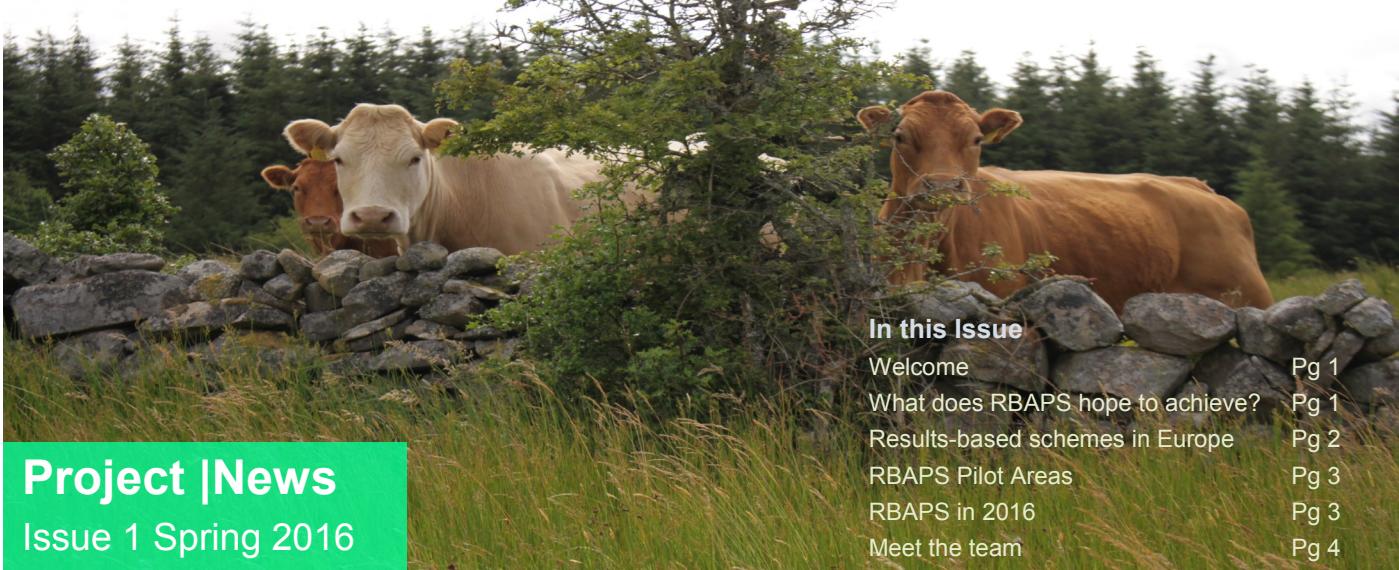


RBAPS

Results-based Agri-environment Pilot Scheme



Project | News

Issue 1 Spring 2016

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Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter from the RBAPS Irish and Spanish teams.

The RBAPS project will run from 2015 to June 2018 to develop results-based agri-environment payment schemes. Through engagement with participating farmers and local stakeholders in Co. Leitrim, Shannon Callows and Navarra, we will test how results-based schemes can incentivise and reward farmers for the quality of nature (also called biodiversity) they produce on their farms.

This is one of only two projects funded by the EU, in response to a call from the European Commission (DG Environment) to trial the results-based approach through pilot schemes, and puts the project areas at the centre of results-based agri-environment scheme development in Europe.

Please read on for more information on our exciting project.

What does the RBAPS project hope to achieve?

In 2016 and 2017, approximately €240,000 will be spent by the RBAPS project on farmer contracts, split equally between the three pilot areas; the Atlantic farmland of the Shannon Callows and Co. Leitrim in Ireland and the Mediterranean farmland of the Navarra region in Spain.



Flooded callow land, Ireland



Vineyard in the Navarra region, Spain

The pilot areas have been chosen because they are of considerable value for nature. Agriculture is a major industry in both Ireland and Spain, with low intensity farming still very much a way of life.

Working with up to 65 farmers in Ireland and Spain, the RBAPS teams aim to build on the Burren model (see pg 2) which uses under-

standable indicators which aim to score the quality of nature (biodiversity) of farmland. The score given reflects the quality of nature produced which is linked to the level of payment to the farmer.

