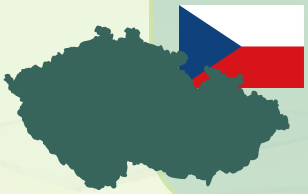
SPRINT SUCCESS STORIES

REDUCING PESTICIDE RELIANCE THROUGH THE DIVERSE LANDSCAPE PROGRAM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

SPRINT
SUSTAINABLE PLANT PROTECTION TRANSITION

Around 60% of farmland in the Czech Republic is managed by corporate agribusinesses, with a relatively small proportion run by small family farms. The Diverse Landscapes Programme, established in 2018, supports these by increasing the visibility of small farms which are both productive and farm in ways that benefit landscape, environment and society.



Members benefit from educational opportunities, certification as nature friendly farmers, and the marketing advantages this brings. Pesticide use is one of the evaluation criteria for small farms to be certified. By supporting biobelts, intercropping, and crop rotation, the scheme helps reduce the need for pesticides.

THE CHALLENGE

Profitable farming has a reputation for producing plentiful food at the expense of the natural environment. The diverse landscapes programme seeks to showcase how things can be done differently.

By producing case studies, advice and creating a certification scheme, the programme supports farmers to farm responsibly for the landscape and their soil, whilst still being productive and profitable.

PESTRÁ KRAJINA

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate that landscape protection and agricultural productivity can co-exist.
- Promote diverse landscapes for the benefit of landscape, environment and society.
- Support small family farmers to be competitive.

BACKGROUND

- The Association of Private Farming of the Czech Republic (APF CR) represents 7,500 family farmers.
- They started the Diverse Landscapes Programme, which members can volunteer to join, in 2018.
- An extreme drought that year raised questions around how to farm in ways that better hold water in the landscape.
- Farmers are certificated by the scheme, but they are given no financial reward.
- Initially the scheme was not well received by the farming community, who thought it sought to limit their farming practices.
- Over time, popularity has grown, along with the number of farmers who have joined.
- Despite initial resistance, larger agribusinesses in the Czech Republic have set up a programme emulating the Diverse Landscapes Programme.

PESTICIDE USE AND THE DIVERSE LANDSCAPE PROGRAMME

Pesticide use is one of the many evaluation criteria for farms in the Diverse Landscape Programme. Some farms involved are organic, but others use pesticides in a measured way that aligns with their objectives at doing nature friendly farming.

In addition, by promoting landscape biodiversity, providing habitats for pest predators, and increasing crop diversity, the programme encourages approaches which reduce the amounts of pesticides needed in the field.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

In addition to giving farmers a nature friendly farming certificate, the programme demonstrates low impact approaches to other farmers, and helps decrease polarisation between farmers and the public on environmental issues.

SPRINT SUCCESS STORIES

THE DIVERSE LANDSCAPE PROGRAM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Farmers can apply to have their farm certified by the Diverse Landscape Programme. An evaluation committee then consider if the farm fits the following criteria:

1. **Production criteria.** Crop diversity, intercrops, livestock, soil erosion, protection of off-farm natural habitats, extent and use of fertilisers and pesticides.
2. **Non-production measures.** Quantity, diversity and extent of landscape features, application of management principles to conserve them, involvement in educational and social activities on agriculture and landscape.
3. **Landscape character and aesthetics.** Preservation or restoration of village architecture, overall impact of the farm on the landscape, siting of equipment and buildings, knowledge and respect of the historical context of the farm.

Farmers are not rewarded financially for their participation in the scheme, but gain a certification that can attract a spending premium from customers.

SCHEME ACTIONS AND IMPACTS

ADVISORY

1. **Making good examples of profitable nature friendly farming visible.**
2. **Producing advice and real world practical examples of how to improve the ecological resilience of farmland, through eg., reducing erosion, increasing biodiversity.**

GOVERNANCE

3. **Indicating how regulatory support could be effective in changing farming practices.**
4. **Highlighting, and helping to eliminate administrative obstacles to best practice.**
5. **Highlighting room for improvement in the farming subsidy system.**

SOCIAL

6. **Popularisation of nature friendly farming practices, and increasing support for farmers who use them.**
7. **Improving the reputation of farming and reducing polarisation between the public and the agricultural community.**

Each year, farms in the programme are entered into a competition. The three top farms are awarded for their contribution to the landscape and nature friendly farming. They are then showcased in brochures, videos, and on social media.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Bottom-up approach:** Demonstrating examples of best practice is working very well.
2. **Economic viability:** Landscape and nature friendly farming can be economically viable.
3. **Diversifying farming:** Diversifying farming strategies is a promising approach to reducing the environmental impacts of European agriculture.
4. **Reduced pesticide use:** Landscape friendly farming on family farms can help reduce the use of pesticides by supporting approaches which reduce the need for them.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Read more about the APF CR Diverse Landscapes Programme here.

This factsheet was produced by Honor Mackley-Ward, Countryside & Community Research Institute, and Jakub Hofmanm, RECETOX.