



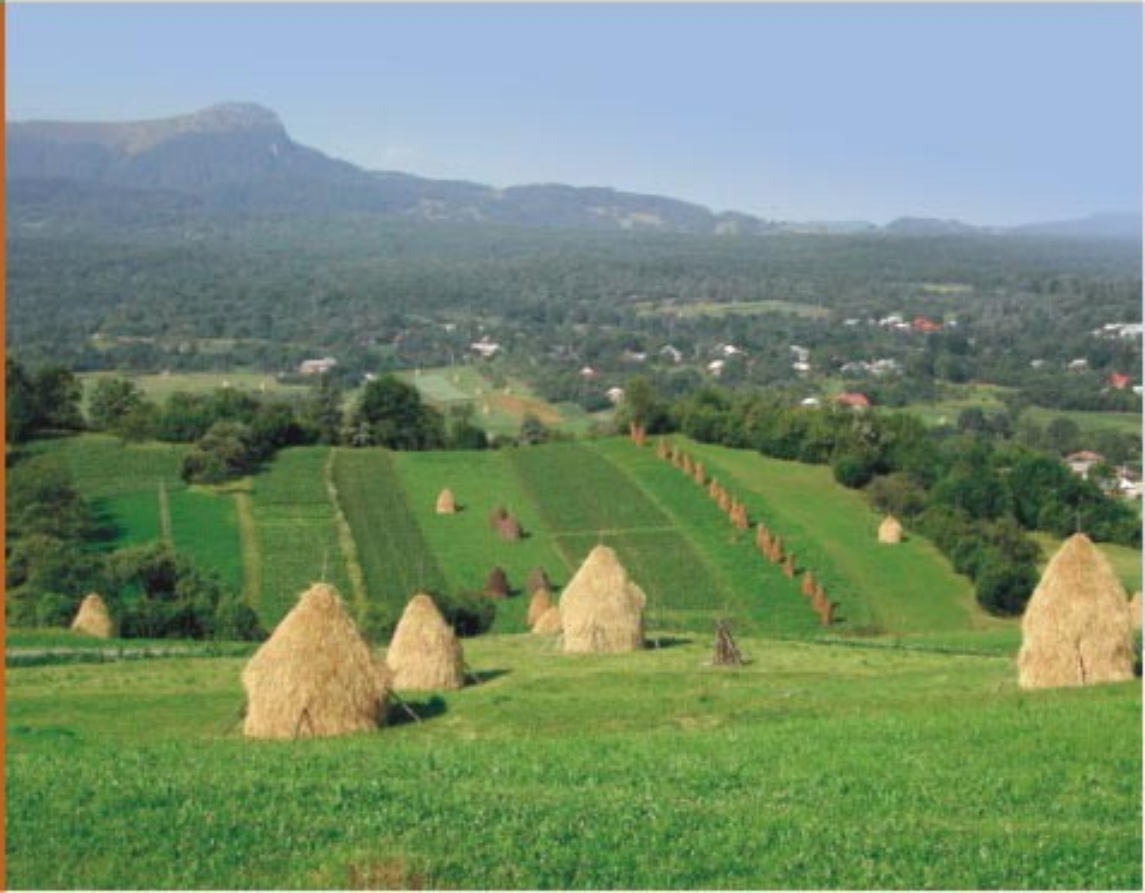
for a living planet®



One Europe More Nature

European Challenges... Natural Solutions

New Perspectives for People and Nature in Rural Areas



Foreword

EUROPEAN CHALLENGES, NATURAL SOLUTIONS

New perspectives for People and Nature in a Changing Europe

I have great pleasure in introducing WWF's project 'One Europe More Nature' to you. I sincerely hope you will not only be interested by what you see and read but that you will also wish to become actively involved.

WWF has more than 40 years' experience in working for a world in which people and nature live in harmony. During that time we have learnt many lessons, one of which is that without partnerships our chances of success are very limited.

'One Europe More Nature - OEMN' is unique and exciting for many reasons. It is a truly integrated project - integrating forest management with grassland management, agriculture, freshwater, and more. It integrates policy work with practical field actions and communications. It also integrates and balances the desires of local people with businesses, consumers and nature.

It is a timely project - analysing current and future trends and opportunities, looking forward to understanding how Europe will look in the years to come and attempting to steer some of these quite momentous changes in a direction to be proud of. Also, it is an international project working across boundaries, reaching out and finding common ground as the European Union expands and as the patterns change for economic development, policies and investments.

But the heart of OEMN, and what makes me confident of its ultimate success, is that the project deliberately aims to seek out, to foster and to demonstrate innovative partnerships, to understand different stakeholder motivations and to identify those areas where we can truly demonstrate win-win mechanisms which make a difference for people and for nature.

To make this work, we need partners. Join us in making this exciting initiative a success.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Sylvén".

Dr. Magnus Sylvén
Director, Europe/Middle East Programme
WWF International

Contents

Introduction	2
The Project Sites	
Doñana, Spain	6
Maramures, Romania	8
Tisza Floodplains, Hungary/Romania	10
Ardennes, Belgium	12
Gelderse Poort, The Netherlands	14
Väinameri, Estonia	16
Prespa, Greece	18
Sinca Noua, Romania	20
Conclusions and a Call to Action	22
The One Europe More Nature Team	25

Introduction

In the summer of 2005 natural disasters filled the headlines across Europe. In Spain and Portugal, the worst drought on record decimated crops and livelihoods, and forest fires razed thousands of hectares of woodland to the ground. Large areas of Central and Eastern Europe were devastated by severe floods which left many dead and caused huge economic losses.

Are these events really 'natural' disasters? Or could the way we manage our land and natural resources be contributing to the floods and droughts which are becoming ever more commonplace? If so, what can we do about it?