This RBAPS project in Ireland and Spain will provide important information for the design of future results-based schemes around Europe.



Flower-rich grassland, Co. Leitrim, Ireland

This pilot is supported by the European Commission (DG Environment) and a consortium of partners.



Results-based schemes in Europe

Farmers who have participated in results-based agri-environment schemes in Europe have reported that they had 'flexibility to use their knowledge and experience to manage the land in a way that benefits both biodiversity as well as their normal farming operations.'

(Source: Environment Directorate, General of the European Commission)

Results-based schemes have been running in Europe for a number of years.

One of the best-known and most successful schemes is located in the Burren, Ireland.

The Burren Life ('Burren Farming for Conservation') Programme has a farmer-led approach to farming and conservation, which sees farmers paid for both work undertaken and, most importantly, for the delivery of results for the environment.

The Burren programme divides its annual farmer payments roughly equally between payments for actions (e.g. scrub clearance) and payments for output, e.g. well-managed

grassland with abundant wildflowers.

Each field within the scheme is scored annually using a 'health check' for the grasslands and other habitats, which has been specifically developed for the Burren region. The higher the score, the greater the payment made to farmers, up to a score of 10 out of 10 for the best quality grassland or habitat.

'Burren Life is results-based. Simply put, we reward those farmers who deliver the highest environmental benefits. Conservation becomes as much a product for the farmer as the livestock produced.' Burren Life (www.burrenlife.com)



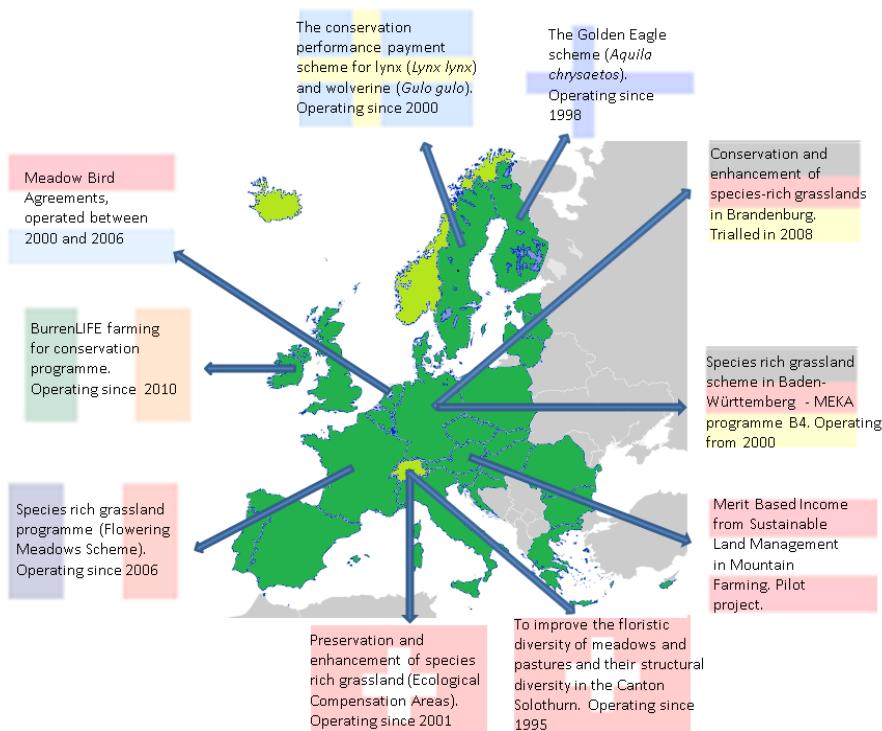
Almond trees in Navarra

Farmers and their knowledge are key to the success of results-based schemes

In Europe, other successful results-based programmes have been run in Germany, Switzerland and France for species-rich grasslands, in Holland and Finland for birds of conservation interest and in Sweden for an innovative scheme to protect wild Lynx.

