

grasslife

Project GrassLIFE

# Restoring EU priority grasslands and promoting their multiple use

## LAYMAN'S REPORT

LIFE16NAT/LV/262



Valsts reģionālās  
attīstības aģentūra

# ABOUT THE PROJECT

**Project title:** GrassLIFE: Restoring EU priority grasslands and promoting their multiple use

**Project number:** LIFE16NAT/LV/262

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**Project implementers:** Latvian Fund for Nature, University of Latvia, Institute of Environmental Solutions and 12 farms: 'INET' Ltd, 'Andruks' Ltd, 'EETAC' Ltd, 'Sita Nature Park' Ltd, 'Celmiņi' farm, 'Drubazas' farm, 'Jaunkraukļi' farm, 'Kalna Rubeni' farm, 'Krastini' farm, 'Stirnas' farm, 'Vekši' farm, 'Vētras' farm.

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**Project home page: [www.grasslife.lv](http://www.grasslife.lv)**

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# INTRODUCTION

Specially protected grassland habitats, which in everyday language we call natural grasslands or natural meadows, are repositories of our nature treasures. Their greatest value lies in the diversity of species – more than 50 plant species can grow in one square meter of natural meadows – this is more than in one square meter of tropical rainforest. The great diversity of plants attracts tons of insects, gives home to species of meadow birds, countless small creatures and soil organisms. A natural meadow is a unique ecosystem that attracts and stores carbon dioxide, promotes water purification, reduces flood and erosion risks, provides habitats for crop pollinators, limits the spread of invasive species, and provides many other benefits called ecosystem services. Natural grasslands give us opportunities to get products such as milk, cheese, honey or sheep, goat and beef products. They provide us with flowers to weave into the Midsummer wreaths and to collect for herbal teas.

**Latvia's natural grasslands have formed and are able to exist in close interaction between nature and people, but with the abandonment of fields and the intensification of agricultural production, these unique ecosystems are rapidly disappearing. One hundred years ago, natural meadows occupied 30% of the territory of Latvia. At the moment, only 0.9% is left and their area continues to decline from year to year. Not acting has a high chance of losing them in our lifetime.**

The existence of these valuable habitats is possible only through purposeful and reasonable actions of humans, and this is the last moment to save them – to preserve the remaining fragments and create new ones, thus enabling the survival and spread of characteristic plant and animal species. Therefore, the Latvian Fund for Nature, uniting scientists, agricultural practitioners and entrepreneurs, seven years ago with financial assistance from the European Union's LIFE programme and the Latvian Environmental Protection Fund started to implement project GrassLIFE. The goal of the project was to carry out restoration or creation of natural grasslands on an area of at least 1320 ha. With our practical work, we were able to help 2% of the remaining natural grasslands of Latvia. In order to contribute to the preservation of others, we have paid great attention to the accumulation of knowledge, informing grassland owners and the general public, because only in this way will we be able to pass on these unique ecosystems to future generations.

# Natural Grasslands in Latvia



**60**  
**thousand hectares**

or **0.9%** of the territory  
of Latvia or **3.4%** of the  
agricultural land of Latvia\*



The most species-rich ecosystem  
of Latvia – more than

**50 plant species**

can coexist in one square metre of  
natural grasslands.



The most endangered habitat  
group in Latvia, which is rapidly  
disappearing\*. Their area has shrunk

**by more than 97%**

over the past hundred years.



**90%** of Latvia's natural grasslands  
are of **low or medium quality** and require  
restoration.

During the Nature Census\* conducted  
by the Nature Conservation Agency in recent years,  
it was found that only

**20 ha** of them meet the criteria of  
**excellent quality.**

*\*Data of the Nature Census implemented within the framework of the project 'Creation of prerequisites for better biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection in Latvia' supported by the Nature Conservation Agency in 2018-2020 supported by the European Union Cohesion Fund.*



# PROJECT OBJECTIVES



The long-term goal of the project GrassLIFE was to improve the conservation status of grassland habitats protected as a priority in the European Union and Latvia and to make their management more efficient.