Europe is Changing

Europe's role on the world stage is changing. Economic patterns are changing. The borders and composition of the European Union are changing. Policies are changing. Consumption patterns are changing. Some of this has brought huge benefits to the people of Europe, who now enjoy a quality of life that previous generations could only dream of. It has also had a profound impact on our environment and our landscapes.



Flooded village in the Upper Tisza region during floods in 2000.

Across most of Europe, the 20th century saw a large-scale intensification in the agricultural sector. Small farms, growing local varieties of crops and raising local breeds of animals, are disappearing, replaced by large farms growing monocultures of just a few commercial crops. At the same time, traditional practices which promote biodiversity are giving way to intensive techniques which leave little room for nature in the fields.

Rivers have been straightened and deepened to make them suitable for shipping, and wetlands have been drained to make more land available for agriculture. Flood plains have been cut off from the rivers and entire towns and cities have been built on them.

Now, EU enlargement and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) mean that millions of hectares of agricultural land will no longer be seen as viable from an economic point of view. In Hungary alone, it is estimated that 1 million hectares will 'fall out' of agriculture in this way.

Changing Landscapes

The floods and droughts of 2005 were not one-off isolated events, but part of a growing trend of extreme weather events. It is now becoming clear that the way we manage our land and water resources is contributing to this problem.



Forest Fire in Southern France, 2003

Changing People

The forces driving land and water use patterns in Europe, such as international trade links, policies and economics, are immense. Little wonder, therefore, that many feel daunted by the prospect of trying to change them. Yet we are all part of these trends, and while they pose many threats, they also offer opportunities.

Strawberries being cultivated under plastic on the outskirts of the Coto Doñana National Park, Spain. Inefficient (and often illegal) irrigation of the crop has caused ground water depletion in the park itself.



WWF, through projects like One Europe More Nature, is working to identify these opportunities and trying to make these dynamic forces work for nature and for people. We are seeking out new partners and sectors, to understand what business can do for nature and, importantly, what nature can do for business. We are working with local people across the continent to show that economy and ecology can and do go hand in hand, and that it is possible to find new ways of making a living which do not jeopardise our natural capital for future generations.

We believe we have found some potential solutions, and they are outlined in this brochure. These solutions are being worked out through people successfully making the transition from a largely *agricultural economy* to a more diverse and sustainable *new economy*. In the latter, agriculture will still play a role, but might no longer be the critical factor on which everything else depends - social life, incomes, and landscape quality.

The Project in Practice

For too long, nature conservation activities have been seen as the preserve of nature conservation professionals, working in areas which are set aside for nature, and where human activity is limited.

One Europe More Nature challenges this idea. WWF believes a much wider range of stakeholders could and should be involved in nature conservation, and benefit from it. One Europe More Nature mainstreams nature conservation and nature restoration into normal life, and places it at the centre of the challenge to develop *new economies*.



The last large meander of the River Tisza is 12 km long and can be found in central Hungary. Inside the meander the successive former courses of the river are still discernible.

At a series of key sites across Europe, WWF and its local partners are forging innovative partnerships to identify opportunities where the interests of business and nature overlap. The people involved in our projects include big businesses, extractive industries, local entrepreneurs, farmers, foresters and politicians. Together, we are developing win-win situations where economic and ecological concerns go hand in hand, where businesses make a profit and nature's capital is maintained or even enhanced.

The One Europe More Nature Vision

The ecological needs of nature are harmonised with the economic needs of people in numerous locations throughout Europe. At these locations, biodiversity and natural resources are conserved and landscapes are functioning through optimal land-uses. These are founded on nature-based economic activities which generate jobs and incomes. Winners include partnerships of rural people, businesses, investors and entrepreneurs, and nature.

This includes a new generation of farmers that not only nurture crops and animals, but also nurture or restore ecological processes. They produce new ecological 'services' and 'products' such as healthy food, landscape quality, provision of habitat, biomass production for energy supply, water retention and flood mitigation.

None of the projects provides a "blueprint" for sustainable development in other areas; every region and every situation needs its own, tailor-made solution. However, the approach, and the lessons, from these areas can be a source of inspiration for all those working on a new future for Europe's rural areas.

At the same time, WWF is working with decision-makers and policy makers from national governments and at the European Union level in order to capitalise on these examples and to support them with existing or future policies and investments.

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White stork, *Ciconia ciconia*.

One Europe More Nature on the Ground

One Europe More Nature has eight project sites where it is putting this approach into practice, and these are presented in the following pages. Here imaginative solutions and mechanisms based on the OEMN approach are already up and running and more are being developed. Nature is being integrated with economy; freshwater with agriculture and forestry; fieldwork with policy work. Most importantly, local communities are embarking on the transition from an agricultural economy to a new economy.

In the **Coto Doñana National Park** in Spain, WWF is working to protect valuable wildlife habitats and safeguard the steady flow of water into these internationally renowned wetlands, in partnership with local strawberry and rice farmers.

The **River Tisza** is the largest tributary of the Danube. WWF is working in the headwaters at **Maramures** in Romania and on the **Tisza floodplains** in lowland Hungary to protect and restore the valuable forest and freshwater habitats and contribute to natural flood mitigation solutions.

The Low Countries have also experienced catastrophic floods in recent years. WWF Belgium is working with farmers in the headwaters of the River Meuse in the **Ardennes** to restore the wetlands and thereby increase the water retention capacity of the region. At **Gelderse Poort** in the Netherlands, Ark Nature is restoring the floodplains along the Rhine and kicking off a new economy for the area.

At **Väinameri** on the west coast of Estonia, the NGO Arhipelaag is helping farmers to maintain and restore the coastal meadows, which make the area such a haven for migrating birds, as one part of a comprehensive approach to linking coastal nature with people.

