

# Third National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity

## D. THEMATIC AREAS

### Agricultural biological diversity

**161.**  Has your country developed national strategies, programmes and plans that ensure the development and successful implementation of policies and actions that lead to the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity components? (decisions III/11 and IV/6)

a) No	
b) No, but strategies, programmes and plans are under development	X
c) Yes, some strategies, programmes and plans are in place (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, comprehensive strategies, programmes and plans are in place (please provide details below)	

Further comments on agrobiodiversity components in national strategies, programmes and plans.

**b) Walloon Region**

**c) in the Flemish Region:**

- agri-environmental measures in the regional plans for rural development;
- codes of good agricultural practices 'nature conservation'.

Recently, much attention has been paid to nature and natural values within agricultural areas, which is often referred to as 'agricultural nature management'. Currently (01.01.2005), there are five types of agricultural management agreements between farmers and the Flemish Ministry that are explicitly aimed at enhancing nature (*i.e.* management of grassland birds, parcel edges, small-scale landscape elements, nature, and botanical management). These management agreements aim to stimulate farmers to actively contribute to nature and the environment, more than they would do through 'normal' agricultural practices.

**162.**  Has your country identified ways and means to address the potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies on the *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation and sustainable use, including food security, of agricultural biological diversity? (decision V/5)

a) No	
b) No, but potential measures are under review	X
c) Yes, some measures identified (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, comprehensive measures identified (please provide details below)	

Further information on ways and means to address the potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies on the *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity.

The DG Environment of the **Federal Public Service on Health, Food Chain Security and Environment** is presently funding a study on the socio-ecological impacts of GMO's. In that study, the case by case general relevancy of GMO cultures compared to other types of cultures and technologies, solving the same problems, is considered in terms of impacts for the environment, for the local population (producers and consumers) and for the food-chain.

## Annex to decision V/5 - Programme of work on agricultural biodiversity

Programme element 1 – Assessment	
<b>163.</b> Has your country undertaken specific assessments of components of agricultural biodiversity such as on plant genetic resources, animal genetic resources, pollinators, pest management and nutrient cycling?	
a) No	
b) Yes, assessments are in progress (please specify components below)	X
c) Yes, assessments completed (please specify components and results of assessments below)	X
Further comments on specific assessments of components of agricultural biodiversity.	
<p>b) <b>Flemish Region:</b> bird surveys in agricultural areas are performed by the Institute of Nature Conservation in cooperation with NGO's. Monitoring of the agri-environment measures takes place. The area of land managed under current agri-environment schemes has continued to increase.</p> <p>Research into the ecology and pest management of three rodent species [<i>i.e.</i> brown rat (<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>), muskrat (<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>) and coypu (<i>Myocastor coypus</i>)] is currently carried out by the Institute of Forestry and Game Management.</p> <p>c) <b>Flemish Region:</b> assessments are completed in relation to animal genetic resources, pest management, nutrient cycling.</p>	

<b>164.</b> Is your country undertaking assessments of the interactions between agricultural practices and the conservation and sustainable use of the components of biodiversity referred to in Annex I of the Convention (e.g. ecosystems and habitats; species and communities; genomes and genes of social, scientific or economic importance)?	
a) No	
b) Yes, assessments are under way	X
c) Yes, some assessments completed (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, comprehensive assessments completed (please provide details below)	
Further comments on assessment of biodiversity components (e.g. ecosystems and habitats; species and communities; genomes and genes of social, scientific or economic importance).	
<p><b>Walloon Region:</b> the SAGRIWATEL project attempts to supply a decision-making support tool for estimating and forecasting agricultural production and for describing rural land quality at different scales (from the plot to the whole region). Three types of tools are required in order to set up an integrated system for monitoring the state of Walloon agriculture: (i) spatial information on annual agricultural land use, using IACS (Integrated Administration and Control System); (ii) CGMS (Crop Growth Monitoring System) yield forecasting, adapted to Belgian conditions; and (iii) satellite information, with different levels of spatial and temporal resolution.</p> <p>This collection of tools is used to produce a set of indicators, both agricultural and agri-environmental (AEI). Agri-environmental indicators are regarded as promising tools for assessing, quantifying and monitoring the effects of agriculture with the objective of ensuring sustainability and minimising environmental impact. While some agri-environmental measures (AEM) are directly linked to the AEI used, other issues are also addressed. From the huge list of AEI published by the European Commission, attention focuses on those where the accuracy of results has the greatest likelihood of being improved by remote sensing: plot size, crop sequence, farm land cover in winter, direction of soil tillage, use of buffer zones, share of agricultural land subject to environmental control,</p>	