## Specific objectives:



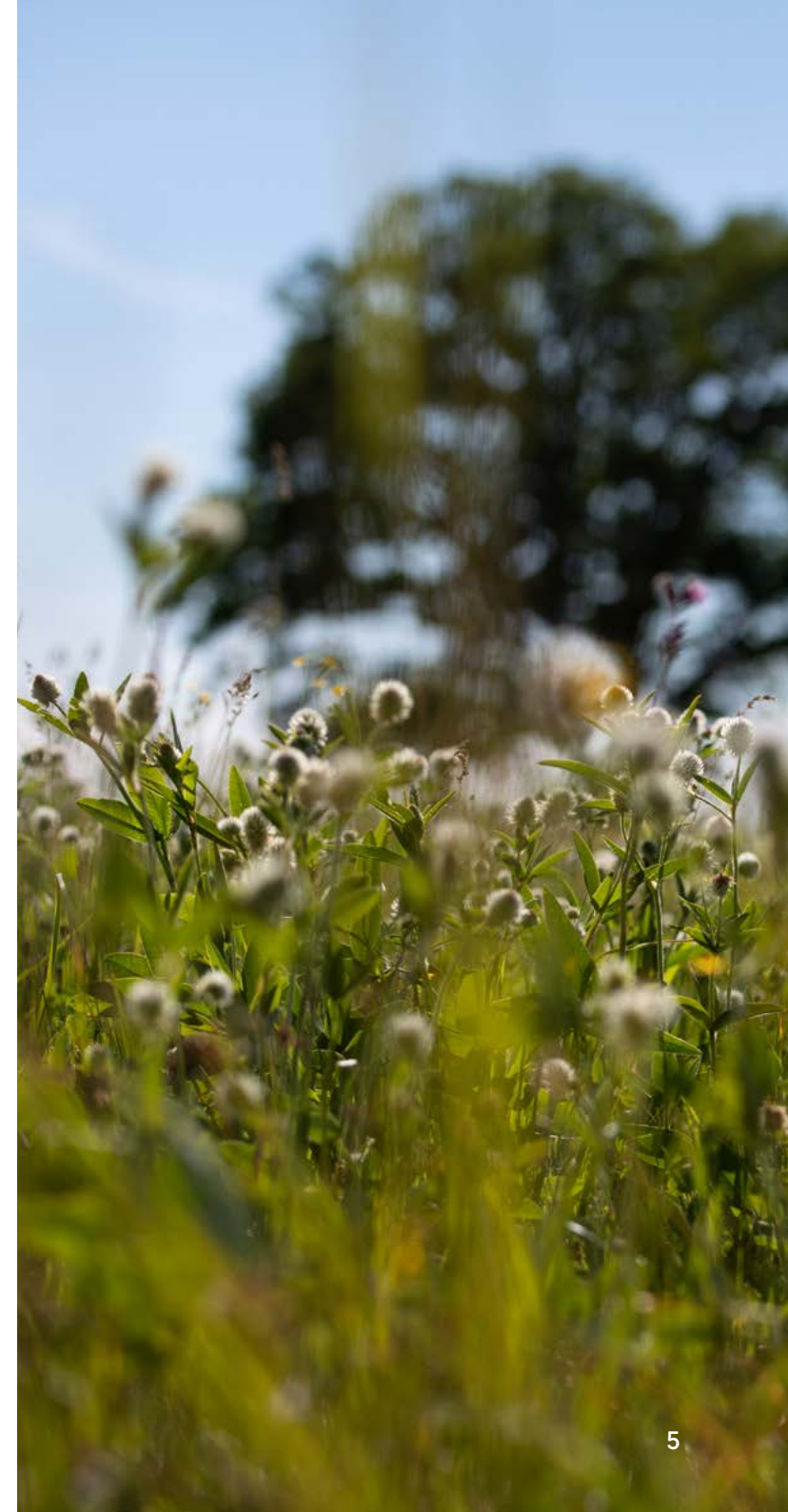
**Restore the target priority grassland habitats and improve their conservation status on 1320.5 hectares by applying best-practice and testing pilot and restoration methods;**



To ensure the long-term management of the restored grassland habitats on the project farms, establish sustainable management systems so that the restored grasslands are integrated into the economic activities of the farmers involved in the project.



To create a mobile herd to be used in the restoration and management of specially protected grassland habitats outside the project farms.





To prepare recommendations for improving the conservation status of grasslands and the connectivity of grasslands in Latvia.



To share the knowledge accumulated during the project on the possibilities of protection and restoration of priority-protected grassland habitats by preparing and distributing informative materials and establishing a demonstration farm for grassland habitat management.



Improve the understanding of the economic aspects of sustainable grassland management by identifying the ecosystem services they provide and the possibilities for their use in the production of high added value products.



To improve public knowledge and raise awareness of the value of priority-protected grassland habitats and the ecosystem services they provide.

