



# HNV-Link – Learning, Innovation & Knowledge A thematic Network on High Nature Value Farming

[www.hnvlink.eu](http://www.hnvlink.eu)

## PROJECT BOOKLET



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**Project**

HNV-Link – High Nature Value Farming: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge (H2020 project, 2016-2019)

**Website**

[www.hnmlink.eu](http://www.hnmlink.eu)

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HNV-Link, 2019. HNV-Link Project Booklet, 12 p.

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HNV-Link Consortium

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## What is High Nature Value (HNV) Farming?

The concept of **High Nature Value (HNV) farming** emerged in the 1990s and refers to those **farming systems and farmlands that support a high diversity of wildlife species and habitats and/or species of conservation concern**. It comprises mainly low-intensity livestock farming relying on permanent and wooded pastures and hay meadows, and in some areas includes low-intensity crop systems, traditional orchards and olive groves. HNV farming safeguards a diversity of land covers with semi-natural vegetation and important features such as hedges, stone walls, terraces and ponds that enhance landscape structure and connectivity.



It occurs most frequently in areas where natural constraints (e.g. poorer land, steep slopes) hinder intensive production, but it is far from being marginal, as it covers over 25% of the European agricultural land.



HNV farms are multi-functional systems that, on top of producing quality food and conserving biodiversity, habitats and landscapes, supply a range of public goods and services: they contribute to water and soil protection, carbon storage, fire and climate change mitigation, employment, and are part of our cultural heritage. As such, they contribute to the sustainability of agri-food systems.

Owing to its relevance to fulfil sustainable development goals, the HNV farming concept was integrated into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as a rural development priority from 2005, and used in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (CMEF) as both an impact and a context indicator for Rural Development Programmes (RDP).

**High Nature Value farming is an essential component of sustainable agri-food systems and territories and it must be rewarded as such!**

HNV farms face environmental and economic pressures, and are often neglected by public policies and not suitably rewarded for their benefits. This may lead to HNV farmland reconversion or to its abandonment/encroachment, with subsequent irreversible biodiversity loss. The challenge is thus to increase the socio-economic viability of HNV farms while maintaining HNV farmlands' natural values. Clearly, agricultural and rural development objectives cannot be fulfilled without supporting adequately HNV farming, and for this, a more innovative and HNV farming friendly policy framework at all levels and the commitment of all the stakeholders are needed.



**How can we enhance the viability of HNV farms while keeping their unique ecological characteristics and the public goods & services they provide?**

## HNV-Link: a multi-actor network to support HNV farming

**HNV-Link** (High Nature Value Farming: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge, H2020, 2016-2019) is a multi-actor thematic network driving a peer-learning process between **13 partners and 10 Learning Areas (LAs)** across Europe. It aims at sharing best practices and innovations that support HNV farming systems and communities by simultaneously improving their socio-economic viability and environmental sustainability.



It builds upon the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group on HNV Farming profitability](#).



### The 10 Learning Areas:

Western Stara Planina (Bulgaria), Dalmatian Islands (Croatia), Thessalia (Greece), Causse & Cévennes (France), The Burren (Ireland), Sítio de Monfurado (Portugal), Eastern Hills of Cluj (Romania), La Vera (Spain), Västra Götaland (Sweden), Dartmoor (UK)

LAs gather farmers, practitioners, advisers, NGOs, authorities, and education/research institutes that work hand in hand to support the viability of HNV farms and the range of environmental and socioeconomic benefits they provide. LAs may have contrasting contexts and dynamics, but they share challenges. Each one has experience to share in terms of actors' organisation and collaboration, enabling policy, successful projects, innovative approaches to adding value to farm products, etc.



LAs have formulated shared visions of sustainable HNV farming pathways, identified the barriers to those and the opportunities to seize. But more importantly, they have identified, shared and implemented a range of solutions to achieve their goals, combining innovations in the social/institutional, regulations/policy, farming techniques/management, and products/market fields.

