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## The role of equines in conservation

In a number of regions in the EU native ponies are important in areas of scientific interest, in agri-environment schemes for conservation grazing and as part of a mixed grazing regime

These ponies are able to graze in wet delta or exposed upland areas

where other livestock such as sheep or cows could not thrive or would destroy the habitat.

In addition to providing valuable farm income in less favoured areas they often play a valuable conservation role as they are selective grazers. For example, the Gait

Barrows Exmoor pony herd in the UK are employed to support and help regenerate an area which includes the 'high brown fritillary', Britain's rarest butterfly. Initiatives like these also help to protect native ponies, many of whom are also endangered species.

## EHN and its Members

The EHN is a non-profit network composed of many equine organisations operating in Europe.

**EFTBA** - European Federation of Thoroughbred Breeders Associations,

**FEI** - International Equestrian Federation, European Equestrian Federation,

**EPMA** - European Pari Mutuel Association, **Pole Filiere Equine** (Normandie) representing the Network of European Equestrian Regions,

**FEIF** - Icelandic Horses,

**WBFSH** - World federation of Sport horses Breeders,

**Swedish Horse Council Foundation,**

**EMHF** - European and Mediterranean Horseracing Federation ,

**UET** - European Trotting Union,

**World Horse Welfare,**

**FECTU** - European Draught Horse Federation.

**ESSA** - European State Studs Association.

**CBC-BCP** - Belgian Horse Confederation



*The beautiful Icelandic horse is just one example of the very many native European breeds of horse and pony which play a significant role in the maintenance of upland and 'less favoured areas' in many parts of Europe, as well as providing valuable farm income.*

# Horses and the CAP

A briefing by the European Horse Network

November 2011



## Horses in Europe

"The sector has a powerful tale to tell to EU policy makers during the current economic downturn, not just in terms of business and employment growth, but also for the current debate on the Common Agricultural Policy." Julie Girling MEP

"This conference, for me personally, is a signal we have to pay more attention to horses" Janusz Wojciechowski, Vice Chair European Parliament Agriculture Committee

EHN Regional Conference November 2010



## Horses in Europe



The horse sector is a dynamic agricultural and rural force in Europe.

**There are over 6 million horses in Europe grazing over 6 million hectares of permanent grassland.**

Around 400 000 jobs are provided by the sector.

It provides 100 billion euros a year economic impact with a growing international market

While total revenues from traditional farming have

fallen around 60% from their peak income level in 1995, the horse sector as a whole is growing, with the number of horse riders increasing by around +5% a year.

Market dynamics in agriculture and leisure are expected to amplify this further in future years, making the equestrian, horse racing and betting sector an important contributor for regional growth in many countries and regions throughout the EU. The horse sector has

many positives in terms of agricultural and rural development:

- *Ecologically friendly with a focus on permanent pasture*
- *minimal or no use of pesticides*
- *offering labour-intensive, all round rural employment*
- *established and growing national and international export markets*

## Horses within the context of the CAP

Within the context of CAP discussions, the horse sector is in an ideal situation to positively contribute to the common theme throughout – which is the need to promote sustainable growth for agriculture and rural areas in an ecologically balanced way.

The use of horses as working animals on farms and in forestry is growing, and is in perfect harmony with the growth of organic farming and the search for

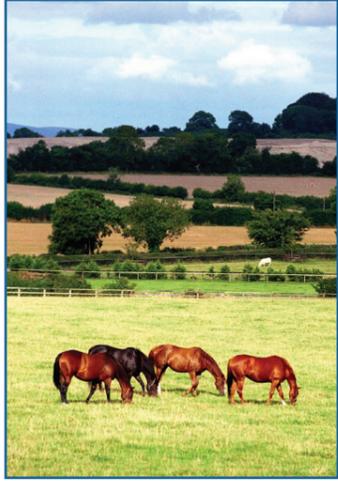
less polluting methods of farm maintenance.

As well as being a growing sector, equine enterprises also provide an added benefit as they can help support other farming sectors, by their need to buy grain, hay, straw, and other items provided by other farms and rural businesses.

In addition, horses provide excellent opportunities for further farm diversification, out of other livestock

subject to EU market organisation or arable farming, as horse breeding for example, requires many of the facilities and lends itself to much of the experience which is used to farm other livestock.

A further plus is that diversification is often a viable possibility in the more difficult upland and remote farming areas – through the natural synergies between horses and tourism for example.



*"breeding and rearing of equidae, and in particular of horses, is generally included in the farming sector. It constitutes a source of income for part of the farming population"*

EU Council  
Directive 2009/156/EC.

## Horses in the current CAP proposals

The Commission's proposals emphasise the importance of permanent grassland and the need to look at agriculture as a holistic part of the overall success and development of rural areas. We fully support this focus.

