.6.4 are supported separately from PAEC

#### Project duration

2015 – 2016

#### Project promoter

Parc naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne

#### Contact

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Farmers in France's Auvergne region used EAFRD support to preserve peatland and wet meadows in two Natura 2000 areas where over a hundred farmers raise cattle.

### Summary

Mountain pasture in France's Auvergne region is used for cattle and sheep to graze but also to maintain an ecological balance, preserve species and improve water quality. Rural development support helps farmers in these areas to preserve wetland and wet meadow habitats and species.



The scheme combines different EAFRD measures and supports training and advisory services in areas such as manure and fertiliser management, implementation of AEC measures, investments in relation to more sustainable farming practices, etc.

### Results

For the 2015 campaign, reported data show encouraging figures with the highest volume of AEC contracts of the Auvergne RDP, including:

- 28 commitments signed
- 823 ha covered
- EUR 323 000 EAFRD commitments to AEC contracts
- EUR 19 800 EAFRD for training and facilitation over a two-years period.

Support for mountain grazing pasture allows to keep extensive breeding practice that is favourable to the maintenance of biodiversity by delaying mowing activities, adjusting livestock rotation to wetlands resistance to trampling, etc.

The number of AEC projects is constantly growing - up to 6 PAEC by 2017. It is expected to reach a volume of 170 contracts, covering over 46 000 hectares of the regional park as more farmers want to participate.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A combined approach with several measures supporting a single agri-environment-climate project is highly transferable.
- ❑ Using a multidisciplinary approach combines knowledge and skills from various disciplines such as biodiversity, agronomics and land economy.

## Context

In the 2014-2020 programming period, 5 Agro-Environmental and Climate Schemes (PAEC in French) are targeting 500 farms and more than 17 000 hectares of the Regional Park 'Volcans d' Auvergne'. The mountain area of Northern Cantal is part of the Regional Natural Park 'Volcans d' Auvergne'. It is an area that has a wet mountain climate with significant snow falls, heavy rain and severe winds. These climate conditions favour the formation of peatland in quaternary glacial lakes. The area has an altitude ranging between 800 and 1 300 meters, and is located on relatively fertile and well-watered volcanic soil, unlike other mountain pasture areas with poor and not well irrigated soil.

In the rural development programme of Auvergne, a special category was established as of 2015 for this type of areas, called 'common mountain pasture'. These areas are used between 130 and 150 days per year for bovine and sheep grazing. They contribute to the preservation of biodiversity through the maintenance of ecological continuum and the environment. Common mountain pasture is also an activity that limits natural hazards like fires, and contributes to landscape preservation. This category was created in order to make these areas eligible for support of grassland systems (Measure 10 - Payment for agri-environment-climate commitments – permanent pasture). In addition, several parts of these pasture areas are registered as a Natura 2000 areas. During the previous programming period, AEC support covered 657 hectares (40 % of the sites' UAA) for 5 years' commitments.

The area is covered by a pastoral strategy which is implemented as a joint action led by a farmers' group called 'Auvergne Estives'. It was established in February 2016 and gave way to an action plan for mountain grazing in the central part of the regional park (Monts Sancy), with the view to expand it to all mountain pasture areas. EAC schemes indirectly contribute to this strategy by supporting for instance some of the water and feed amenities.

## Objectives

In this scheme the objective is to preserve peatland and wet meadows of two Natura 2000 areas in Northern Cantal where over a hundred farmers raise cattle. It is aimed to cover at least 45% of the sites over 2 years (2015-2016), corresponding to 738 ha to maintain habitats and species, improve water quality, avoid the

eutrophication of wetlands and water courses and maintain the carbon sequestration capacity of peatland and natural meadows.

## Activities

The AEC scheme combines different types of EAFRD support, on top of the AEC commitments to farmers under Measure 10. These measures are:

**Measure 1 - Training and advisory services.** The project starts with a yearly training course on Natura 2000 targeting farmers located on each site, covering topics such as:

- Recognizing grassland flora & identifying organoleptic qualities for animal health;
- Livestock manure and fertiliser management;
- Livestock watering in relation to water resources;
- Management of invasive species;
- Control of animal husbandry in relation to biodiversity and water management;
- Predators issues;
- Etc.

**Measure 2.1.4 - Support to help benefitting from the use of advisory services.** Each farmer gets tailor-made support for preparing the grant request followed by a two-year monitoring process with regular checks on the spot and a final assessment.

**Measure 7.6.2 - Joint facilitation in relation to the implementation of AEC measures.** Consultation meetings are organised throughout the project duration, gathering farmers and local stakeholders, in partnership with the Chamber of Agriculture.

In addition, the following measures can be activated by the farmers:

Measure 4.1.2 - Support for investments in agricultural holdings in relation to more sustainable farming practice.

Measure 7.6.4 - Support for common mountain pasture investments and national scheme to fight against predation.

Staff from the Regional Nature Park provide technical assistance upon request on financial applications related to investments for improving environmental challenges linked to Natura 2000 sites (watering systems, pastoral facilities, etc.).

### Additional sources of information

[www.parcdesvolcans.fr/Je-suis/Elu-du-territoire/Vie-institutionnelle/28-agriculteurs-du-Nord-Cantal-engages-en-2015-dans-l-agro-ecologie](http://www.parcdesvolcans.fr/Je-suis/Elu-du-territoire/Vie-institutionnelle/28-agriculteurs-du-Nord-Cantal-engages-en-2015-dans-l-agro-ecologie)