

stroming

office for nature and  
landscape development



A policy field guide to

# Sinca Noua and the Țagla Mountains

BUILDING A NEW, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

One Europe More Nature

European Challenges, Natural Solutions:

A new perspective for nature and people in rural areas in Europe

A policy field guide to

# Sinca Noua and the Țagla Mountains

Building a new, sustainable economy



## One Europe More Nature

European Challenges, Natural Solutions:

A new perspective for nature and people in rural areas in Europe

Sinca Noua Foundation and Stroming Ltd commissioned by WWF  
August 2005

Christoph Promberger

Gerard Litjens

Wim Braakhekke

Sinca Noua Foundation



# Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	The village of Sinca Noua	8
3	Sheep farming	11
4	Forests and large carnivores	13
5	Livestock grazing, hay meadows and pasture lands	18
6	The Strâmba Valley	23
7	Water supply and hydrology	26
8	Tourism	28

# 1 Introduction

## THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE AT A CROSSROADS

The appearance of the European landscape is largely determined by agriculture – simply because this economic activity covers more than 50% of Europe's land surface. Forestry comes a good second, covering 35%. Changes in agriculture and forestry therefore impact immediately on our landscapes and the animal and plant communities associated with them. And big changes in land use do lie ahead of us – especially in agriculture.

It has been estimated that as a result of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy several million hectares of land will no longer be needed for agriculture. In areas where conditions are good (soil quality and in particular access to resources and markets) farmers will intensify and upscale their activities, thus out competing colleagues in areas where conditions are less favourable. Without support, the latter will have no choice but to give up their farms, often leaving the land unmanaged. Both sides of the coin, intensification and land-abandonment, will induce drastic social changes in rural areas throughout Europe and will lead to enormous changes in landscapes, natural values and ecological processes.

The change has already started and will be accelerated by the extension of the EU. This demands reflection and action by all those who care about the quality of the European landscape and the wellbeing of the people whose lives are intertwined with them. Where agriculture disappears, new economies need to be developed. These should

- support people (socially, economically)
- support the conservation and/or restoration of landscapes and ecological processes.

Only initiatives, in which these two qualities are combined, will have a chance for *implementation in the short term* and at the same time will be *sustainable in the long term*.

## ONE EUROPE MORE NATURE

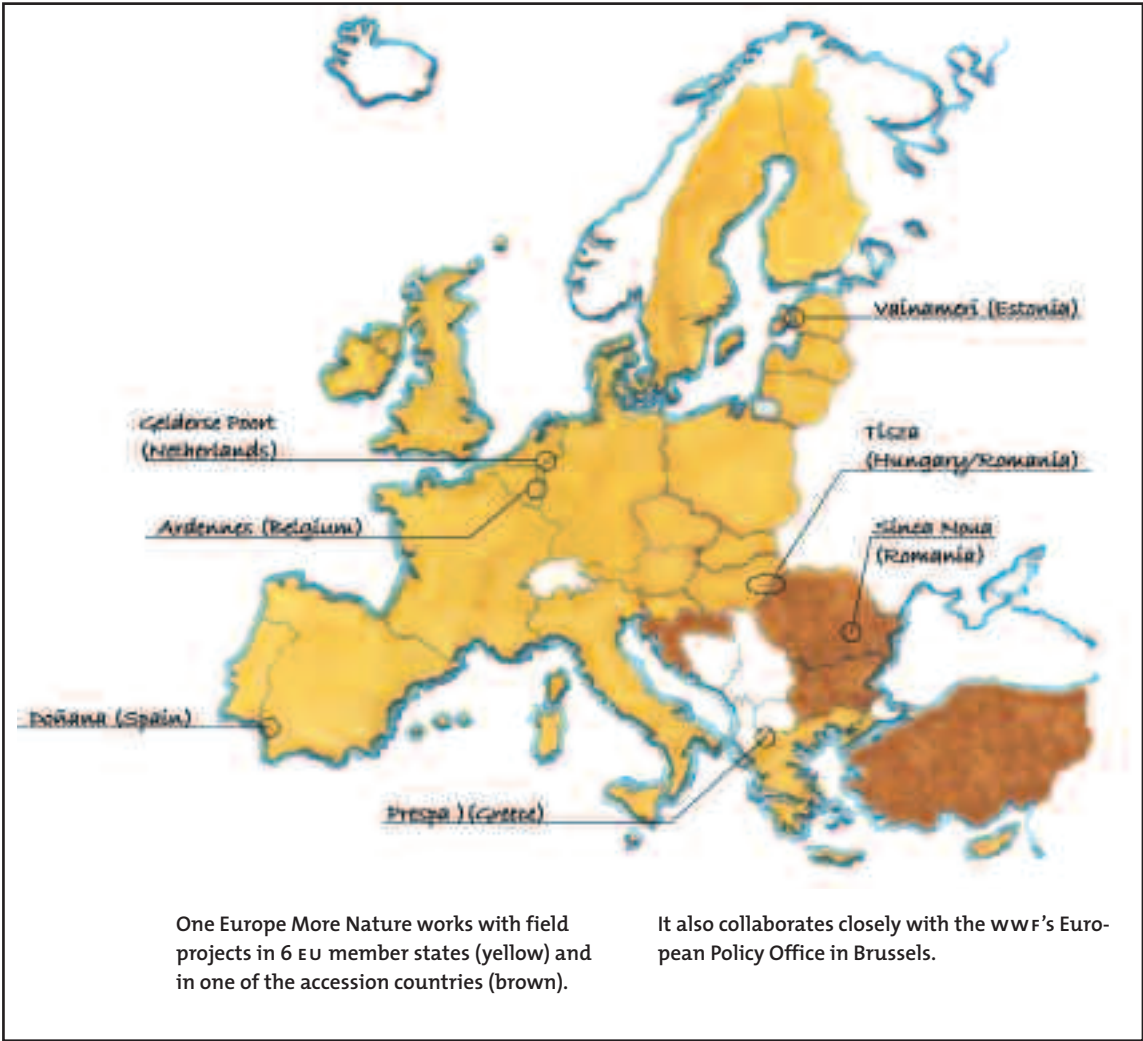
The fact that land-use is changing is no secret. Although the public at large may not yet be aware of it, policy makers and politicians know what's going on. It is no coincidence that the Common Agricultural Policy increasingly offers possibilities for 'rural development' in the broad sense, instead of being solely directed towards supporting agriculture. However, changing *policies* is one (important!) thing, changing *practices* is another. This is where One Europe More Nature comes in. One Europe More Nature aims to develop and/or highlight areas in which people are succeeding in making the transition from a (largely) *agricultural economy* to a (more diverse and sustainable)