At the **Prespa Lakes** in Greece, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, WWF and the Society for the Protection of Prespa are working with the local communities to reduce the impact of agriculture on the lake, and ensure a sustainable development path for the region.

In Romania, the **Sinca Noua** Foundation is helping local people to develop their local economy in ways that will protect and enhance the natural values of the surrounding area, and pave a sustainable path into the future as Romania joins the European Union.

These sites serve as showcases for the OEMN approach - living examples of a new way of living - and an inspiration for people across Europe to get involved and start shaping Europe's changing landscapes for the benefit of people and nature.



Base-map: NASA World Wind project

Doñana

Lying in the delta of the Guadalquivir River, between the southern Spanish city of Seville and the Atlantic Ocean, the Coto Doñana National Park is one of the world's most valuable wetlands. The park's marshlands, natural beaches, dune systems, woodlands and heaths provide a haven for six million migratory birds as well as endangered species such as the Imperial eagle. Doñana is also home to one of the last surviving populations of the world's most endangered cat species, the Iberian lynx.

© WWF/Juanjo Calmona



WWF has close links with the area - in the 1960s it purchased a significant part of the park and was instrumental in encouraging the Spanish government to turn the area into a National Park, a goal it achieved in 1969. Since then Doñana's status as an area of great ecological importance has been further reinforced by a number of European and international laws and conventions which specifically call for its protection.

Yet Coto Doñana is still under threat. In a country beset by droughts on a regular basis, the main problem in Doñana is the misuse of water.

In recent years, strawberry farms have sprung up in areas around the park, growing the fruit out of season in response to the demand from northern European consumers for a year-round supply of strawberries. Strawberries are a thirsty crop, and farmers have to extract massive quantities of groundwater, often illegally, to irrigate their plants. This is having a severe impact on the park. Many of the rivers and streams running into Coto Doñana, including one of the most important ones, La Rocina, have experienced reduced flows of up to 50%, leading to a drying out of the wetlands.

The explosion in the number of strawberry farms has also lead to a loss of natural habitat, as many are set up on public land, with the farmers simply clearing the forest illegally to make room for their plants.

The other main crop related to water in Doñana is rice, which is grown to the east of the National Park. The area was once open marshland, and numerous streams transferred water from the Guadalquivir River to the national park area. Now the streams are gone and the area has effectively been transformed into a vast rice paddy of more than 35.000 hectares of monoculture. Many rice farmers recently switched to Integrated Production (see page 19 for more information), thereby reducing many of the environmental impacts of the crop, such as diffuse pollution of chemicals. However, the rice continues to use a lot of water.

Strawberries and Supermarkets

WWF Spain is pulling together all the different stakeholders involved in strawberry production and marketing in order to highlight the problem and take steps towards a more sustainable pattern of land and water management. The aim is to solve the water problems by encouraging the farmers to use the best available irrigation technologies, and solve the spatial problem by offering alternative plots of land to those currently farming in zones known to correspond with migration corridors. These migration corridors link Doñana with other areas of natural habitat further inland and as such provide an important link for lynx and other animals to the rest of the world.

Farmers are interested in the project, but will only change if they get some economic incentives from the market, which is where supermarkets come in. Currently most of the strawberries grown around Doñana are sold to large, international supermarket chains. As consumers become ever more aware of the environmental impacts of farming and food production, supermarkets are keen to market themselves as environmentally friendly companies. The supermarkets' purchasing policies dictate how the food we buy is produced, and WWF is working to convince them to adapt these policies in order to improve the environment.

The deal between strawberry farmers and supermarkets won't be good just for the connections between Doñana and the natural habitats further inland. It will be good for the whole of Doñana, in that an estimated 4 million cubic metres of water could be saved annually, a huge contribution towards ensuring the healthy functioning of these unique wetlands.

New Nature amongst the Old Rice Fields

Although artificial in origin, rice paddies in Doñana have become an important habitat for waterfowl. The current situation could be very much improved if the 35.000 hectares of rice paddies were reduced to some extent, thus cutting their water consumption and allowing for a more diverse landscape with a mosaic of uses which would be much more beneficial for biodiversity. Rice paddies could be alternated with natural grazing lands, extensive aquaculture pools or mixed rice/crab production paddies. The environmental impact of the remaining rice paddies could be reduced significantly if the farmers use more efficient irrigation systems and, eventually, switch over to organic farming. WWF is embarking on a pilot field project with farmers to show how creating more space for nature does not necessarily mean a reduced income.

The creation of a system of 'water banks' as currently being envisaged by the River Basin Authority will encourage farmers to reduce the amount of land they have under rice cultivation, as they can sell the rights to the water they save or do not consume. If the water saved is then used partially or entirely for environmental purposes, nature will be the winner.

Water Banks

Water Banks are a system of allocating, buying and selling rights to water usage, and they could have a significant benefit for nature in Doñana. They already exist in other parts of the world - notably North America and Australia - and Spanish legislation also makes provision for such arrangements.

The Guadalquivir River Basin, which constitutes almost 25% of Spanish territory, would be a good place to put this into practice, as long as the 'rules of the game' were clearly established and based on the Water Framework Directive.

© WWF / Felipe Fuentesbuz



Maramures

Maramures is a land of impressive scenery - eagles soar above the mountains, and bears, wolves and lynx still roam the ancient forests. The area is also home to the headwaters of the River Tisza, the longest tributary of the Danube and a river famous in central Europe for its catastrophic flood events of recent years.

Although the plateau itself is largely uninhabited, it is surrounded by small settlements whose economies are based primarily on the use of the plateau's natural resources. The city of Baia Mare is also dependent on the plateau for much of its economic life, as well as its drinking water supply and cultural aspects such as recreation. In fact, the forests and grasslands of Maramures have long provided people with a range of products and services such as drinking water, wild berries, mushrooms, medicinal plants, building materials and fuel.