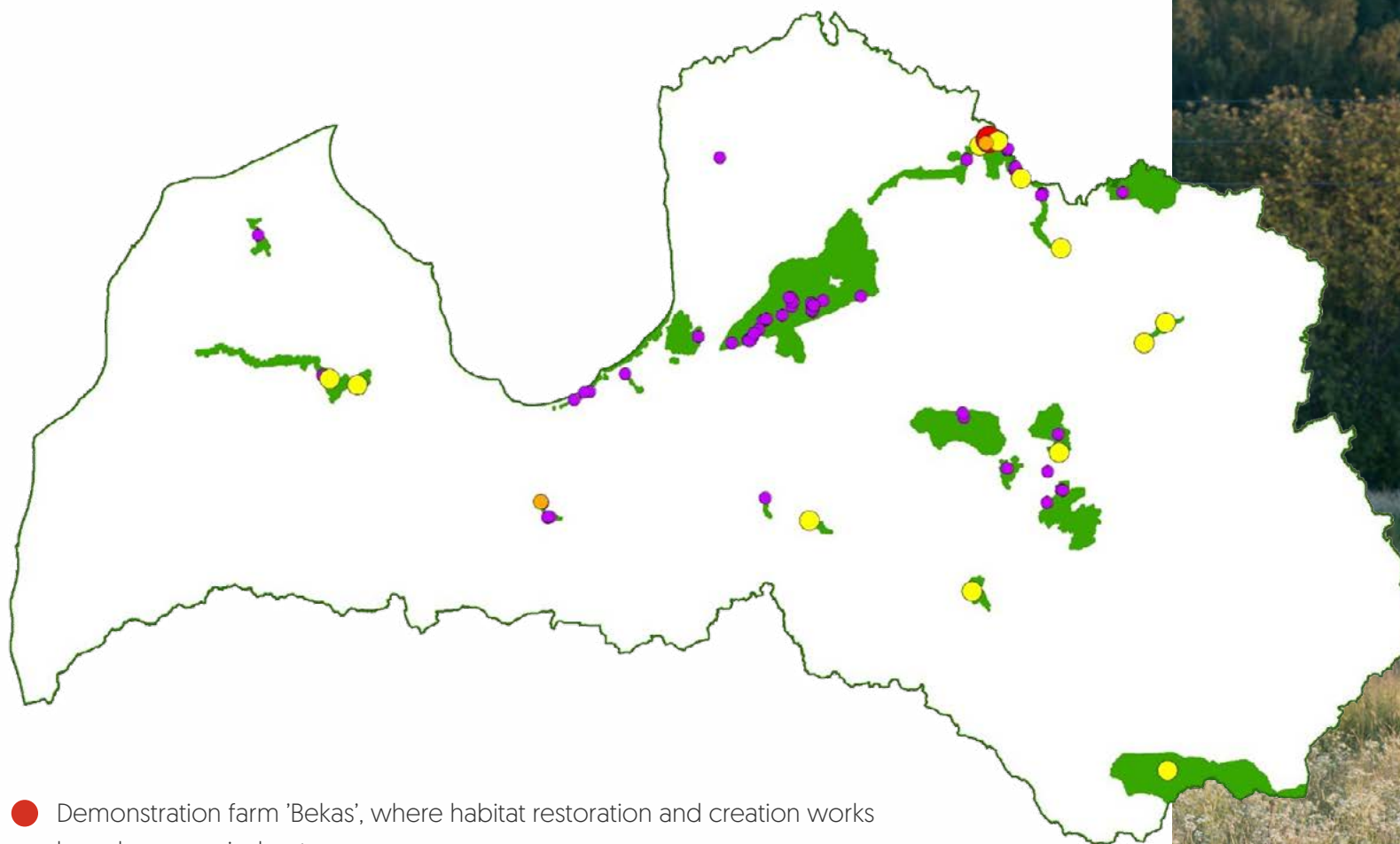


# RESULTS

In **18 specially protected nature areas** of European Union significance, restoration, creation or improvement of the types of protected natural grassland habitats were carried out in **1391 hectares**.

Restoration of natural grasslands in specially protected areas	Restoration and creation of protected grassland habitats were carried out in 12 project partner farms and grasslands managed by the Latvian Fund for Nature	Restorative grazing of protected grassland habitats using a mobile herd	Total
Protected landscape area 'Ziemeļgauja'	254.5	168.0	422.5
Nature Park 'Kuja'	57.7	69.7	127.4
Protected landscape area 'Augšdaugava'	122.3	0	122.3
Nature Park 'Abava Valley'	33.6	18.5	52.1
Nature reserve 'Ābelī'	42.4	0	42.4
Nature reserve 'Sita and Pededze floodplains'	208.8	0	208.8
Nature Park 'Daugava Valley'	21.0	0	21.0
Nature reserve 'Mugurves Meadows'	16.5	0	16.5
Nature reserve 'Lielupe Floodplain Meadows'	24.3	56.8	81.1
Protected landscape area 'Ādaži'	0	2.6	2.6
Nature reserve 'Daugava near Kaibala'	0	1.4	1.4
Gauja National Park	0	170.3	170.3
Krustkalni Nature Reserve	0	5.7	5.7
Nature Park 'Piejūra'	0	41.6	41.6
Nature reserve 'Raķupe Valley'	0	2.6	2.6
Teiči Nature Reserve	0	29.5	29.5
Protected landscape area 'Veclaicene'	0	5.3	5.3
Protected landscape area 'Vestiena'	0	10.3	10.3
Grazing works of priority-protected grassland habitats in areas adjacent to protected nature territories	0	27.3	27.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>1391</b>





- Demonstration farm 'Bekas', where habitat restoration and creation works have been carried out
- Project partner farms, where habitat restoration and creation works have been carried out
- Grasslands managed by LDF, where deforestation, regenerative mowing and improvement of the composition of plant species have been carried out
- Grasslands grazed by mobile herd
- Specially protected natural areas of European significance, where habitat restoration works have been carried out