*new economy.* In the latter, agriculture might still play a role but will no longer be the critical factor on which everything depends – social life, income, natural values and landscape quality. By highlighting these working examples, wwf wants to change the spirit of the debate and demonstrate that changes in land use need not necessarily be treated as a problem. They can also be seen as an opportunity to develop new landscape qualities and new forms of income. Sure, grabbing these opportunities is hard work – but it *can* be done and it *is* rewarding. One Europe More Nature shows this.

An example is illustrated in this policy field guide. It shows how people living in the Romanian village of Sinca Noua are trying to build a new economy, which is not only helping restore ecological processes and landscape quality but is also creating new jobs.

Sinca Noua is *not* a blue print for sustainable development in other areas in Europe – every situation needs its own, tailor made solution. However, wwf firmly believes that the initiative undertaken here *can* be a source of inspiration for all those working towards a new future for Europe’s landscapes and ecological processes – and the people, plants and animals associated with them.



## ONE EUROPE MORE NATURE

The central goal of One Europe More Nature is: *to identify, create and communicate practical examples of alternatives for rural development in Europe, mechanisms which are good for nature and good for people and which can significantly influence the reform of the CAP and enhance WWF's nature conservation impact across Europe.* WWF does this by:

- setting up a network of pilot projects across Europe and acquiring experience with various regional partners of financing mechanisms for nature and landscape protection and restoration. These pilots also include non-WWF projects. In most cases pilots offer perspective on a European scale;
- using these results to influence public opinion and policy decision-making on European (agricultural) policy and its reform and implementation;
- creating awareness in European consumers that they contribute to the quality of nature and landscape by their (purchasing) behaviour in food, services, recreation, tourism and other sectors.

By combining policy and market mechanisms, and by focussing on partnership, on stakeholders, and on new economies rather than on species and habitats, WWF believes that the One Europe More Nature projects offer potential for self-sustaining rural development in a time of change. Projects included in One Europe More Nature:

- Väinameri (Estonia), executed by Arhipelaag and WWF-Sweden;
- Gelderse Poort (Netherlands), executed by Ark nature and WWF-Netherlands;
- Sinca Noua and Țagla Mountains (Romania), executed by the village of Sinca Noua and WWF International;
- Ardennes (Belgium), executed by WWF-Belgium;
- Prespa (Greece), executed by WWF-Greece and Society for the Protection of Prespa
- Coto Doñana (Spain), executed by WWF-Spain;
- Tisza lowland floodplains (Hungary), executed by WWF-Hungary;
- Tisza upland headwaters in Maramures (Romania), executed by WWF-Danube Carpathian Programme.

One Europe More Nature is a collaborative – integrated – project of the WWF European teams on agriculture, forestry, and freshwater and is funded by WWF Netherlands. For more information on One Europe More Nature, contact the Project Leader:

Charlie Avis

c/o WWF Hungary, H-1124 Budapest, Nemetvolgyi ut 78/b, Hungary.

Tel: +36-1-2145554 x126; mobile: +36-30-4144454; email: [Charlie.avis@wwf.hu](mailto:Charlie.avis@wwf.hu)

## HOW DOES THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF EU POLICIES, AND VICE VERSA?

Sinca Noua offers real potential as a positive model for Romania eu accession. The area can be viewed as a test case for the application of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Romania, a country scheduled to join the eu in 2007. As this document will show, a host of eu and pre-accession laws, policies, and programmes will be supported or indeed tested by the activities planned for Sinca Noua. The community can justly consider themselves to be 'pioneers' in the search for sustainable solutions. And they can rightly expect that eu and national policies, programmes and support should be accessible in order to assist in this challenging process.

The people of Sinca Noua have chosen a development path which is sustainable and integrated in its approach, activities, and implementation. It is a conscious attempt to be profitable and competitive, while remaining in harmony with the area's natural resources and assets. The goals of eu policy makers are (in theory) sustainability and competitiveness, as agreed by the Member States at a number of high level summits.

Appropriate support from the new Rural Development Regulation (RDR) would go a long way towards helping the community realise its plans. It can justifiably be viewed as a prime site for Natura 2000 designation and the opportunities – and responsibilities – which arise from the Birds and Habitats Directives. There is much to be learnt from careful application of the Water Framework Directive as well. But all these in isolation do not 'solve' the problems facing the community, nor do they offer a magic solution for the challenging social and economic problems which need to be confronted.