The unique patchwork of forest, wetland and grassland on the plateau also provides an important ecological function. Working like a sponge, it retains water in the area, thereby reducing floods downstream.

But pressures are mounting. Both legal and illegal loggers have started to eat away at the pristine forests, and the majestic Bruna de Maramures cattle, which keep the highland pastures open, are disappearing. Wetlands are also being drained to make way for crops. As a result of these changes, biodiversity is in decline. Thus the water retention capacity - the natural 'sponge' function - of the area, risks being lost.

The reasons behind these damaging activities are largely economic. In a region where incomes are low and unemployment is high, people have little choice but to exploit the few opportunities they see as being open to them, be this by felling trees for timber or giving up farming practices which are proving unprofitable.

At the same time, Romanian accession to the European Union is planned for 2007. The impact of the Common Agricultural Policy upon rural life in Maramures is likely to be negative, if experience from the current 25 Member States is any guide. WWF believes that the transition from an agricultural economy to a new economy is vital for both socio-economic and ecological reasons.

It is against this backdrop that the WWF Danube Carpathian Programme (DCP) is implementing a project to help local people develop new economies which will both generate income in the longer term and preserve the area's natural values.

Restoring natural sponges

At Nistru, near Baia Mare, a local investor and the local authorities, together with WWF, are in the process of improving catchment management to preserve this important function of the region. Funding may come from a simple Payment for Environmental Services (PES) mechanism. A local bottled water company is eager to market its product as high quality, pure water from a natural catchment. In return for the right to do this, it will give a percentage of its profits to the local council for improved management of the area upstream of the source.

Romania



Sustainable Forest management

The main threat to the forests comes from logging, and WWF is tackling this problem on two fronts. It is encouraging local businesses (including a nearby IKEA factory) and authorities to buy only wood which has been certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). FSC certification requires the owners of the forests to manage their land sustainably. That must include of course managing the forests in a way which has a positive impact on the sponge function of the plateau. At the same time, new, more sustainable income-generating initiatives are being set up, based mostly on the sustainable harvesting of forest products, tourism and the production of handicrafts.



© Pop Emt

Extensive grazing

Part of the rich biodiversity of Maramures owes its existence to the lush meadows which are interspersed with the forests. Currently, many of these meadows are used for hay production. The farmers transport the hay off the mountain by road, and these roads act as drainage channels, contributing to flooding. Extensive grazing will maintain biodiversity and reduce water run-off as cattle do not need to be moved along the roads. The beef resulting from the project will be marketed as local, 'green' beef. The mixture of open grassland and closed forest also gives the region its distinctive landscape quality. This is highly valued by tourists as well as local people, meaning that the tourism sector has a direct economic interest in a healthy, balanced management of the plateau if it is to continue to develop and to provide investment and income opportunities into the future.

Payments for environmental services

Payments for environmental services (PES) is the generic name of a variety of arrangements whereby governments, businesses and other users pay farmers and other water and land managers for conservation activities that deliver environmental services. Although the PES concept is rather new, there are many PES or similar schemes at work around the world, including:

- Spontaneous, private, market-type arrangements (common in nature-based tourism or protection of small watersheds);
- PES markets created by regulation (e.g. carbon sequestration markets created by the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change);
- Government-led PES arrangements (e.g. in Costa Rica, Brazil, China or the EU, where public money is used to pay farmers to adopt rural conservation practices).

Whatever the arrangement, the core concept of any PES scheme is that those who pay should be aware that they do so to secure the provision of a valuable environmental service, and those that receive the payment are paid to engage in meaningful and measurable activities to secure the supply of those environmental services.



© Pop Emt

Tisza Floodplains

The Ecsed Marsh lies on the border of Romania and Hungary. Once the largest wetland in central Europe, it was drained in the 19th century to make way for agriculture, and now just a few pockets of land have retained their original character. Today the remaining wetlands and marshlands are no longer connected to each other, and the water supply of the region is not continuous, creating problems for water management and agriculture. Arable crops dominate the area, yet despite intensive use of fertilisers and the latest farming techniques, the farmland is unproductive and yields and profits remain low.

In 1999 and 2001 Hungary was struck by severe floods along the Tisza which damaged homes and crops alike. In response to this, the Hungarian government drew up a national flood management plan which envisaged the establishment of 14 lowland reservoirs where water could be stored during times of high water.

WWF argued for a more natural approach to flood management, involving the restoration and reconnection of the floodplains and wetlands. One of the areas chosen for a reservoir was the Ecsed Marsh, and WWF together with the local municipality has embarked on a pilot project to put these ideas to the test. Their aim is to create a landscape comprising a range of land uses which will, together, provide not only habitats for nature but also income opportunities for people, and at the same time secure the flood storage function required under the government flood strategy. The win-win mechanism underpinning this ambitious process centres on the switch from intensive, yet unprofitable, arable crop production to a mixed economy based on water and wetland. Again, it is therefore a switch from a largely *agricultural economy*, to a more sustainable, *new economy*.

WWF's long-term vision for the region is a fully ecologically functioning Tisza River which is connected to its restored floodplains and wetlands. It supports a variety of important habitats and species and also underpins the entire economic viability of the region, including through the natural and effective management of floods.



Common kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*

Green Energy

One new land use with significant potential is biomass production. The power company AES Energy has made commitments to reduce its CO₂ emissions by producing more of its power from biomass. WWF is helping AES make contact with potential biomass producers and ensure that biomass production is environmentally sustainable. To ensure the area is not simply covered with a monoculture of a single energy crop, AES' deal with WWF covers wider land management issues, floodplain restoration and the use of a range of crops at different altitudes within the floodplain area.