We have identified a wealth of innovations suitable for HNV farming, and sharing and discussing these across diverse social and geographical contexts enabled us to inform how widely applicable each one is. The Project highlighted the urgent need to actively support HNV farming and spread innovation by designing and implementing appropriate CAP Strategic Plans and measures focused on realising the potential of these areas in an integrated, targeted and results-focused policy framework.



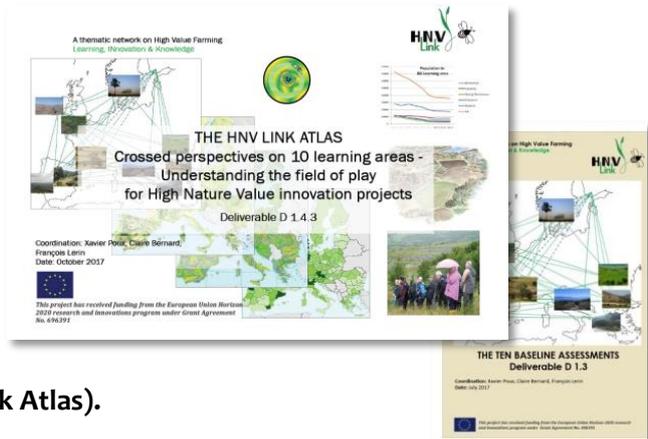
**Multi-actor networks such as HNV-Link drive innovation & policy change, as they connect research, policy and practice and foster co-innovation.**

## What has HNV-Link achieved?

HNV-Link supported a wide range of analytical and innovation brokering activities within and between the Learning Areas, from the local to the international scale.

### Characterising and understanding HNV farming territories.

- Co-construction of methodological guidelines for conducting territory baseline assessments and carrying out fruitful peer-learning activities (**Guidelines for territorial assessment and for cross-visits**).
- Assessment of the socio-agro-ecological characteristics, and innovation gaps, needs, drivers, and opportunities in the 10 LAs (**10 Baseline Assessments and 1 HNV-Link Atlas**).



### Identifying & sharing best practices that enhance HNV farming viability.

- Inventory, analysis and dissemination of over 140 innovative solutions of technical, commercial, social, institutional, and policy nature that support HNV farming (**Literature review on EU HNV farming innovation, 10 Reports describing the participatory processes to promote HNV farming, 40 Innovation Fiches, 1 Innovation Compendium, 1 Interactive Innovation Map**).



### Promoting cooperation, peer-learning and HNV farming innovation uptake across

- Organisation of seminars to work on methodological issues and foster multi-actor cooperation (e.g. **Methodological Seminar in Montpellier, 2016; Innovation Fair in Évora, 2017**).
- Organisation of **local, regional and national meetings** to foster dialogue on HNV farming, strengthen stakeholder engagement, enhance innovation diffusion and drive action in the field.
- Implementation of **16 cross-visits between Learning Areas** to discuss best practices, identify the factors of success and potential for transfer and upscaling.



## Promoting locally-led projects fostering HNV farming.

- Engagement of local actors in the development of a **shared vision for HNV farming territories** and in the implementation of HNV farming-friendly development pathways.
- Mobilisation of funding** to better support long-term territory animation, and to reward HNV farmers for their biodiversity conservation results.