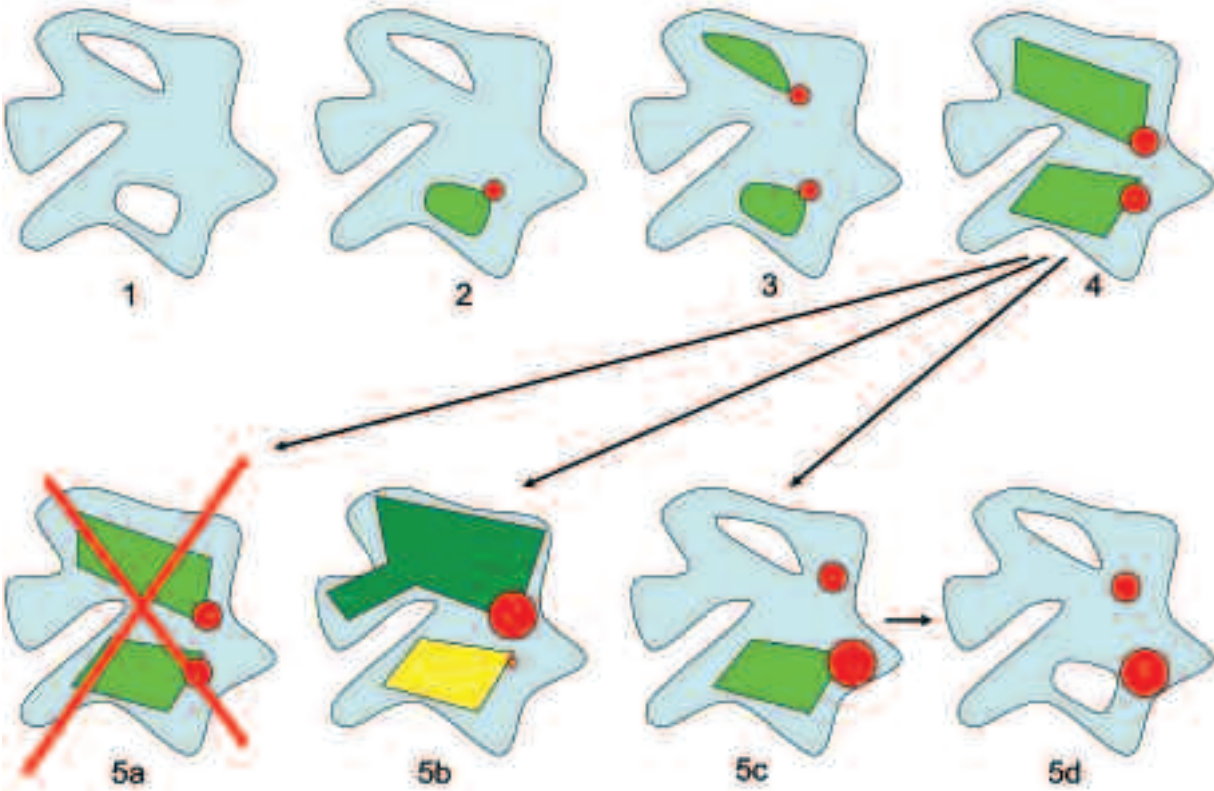
What Sinca Noua really offers is a test-bed for integration of these aspects – forestry with freshwater; nature conservation with tourism; animal husbandry and biodiversity; and so on. A test-bed for integrating these sectors and developing them for economic gain: an obvious but seldom realised goal. In a nutshell: sustainable development.

CHANGING LAND USE.

Early hunter-gatherers lived from what Europe's natural landscape had to offer, without influencing its appearance (1, gray is forest, white is open patches).

At a later stage men stopped this nomadic existence and shifted to small scale agriculture and a life in small settlements (2 and 3).

This was a successful strategy resulting in population growth. Consequently more space was needed for food production. Forests were cleared to provide for this (4).









In Sinca Noua this land use system is still in use today: a relatively small village supported by extensive agriculture. Now, what is the next step? Keeping things as they are, against the pressure of international markets and standards, will be impossible (5a).

Without action, developments will take a course already witnessed in Western European countries: intensification of the best grounds (dark green), abandonment of land (yellow) and villages on more marginal ground, with social, economic and ecological disruption as a consequence (5b).

The challenge is to develop a new economy, which (again) has its basis in the natural richness of the area but offers a new economic and social perspective for the people of Sinca Noua. This could be a new economy based on extensive agriculture and nature development/tourism (5c)

or, eventually, a new economy which is entirely based on services provided by the natural system, such as tourism, water production, timber production, forest fruits etc. (5d).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  natural forest         |  intensive agriculture |
|  natural open landscape |  abandoned lands       |
|  extensive agriculture  |  village/city          |



## 2 The village of Sinca Noua

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The commune of Sinca Noua currently has some 1 800 inhabitants and an area of 8 500 hectares. The community is located in an extremely picturesque landscape with hills and mountains. There is no industry: extensive agriculture and livestock breeding are still the main economic activity and local traditions are still an important part of the daily life.

The village was founded around 1762 and currently consists of around 400 houses, all concentrated along the main road (not spread out in the countryside). This also means that infrastructure is limited and the (semi)natural habitats are not intersected.

### 2 UPCOMING CHANGES

Due to their strong opposition, the people in Sinca Noua were among the few, who successfully prevented the nationalisation of their land during communism. However, as a result of this, the community lost its independence in 1968 and did not regain it until 2002. People are now eager to develop their own future and are willing to accept changes.

Sinca Noua's local council and mayor are among the youngest in the county of Brasov and are keen to develop the community in an eco-friendly way. In winter 2003/4, the council developed a vision for Sinca Noua in 20 years from now:

'In 20 years, Sinca Noua will be an ecological village with a high social and economic standard. The local economy will be based on organic agriculture, eco-tourism, and small processing industries. The village will be extended only at its periphery.