The Ecsed Marsh area could be suitable for the production of energy crops such as hemp - hemp has a number of uses aside from biomass, and needs little chemical input to thrive. AES will also contribute to floodplain restoration by first utilising the invasive species *Amorpha fruticosa* (bastard indigo) as a temporary biomass source. *A. fruticosa* currently dominates the floodplains; as it propagates vigorously during the floods every year, its presence seriously hinders work to restore the floodplains to their natural states.



Wetlands for Fishing

Fishing is a popular pastime in Hungary and most towns and villages have their own fishpond. With the active support and investment of the local fishing associations, WWF is working to restore the wetlands of the Ecsed Marsh for fish habitat. The wetlands will bring income into the communities and fulfil an important social function.

Floodplain Orchards

Further down the river, in the Nagykörű region, WWF has been instrumental in re-establishing the traditional floodplain orchards. The local varieties of plum, cherry and pear withstand floods far better than arable crops, and resist pests and are more disease-resistant than commercial fruit varieties. The farmers have benefited from having a reliable crop and the improved income that comes with it.

Extensive Grazing

Close to the river, herds of the distinctive Hungarian grey cattle can be found grazing on the newly restored wetland meadows. This hardy breed is well suited to local conditions and will help to keep the land free of scrub and invasive species.

Restoring a fully functioning floodplain

Put together, the activities outlined above will form a mosaic of land-uses that switch the economy across from a solely agricultural to a more diverse and sustainable footing. Yet WWF Hungary's work in the Ecsed Marsh is just the first stage of a much larger plan. They aim to widen the project to include the rest of the Ecsed Marsh reservoir site and export the model to the other 13 reservoir sites. Eventually, they hope to see at least partial restoration of the Tisza floodplains throughout Hungary. The magnification process is already underway, and a number of communities along the river have started similar projects of their own.

Ardennes

In 1993 and 1995 a number of cities in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, including Namur, Dinant, Venlo, 's Hertogenbosch and Nijmegen, experienced catastrophic floods. Damages in the Netherlands alone amounted to €250 million. One of the causes of the floods can be found some 70-80km upstream in Belgium, in the tranquil Ardennes Mountains. For centuries people in this area have farmed on the slopes, while the banks of the rivers and streams were flanked by marshland. When it rained, they absorbed much of the water running down the slopes, stopping all the water from entering the river at once. During periods of low rainfall, they released their stores of water, thereby regulating the flow of the river throughout the year.



With the intensification of farming in the 20th century however, the wetlands were drained to create more room for grazing and crops. No longer slowed by the natural barrier of the marshes, most of the rain that falls in the catchment area now enters the river within a matter of hours. These floodwaters then race downstream, combining with water from other rivers, before hitting the downstream communities in Belgium and the Netherlands just 24 hours after the initial storm over the Ardennes.

Natural Sponges

Now, a project initiated by WWF Belgium and various national and local environmental organisations is trying to change that. They have identified key plots of land in the area which, if converted back into wetlands, could act again as natural sponges. This would increase the water retention capacity of the region, by absorbing rainwater before it flows into the rivers and streams. Many of the plots of land are of a low quality and so are no longer being used for agriculture. WWF Belgium and its partners are working to convince the owners of the land to transform these parcels of land back into wetlands, so that they can again help to hold back the floodwaters.



© Franck Héberg - natagora

© Philippe Weter - WWF Belgium



*Thommerback River,
Lower Ardennes*

Payments for Environmental Services

It is hoped that initial funding for the farmers to implement the scheme will come from the Common Agricultural Policy's Rural Development Fund, which supports the implementation of key EU water and nature protection legislation. Thus the farmers of the Ardennes become water managers and not just food producers.

Further contributions could also come from some of the other stakeholders based downstream along the River Meuse who will benefit from a more stable flow of water in the river. These include power stations, which need the water for use in their cooling towers, and drinking water companies. The Ardennes region is popular with kayakers and canoeists, and the ability of the navigation and recreation sectors to operate effectively is currently compromised when the river is low. With natural sponges regulating the flow, these situations would become rarer.

Finally, there are of course the Belgian and Dutch towns which have suffered so often as a result of the floods. Together with its partners, WWF Belgium is facilitating discussions with the relevant authorities to negotiate how the farmers' restoration of the wetlands can best be rewarded by the downstream communities which benefit from their work.

Again, the project demonstrates that the switch to a new economy is possible.

© Franck Hildeg - rebiorga



Gelderse Poort

The Gelderse Poort is located where the river Rhine branches out into the rivers Waal, Lower Rhine and IJssel. For many years the landscape was dominated by intensively farmed fields. The region was an important site for clay mining, which provided materials for the local brick industry. The floodplains were also cultivated, but regular flooding rendered the farmers unable to intensify their activities and compete on the international market. Inhabitants of the nearby towns and cities such as Arnhem, Nijmegen and Emmerich were confronted with a higher risk of severe floods, raising public awareness of the floodplain's decreasing capacity.

WWF, the NGO Ark Nature and the governmental nature management organisation Staatsbosbeheer started working in Gelderse Poort around 15 years ago. Since then the floodplain area has been transformed, and both nature and the local economy are booming. Now, it is increasingly seen as the 'green lung' at the heart of this economically important region.



Building with Bricks is Building with Nature

During the 1980s, as the area became better known for its natural values, new clay mining projects were faced with growing opposition from environmental groups and the industry's future looked bleak. WWF Netherlands saw that far from damaging the landscape, clay mining could actually be used to restore the old riverine landscape, benefit nature and contribute to flood prevention. In collaboration with local people, they set up partnerships which, they hoped, would be good for industry, farmers and nature alike. In the early 1990s, a 600 hectare pilot area was begun.