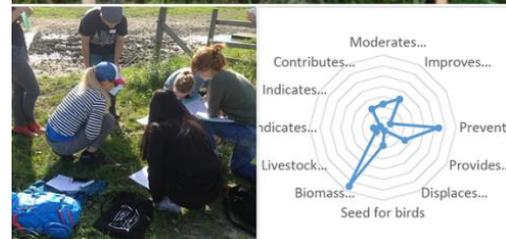


## Improving teaching, sharing knowledge & raising awareness on HNV farming

- Development of **open-source educational materials on HNV concepts, challenges and opportunities**, to support agricultural, rural development and environmental educators.
- Preparation of **scientific papers and master theses** on HNV farming innovation impact and brokering.
- Production of **policy recommendations to improve the CAP, CAP Strategic Plans, and Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems**.
- Broad **dissemination of the products and recommendations** through the project and partners' **websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube Channel, and newsletters**.
- Collaboration/synergies with other EU, national and local initiatives** related to sustainable farming and biodiversity conservation (e.g. CAPSELLA, PEGASUS, SALSA, SUFISA, ENABLING, LIFE+ Mil'Ouv, The Burren Programme).
- Presentations of HNV-Link and its findings at regional, national and international fora** (e.g. Silvo-Pastoral Systems 2016 - Evora, IALE 2017 European Congress - Ghent, 19<sup>th</sup> EGF Symposium 2017 - Alghero, Territorios Pastoreados 2018 – Plasencia, SISA-3 Workshop – Riga).
- An International Conference, “Innovation to sustain High Nature Value farming: Who needs to do what?”** (31 January 2019, Montpellier) to discuss measures to actively support HNV farmers and fulfil EU Biodiversity Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

**HNV-Link: Innovation for High Nature Value Farming**  
 Published by Iryna Herzon [?] · 8 November at 12:43 ·

What is your personal definition for a "weed" - ask this from your students, children, farmers or colleagues. The diversity of views is instructive! Why this discussion is relevant and what Ralph Emerson had to say about weeds – see a field assignment in A set of ten assignments for class and field/farm work from <http://www.hnvlink.eu/outputs/>



All HNV-Link outputs are available at [www.hnvlink.eu](http://www.hnvlink.eu)

## Fostering High Nature Value farming – Steps forward

**HNV farms are multi-functional and must be supported according to their ecological, social and economic benefits.**

🐝 HNV farms provide a multitude of goods and services to society, on top of producing food. They are an important component of sustainable agri-food systems and part of our cultural heritage. They deserve to receive a stronger support as without HNV farming, biodiversity and habitats cannot be preserved across sufficiently large scales, and EU Biodiversity Strategy goals cannot be reached.



🐝 HNV farms, as they operate often in constrained and less productive areas, are usually less competitive and more fragile than more intensive farms. This “fragility” must be compensated if their contribution to biodiversity conservation, landscape maintenance, food quality, sustainability and society’s welfare is to be recognised.

🐝 HNV farmers apply low quantities of inputs, a prerequisite for biodiversity conservation and self-sufficiency. They take advantage of spaces and resources unused by more intensive



systems and are therefore more resource-efficient. By their practices, they also slow down scrub encroachment onto open cultural landscapes. Thus, grazing land with shrubs or trees that are grazed directly or fed to livestock, should be considered eligible for CAP payments and other forms of support.

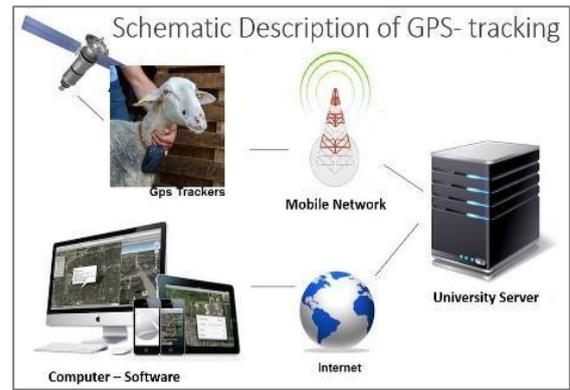
**Suitable innovations exist that can sustain HNV farming, and they must be adopted more widely, considering national, regional and local contexts.**

🐝 Addressing HNV farming challenges through innovation is not merely a question of individual initiatives, and the reality is more complex. Indeed, different types of innovation feed-off each other, creating synergies. In the most successful cases, there is a long-term, multi-actor “HNV innovation process” involving a bundle of innovations in different sectors (social/institutional, regulations/policy, farming techniques/management, products/market).