# Restoration of various natural grassland habitats

	Restoration and creation work of protected grassland habitats has been carried out in the farms of the project partners and in grasslands managed by the Latvian Fund for Nature	Restorative grazing of protected grassland habitats using a mobile herd	Total
Boreal Baltic coastal meadows 1630*	0.0	41.6	41.6
Xeric sand calcareous grasslands 6120*	4.7	10.2	14.8
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates 6210*	97.4	65.6	163.0
Species-rich Nardus grasslands 6230*	1.1	0.5	1.6
Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands 6270*	224.0	239.2	463.2
Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands 6270*, in which habitat restoration or creation work has been carried out, but they do not yet meet the minimum requirements for protected grassland habitats. Their naturalisation and regeneration is still ongoing, continuing the ongoing habitat restoration work	141.7	83.5	225.3
Fennoscandian wooded meadows 6530*	293.4	80.3	373.7
Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils 6410 in priority-protected grassland habitat inclusions	0.8	0.5	1.4
Northern Boreal alluvial meadows 6450 in priority-protected grassland habitat inclusions	15.9	57.6	73.6
Lowland hay meadows 6510 in priority-protected grassland habitat inclusions	0.0	30.6	30.6
Alkaline fens 7230 in priority-protected grassland habitat inclusions	2.0	0.0	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>1391</b>



**1283 hectares or 92%** of the habitat restoration works were carried out in the European Union in priority-protected grassland habitats, but **8%** – in other protected grassland or calcareous fen habitat types, which are located in priority protected grassland habitat inclusions.



# RESTORATION WORKS

## 12 Project Farms and Grasslands Managed by the Latvian Fund for Nature

The most significant part of the practical work of the project GrassLIFE has been implemented in 12 partner farms and on the long-term managed lands by the Latvian Fund for Nature, where restoration work of priority-protected natural grassland habitats or their creation has been carried out on an area of 781 hectares, using 8 methods for the restoration of natural grassland habitats:

**370 hectares**

of cut bushes and in most of them – milled stumps and repeated mowing of shoots.

**134 ha**

of restorative mowing has been carried out to reduce the spread of wood small-reed, cock's-foot, ground-elder, cow parsley and other expansive species.

**606 ha**

of restorative grazing, in 440 ha grassland grazing just started, and in already grazed areas – adapting the grazing intensity to the restoration needs of natural grasslands.

**58 ha**

of land surface alignment works were carried out to ensure appropriate mowing opportunities for the restoration or creation of natural grasslands [in grasslands where signs of natural grasslands were still preserved, performing repeated disking, harrowing and tightening, but in areas completely occupied by expansive species – ploughing, levelling and resowing].



In an area of **166 ha,**

the introduction of plant species characteristic to natural grasslands has been carried out after the necessary soil preparation, by sowing seeds of plant species characteristic to them harvested in the natural grasslands of Latvia, by spreading grass or hay rich in species, by replanting sod, or by feeding hay of seeds harvested on species-rich grasslands to cattle used for grassland grazing in early spring or autumn months.

On an area of **42 ha,**

soil fertility has been reduced and natural grasslands have been developed by sowing and harvesting oats, annual ryegrass or various grass mixtures several times without fertilisation, and after reducing soil fertility by one of the above methods, by bringing seeds of species characteristic of natural grassland.

**213 ha**

ha of activities for reduction of a dense continuous layer of dry grass [multiple harrowing, low mowing with collection of hay or early grazing].

On an area of **1 ha,**

the restriction of soil fertility and undesirable species was carried out by removing the fertile topsoil.



Felling of trees and shrubs, milling of stumps, resumption of mowing and grazing in the restoration of overgrown natural grasslands in Latvia has been used quite widely, but the land surface alignment, natural grassland formation, removal of fertile topsoil, sod transplanting and seed grass and hay spreading works in Latvia have been carried out for the first time during the project. The experience gained and the knowledge accumulated is already successfully used in the restoration of other natural grasslands of Latvia.

# PREPARATIONS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

## Management of Rehabilitated Grassland Habitats

In order to ensure the long-term maintenance of the restored grasslands, permanent grazing infrastructure has been established in the farms of the project partners and the grasslands managed by the Latvian Fund for Nature, grazing animals and equipment have been purchased to ensure regular mowing or grazing of the restored grasslands, and culverts, river crossing fords and roads have been restored to ensure the availability of the restored grasslands.



In order to make the restored grasslands accessible with the equipment necessary for mowing and pasture maintenance, **14** culverts have been restored in 6 project farms and restoration work has been carried out on **680** m of roads crossing pastures and meadows.



The farm 'Jaunkraukļi' has established a crossing ford at the Ziemeļsusēja river for grazing animals and pasture management equipment.



In order for 'Andruks' Ltd. to be able to graze the farm grasslands on both banks of the Gauja river, access to the ford crossing the Gauja river has been restored.







**9** project farms acquired **195** cattle animals.



When installing stationary paddocks, pasture infrastructure has been installed on **607** hectares – stationary paddocks have been installed, and where necessary – watering places, canopies for grazing animals or hay storage sheds have been installed.



**8** project farms have been provided with the equipment necessary for further maintenance of the renovated grasslands, sheds for storing hay, or drinking or feeding areas for livestock have been set up in winter housings for grazing animals.



# MOBILE GRAZING HERD

## for Restoration and Management of Natural Grasslands Included in Specially Protected Nature Areas

The Latvian Fund for Nature in the project GrassLIFE created the first mobile grazing herd in Latvia for the restoration and grazing of natural grasslands included in specially protected areas. It started with the installation of a winter location in 'Gailīši' of Ligatne parish, the purchase of 54 Galloway breed cattle, as well as the provision of animal transportation equipment and equipment for the installation of paddocks.