The community will contain a large surface of forests, natural pastures, and hay-meadows, of which 10 percent are protected areas.

The population is becoming well prepared in its professions, for example, knowing foreign languages, and will have easy access to medical and veterinary services. The traditional folklore with its local particularity and the typical architectonic style of the region will be vivid and transmitted.

The use of natural resources in the community will be a model for sustainable development.'



The village of Sinca Noua is situated in surrounded by the Țagla mountains.

**NEW PERSPECTIVES**

The many examples mentioned in this policy field guide, are witness to the fact that the village of Sinca Noua is actively working to implement its new vision. On top of what is highlighted in this brochure, the construction of a sewage system and a garbage recycling programme are also planned and will not only contribute to environmental protection but will also enhance the general appearance of the village and improve quality of life. This in turn will have a positive spin-off on tourism. Currently, Sinca Noua has achieved the first initial funding to get the ball rolling.

**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION**

Barbara and Christoph Promberger and their young family live in the village of Sinca Noua for almost two years now. They set up a successful guest house Equus silvania in cooperation with a local partner. This is one step in a long term development which started about ten years ago with a large carnivore

research and awareness project in and around the city of Zarnesti. The current initiative of the Prombergers is to set up the Sinca Noua Foundation, for the conservation and sustainable development of the natural resources in and around the municipality.

**CONTACTS**

**General information**

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105  
Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Silvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: christoph@deltanet.ro



In Sinca Noua the traditional life style still prevails. There is no industry; livestock breeding and farming are the main economic activity.

## 3 Sheep farming

### INTRODUCTION

As everywhere in the Carpathians of Romania, sheep are a common sight around Sinca Noua. Several families in Sinca Noua have a dozen or so sheep or goats, which they keep over winter in their backyards and feed with hay or willow branches. During summer time, the sheep are kept together in larger flocks in 'sheep camps' usually higher up in the mountains.

### LAND USE

In January and February, the lambs are born and grow up with their mothers in the herd. Most of them, however, are slaughtered for the traditional Easter meal of Romanian families. From April onwards, the flocks are gathered together and taken by a handful of shepherds up into the mountains, where they stay for the summer. The life of a shepherd is hard: their work starts at the crack of dawn and often does not end until late in the evening. The sheep are milked three times a day, and the milk is used to make the typical Romanian varieties of cheese: Urdea, Telemeu, and Brânza Burduf. For most of the day, the sheep graze on the move – normally the shepherds take them in three or four big loops to the various meadows in the area.

In the mountains, sheep are exposed to predation by wolves and bears, which are abundant in this part of the world. For them, sheep are an easy prey and the shepherds have to be vigilant. To help them with this, they usually have five to ten ferocious guard dogs, which grow up among the sheep and consider the flock to be their pack, defending it against any intruders. As soon as a wolf or a bear shows up in the vicinity of the sheep, the dogs warn the shepherds by barking and protect the sheep by circling around the herd. If a wolf or a bear gets close to the sheep, the dogs rarely hesitate to attack the carnivore and chase it away.

### VALUES

As well as providing many families with an important source of income, sheep grazing also has an important impact on the landscape. Sheep and goats can graze on meadows of low quality and thrive at high altitudes. Their grazing keeps many meadows free of bushes and trees, helping many rare plant species to survive. But a traditional shepherd camp also offers a unique and exciting opportunity for the visitor to Sinca Noua – to spend an evening watching the shepherds milk their sheep and make cheese, and sit with them around their campfire.





During the summer sheep of several families are kept in shepherd's camps higher up in the mountains. The cheese is processed on the spot and brought back to the village.



It will be difficult to meet EU standards for hygiene in the shepherd camps. The market for sheep's cheese will therefore be severely limited in future – unless a local cheese factory is set up which allows better quality controls.

#### UPCOMING CHANGES

This ancient form of livestock grazing will soon be under severe pressure. Hygienic conditions in these livestock camps will struggle to meet EU standards, and once costs to run a sheep camp rise considerably, it will become more difficult to employ enough shepherds to properly guard the stock against predators. And if economic conditions get tough, the occasional loss to large carnivores will be even more devastating. A call for the legal persecution of wolves and bears or the illegal killing of them will be a likely result. If sheep disappear from the Carpathians, this will have a negative effect on the local economy, leaving many people (mainly from the lower social levels) without jobs, and substantially altering the picturesque landscape..

#### NEW PERSPECTIVES

In most other EU countries, sheep farming survived only where it was heavily subsidised by the government. Consequently, the economic situation for sheep farming can be expected to toughen in Romania as well. In combination with tourism, however, sheep farming has a special quality and could be used as a visitor attraction. In return, tourism could create additional income for sheep farmers. The only sheep camp in reach of Sinca Noua has already made (2004) about one third of its profits from organising campfire barbecues for visitors. This could be developed further, e.g. through giving visitors the opportunity of staying with the shepherds for a couple of days and participating in their daily routine.

Furthermore, a planned cheese factory would offer the sheep farms a higher income due to the production of speciality cheeses (e.g. Feta).



## 4 Forests and large carnivores

### INTRODUCTION

In the community of Sinca Noua and the surrounding areas, over 50% of the land is covered with forests. In Sinca Noua itself, 5 800 out of 8 500 hectares consist of forests.

Today, there is a contiguous forest cover with few open patches at higher altitudes. These remain open as long as grazing pressure inhibits forest encroachment. Currently, most of this grazing is due to sheep. The forests are the watershed for the Strâmba river and its tributary the Strâmbisoara on the West side, and the Gaunoasa river on the East side of Sinca Noua. Both rivers flow into the Sinca river, which runs through Sinca Noua village.