'We found that our results-based approach works very well because it gives the farmers here a target for improving their environmental performanceit gives the farmers a new language to talk about the environment and their environmental output. And one that makes real sense to them.' Dr. Brendan Dunford, BurrenLife project coordinator

Results-based Agri-environment Schemes around Europe



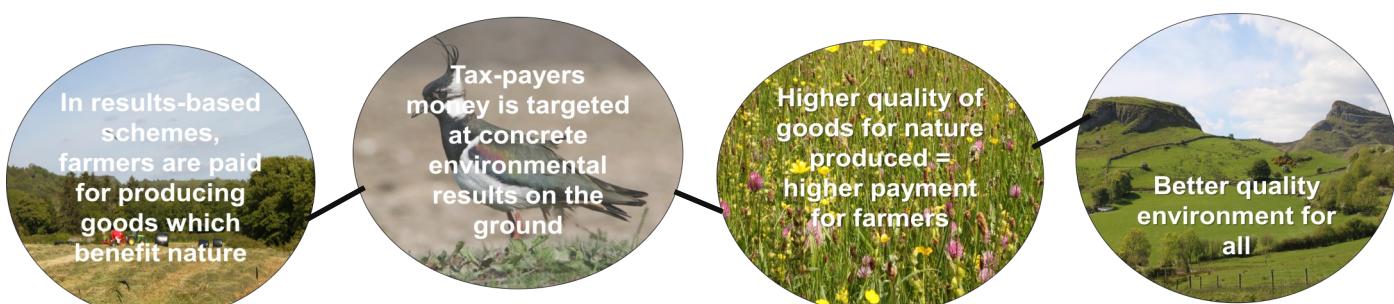
Source: Environment Directorate General of the European Commission

More Information

More information on results-based schemes is available:-

From the European Commission at <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/rbaps/>

On the Burren Life project at <http://burrenlife.com>



RBAPS Timetable in 2016

In 2016, the RBAPS Ireland and Spain teams will work with up to 65 farmers to develop results based agri-environment schemes

Jan-April 2016 — Farm visits and joint preparation of RBAPS Farm Plans with the participating farmer and RBAPS teams

March to November 2016 — Scoring of habitats for the biodiversity targets and refining the RBAPS methodology.

May to September 2016 — Participant and Agricultural Advisor workshops to demonstrate how the results-based scheme works in practice

Throughout 2016, the RBAPS teams will continue to meet with their local Stakeholder Advisory Groups to discuss progress and direction of the project. Farming, government and local interested parties are represented on these groups. They provide invaluable input to the development and testing of these results-based agri-environment schemes.



RBAPS Pilot Areas

Co. Leitrim, Ireland

Co. Leitrim has low intensity and extensive farming. Cattle and sheep are the main livestock. Much of this High Nature Value (HNV) farmland lies outside of Natura 2000 designation (protected sites for nature conservation).

Afforestation, land abandonment and intensification are threats to nature in this area and in other parts of Ireland's HNV farmland making Co. Leitrim a great opportunity to explore solutions to widespread issues.

In Leitrim, RBAPS will focus on developing indicators for species-rich grassland and Marsh Fritillary (rare butterfly) habitat.



The rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly

Shannon Callows, Ireland



Meadows along the Shannon Callows

Populations of breeding waders in the Shannon Callows have undergone severe declines in the past two decades. The HNV farmland of the Callows is one of their last strongholds. The Callows flood regularly during winter, but in summer the meadows are colourful and rich in plant life. The importance of this landscape is recognized by both Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area designations.

The Callow meadows are under threat from intensification and lack of management. Wader populations are in decline due to fine scale changes in agriculture practice, increased predation and summer flooding.

The Shannon Callows RBAPS will focus on developing indicators for breeding waders and hay meadow.

Navarra, Spain

The upland Mediterranean zone of Navarra supports a mosaic of vineyards, olive and almond groves, arable plots, rough grazing areas. These offer an important variety of ecological niches for wildlife.