In the first year of the project, the mobile herd grazed 9 specially protected grasslands of the Gauja National Park, the nature reserve 'Lielupe floodplain meadows' and the protected landscape area 'Ziemeļgauja'. In the following years, it grazed 17–29 grasslands, or 160–274 hectares of specially protected grassland habitats per year. Most of them were grazed for at least two years in a row, but on certain grasslands, the mobile herd grazed for three or even four years in a row and continues to graze there even after the end of the project.

In total, during the project, the mobile herd carried out restorative grazing in 45 meadows. The total area grazed exceeded 640 ha, 610 ha of that correspond to one of the protected grassland habitat types of European importance. As a result of grazing, the layer of dry grass, which accumulated during time of non-farming or under the influence of shredding and high mowing in previous years, has been significantly reduced; the dominance of expansive species that had formed due to late mowing has been reduced; overgrown forest edges have been exposed; bush cover has been reduced and the incidence of species characteristic of natural grasslands has been increased.





# Impact Assessment of Restoration Work

In the life of natural grasslands, five years is a short time. Not all grasslands where restoration work has been carried out already meet the criteria for specially protected grassland habitats. However, observations of researchers from the University of Latvia show that the work carried out to restore habitats has been successful. In areas overgrown with trees and shrubs, their cover no longer exceeds 20%, and grassland-specific species have returned to the undergrowth. On grasslands, where a dense layer of dry grass had accumulated due to prolonged lack of management, shredding or irregularities of the land's surface, it decreased to 5–35%. In all rehabilitated grasslands, the restoration work has led to an increase in the total number of species typical of natural grasslands and has also led to an increase in the presence of natural grassland indicator plants, while the coverage of atypical species has been reduced below the 30% threshold. With continued adaptive management, leaving unmown seed areas and introducing species characteristic of natural grasslands, it is expected that the presence of expansive species will continue to decrease, while the number of species characteristic of natural grasslands and their occurrence will continue to increase.

**Information on the needs, possibilities and methods of restoring natural grasslands tested in the project has been compiled in 3 reports prepared by researchers of the University of Latvia and the Institute of Environmental Solutions and offered in two seminars 'I want a meadow', recordings of which are available both on the project website and on the Latvian Fund for Nature YouTube account with almost 3400 views. Practical advice on using the methods tested in the project is given in 7 fact sheets and 2 instructions. Reports and fact sheets can be found on [www.grasslife.lv](http://www.grasslife.lv)**





# DEMONSTRATIONS

A demonstration farm has been established in the specially protected nature area 'Ziemeļgauja' – **nature farm 'Bekas'**, which acts as an information and education centre where to gain experience-based knowledge on the management, restoration and management of natural grasslands in a landscape saturated with natural grasslands. During the project, **nearly 1200 visitors** attended the demonstration farm, and it will continue to welcome and educate landowners interested in the management and restoration of natural grasslands for years to come.







# NATURAL GRASSLAND PRODUCTS AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

## Reports

Two reports have been prepared – [\*'Grasslands and ecosystem services'\*](#) [in Latvian] and [\*'Grasslands, business and biodiversity'\*](#) [in English]. The first of these contains a general overview of the ecosystem services provided by grasslands and their assessment experience in Europe, while the second illustrates successful examples of the creation and use of brands of natural grassland products in the production and sale of high-quality grass, honey, herbal teas and spices harvested from natural grasslands, as well as milk, meat and wool products from animals grazed thereon.

**Inspired by the examples of other countries collected in the report, in Latvia, too, the development of a brand of Latvian natural meadow products has begun. By interviewing owners of natural grasslands, producers of grassland-related products, traders and cooks, the study of the current situation and possibilities was carried out within the framework of GrassLIFE, and the practical work on the creation of the brand continues in the project LIFE LatViaNature.**

