Farmland biodiversity: where do we go from here?

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Scotland’s changing rural biodiversity: policy and action needs
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Farmland Biodiversity
Why are we interested in farmland biodiversity?

- Over 45% (173 million ha) of EU27
- Recognised that habitats and landscapes of High Nature Value ARE intimately associated with farming practices
- Taking land out of agricultural production is not the answer for farmland biodiversity
  RATHER
- it is essential to ensure type and intensity of farm management is appropriate
Pressures on farmland biodiversity

- Intensification of management practices
- Abandonment of management practices
- Simplification of agricultural landscapes

Where are we now?

Scotland: 1994-2007 (BTO)

Stable (but at low levels):
- Linnet
- Skylark
- Starling
- Yellowhammer

Declined:
- Curlew (-48%)
- Kestrel (-56%)
- Lapwing (-38%)
- Meadow pipit (-23%)

Wild bird population index: 1970-2007
Where are we now?

The CAP must fit for the environment
5 September 2010

A letter had a positive for Scotland’s environment and the rural economy. A new report published today by the Rural Support Centre for Scotland (RULS), the successor to the Scottish Agricultural Policy (CAP) group, serves the way forward for the policy in the next decade.

The current CAP involves a shared responsibility to ensure that farmers and our farming systems for better environmental, economic, and social benefits. The new CAP will provide a sustainable future for the Scottish Government and the Scottish farming community.

The LINK report calls for access to the market for producing quality products and services, at both the national and EU levels, including access to affordable and sustainable energy, and sustainable management of water and land, to secure the long-term future of high nature value biodiversity and landscape benefits.

The CAP’s basic income support budget, which helps farmers to produce food, also builds a strong direct payment system. The new CAP also prioritizes the CAP’s support for environmental and rural development, with farmers being encouraged to provide new services, such as flood prevention, biodiversity, and tourism.

Beyond the CAP
Towards a Sustainable Land Use Policy that works for Scotland
Where are we heading?
What more needs to be done?

- Put farmland biodiversity conservation higher up the list of policy priorities

Make existing budget go further:

- **Require** substantial changes at farm level
  
e.g. need minimum amount of habitat diversity to qualify for Single Farm Payment?

Pro-actively target agri-environment

Direct additional support to High Nature Value farming
The underlying principle to the HNV concept was, and remains, basically:

- A large proportion (c. 30% of EU farmland) is of particularly high nature conservation value.
- That market pressures are increasingly making these farms economically unviable.
- Intensifying or abandoning farming on these farms would adversely impact the HNV.
- There is therefore a case to direct additional financial support to these farms to help maintain the HNV.
Potential HNV farmland in EU27