Olive grove in Navarra

The increase in the amount of herbicides and pesticides being used in vineyards and olive groves, reduction in traditional grazing pressure and a gradual extension of irrigated cultivation with intensive varieties and techniques are leading to a loss in biodiversity throughout the landscape. Traditional almond groves don't lend themselves to intensification and are now facing abandonment, with the loss of ground flora and associated wildlife.

The Navarra RBAPS will focus on developing indicators for mosaic habitat which comes with traditionally managed arable and perennial cropland and rough grazing land.

Meet the RBAPS Team



Caitriona



Anita



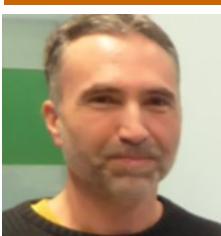
Sean



Vanessa Alzaga



Asun



Carlos



Dolores



Kathryn



Vanessa Clavería



Alfonso



David



Javier

The RBAPS teams are based in the three pilot locations. We look forward to working with our farmers over the next two years to promote and support results-based agri-environment schemes.

RBAPS Ireland

Caitriona Maher (EFNCP) is the RBAPS Project Manager. She has previously worked on the Burren Farming for Conservation project and on ecology of flood meadows in the Shannon Callows.

Dolores Byrne (IT Sligo) is the RBAPS Project Ecologist and is working primarily in Co. Leitrim, and providing ecological assistance to the Callows. She is a part-time farmer in Co. Leitrim.

Anita Donaghy is a Senior Conservation Officer with BirdWatch Ireland and has headed national curlew, breeding wader and corncrake conservation projects.

Kathryn Finney is the Shannon Callows Breeding Wader Management Officer for BirdWatch Ireland and has worked on breeding waders in the Shannon Callows for the past 10 years.

Seán Kelly is an Assistant Ecologist with BirdWatch Ireland and has worked on curlew conservation. Seán is providing maternity cover for Kathryn Finney.

RBAPS Spain

The RBAPS Spain team consist of members of Ganasa, a public corporation of the regional Government of Navarra working on environmental management.

Vanessa Clavería Iracheta has responsibility in Navarra for dissemination of the RBAPS project and for selection of project participants. She is a botanist with experience in conservation of endangered flora species and vegetation.

Asun Berastegi Garciandia is the Navarra RBAPS Project Co-ordinator. She is a botanist and ecologist with extensive experience in the areas of conservation of flora and habitats of European interest, and in the process of implementation of the Natura 2000 Network.

Vanessa Alzaga Gil has specialties in veterinary and on game species, mainly in their relationships with habitat and in the ecology and epidemiology of wildlife diseases.

Carlos Astrain Massa has worked in the conservation of steppe-land birds and agricultural systems, mainly in design and implementation of agri-environment and Natura 2000 measures in the RDPs, and in identification and characterisation of HNV farms.

David Campión Ventura is a specialist in conservation biology. He has worked with many species (raptors, bats, woodpeckers, grouses, mussels) and in habitat management. He runs a small goat farm.

Alfonso Llamas Saiz specialises in herpetology, carrion birds, steppe birds, invertebrates.

Javier Torres Ithuriz is an ecologist with 25 years' experience in management of endangered and game species, as well as in environmental impact studies in the agriculture.

Technical and administrative support to the RBAPS project is provided by James Moran and Caroline Sullivan, IT Sligo, Gwyn Jones, and Guy Beaufoy EFNCP, Andy Bleasdale and Barry O'Donoghue and other experts in the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Alex Copland, BirdWatch Ireland, Sharon Parr, Brendan Dunford, Anne Mullen and Bryony Williams, HNVS and Eladio Llorente Ramos, Anika Meyer, Silvia Zabalza, Roberto Rodriguez Perez, Fabiola Lopez Rodriguez, Uxue Iragui Yoldi, Ganasa. Thank you to members of the Stakeholder Advisory Groups in each region for their support and assistance.

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Visit our website at www.rbaps.eu

All photos are property of RBAPS Ireland and Spain teams: Marsh Fritillary (John Matthews, NPWS, Ireland)

The next newsletter issue will be published in **Spring 2017**.
Please send any comments, contributions or events which you
might like included to byrne.dolores@itsligo.ie

All views expressed are those of the RBAPS project