The forests are also home to an almost intact megafauna, including large carnivores like bear, wolf, and lynx. Wildcats also are present in the area.

### LAND USE

In the past, the forests around Sinca Noua were used for timber production. Starting in communist times, trophy hunting in the Strâmba catchment became an important part of land use though forest exploitation continued. Now, forests which were nationalised under communism have been returned to the original owners and are managed through a private forest service. In 2005 efforts started to develop most of the forests into a nature reserve in which timber exploitation will come to a stop.

Collection of forest fruits and mushrooms is also carried out, especially by the 200 Roma living in the village. Villagers from all the surrounding villages gather fuel wood from the forests, both for private use and also for sale to markets further away (larger cities).

### VALUES

Only few patches are completely pristine, but it is fair to say that the forests surrounding Sinca Noua are among the most natural in Europe, not in the least because of almost complete megafauna (wolf, bear, lynx, red deer, roe deer, wild boar, and chamois).

The forest also protects the water supply for Sinca Veche and Sinca Noua: the Strâmbisoara is of drinking water quality and in the near future will be used to supply running tap water to Sinca Noua.



The brown bear is still present in the forests around Sinca Noua. Visitors joining in on a special bear watching trip are almost certain to see these impressive animals.



Forest surrounding the village of Sinca Noua

#### UPCOMING CHANGES

After being nationalised by the Government 4 decades ago, the forests were recently returned to their original owners: private individuals or communes. Due to the tough economic situation many of the 'new' owners may lack the skills and/or the desire to manage the forests in a sustainable way. Despite forest laws and management plans there is a danger that parts of the forests may be over-exploited or sold. As a result, the forests could be managed from a purely economic viewpoint, leading to an impoverished ecosystem and affecting the water supply for nearby villages.

A second factor which may affect the forests is the uncertain future of sheep farming (see elsewhere). If this activity will come to an end the last remaining open patches will disappear, together with the species which are associated with them.

#### NEW PERSPECTIVES

The status of the forest is undergoing rapid changes. Plans are under way to give the core zone of the forest, at least 5,000 hectares, full protection. In this nature reserve, timber cutting will be prohibited, wildlife watching revenues will substitute current revenues from trophy hunting, and the nature reserve will contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of Sinca Noua and the surrounding villages. It will be the main selling point for upcoming tourism development and will also be an important part of the marketing scheme of the local food processing industry. Important in this respect is that the collection of forest fruits and mushrooms will continue to be possible in the nature reserve. Facilities for the local processing of these products are being set up to provide for extra revenues. An extra economic pillar in the form of natural grazing and meat production is under development (see, 5. Livestock grazing and pasture lands).

Forests around the protected area would still be open to timber production. Studies are under way to investigate the possibilities for FSC certified timber production. In the EU there is a growing market for timber from certified sources and in this respect the accession of Romania to the EU offers new opportunities.



Wolves are living in the Țagla Mountains

**MANAGING FORESTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION, NON-FOREST PRODUCTS, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND TOURISM IS ENTIRELY IN KEEPING WITH ROMANIAN AND EU LAWS AND POLICIES!**

Much of the territory around Sinca Noua deserves to be designated as Natura 2000 land, reflecting the important animal and plant species found there. The area is of community importance according to the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Such designation would also give local and national authorities the chance to tap into funding from eu programmes such as LIFE in order to implement appropriate management. It would also recognise and give a boost to tourism in the area.

wwf believes in the market opportunities for these new forms of land management: the goods and services such an approach would enable, can be a pillar of the new economy for the local people. The socio-economic benefits of FSC have been well demonstrated elsewhere (see report on

([www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org) or [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)) detailed information is available on the costs and benefits of N2000.

**EU POLICIES CAN HELP BUILD THE BRIDGE!** But building a new economy is not a fast or easy job. For that reason, the community could look to a number of funding possibilities which the Romanian government could tap into, in order to help 'bridge' the transition into self-sustaining new economies.

Appropriate forms of forestry management, investments into this sector, capacity building, and infrastructure are fundable through the Rural Development Regulation (COM(2004)490 article 31). This reflects the economic, ecological, and social importance of Sinca Noua's forests.

**CONTACTS:**

Sinca Noua Foundation (for information on the nature reserve and bear watching),  
p.a. Barbara and Christoph Promberger, s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov,  
Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: [christoph@deltanet.ro](mailto:christoph@deltanet.ro)

**General information**

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua,  
jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105  
Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Silvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua,  
jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: [christoph@deltanet.ro](mailto:christoph@deltanet.ro)





The village of Sinca Noua, spread out in the valley of the Strâmba river. On the foreground the Țagla mountains, source of the Strâmbisoara river which joins the Strâmba a little north of the village.





This birds-eye view shows an area of approximately 10 (width) x 25 (depth) kilometres.



## 5 Livestock grazing, hay meadows and pasture lands

### INTRODUCTION

Hilly grasslands make up approximately one quarter of the landscape surrounding Sinca Noua. (*See land-use map – to be produced*). These pastures and hay meadows, interspersed with shrubs and woods, solitary trees and hedges, are situated just outside the village. For centuries these grasslands have been used for daily grazing during the vegetation period and for hay making to assure the winter food. This mosaic landscape's attractiveness is enhanced by the fact that the grasslands are completely unfenced, with the exception of the occasional orchard or isolated farm.

The mosaic landscape of the commune of Sinca Noua, with the Țagla mountains in the background.





Cattle grazing helps to maintain an open landscape. When this type of land use decreases, shrubs move in. This can already be witnessed in areas which are more difficult to reach, e.i. at higher altitudes or in areas further away from the village.



The meadows are host to a special fauna and flora, like this Enzian.