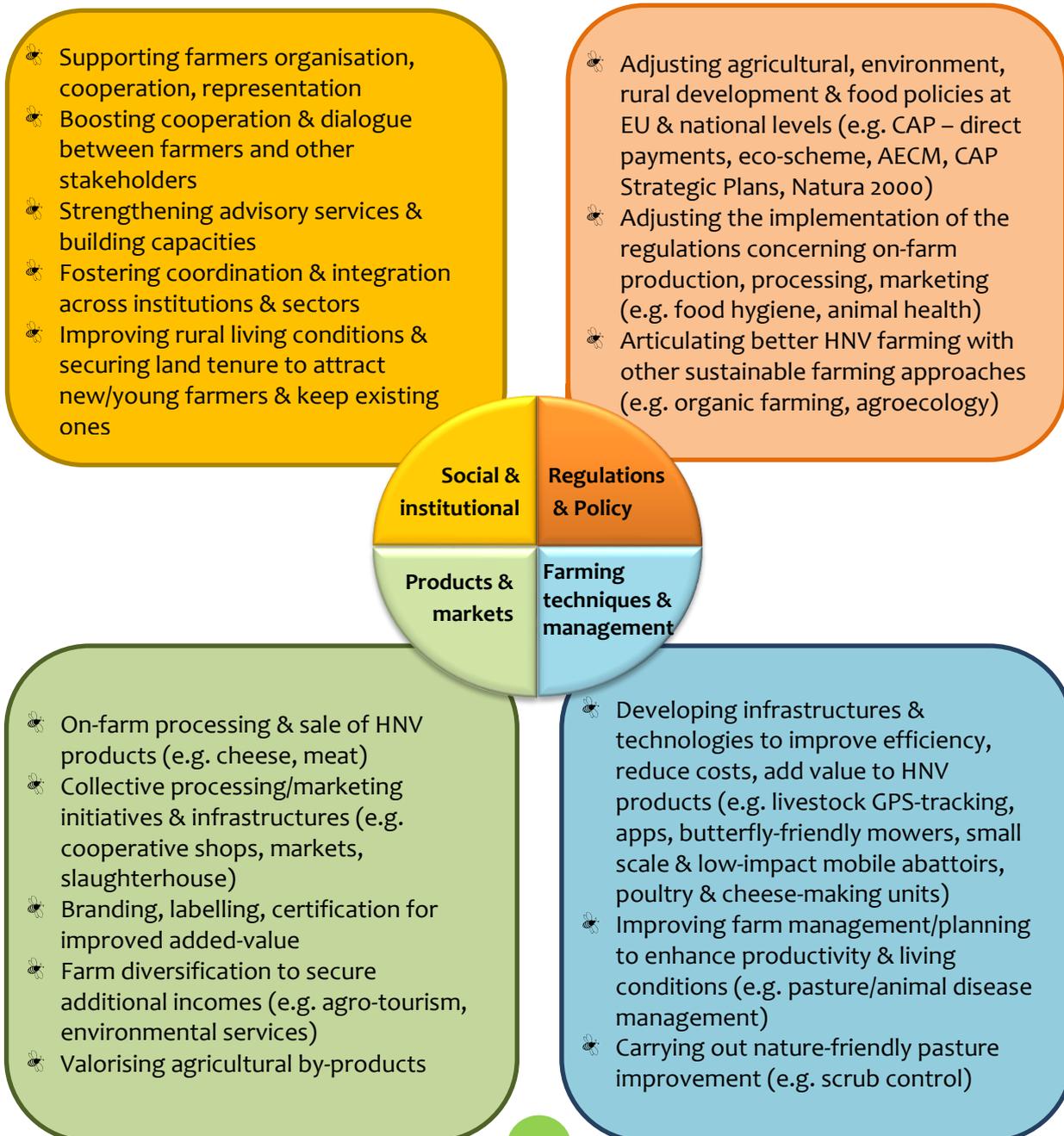


🐝 Institutional and regulatory barriers might prevent support from reaching HNV farming, whilst also blocking innovation on the ground from farmers and other actors in the civil society. Consequently, social/institutional and regulatory/policy innovation must be encouraged at all scales.

- A wealth of successful practices supporting HNV farming are available in Europe and can be adapted to different HNV farmland territories. Nonetheless, driving and sustaining an effective HNV innovation process is challenging. Actors should agree on a shared vision of what the territory could look like in the future, and commit towards common goals. Then, active brokers with suitable skills must catalyse innovation processes and projects, working locally with HNV farmers to build trust and commitment. This in turn requires a continuity of institutional cooperation and support, with a stability of personnel over the years.



