

# Collective agri-environmental scheme for species rich grassland in Beverhoutsveld - Belgium

**SUMMARY** Beverhoutsveld is a unique area, which has been used by farmers as common land for centuries. It is owned by the municipality of Beernem and is designated as a “valuable agricultural area” on the regional plans. In 1995, a nature development plan for Beverhoutsveld was approved by the council. Some plots have been taken out of lease to do nature development. These plots require specific management. Because the Beverhoutsveld is an agricultural area, it is evident that the farmers and horticulturists also participate in the management of these plots. In spring 2012, some farmers set up an agri-environmental management group, supported by Boerennatuur Vlaanderen. The municipality made an agreement with this management group to manage the plots against a fee. Together with this local group of farmers Boerennatuur Vlaanderen developed a result-based payments approach in which farmers are paid according to the botanical value of their grassland.

## Contract Type



PES contracts including AECM

## Public Goods

## BIODIVERSITY

## LANDSCAPE & SCENERY

## Field of action



## Basis of Payment



Result-based

## Involved contract takers



Collective

## OBJECTIVES

- Increase grassland biodiversity
- Support multifunctional, nature-inclusive agriculture
- Establish fair payments that lead to long-term results

## CONTRACT DETAILS

**Participation & involved parties** One important actor is the municipality. They support local farmers in the project with their nature development plans, are the first point of contact for communication and maintain increased biodiversity. The second key actors are the farmers of the farm complex. They have the opportunity to play a role in nature conservation and receive a public reward (payment) for doing so. Moreover, they benefit from administrative support and ecological advice from the coordinator of the farmers’ group of Boerennatuur Vlaanderen.

**Conditions of participation & management requirements** The conditions for participation in the programme are the membership of the farmers’ group and compliance with the local protocol for the distribution of different plots of land among the farmers. A further condition is that a prescribed botanical grassland management is carried out to extensify the fields, i.e. mowing and removing the mowed grass to improve the botanical and floristic value of the fields. Furthermore, the continued participation in the activities of the farmers’ group, such as evaluation, adaptation of the management, communication about their management with the coordinator of Boerennatuur Vlaanderen is necessary.

**Nature of cooperation & payments** The contract is a written agreement with the municipality. Through a tender contract, which is renewed every 3 years, the municipality pays a fixed payment per hectare each year to the group of farmers. With the advice of Boerennatuur Vlaanderen three payment levels have been developed and agreed by the farmers. This money is distributed among the farmers on the basis of the level of botanical grassland development of the fields. The higher the biodiversity (species numbers) the higher the payment. These payment levels correspond both to the increase in the botanical grassland biodiversity and the decrease in the hay price for the yield of grassland as animal feed. The payments are funded locally by the municipality of Beernem who owns the land.

**Advice & support** The local advisor of Boerennatuur Vlaanderen meets regularly with the local farmers' group and discusses the evaluation results, the farmers' findings and experience as well as new initiatives and projects that could be implemented. The advisor also supports the participating farmers by taking over administrative tasks related to the contract and organising information meetings when necessary.

**Environmental monitoring & control** Every three years the fields are visited and scored for their botanical value by the local farm group advisor of Boerennatuur Vlaanderen together with a grassland specialist.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

### Results-based approach

- Stimulates the intrinsic motivation of farmers to establish a well-functioning management and to learn how to further improve their management
- Supports farmers in implementing the community's nature plans by enabling them to decide on measures themselves

### Collective

- More opportunities for funding, joint projects, activities, communication and exchange

[www.boerennatuur.be/beverhoutsveld/](http://www.boerennatuur.be/beverhoutsveld/)