## LAND USE

Most families in the village have a few cattle (local brown breed) or water buffaloes, with a total of 1,450 heads. There are further 3,500 sheep and goats and approximately 120 horses in the village.

Of the cattle, approximately half are brought to sheep camps during the summer months; the rest remain in the village. In the morning, after milking them manually, they are collected by herders, who stay with the free roaming herds during the day. At dusk, the cattle return to the stables, where they are milked again. Part of the milk is used privately by the owners; the rest is collected by one of the regional dairies.

The communal pastures make up about one third of the grasslands. The rest are privately owned hay meadows, which provide winter fodder for the animals. The livestock is left out on the pastures and meadows from early April until the first snows come, usually in late November. From mid-May to mid-September, grazing is restricted to the communal pastures. The meadows closer to the village are used the most and are manured with organic dung. In a productive year, when two cuts are possible, hay making will only take place on the favoured lands; meadows further away with a lower productivity are only used in years when production per hectare is low due to droughts.

## VALUES

The grasslands are extremely rich in flora and fauna (herbaceous plants, insects, small mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, mushrooms in autumn), many of which are in the annexes of the EC Habitats Directive. The structure of the vegetation is different on the pastures and the hay meadows, but both have a high diversity. In addition, the mosaic of hilly pastures, colourful hay meadows, shrubs and woods, also provides a very scenic landscape, highly valued by tourists, who are starting to discover the area. Traditional forms of agriculture, with farmers still mowing and collecting hay by hand, adds value to this 'romantic' picture. The grasslands are also a



Hay making is an important part of family life, with several generations working together.

reflection of an agricultural system which has lasted for centuries and still is embedded in the cultural and social life of the village. Strictly speaking this is not a ‘value of the grasslands’, but the direct link between a traditional way of life and the resulting landscape is still present and is valued not only by the people of Sinca Noua but also by visiting tourists.

The hay production process is also economically and socially important to the people of the village. It creates food for the livestock and income through selling. During production, it forms an important part of the family life: three generations work together and the older generation is still able to feel ‘useful’.

#### UPCOMING CHANGES

A number of villagers, mainly those with alternative jobs, have already chosen to get rid of their cattle. At the same time, most horses in the village have been replaced by tractors during the last 15 years. As a result, the encroachment of shrubs can already be seen on pastures and former hay meadows further away from the village, indicating the lower number of livestock. Although some people still cut the hay on the more fertile meadows to achieve some additional income, the abandonment of the meadows is likely to continue for some time yet. Some owners are also willing to sell their land for (high) prices, to people who wish to build a house in the countryside. Mechanisation (use of tractors and mowing machines) has been increasing steadily during the past ten years and with the decline in the number of farms, the number of available jobs on the fields will decrease. This will induce further mechanisation. As a result the traditional patterns of small-scale hay meadows will disappear and either make place for large-scale agricultural landscapes or be abandoned and re-forested or transformed into building sites.

This process will continue and even be accelerated because of EU legislation. As an example: the EU’s high standards for hygiene in milk and meat production cannot be met by individual families hand-milking a few cows in their own stable or slaughtering a calf in their back yard. This means that selling this milk and meat to the market will soon be impossible and hence an important economic driver behind the grazing will disappear. On top of this comes the lack of interest from younger generations in continuing their parents’ way of life.



As a result, small-scale farming will in the near future decline substantially and will either make place for self-sufficiency in meat and milk production or lead to transformation into larger units. On the whole the small farms will disappear, leading to changes in the socio-economic structure of the village.

In principle, investments could be made to meet EU standards. However, most farmers lack the financial means to do so and even if investments were made, this would lead to intensification with larger farms and increased yields and hence the loss of the current landscape and the values (ecological, social, value for tourism) attached to them.

## ALTERNATIVES

There are a number of new economic drivers which are being developed as incentives to continue grazing of the pastures and hay production hay. These include:

- a biogasplant. The manure produced in the stables could be used for the production of methane gas. Currently the village uses bottled gas (mostly 25 kg canisters). This is quite expensive (8 € per bottle, which lasts 3-4 weeks) if compared to the average family income (€ 100 per month). In principle manure production (=gas production) could therefore be an additional, new economic driver for grazing or at least for hay production. However, this perspective should be examined thoroughly, if only because natural gas will be supplied to the village by a new pipeline in 2006;
- a water buffalo farm, producing high revenues from Mozzarella di Buffalo (see elsewhere);
- higher revenues per cow from certified organic agriculture;
- large scale, year round grazing with traditional types of cattle (and/or horses), mainly for meat production. This is a very low-input/low-output form of land-use. The relative disadvantage is that this produces modest amounts of money. A very positive side of this approach is that it can 'service' a large surface area of pastures at no cost (or even a small profit). According to experience from elsewhere, biodiversity (numbers of animals and plant species) would remain intact, although the vegetation structure would change and the phenomenon of flower meadows would be less striking because plants would not flower simultaneously but spread over a number of weeks;
- factory for processing of locally produced meat and cheese;
- factory for processing of locally collected forest fruits. There is abundant blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and mushrooms in the forest, which so far are used only to a limited degree and only for local markets. A variety of products (jam, liqueurs, dried fruits, teas, sauces etc.) could be produced and merchandised in the future;
- collection of medicinal plants and processing them for the local or regional market. Medicinal plants are already collected by people from the village, but only for their own use.

## CONTACTS:

### General information

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105

Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Sylvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: christoph@deltanet.ro

MILK AND MEAT PRODUCTION

Cattle around Sinca Noua is mainly kept for production of milk and a small amount of meat (veal). The current herd contains around 1 200 cows and 250 calves. These animals are owned by 400 families.