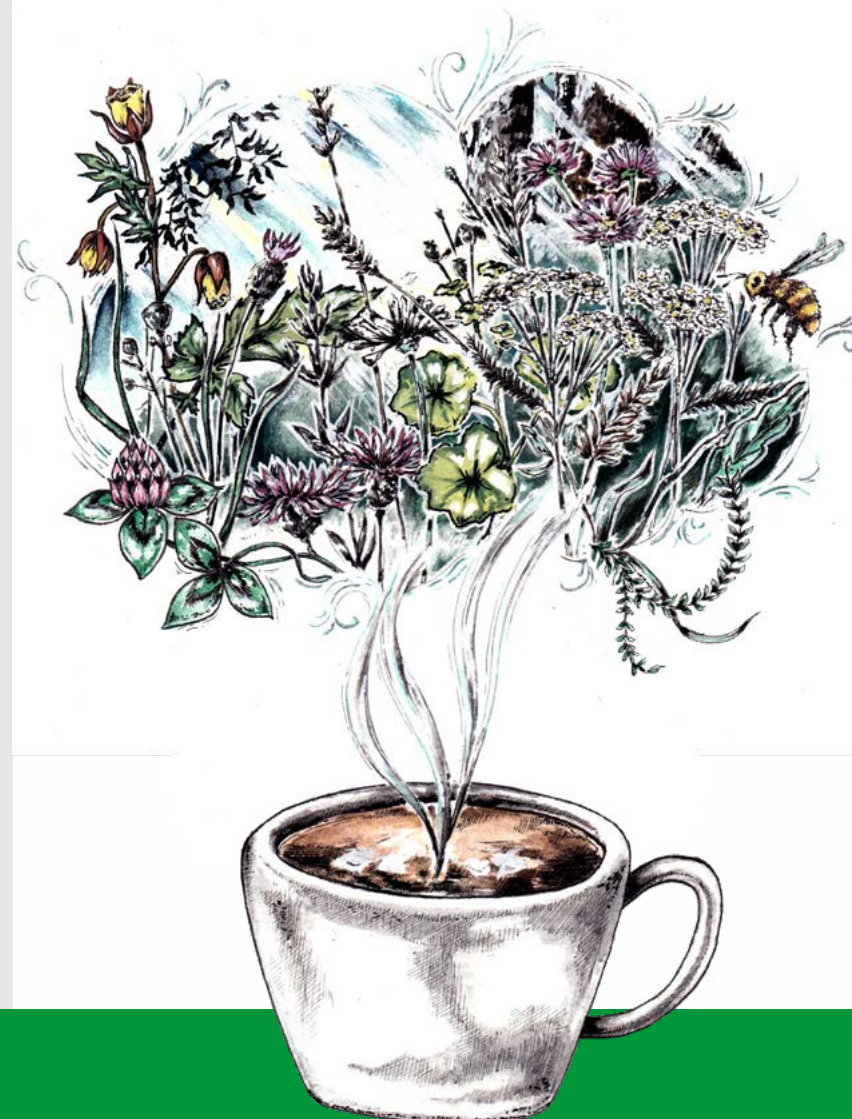
## Ecosystem Services

In order to acquaint the general public with the ecosystem services provided by grasslands, [10 fact sheets](#) and [6 animated short films](#) have been created on the role of natural grasslands in the preservation of medicinal plants, pollinators and the cultural heritage of Latvia, soil formation, carbon storage, reduction of flood risks and water pollution, and control of invasive species and crop pests.

## Green Strawberry and Medicinal Plants

Individual products of natural grasslands are evaluated in more detail. By determining the biochemical properties of the only berries characteristic of natural grasslands – green strawberries (*Fragaria viridis*) and their leaves, [its potential in the production of high value-added nutritional products is evaluated](#). By compiling information on the natural grassland plants of Latvia used in the production of medicinal products, for which the current economic value is known in the European market of medicinal plants, and by analysing their occurrence in the natural grasslands of Latvia, the [potential value of Latvia's natural grasslands in the extraction of medicinal plants and herbal teas and in ensuring raw materials for the production of medicinal plants has been determined](#). A [public survey was also conducted](#) on the consumption habits of herbal teas and medicinal plants of the inhabitants of Latvia.

In cooperation with the company 'Latvijas Fakti' ['Latvian Facts'], a standardized social survey found that **71% of the Latvian population use herbal teas and 51% of them still collect them themselves**. Most of the consumption of herbal teas is made up of mint, melissa and chamomile grown in gardens, but yarrow, meadowsweet, rosebay willowherb, marjoram, plantain, linden blossoms and other plants characteristic of Latvia's natural grasslands also rank among the favourite teas. In general, residents of Latvia admit that more than 100 species of plants are used for herbal teas or medicinal purposes, and more than 80 species of herbal teas are collected annually by themselves.





## Natural Grass-Fed Meat

Chemical analyses of Galoway beef grown on natural grasslands have been carried out, which showed that meat grown on natural grassland contains a high concentration of iron and essential amino acids, and a low cholesterol content, thus confirming what studies in other countries have already shown – grass-fed meat is more nutritious and healthier for humans than meat obtained from grain-fed and concentrated fodder-fed cattle.

## Hay From Natural Grasslands

Hay analyses of several types of natural grassland habitats harvested at different times have also been carried out. They show that when mowing before Midsummer, it is also possible to harvest high-quality hay with a high protein and low fibre content on natural lawns. It is true that when natural grasslands are mowed before they bloom, there is a high risk of losing their species wealth, but the experience of GrassLIFE owners shows that this can be addressed by leaving sufficiently large seed entry areas during early mowing, which are grazed in the second half of summer at the same time as the area regrown in the mowing areas.



The project also analysed information on carbon stock stored in natural grassland soils and carbon emissions from the project's mobile herd.



## Recipe Book MEADOW

Nature experts of the Institute of Environmental Solutions in cooperation with artists, photographers and chef of the restaurant 'Kest' Māris Jansons, created one of a kind recipe book MEADOW, which combines cooking innovations and the unique taste and smell characteristics of **25** Latvian meadow plants in unusual recipes.

## Exposition of the Museum of Natural Medicine

In the granary of Cēsis Castle, the Institute of Environmental Solutions created the first exposition of the future Northern Museum of Natural Medicine, which tells about the medicinal plants found in meadows, forests and swamps of Latvia, their diverse power and use in health care both in antiquity and in the development of innovative medical remedies.



