

Recommendations of the meeting of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy

held under the German Presidency of the EU

“Sustainable use of Biodiversity”

Leipzig, 5th-7th May, 2007

concerning

Biodiversity in the wider countryside

To achieve the objectives of the Communication of the Commission of the European Communities to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and beyond (Com (2006) 216 final), the participants of this meeting place high priority on research to:

1. Status and trends of biodiversity in the wider countryside

- 1.1 Develop standardised methods for harmonising and supplementing monitoring schemes and indicators for wild and domestic biodiversity and for the drivers and pressures that influence biodiversity;
- 1.2 Understand the importance of landscape structures, patterns and gradients for biodiversity, and how information about biodiversity can be applied across scales.

2. Drivers of change in the wider countryside

- 2.1 Understand and assess the impacts on biodiversity of demographic, social and economic trends (including urban sprawl, water-course modifications and land abandonment) and of policies including for example for agriculture, forestry, water, energy, trade, transportation, and tourism;
- 2.2 Analyse and assess, at enterprise level, the socio-economic factors that lead businesses to impact positively or negatively on biodiversity;
- 2.3 Evaluate the effect on biodiversity of changes in agriculture and forestry, brought about by climate change and climate change policies, in particular through the use of biomass and energy crops.

3. Management of biodiversity in the wider countryside

- 3.1 Evaluate the potential of Agri-Environmental Schemes for making a real and measurable positive impact on biodiversity, taking into consideration the policy process that leads to their design, and develop proposals for improvements or alternatives;
- 3.2 Understand how policies and measures may promote the conservation and sustainable use of the genetic diversity of harvested and domesticated plants and animals;
- 3.3 Identify new measures, and modifications to existing land and water use systems, including the potential contributions of rural businesses, to protect biodiversity in extensive systems and High Nature Value Farmland areas from negative impacts of land abandonment or land use intensification;

- 3.4 Enhance the understanding of how market-based instruments such as tradeable permits and result-orientated payments can be applied to biodiversity conservation;
- 3.5 Determine the ecological, social and economic consequences (including sustainable harvest, conflicts and stakeholder perceptions) of the spread and increasing abundance of certain species of wildlife;
- 3.6 Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments with respect to biodiversity;
- 3.7 Evaluate the interactions of land and water use changes with climate change effects and adaptation strategies and develop policy options and actions that help to conserve biodiversity.

These research priorities were derived in particular from the following considerations:

- Land and water use changes in the wider country side (intensification of production systems and abandonment of marginal areas) have been and still are the main drivers of biodiversity loss in Europe. In future, these changes will interact with the impacts of climate change and possible mitigation and adaptation measures to it (e.g., increased biofuel production). This will lead to increased threats to biodiversity, impeding the EU target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 and showing substantial recovery by 2013 (COM (2006) 216final, Objective 2).
- As one consequence, mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and natural resource use into all policy fields, especially in agricultural policy and regional development, are of major importance, taking into account the European, as well as specific member state perspective on these issues (COM (2006) 216final, Objective 4).