During the summer, approximately half of the herd stays at the sheep camps. The other half is kept close to the village. The milk produced at the sheep camps largely functions as an in kind fee for the shepherds (also) guarding the commune's sheep. The milk produced in the village is partly used by the owners and partly sold.

A cow in Sinca Noua produces roughly 2 000 litres of milk annually. This implies that the current herd roughly produces some 2.4 million litres annually. Although some of this is used directly and partly transformed into cheese, this represents a theore-

tical economic value of € 384 000 in total or € 950 per family (milk sold to the milk factory fetches € 0.16/litre).

Milk production is fairly labour intensive and certainly in future will also have to fulfil the high EU standards with regard to hygiene in order to sell milk (or cheese) on the market. Because of this the current grazing practice could come to an end – the decline is already starting. As an alternative the pastures and meadows could also be used for natural grazing and meat 'harvesting'. This is much less labour intensive and a rough calculation suggests that it would provide a similar type of revenue as the current system. At the same time it would maintain landscape quality and biodiversity, the basis for tourism in the region.



## 6 The Strâmba Valley

### INTRODUCTION

The Strâmba Valley is a special place. It covers some 2 500 hectares, of which approximately 300 hectares in the lower part are hay meadows and 2 200 hectares in the upper part are forests, with a well developed gradual transition between the two in many areas.

The valley is extremely beautiful, a place of tranquillity, with only one (unpaved) road and just a few old and fairly primitive farm buildings. The meadows are rich in flowers, especially in spring, with several species of orchids. The valley is home to important bird species, including hoopoe, corncrake, black stork, and lesser spotted eagle. The valley forms the boundary between Sinca Noua to the South and Sinca Veche to the North. The Strâmba creek stills follows it's natural course on the valley floor and its water is free from pollution.

### LAND USE

Currently, the valley floor is used as a hay meadow, producing winter fodder for the cattle in the village. In the lower part, the slopes are forested and timber extraction (mainly for firewood) takes place along with the collection of mushrooms and forest fruits. In the upper part of the valley, regular forestry is going on and a hide for bear hunting and bear watching is present. The overall impression is that of a virtually untouched forest, with a good population of wildlife.

### VALUES

In addition to the values of the hay meadows and the forests as described earlier, the Strâmba Valley has an important role in the future marketing of eco-tourism. The valley is a unique place, which can be explored on foot, on horseback, by bike, or used for a little barbecue.

Row deer can be encountered in the Strâmba Valley.





The milk produced by water buffalo can be used for the production of Mozzarella di Bufalo.

#### UPCOMING CHANGES

Small scale cattle farming and milk production will go down with (and even before) EU accession, as will the need for hay production. Already meadows further away from the villages are being abandoned and if nothing happens the meadows in Strâmba Valley will soon be overgrown. And there is another challenge: despite its picturesque setting, the Strâmba Valley currently is the last valley between Brasov and Sibiu without any development of holiday homes. There is already pressure to allow construction in the Strâmba Valley and, if nothing changes, the valley will be 'developed' with weekend and holiday houses in few years time. This would immediately change the character of the valley and ruin its value for tourists. It would also open up the valley for leisure activities which could disrupt many ecological patterns such as red deer rutting or wintering.

#### NEW PERSPECTIVES

The meadows on the North side of the Strâmba Creek are owned by people from the village of Sinca Veche, which is almost 10 km away and people have little interest in maintaining the meadows or putting manure on them. The South side of the Valley is owned by people from Sinca Noua and is still used for potato or hay production. But this too could change.

One way of keeping the landscape quality and biodiversity of the valley intact is the start up of a water buffalo farm somewhere in the valley or at the village. Possibilities for this are currently explored. A water buffalo farm with initially 30 cows will at least keep part of the need for hay intact and hence will help keep the hay lands mowed. Surplus hay harvested by the water buffalo farm would be sold.

Water buffalo produce limited quantities of milk (5 litres per cow/day) but it has a high fat content (8-9%). The milk therefore fetches a high price: 20 000 lei = 0.55€/litre as compared to 0.16 € for normal milk. The farm will sell the milk to producers of Mozzarella di Bufalo, for which a large demand exists in Western Europe.

A rough calculation shows that the Water Buffalo Farm will have an annual turnover due to milk of € 20 625 (30 Water Buffalo \* 5 litre\* 0.55€ \*250 days = 20 625 €/year) and due to meat of € 3 750 (25 calves \* 150 kg \* 1 €). Annual turnover will be higher if the milk and the meat is processed locally. The water buffalo farm would help villagers also in achieving a better price for their buffalo milk, if together with the farm a small dairy is being built.

An alternative (or fallback) solution for the Strâmba valley could be extensive, large scale year-round grazing with natural herds of cattle (water buffalo or other winter-hard and self-calving race) for meat production. The valley could possibly support 800 animals, with an annual offspring of 260 animals. If all of this were harvested, this would lead to an annual turnover at least comparable to that of the Water Buffalo farm but at lower cost.

## CONTACTS

General information about these initiatives :

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105

Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Silvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: christoph@deltanet.ro

# 7 Water supply and hydrology

## INTRODUCTION

Presently every household in the village of Sinca Noua has its own well and/or takes ground water from small springs in the surroundings. This system does not work very well, since the soil in around Sinca consists mainly of clay and thus many families experience a water shortage in summer droughts.

The surrounding creeks are still in a very natural state and have drinking quality water. As a consequence, Sinca Veche has already started to catch water from the Strâmba Creek and Sinca Noua is planning to do the same on the Strâmbisoara Creek, a tributary of the Strâmba Creek. Both catchments are largely forested. Lower parts of the catchment area are used for extensive agriculture (grazing/hay making) with little use of pesticides and fertilisers. The tributaries are ecologically intact, the requirement of the Water Framework Directive to work towards ecologically functioning water systems is probably fulfilled here. In that sense this provides an example for other places in Europe, where the hydrology and water quality are still far from reaching this goal.