WWF encouraged the farmers near the river to sell their land to the clay mining industry, and use the money to buy better, more profitable land behind the dykes, away from the floods. The brick companies then extracted the clay from the riverbanks, increasing the river's water retention capacity and restoring the old riverbeds in the process. Once the clay was extracted, industry moved out and nature soon moved in, creating a new landscape of river dunes, forests and open grasslands. The project injected new life into the clay mining industry; opposition to its activities fell and its bricks are now used with pride in construction projects in the surrounding cities.

Similar schemes were soon springing up across the region. Prompted by serious floods in 1993 and 1995, the local authorities also gave their full support to the project.



© Bart Bekkers

Wild horses

Early on in the project, Ark Nature and Staatsbosbeheer embarked on a natural grazing scheme, introducing a few Konik horses and Galloway cattle in one of the restored nature areas by the river. Today hundreds of these animals roam the floodplain between Millingen and Nijmegen, where their grazing helps to keep the landscape open. The project is almost entirely self-supporting, with income being generated by the natural growth of the herds. Part of the surplus stock is destined for sale as "wilderness meat" which is sold in the Wilderness Café, through the internet and via other channels. The rest of the surplus is sold live to similar projects around the world.

© Keesjan van den Hoek



Developing Tourism and Infrastructure

Thanks to a strong marketing campaign by WWF Netherlands, Gelderse Poort's fame spread. Tourists began to arrive, attracted by the prospect of an area of wilderness in the heart of an otherwise densely populated area. The local authorities started investing more in local infrastructure - bus services were restored and new tourist ferries started operating. A brochure was produced with a map of the region showing foot and cycle paths, and vouchers for some of the nearby cafés and hotels.

An estimated 150,000 people now visit the area each year. Existing hotels, restaurants and cafés were revived and new ones opened, creating job opportunities and bringing much needed income into the region. In 2001, Ark Nature purchased a café at the entrance to the original project site. At the 'Wilderness Café', the food and drinks served are sourced largely from the Gelderse Poort area, and the bartender, who is also an ecologist, provides visitors with the latest nature information from the region. Many guided tours start here, and the café is often the venue for local events and festivities.

The Future

The successes enjoyed by the project have taught local people to look at their world through different eyes. The many tourists show farmers that the landscape they work in is much more than a production field. This has stimulated farmers to think along new lines about the future of their land and income. Together with WWF and Ark Nature, they recently started an initiative, called 'Food for Nature', to look into how a balance between agricultural production and landscape values may be guaranteed on the land behind the dykes as well.

Väinameri

Situated in western Estonia, Väinameri is a region of shallow seas dotted with numerous islands and reed beds. The coastal areas are fringed with beautiful meadows, which were maintained for centuries by farmers practising low intensity grazing with local breeds of cattle, sheep and horses. The area is a haven for wildlife, attracting immense flocks of birds each spring and autumn around 2 million waterfowl descend on the area as a stopover on their migration routes.

Extensive grazing and low level mowing are vital to the maintenance of the coastal meadows which make Väinameri such an attractive site for migrating birds. However, in recent decades, it has become harder for farmers to make a living this way, and many have abandoned their land. Once the grazing stops, the land becomes overgrown with reeds and scrub within a few years, and the species which depended on the grassland disappear. The region is also beset with many of the problems common to many rural areas, including high levels of unemployment and an aging population, as young people move to the cities in search of work.

The local NGO Arhipelaag started working in the area in 1997. The aims of its 'Väinameri Project' were not just to restore the meadows, but to provide the wider rural community with viable livelihoods based on the sustainable use of natural resources. The project has been financed principally by WWF Sweden, with additional contributions coming from SIDA and Estonian national sources.



Green beef

The breeds of cattle chosen to restore the meadows were the Scottish Highland, Aberdeen Angus and Hereford, on account of their hardiness and ability to provide high quality beef. Arhipelaag loaned around 30 head of cattle to local farmers, and gave them support and advice to get established. The cattle thrived, and slowly but surely the old coastal meadows re-emerged from beneath the reeds and the birds came back. As the herds grew, the farmers were able repay their initial loans of livestock, enabling Arhipelaag to help more farmers get started. Meanwhile, the meat from the animals is being marketed as "green beef", and will soon be available in a number of local restaurants.



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Ecotourism

Väinameri's location on the border between East and West meant that for decades many of the islands were occupied by Soviet troops, and the tourism potential of the islands remained unexploited. Since Estonia gained its independence, growing numbers of visitors have discovered the area, drawn by the beautiful scenery, rich biodiversity and the peace and quiet. A number of nature trails have been designed, and bird-watching towers scattered throughout the region offer breathtaking views over the landscape. Many local entrepreneurs have also opened up guesthouses, where visitors can experience local food and traditions.

Passing on old traditions... and shaping new ones

The final strand of the Väinameri project is based on the production of traditional handicrafts made from locally sourced, sustainably produced materials. At the start of the project the handicraft workers usually worked alone, and income was low. The Väinameri project brought the craftsmen and women together into co-operatives, where they could develop their expertise and work together to market their products. Old skills are being revived and local people are rediscovering a pride in their cultural heritage. The high quality, handmade goods, which include woolen knitwear, woven rugs, blankets, leather goods and wooden items, are proving popular with tourists and locals alike. A group of artisans has opened up a shop in the town of Lihula, and Craft Fairs held at Christmas and Midsummer are now popular events, attracting people from across the country.

Passing on the torch

In the early days of the project, the participants benefited hugely from study tours to nearby Sweden, where meetings with experts, farmers and other rural dwellers provided them with new ideas on how their own businesses could succeed in the modern world. Now groups from the other Baltic states and Russia are visiting Väinameri, to see how ordinary people like themselves can combine economic activities and nature conservation.