Horses graze a significant percentage of Europe's permanent grassland, and therefore contribute to the upkeep of many areas, as well as providing significant sources of income for local population.

Horses are an agricultural product, as is clearly shown by their inclusion in livestock policies and, for example, by the consistent application of European food safety and welfare regulations.

Their historic and close connection to the land and how it is farmed means they need to be considered along with other livestock such as cows and sheep, not least because of the millions of hectares which they graze, but obviously

also because the horse breeding and production also often takes place as a valued part of a more varied farm enterprise.

As farming becomes ever more diversified and environmental land management becomes ever more important, it also becomes more important to fully integrate horses into any new proposals.

## Some initial comments on the proposals

**Definition of active farmer** - The proposed definition of agricultural activity makes it clear that the breeding of livestock as well as the grazing of animals, makes farmland eligible for direct payments.

However, we would urge that this definition is made clear at EU level to remove the unfair and unlevel playing field which currently exists due to member states' interpretations of the

status of the horse and applying different historical models of the Single Farm Payment.

**The movements towards the SFP as an integral 'land management system'** seems inherently sensible and we support this.

**The further emphasis on rural development measures and diversification** is also welcome in terms of

the growth of the rural economy and jobs as a whole rather than the focus on artificial market support mechanisms on individual crops or animals.

We also support the focus the need to ensure **that high animal welfare standards** are adopted – including seeking the highest meat hygiene standards for those horses that are slaughtered for human consumption.

## The international strength of EU breeders

**Supporting farmers who supply an international market for agricultural products** is an important consideration for the EU's long term agricultural policy.

Fortunately European horse breeders are in a pole position to contribute

to this goal. European studbooks, whether in horse racing, sports horses, or pony breeding, lead the world, and are responsible for millions of euros a year in export revenue.

In addition, the facilities for auctioning and selling are already firmly established

and EU horse auctions have a large percentage of international buyers.

The value of this framework in sustaining both farm and rural employment and supporting farm incomes is evident.

## True 'horse power' in agriculture

There are still over 800 000 working horses used on small farms in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in rural and remote areas of Romania for example. In other parts of Europe there is an increasing re-use of the horse on farms as a draught animal as the horse is a perfect renewable and ecologically friendly energy source.

Draft horses are increasingly being used in the forestry logging business throughout Europe. Unlike large logging machines, they are able to preserve fragile ecosystems and cause minimal damage.

## The horse – present in every EU country

The horse is also of importance as it grazes land and contributes to farm incomes in every country of the EU.

In some countries horses are vitally important for regional economic clusters. For example in the area of Basse-Normandie in **France** you will find 10% of the whole French horse population, and 20% of the foals, the sector there provides more than 10 000 jobs The thoroughbred yearling sales alone in Deauville in August 2010 generated 26 million euros, and the World Equestrian Games are to be held in Normandy in 2014.

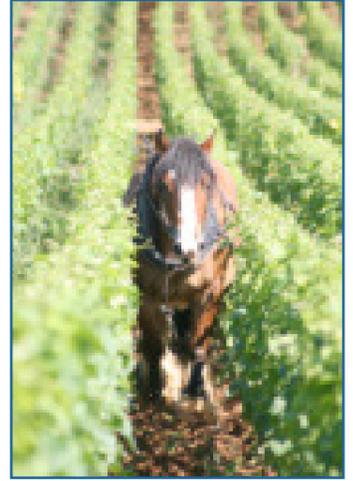
Logging horses in Sweden, for example, are used to transport more than 1 million metres cubed of logs a year.

Research has shown that draught horses can be an economically sound alternative to machines. Organic farms particularly welcome the re-emergence of horse power as the use of horses do not pollute the produce, and do not compact the soil in the same way as tractors and other machines. This is not just seen in mainstream or organic farming. In vineyards, research has shown that young vines growing in a vineyard

worked only with horses start to fruit (one to) two years earlier than those growing in soils compacted by tractors. (SCHARNHÖLZ 2009)

In this way, again, we see horses as central to the debate about how to maintain productivity and farm incomes while also 'greening' the CAP and encouraging biodiversity and more environmentally sound land management.

We would like to see the use of working horses recognised and supported much more in terms of the benefits they can bring to small working farms.



*"Young vines fruit earlier if worked by horses – an example of productivity and ecology in harmony"*

scientific interest is the part-EU funded Lake Pape project in the remote region of south-west **Latvia** along the Baltic coast close to the border with Lithuania where a key feature of the project was the re-introduction of wild horses to help maintain important grasslands.

Another example is in **Romania** in the Carpathians where a scheme is being set up to support local communities within the nature conservation policy of protected areas by developing ecotourism products focused on horse-riding.

One example of combining ecological conservation with tourism within national parks and areas of special