## Meadow Species Identification Guides

Two **plant and animal species identification guides** have been published '[\*What grows in natural meadows?\*](#)' and '[\*Who lives in natural meadows?\*](#)'. The guides were distributed in public events and to main stakeholders, and was a very popular publication among our audience.





# Contribution to Research into Natural Grasslands and Support for Their Protection, Restoration and Management

The project has developed a unique model of connectivity of natural grasslands, which allows to identify the isolation of Latvia's natural grasslands and the problem of distribution of their characteristic species.

It has been used in the selection of priority renewable sites carried out within the framework of GrassLIFE and other activities of the Latvian Fund for Nature and submitted to the Nature Protection Board, where it has been used in planning opportunities for improvement of the network of specially protected nature territories. When assessing the potential of the model in planning the protection and restoration of natural grasslands, the methodology used in its development during the implementation of the project was transferred to the implementation team of the project *LIFE Connecting Meadows*, which used it in the planning of the restoration of natural grasslands in Estonia. In Latvia, the methodology and results of the model have been adopted by the project *LIFE IP LatViaNature* in order to continue its improvement and use in the study of certain types of natural grassland habitats and planning their restoration.

Proposals have been prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture for environmental and agricultural support schemes of the 2023–2027 Rural Development Programme to promote the management of natural grasslands and to promote their protection and restoration. Although many of the proposals made were not taken into account, through active involvement in rural development policy-making processes, it was nevertheless possible to ensure that the existing support rates for the management of natural grasslands were not reduced and that the Rural Development Plan included support for the restoration of natural grassland habitats, as well as more possibilities for adaptive management of natural grasslands in the conditions for receiving support.





# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## Living Soil

In cooperation with the Institute of Environmental Solutions, researchers from the University of Latvia, the Latvian Mazpulki [Latvian rural youth organisation], the Ecoschool Programme of the Foundation for Environmental Education and more than 200 young people of school age, two citizen science campaigns **‘Living Soil’** have been implemented, during which 144 data to be used in the study of natural grassland soils of Latvia have been collected. The results of the campaign are summarised in a [report](#).

## Urban Meadows

At the end of the project, the successfully implemented campaign of a square metre of meadow grew into the movement **‘Urban Meadows’**, in which the most active neighbourhood associations in Riga chose meadow creation sites and participated in their management. It started the development of natural grasslands saturated in characteristic species in urban environments. The movement of urban meadows continues in the project urbanLIFEcircles of the Latvian Fund for Nature, Riga City Council and Tartu University.





## Plant Your Own Square Metre!

Anyone interested in devoting one square meter of land in their yard or meadow to the experiment of sowing plant species characteristic of natural grasslands and following the progress of their germination and growth was invited to participate in the 'Plant your own square metre' campaign. Within the framework of the campaign, 1200 of the more than 1800 interested parties during the two years of implementation of the campaign were sent packets with seeds of 12 natural grasslands characteristic plants collected by students involved in the Latvian Mazpulki movement and active representatives of Latvian seniors and their societies in Latvian meadows, riversides and roadsides. 238 of the 700 participants who received the seeds in the first year of the campaign continued to be involved in the campaign after a year and provided valuable information on the success of germination, growth and flowering of the sown seeds. With the help of the campaign, we not only created an opportunity to raise the problem of preservation of natural grasslands and the distribution of plants characteristic to them, but also obtained valuable information about the success of seed germination and sprouting of Latvian meadow plants. On almost every square meter oxeye daisy sprouted, in every second there were also brown knapweed, agrimony and selfheal, but there was also no shortage of places where sprouts of all sown species sprouted, as well as those where none of them sprouted.



# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

An important part of the GrassLIFE project was communication about natural meadows, their value, status and management. At the beginning of the project, when creating a communication strategy, we concluded that meadows are taken for granted by the inhabitants of Latvia as a part of Latvian nature and they are not aware of what natural meadows are. Also, most part of the society does not realize that natural meadows are a habitat that is on the verge of extinction in Latvia.

**Therefore, throughout GrassLIFE, two main messages permeated the project's activities and communication:**



On one square metre of natural meadow there can be **more than 50 species of plants**



Natural meadows in Latvia are endangered and they **have survived only in 0.8% of the territory of Latvia**

## Main publicity topics for GrassLIFE:



**Events and campaigns**



**Restoration of meadows**



**Mobile herd**

# 749

During the project, GrassLIFE was mentioned 749 times in Latvian media and the total potential audience of materials containing GrassLIFE mentions was 27.06 million, but the audience effectively reached was 9.38 million. The tonality of all publications was positive (462 publications) or neutral (287 publications).



GrassLIFE implemented three integrated communication campaigns on natural grasslands. The aim of the first campaign **‘50x more valuable square metre’** [2018] was to give a new value to the meadows in the public consciousness and to herald the importance of meadows, as well as their endangered status. The second campaign, **‘Nature has not cancelled anything’**, was implemented during COVID19 pandemic restrictions, when all events were cancelled. This provided an opportunity to show developments in nature and their value. The ‘Nature has not cancelled anything’ campaign won the Order of the 1st category at the Adwards advertising festival in 2021. In the fall of 2020, the campaign was dedicated to the public engagement campaign ‘Plant your own square metre!’. The campaigns were conducted in cooperation with the communication agency WKND.