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Prespa

High up in the Balkan mountains, where the borders of Greece, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia meet, lie the lakes of Micro Prespa and Macro Prespa. This area of outstanding natural beauty is extremely rich in biodiversity. The waters of the lakes teem with 20 species of fish (most of which are endemic), while over 260 species of birds, including the rare Dalmatian Pelican and Pygmy Cormorant, can be found there. Meanwhile the surrounding mountains are home to brown bears, wolves and other endangered animals. The area has been the focus of conservation activities since the 1970s, and is protected under numerous European and International laws and treaties.

Prespa also has a rich cultural heritage. In Byzantine and Ottoman times the region served as a gateway between the Balkans and Greece, and the area is littered with monuments from these periods. Moreover, traditional practices in the sustainable use of natural resources, applied by the local people for centuries, have contributed greatly to the inherited natural and cultural wealth of Prespa. Now the area is sparsely populated, and the local economy is based on agriculture.

In Greece, the Prespa area is best known for its beans, which are sought after for their quality and excellent flavour. In 1998, the beans were awarded the EU's Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) designation.

However, Prespa's beans are also causing problems to Micro Prespa's natural environment. Although the creation of the irrigation system in the 1960s helped people stay in the region, it also contributed to the conversion of littoral wetland areas into agricultural land. Furthermore, intensive agriculture in Greek Prespa causes impacts particularly on the agricultural land, which is degraded due to pesticide and fertiliser use; a fact that could have also negative implications to the waters in the long run.

Promoting Organic Bean Production

Founded in 1991, the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) works to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the area. One of its big breakthroughs came in 1992, when it convinced a local farmer to switch his bean farm to organic production. Although the SPP helped to market the organic beans at first, nowadays they sell better than the non-organic beans. Since then a large number of farmers have followed suit, due to the higher prices and better sales of the organic beans and because of their understanding that intensive agriculture impoverishes their land. In 2004, a programme of Integrated Production Management (IPM) started, and now around half of the area of beans is cultivated in this way. Although it is not as environmentally friendly as organic cultivation, IPM uses significantly less fertilisers and pesticides than intensive farming and requires stringent monitoring of soil quality.





Dalmatian pelicans, *Pelecanus crispus*

© SPP

Integrated Production

The IOBC (International Organisation for Biological Control) defines Integrated Production as a "farming system that produces high quality food and other products by using natural resources and regulating mechanisms to replace polluting inputs and to secure sustainable farming. Emphasis is placed on a holistic systems approach involving the entire farm as the basic unit, on the central role of agro-ecosystems, on balanced nutrient cycles, and on the welfare of all species in animal husbandry. The preservation and improvement of soil fertility and of a diversified environment are essential components. Biological, technical and chemical methods are balanced carefully taking into account the protection of the environment, profitability and social requirements."



© SPP

Organic bean farmer with his crop

Spreading the Message

Although its early activities were focussed on the Greek part of the region, the SPP realised that to protect the region and especially the lakes effectively, it was necessary to map out a common vision and coordination between the three countries for water and natural resources management. The SPP was instrumental in founding the Prespa Park - the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans, and is now in the process of investigating the establishment of a transboundary Prespa 'brand' which would signify high quality, sustainably produced products from the region.

The principal crop in the FYR Macedonia is apples. Produced intensively, the crops give high yields; unfortunately apple production sales are poor as the country's economy is in transition. The local farmers could grow apples in a more environmentally friendly way and market them using the Prespa Park 'brand'.

In Albania the situation is rather different. Most of the farming is of a subsistence level and incomes are low. Production used to be organic, yet in the last few years farmers have started to use agrochemicals. The establishment of a Prespa Park 'brand' could help the Albanian farmers follow best agricultural practices and thus give added value to their produce.

Sinca Noua

Nestled among the hills and mountains of the southern Carpathians is the Romanian village of Sinca Noua. The forests in the region abound with wildlife - large carnivores such as bears, wolves and lynx can all be found, along with deer, wild boar and chamois. The local economy is still based largely on extensive agriculture and livestock breeding, and old traditions are still very much alive.

The area around the village is characterised by a mosaic of pastures and hay meadows, interspersed with patches of shrub and woodland. Most families in the village own some livestock - mostly sheep, goats, cattle and water buffalo. In the spring, most of the sheep and around half the cattle are taken up into the mountains where the shepherds keep them in large, communal flocks at 'sheep camps'.

The village's hay meadows are primarily privately owned, and provide winter fodder for the animals and income for the families. Like the grazing pastures, they are rich in biodiversity, containing a wide variety of plants, insect, small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. The hay is still mowed by hand, with all three generations of the family working side by side in the field.

The fall of communism and the forthcoming accession of Romania to the European Union have brought Sinca Noua new opportunities to develop, but also new challenges. The keeping of livestock is in decline in the village and the meadows and pastures are being abandoned, as people search for more lucrative sources of income.

In 2003, the mayor and council of this remarkable community set out their vision for the future of the village and its surroundings. Recognising the value of their natural resource base, they opted for an environmentally sustainable model of development. Now, with the active support of the villagers, they are on their way to achieving their dream.

Romania



Grazing and hay making

Keeping sheep is not a lucrative business, and the shepherds have developed innovative ways of augmenting their income. One third of the income of the sheep camp nearest to Sinca Noua now comes from the organisation of campfire barbecues for visitors. Also in the pipeline is a cheese factory. This would enable them to produce speciality cheeses alongside their local varieties. There are also plans to get official organic certification for the cattle, as this would attract a higher price for the meat.

Buffalo Farm

The possibility of setting up a buffalo farm is being explored. This would help to keep the meadows open and in use, and the milk could be sold to producers of soft cheeses. The meat could also be sold at a profit, as could any excess hay.

