

Ireland – innovation example 6

FARMING CONSERVATION AWARDS: CELEBRATING HNV FARMERS

Institute of Technology Sligo, Centre for Environmental Research Innovation and Sustainability
www.itsligo.ie

- **Location:** Burren Region, Ireland
- **HNV system:** Extensive winter-based grazing of rough limestone pastures by suckler cows.
- **Scale of operation:** Approx. 500 farm families working on c.30, 000 ha of HNV
- **Timespan:** 2015 – Present.
- **Keys to success:** Identifying a credible, high profile sponsor for the award; organising an awards event which attracts the wider community; having clear criteria through which the awards are made.

Problems addressed by this example

Residual suspicion and negativity among the wider farmer community and general public regarding farmer's role in managing the environment. The social and cultural challenges faced by some HNV farmers in 'going against the grain' and embracing farm practices that deliver environmental benefits.

Story in a nutshell

To farm in a way that delivers for the environment can often mean that a farmer needs to 'put his neck on the line'. Having the courage to embrace new ideas such as HNV farming isn't always easy in a 'modern' farming culture, so it was decided to organise an awards ceremony to celebrate and acknowledge the farmers who took this leap of faith and achieved success in doing so. The annual 'Farmer for Conservation Awards' has five categories: 'Best HNV pasture', 'Best HNV meadow', 'Highest standard of HNV works', 'Farm family of the Year' and 'Farmer of the Year' (the latter based on environmental performance scores, work completed and additional effort). The awards (2000 euro in total) are sponsored by Bord Bia (the Irish Food Board – one of the most trusted organisations in Ireland according to recent research) and are presented in front of the local community during a 'community feast' which is organised as part of the Burren Winterage Weekend. The awards have been a huge success in terms of affirming the work done by farmers and inspiring others to follow suit. It is intended to expand this into a National Awards Ceremony in the coming years for HNV farming across Ireland.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



What did developing a new awards ceremony for farmers achieve for HNV farming?

- Successful annual awards ceremony in 2015 and 2016 with €2k in prize money per annum.
- Public recognition locally and nationally for farmers who deliver positive HNVF outcomes

Achievements

In 2015 and 2016 Bord Bia sponsored five awards for HNV farmers in the Burren: ‘Best HNV pasture’, ‘Best HNV meadow’, ‘Highest standard of HNV works’, ‘Farm family of the Year’ and ‘Farmer of the Year’. The awards received national recognition – featuring in the main farming publication The Irish Farmer’s Journal – and were widely covered in local media also.

Economics of HNV farming

€2,000 in annual prize money for Burren farmers

Maintaining or improving HNV values

This innovation highlights the importance of HNV farming and celebrates HNV farming champions in front of their own community, empowering these farmers and others.



Figure 5



Figure 6

How did this Farmer Awards innovation respond to the HNV LINK innovation themes?

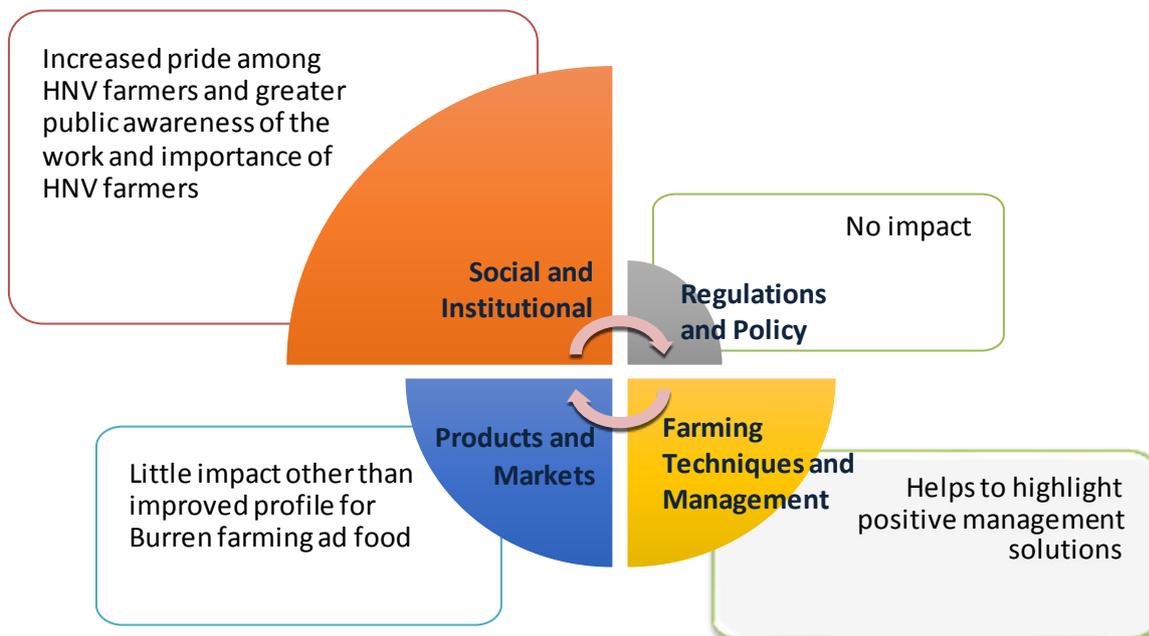


Figure 7 Shows how this innovation addresses the four themes of the HNV-Link innovation framework.

These awards improve the social standing of HNV farmers and the social opportunities available to these farmers, while raising the profile of HNV farmers and their produce and highlighting exemplary HNVF management systems. Little impact on policy.

The process that made it happen and critical factors for success

- Identifying a funder for the awards, one that had a high level of relevance and credibility
- Deciding on award categories as well as nomination and assessment protocols
- Organising an awards event within the local community but with national coverage



Figure 8

Actors and roles: Burren Programme Manager B. Dunford approached Bord Bia to sponsor an awards event and they agreed to do so. Farm advisors and BP Staff nominated farmers (and fields!) for each award category and an assessment process was agreed.

Resources: €2000 in prize money is provided by Bord Bia, for 4x €250 and 2x€500 prizes. The awards are held as part of a night organised by the local community in their hall.

Processes: Critical factors for success: Credible sponsor, lucrative prizes, community participation, good media coverage.

Limiting factors: Limited profile: this will be addressed by making this a National Award in future.



Figure 9

Lessons learnt from the 'Farming for Conservation' Awards and their potential replication

Overall lessons for HNV farming:

Celebrating success helps to embed positive management ideas and creates new farmer advocates for HNV farming. Such award ceremonies help counter the prevailing negative opinion of HNV farmers and farming systems.

Replicability of innovation and key requirements to do so:

Highly replicable, simply requires a credible sponsor and an organising committee.

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