Other activities were also held to inform the owners of natural grasslands and the general public: discussions at the exhibition ‘Environment and Energy’ organized in the exhibition complex ‘Ķīpsala’ and at the democracy festival ‘Lampa’ held in Cēsis Castle Park; in the protected landscape area ‘Ziemeļgauja’ accompanied by knowledgeable nature guides, exploratory walks ‘Landscape Tours’ were held once a year, products made in natural grasslands were promoted during the four ‘Market Days’ held at the Sigulda, Straupe and Āgenskalns markets.

The project also produced a poetic nature documentary [‘Enter the Natural Meadow’](#).

The project website [www.grasslife.lv](http://www.grasslife.lv) was created as an informative resource about natural grasslands, their value and restoration. The social media networks of the Latvian Fund for Nature were used as the channels for the GrassLIFE project.

**In the public survey conducted in 2023, one third of the population had indicated that they had heard the statement ‘Natural meadows in Latvia are disappearing and they have survived only in 0.8% of the territory of Latvia’, while 35% indicated that they have heard the statement that ‘There can be more than 50 plant species in one square metre of natural meadows’.**





# BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY

GrassLIFE's work has ensured that the restored grasslands have been returned to agricultural land circulation – overgrown, boar-dug and rough grasslands now are mowable, a thick layer of dry grass has been removed from long-term unmanaged grasslands, and plants characteristic of natural grasslands have now appeared in areas taken over by expansive species that are little used in animal husbandry. The pasture infrastructure installed and the mowing equipment purchased will ensure that the restored grasslands will be maintained long after the end of the project.

GrassLIFE farms are also involved in the GrassLIFE2 project launched by the Latvian Fund for Nature – as restorers of new natural grasslands, restoration grazing service providers or demonstration farms. This confirms that the GrassLIFE project has made a significant contribution to strengthening farm capacity, increasing competitiveness and raising awareness. GrassLIFE owners have not only become successful meadow restorers, but also ambassadors of natural meadows, from which other meadow restorers can gain valuable knowledge and inspiration.

**GrassLIFE has contributed to the Latvian society as a whole by carrying out informative and educational work, advocating for the preservation of the support necessary for grassland management, promoting the development of science, using the services offered by local entrepreneurs, promoting the development of project partners and providing them with the opportunity to hire additional employees.**



# FURTHER ACTIONS

**It takes a long time to recover a species-rich meadow instead of overgrown or ploughed grasslands, so the work on restoring and creating natural grasslands in GrassLIFE areas must continue. The GrassLIFE project has allowed to accumulate knowledge, ensured the availability of meadows, the purchase of cattle, the installation of pasture infrastructures and helped to provide the necessary equipment for grassland management. During the project, preparations have been made to ensure regular management – milled stumps, levelled grasslands, removed dry grass layer. As a result, the project has laid a good foundation for the continued management of the project areas.**

The experience gained is described in restoration success monitoring reports and natural grassland restoration advice sheets and can be used when planning restoration and creation works of natural grasslands elsewhere in Latvia. During these years, the owners involved in the implementation of the project have become knowledgeable meadow restorers, who are ready to share the experience gained during the project with other interested parties.

The mobile herd created during GrassLIFE continues its activities both in the GrassLIFE2 and WoodMeadowLife projects, as well as in the grasslands managed by the Latvian Fund for Nature.

The demonstration farm 'Bekas', created during the project, will provide an opportunity to transfer the gained experience both to the owners of natural grasslands and to nature conservation experts and planners of Latvia and other countries. Other GrassLIFE farms are also involved in the GrassLIFE project as demonstration farms.

It takes time to fully assess the effectiveness of the restoration measures carried out during the project, so a solution has been found so that the work of assessing the effectiveness of restoration measures, at least on grasslands where innovative grassland restoration methods have been used, can continue in the next five years. The methodology for assessing the success of grassland habitat restoration developed and used by GrassLIFE has been transferred to the implementers of the LIFE LatViaNature project, who use it to create a unified system for evaluating the success of restoration and management of protected grassland habitats. GrassLIFE information materials will be used to educate both grassland owners and the general public on various issues related to the management, restoration and use of natural grasslands, while the exhibition of the Northern Museum of Natural Medicine, created in the granary of Cēsis Castle, continues to receive visitors.

# LIFE



The European Union's [EU] LIFE programme is a financial instrument for the development, development and implementation of EU environmental policy in the EU Member States. The LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity sub-programme supports projects that contribute to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and to the development of the Natura 2000 network of sites.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>

# Natura2000



The project has been implemented in 18 specially protected nature territories of Latvia, which are part of the Natura 2000 network of specially protected territories of European Union [EU] significance. The Natura 2000 network has been set up to ensure the protection of species and habitats threatened at European level throughout the European Union by implementing the requirements of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.





# grasslife

[www.grasslife.lv](http://www.grasslife.lv)