Tourism

With its abundance of wild animals and plants and vibrant cultural traditions, Sinca Noua clearly has much to offer to visitors. However, due to its isolated location, it is still largely undiscovered. While the villagers are keen to exploit the opportunities raised by tourism, they are also conscious of the need to protect the natural resources of the area, which attract the visitors in the first place. A horse riding business is already up and running, and further initiatives are planned.

An Award-winning Village!

In 2005 the European Commission organised a competition in Romania to see which communities had done the most to prepare for the country's accession to the EU. Sinca Noua was awarded the first prize in the village category.



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Conclusions and a Call to Action

The projects described in this brochure are at various stages of maturity. They never end, however, because the partnership approach has made sure that they are not 'WWF' or 'NGO' projects, but an approach to life owned and driven by the people who matter; local communities, businesses, local and national governments and (sometimes) the EU.

What they have in common is that they exemplify natural solutions to complex, universal, sometimes European challenges. They show people and places where a transformation is being worked out from livelihoods based solely on an single economic pillar, *an agricultural economy*, to a more diversified, sustainable, *new economy*.

What then are the keys to success? Despite their diversity, the One Europe More Nature projects presented in the preceding pages all have five elements in common. These can be summarised as the One Europe More Nature approach.

- The projects are about **landscapes** and their ecological functions - and about making positive changes to those landscapes through market and policy interventions. This means establishing how the landscape as a whole - waters, soils, topography and vegetation - could work to provide environmental services.
- The projects identify **win-win situations** where both economy and the environment come out as winners. This means economic powers, the private sector and entrepreneurs are key, and very often it is such people who have new ideas which get the projects started.
- The projects are **opportunistic** - they look for problems, opportunities, key drivers or changes and try to understand them. They then identify how the momentum of these changes can be harnessed to push forward long-term solutions which will benefit both nature and the economy.
- The changes brought about by the projects are clearly **visible and visitable**, and it is this which convinces people to get involved, and provides a source of inspiration to others facing similar problems elsewhere. This greatly magnifies the impact of the project.
- Key to all of the projects is the long-term **motivation** of the partners within which lies the *mechanism* behind each intervention. If local people, organisations and businesses are not motivated to get involved and stay involved, the project will fail. But where WWF has identified those actions where the motivations of partners coincides with the best interests of nature, and where the preceding four features are also present, sustainability is assured.



Changing Perspectives

One Europe More Nature has done more than just develop mechanisms to help people earn a living while caring for the environment; it has fundamentally changed the way the communities involved in the project look at the world around them. *It is creating new perspectives for nature and people.* This process takes a long time, and its success is testimony to the time and energy invested in the project by WWF and its partner NGOs.

Changing Europe...

The projects outlined in this brochure are just a few, and they are just the beginning. The long-term aim of One Europe More Nature is to provide inspiration and hope to others who are struggling with similar problems. It offers a new approach to nature conservation, one which is based on forging unusual partnerships to develop innovative solutions to a range of problems.

The existing projects show what is possible when the One Europe More Nature approach is combined with imagination, time and perseverance. Across Europe, countless regions are facing the same issues as those presented here - floods resulting from land use changes, rural population decline and the loss of important cultural landscapes. Just as we are all part of the problem, we can all be part of the solution.

- *Politicians and policy-makers* at all levels, from the EU right down to local municipalities, can recognise in One Europe More Nature the importance of ensuring supportive policies, programmes, funding, legislation, expertise and publicity.
- *For farmers*, One Europe More Nature demonstrates that it is possible to stay on the land and maintain or even boost incomes, despite the ever-worsening outlook for agriculture as a sector. It shows that it is also possible to practise extensive, low impact techniques profitably.
- *For the business community and especially entrepreneurs*, One Europe More Nature opens up completely new income streams, results in innovative new products and services, and makes a strong case for sustainable markets. This means 'going green' doesn't just improve corporate image; it boosts the bottom line and safeguards the future.
- Finally, *society as a whole* can recognise that our choices as consumers are intimately related to our landscapes and landscape quality, and that we can all therefore be a part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem. Society can look anew at ways of rewarding those who provide vital environmental services such as flood prevention, flood storage, and habitat provision. One Europe More Nature shows how rural areas can remain 'rural' and yet be profitably linked in to the 'urbanised' market economy. It re-defines the relationship between cities and their surrounding countryside. The concept of Payments for Environmental Services is still relatively new, but projects like One Europe More Nature put it into practice.

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... to get more nature

With nature conservation no longer marginalised on the periphery, but mainstreamed into everyday life, it becomes clear that more nature means more business, more income and more quality of life. A diversified *new economy* is more resilient than one based only on agriculture. Combined, this means more security - security from the impacts of floods and droughts, security from uncertain market fluctuations, security from the social changes wrought by globalisation, EU accession, and international events.

WWF wants to move the spirit of the debate away from problems and towards opportunities. Away from sectoral approaches and towards integration. Away from single-sector economies and towards diversified new economies.

The opportunities are there. One Europe More Nature shows how to capture them.

Join us in making it happen.



The OEMN Team

The OEMN team is drawn from 10 nationalities working in 7 countries, and includes not just environmental expertise but also staff with a background in economics, agronomy, commerce, communications, and policy. The project is jointly managed by WWF's European team leaders for forests, freshwater, and agriculture and rural development, and there is a strong link to WWF's European Policy Office in Brussels. Funded and inspired by WWF Netherlands, and led by Charlie Avis of WWF's Global Freshwater Programme, the project is anticipated to run until June 2009.



Main photo © WWF / Paul Csagoly

The information provided here offers just a glimpse of what is going on in One Europe More Nature's projects. This brochure is also an invitation to visit these beautiful places, see the transformations taking place, and take the One Europe More Nature message back home with you. Below are contact details for the team. They are happy to provide more details of their work.

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WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

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