

LITHUANIA

Biodiversity's restoration, preservation & enhancement

Location

Dvargaliai village

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P4 – Ecosystems
management

Measure

M10 – Agri-environment-
climate

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 111 244.43*
EAFRD 83 433.30
National/Regional 27 811.13

Project duration

2015 – 2022

Project promoter

Kristina and Jūris Milišiūnai

Contact

ukininkasjurelis@gmail.com
milikristi@gmail.com

Website

www.facebook.com/milisiunukis

The genetic integrity of two species of traditional Lithuanian sheep breeds is being protected by agri-environment and climate RDP funds on a certified organic family farm which sells the sheep's meat and wool and offspring, as well as uses the traditional breed as a unique rural tourism attraction.

Summary

Agri-environment climate measures (AECM) from the Rural Development Programmes are available to help farmers conserve traditional livestock breeds. A good practice example in Lithuania is using this rural development support to help conserve the genetic purity and resilience of Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and Lithuanian Coarse-Wooled sheep.



This AECM contract is provided to the family farm of Kristina and Jūris Milišiūnai from the Biržai District. Conserving sheep breeds can involve more work than managing a conventional flock due to the need to use a pedigree ram from the same genetic properties to breed ewes. These additional inputs and considerations are the basis for the compensation payments provided through the AECM support. The farm receives €187 per animal in the AECM contract. For this the farm agrees to continue the AECM commitment over six years.

Results

580 Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and five Lithuanian Coarse-Wooled sheep are covered by the Milišiūnai farm's AECM contract. A closely-controlled breeding programme sustains the genetic integrity of the animals covered by this contract.

The farm maximises economic opportunities from their traditional livestock breeds by using the sheep flock to attract tourists interested in Lithuanian biodiversity and traditional husbandry. Schools and other education bodies can also visit the farm.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ A limit of 15 sheep per hectare is part of the AECM contract and this reflects welfare standards for livestock, as well as environmental protection vis-a-vis the carrying capacity of agricultural land. The farmer would like to rear a larger flock of the traditional breeds but this is not currently possible for their situation within the AECM limits.
- ❑ Traditional breeds can be used as an attraction for developing rural tourism niches and agricultural educational programmes.

* It should be noted that the beneficiary's commitments have not yet expired, the project is still implemented, and the payment for the remaining two years is calculated based on the number of animals committed.

Context

Biodiversity loss is acknowledged by the EU and Member States as a significant problem that needs to be reversed by conservation actions. Wildlife and agricultural livestock breeds are covered by the EU's biodiversity strategy and commercial benefits can arise from conserving traditional livestock breeds. For example, consumers may have a preference for traditional food, and traditional livestock breeds are adapted to local rural environments which can help to reduce some of their husbandry costs.

Agri-environment climate measures (AECM) from the Rural Development Programmes are available to help farmers conserve traditional livestock breeds. A good practice example in Lithuania is using this rural development support to help conserve the genetic purity and resilience of Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and Lithuanian Coarse-Wooled sheep.

This AECM contract is provided to the family farm of Kristina and Jūris Milišiūnai from the Biržai District.

Objectives

The Milišiūnai family farm promotes ecological agriculture and their decision to conserve traditional breeds emerged as an option to help boost their farm's reputation as an organic certified enterprise. Their objective is to rear traditional livestock breeds commercially while conserving Lithuanian biodiversity.

Biodiversity conservation is therefore harnessed by this farm to help advertise its environmental credentials to potential customers. This helps to support farm revenue from the sheep meat, wool, and breeding stock. Maintaining the traditional breeds also acts as a unique visitor attraction for the farm.

Activities

Conserving sheep breeds can involve more work than managing a conventional flock due to the need to use a pedigree ram from the same genetic properties to breed ewes. These additional inputs and considerations are the basis for the compensation payments provided through the AECM support.

The flock's unique characteristics are also promoted to help attract tourists and education visitors to the farm.

The farm receives €187 per animal in the AECM contract.

For this the farm agrees to continue the AECM commitment over six years.



Main results

580 Lithuanian Black-Headed sheep and five Lithuanian Coarse-Wooled sheep are covered by the Milišiūnai farm's AECM contract. A closely-controlled breeding programme sustains the genetic integrity of the animals covered by this contract.

The farm maximises economic opportunities from their traditional livestock breeds by using the sheep flock to attract tourists interested in Lithuanian biodiversity and traditional husbandry. Schools and other education bodies can also visit the farm.

Key lessons

A limit of 15 sheep per hectare is part of the AECM contract and this reflects welfare standards for livestock, as well as environmental protection vis-a-vis the carrying capacity of agricultural land. The farmer would like to rear a larger flock of the traditional breeds but this is not currently possible for their situation within the AECM limits.

Traditional breeds can be used as an attraction for developing rural tourism niches and agricultural educational programmes.

Additional sources of information

www.visitbirzai.lt/milisiunai-sheep-farm/