- EIP Operational Groups and locally-led projects can help kick-starting innovative processes. Very successful initiatives exist in Europe that can inspire new ones.



**Supporting HNV farmers' empowerment, organisation, and cooperation with other stakeholders is key to improving their working and living conditions.**

- 🐝 Overall, HNV farmers' interests are poorly represented, both by mainstream farming unions (for whom profitability and competitiveness are priorities) and by some conservationists (whose interests may be purely environment-oriented). Supporting the empowerment, organisation and cooperation of HNV farmers is thus critical to advocate for change.
- 🐝 Multi-actor networks such as HNV-Link play a key role in boosting innovation & driving policy change, by fostering knowledge exchange, co-innovation and by bridging the gap between researchers, practitioners and the civil society.



**Thoughtful policies and regulations, in the agriculture, environment, food and rural development sectors, can strongly benefit HNV farming.**

- 🐝 The CAP and CAP Strategic Plans should be thoughtfully designed and implemented to better account for HNV farming specificities, and fairly reward HNV farmers for their essential contribution to nature conservation and sustainable development.
- 🐝 HNV farming has been a priority for EU rural development policy since 2005 and lots of work has been done and public money spent to support and monitor HNV farming since then. The HNV farming context and impact indicators that have been developed and implemented so far by Member States should not be abandoned, or should be properly integrated in/covered by related indicators.
- 🐝 A long-term innovation process is needed to gradually build a consensus and political commitment around the need to sustain HNV farming systems across Europe, and to drive action in the field.
- 🐝 There is scope to adjust nationally/regionally food hygiene regulations to suit better local/artisan food production and processing, to help generate a greater added-value for HNV farm products, and enhance the viability of HNV farming systems.
- 🐝 As HNV farms are exposed to animal diseases (e.g. tuberculosis) and predators (e.g. wolf), which can seriously affect their viability, adapting animal health regulations and control planning to the realities of extensive grazing systems and offering greater support to alleviate predation impacts is helpful.





**Don't we all wish for good food, diverse and beautiful landscapes, thriving wildlife and vibrant rural communities?**

HNV farming is about all that! It produces quality and ethical food, safeguards unique habitats and biodiversity, reduces wildfire risk, employs people, and preserves our cultural heritage.



## HNV-LINK NETWORK

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE HAUTES ÉTUDES AGRONOMIQUES MÉDITERRANÉENNES  
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<http://www.iamm.ciheam.org>



EUROPEAN FORUM ON NATURE CONSERVATION AND PASTORALISM Ltd (EFNCP)  
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UNIVERSIDADE DE ÉVORA (UEvora)  
<http://www.uevora.pt>



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SOCIETY FOR TERRITORIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY (STEP)  
<http://www.step-bg.bg>



LÄNSSTYRELSEN I VÄSTRA GÖTALANDS LÄN (LST VG SWEDEN)  
<https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/vastra-gotaland/privat.html>



APPLICATION DES SCIENCES DE L'ACTION (AScA)  
<http://www.asca-net.com>



INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SLIGO (ITS)  
<https://www.itsligo.ie>



PANEPISTIMIO THESSALIAS (UTH)  
<http://www.uth.gr>



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI (UH)  
<https://www.helsinki.fi>



CONSERVATOIRE DES ESPACES NATURELS DU LANGUEDOC ROUSSILLON (CEN-LR)  
<https://www.cenlr.org>



FUNDACIÓN ENTRETANTOS (FENT)  
<http://www.entretantos.org>





**Learning Areas**

- 1) Dartmoor (UK)
- 2) Sitio de Monfurado (PT)
- 3) Dalmatian Islands (HR)
- 4) Eastern Hills of Cluj (RO)
- 5) Western Stara Planina (BG)
- 6) Västra Götaland (SE)
- 7) The Burren (IE)
- 8) Thessalia (GR)
- 9) Causses et Cévennes (FR)
- 10) La Vera, Extremadura (ES)

**Work Package Leaders**

- a) CIHEAM-IAMM (FR)
- b) ASCA (FR)
- c) UH (FI)
- d) EFNCP (ES)