The Strâmba Creek is still in pristine condition, it provides drinking water to the community of Sinca Veche.

**CONSERVING AND MANAGING THE RIVERS AND STREAMS OF THE SINCA NOUA AREA IS ENTIRELY IN KEEPING WITH ROMANIAN AND EU LAWS AND POLICIES!**

Romania is committed to implementing the Water framework Directive and therefore is looking at ways to achieve 'Good Ecological Status' of all its waters by 2015. The combination of actions proposed by the community, if harmonised and properly managed, would ensure not only a plentiful supply of good quality drinking water, but would also ensure that there is no deterioration.

The rivers and streams in the Sinca Noua area are still in pristine condition and almost certainly fulfil the Water Framework Directive's requirements. The conservation of the Strâmba valley and the construction of a secure, central water supply system, are essential in order to ensure that these qualities would also be maintained in future.

**UPCOMING CHANGES**

Intensification of agriculture (pesticides, fertilizers, drainage), deforestation (loss of retention capacity) and the development of building sites (drainage) could all impact negatively on water quality and the hydrology of the area.

**NEW PERSPECTIVES**

A larger number of tourists, combined with a gradual increase in living standards of the local people, will increase the demand for a larger and more secure water supply. The current decentralized system will not be able to fulfil this growing need. Therefore the village will have to shift to a centralized water system, distributing running tap water to all the houses in the village, without compromising the natural hydrology of the area. A project proposal for the implementation of a centralized water system is in place, and funding is currently being sought.

**CONTACTS:**

**General information**

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105  
Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Silvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: christoph@deltanet.ro



## 8 Tourism

### INTRODUCTION

If Sinca Noua were in the Austrian or Swiss Alps, there is little doubt that the village would be a well-known tourism destination. But Sinca Noua is at the edge of the Southern Carpathians and is still undiscovered. However, it has the potential to become a hot tip for travellers, looking for a picturesque setting and the tranquillity of a small mountain village off the beaten track. Sinca Noua offers exciting surroundings with abundant wildlife in the forests around, meadows with more species per square meter than per hectare in the intensively managed meadows elsewhere and the possibility of an encounter with the majestic water buffaloes.

### UPCOMING CHANGES

A visitor to Sinca Noua can still experience all this, as well as an intact community life where the old traditions are still genuinely alive and are not just performed for tourists. The first tourism enterprises such as the Equus Sylvania horse-riding centre have already opened in the village.

The socio-economic changes which are gradually taking place today, will be accelerated due Romania's accession to the EU. Special efforts are necessary to maintain the unique landscape and social and cultural qualities of Sinca Noua. Also economic alternatives for the people in rural Romania are necessary.

### NEW PERSPECTIVES

The careful development of sustainable tourism is one of the new economic opportunities. Local people could open a variety of businesses such as small guesthouses, cafés or restaurants, thereby creating income for local people. Such tourism could also support the extensive, traditional agriculture, and valorise the natural richness of the surrounding landscape. Tourism development, however, can also be a threat if it is not done properly: it could lead to the developments of hotels in the middle of areas valuable for conservation and so destroy the reason why people come to the region in the first place. Also such large-scale developments typically leave only a small percentage of the revenues for the local economy.

The challenge therefore is to develop high quality tourism which is centred around the unique landscape qualities of Sinca Noua and also supports the continued existence of these qualities. The development of a franchise is considered to be a good way to link a sufficiently large scale project (to ensure enough economic and social benefits to the people of Sinca Noua) to a type of development which is tailored to



The Equus Silvania horse riding centre at the edge of Sinca Noua not only offers accommodation and trips to visitors but also created a number of new jobs for people in the village.



The main road through Sinca Noua illustrates the atmosphere in the village – perfect for people who want to escape the ‘hustle and bustle’ of city life.

the local, pristine situation. The franchise will set quality standards for local people who are interested in opening a guesthouse, setting up excursions or selling local food. Participants meeting these standards could benefit from the joint marketing effort of the franchise, which would have a much broader coverage than an individual guesthouse could have on its own.

Much of the initiative will have to come from entrepreneurial people within the village. However, unbureaucratic help (combined with the franchise organisation) with relatively small grants of seed money could do a great job in getting them started. Legislation, which does not create large hurdles for the establishment of guesthouses and the use of agricultural products from traditional agriculture will also help.

## CONTACTS

### General information

Dumitru Flucus, Mayor of Sinca Noua, Primaria Sinca Noua, 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228721, ++40-740-051105

Barbara and Christoph Promberger, Equus Silvania s.r.l., 507210 Sinca Noua, jud. Brasov, Tel. ++40-268-228601, email: christoph@deltanet.ro

Stroming ltd  
P.O. box 31070  
6503 CB Nijmegen  
[www.stroming.nl](http://www.stroming.nl)  
[info@stroming.nl](mailto:info@stroming.nl)  
The Netherlands

PUBLICATION

Stroming ltd  
P.O. box 31070  
6503 CB Nijmegen  
The Netherlands  
[www.stroming.nl](http://www.stroming.nl)  
[info@stroming.nl](mailto:info@stroming.nl)

DESIGN Brigitte Slangen

LAY-OUT Franka van Loon

PRINT XXL-Press Nijmegen

ILLUSTRATION

Jeroen Helmer (Ark nature)

PHOTO's Wim Braakhekke, Gerard  
Litjens

© Copyright 2005 Stroming ltd



office for nature and landscape development