permanent grass area trend and diversity of plant products. Spatial representation of these AEI is implemented partly from the spatial information provided by IACS and partly from the satellite data mentioned above.

**Flemish Region:** analyses of a number of farmland species in relation to habitat use and agricultural practices are currently planned at the Institute of Nature Conservation (models of habitat requirement, density factors, etc). First results have been published in: Vermeersch, G. & De Bruyn, L., 2002. De verspreiding van vogels in Vlaanderen voorspellen: het voorbeeld van de Veldleeuwerik *Alauda arvensis*. *Natuur.oriolus* 68:9-16. (*Predicting the distribution of birds in Flanders: the example of the skylark, Alauda arvensis*).

A project on habitat choice of the stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (in farmland as well as in heathland), has been running since 2004, organised by the Province of Antwerp Nature Study Umbrella (ANKONA) and published in: Vermeersch G., 2005. Het project Roodborsttapuit in de provincie Antwerpen, tussentijds verslag projectjaar 2004, Ankona, Antwerpen, 8 pp. (*The stonechat project in the province of Antwerp, first report 2004*).

A project is running in the Province of West-Flanders in collaboration with the Institute of Nature Conservation, focusing on small-scale relations between agricultural use and farmland birds with education and management aspects included. An initial report has been published: Dochy, O. & Hens, M., 2005. Van de stakkers van de akkers naar de helden van de velden: Beschermingsmaatregelen voor akkervogels. Rapport IN.R.2005.01. Instituut voor Natuurbehoud, Brussel i.s.m. provinciebestuur West-Vlaanderen, Brugge. (*Conservation measures for farmland birds*).

The Institute of Nature Conservation investigates the distribution and ecology of geese in the Flemish Region, also within the wider scope of the EU FRAGILE project on the pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). The coastal agricultural areas in the Flemish Region play an important role for wintering and migrating geese on an international scale.

The Institute of Nature Conservation carries out hydrological research in rural areas, concentrating on the analysis of flood flows in relation to the safety policy, low flows, the quality of hydrological data, erosion and sediment transport.

Research is carried out by the Institute of Forestry and Game Management (IBW) to develop instruments to evaluate the effect of game management plans and to develop standard methods for the data analysis of 'game management units' in the Flemish Region.

**165.** Has your country carried out an assessment of the knowledge, innovations and practices of farmers and indigenous and local communities in sustaining agricultural biodiversity and agro-ecosystem services for food production and food security?

a) No	
b) Yes, assessment is under way	X
c) Yes, assessment completed (please specify where information can be retrieved below)	

Further comments on assessment of the knowledge, innovations and practices of farmers and indigenous and local communities.

**Flemish Region:** existing agri-environmental schemes include several packages promoting good management practices for biodiversity. The new agri-environmental programme expands on these measures with a range of options that emphasise on organic management, natural resource protection and genetic diversity (such as rare or old breeds).

**166.** Has your country been monitoring an overall degradation, status quo or restoration/rehabilitation of agricultural biodiversity since 1993 when the Convention entered into force?

a) No	
b) Yes, no change found (status quo)	

c) Yes, overall degradation found (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, overall restoration or rehabilitation observed (please provide details below)	
Further comments on observations.	
<p><b>Flemish Region:</b> the Nature Report 2005 presents new facts and figures regarding the state of species and habitats, disturbances, the sustainable use of natural resources and the impact of protective measures taken by the Government.</p> <p>Data from the Flemish Breeding Bird Atlas show an overall decline of species occurring in agricultural areas (Vermeersch G., Anselin A., Devos K., Herremans M., Stevens J., Gabriëls J. &amp; Van Der Krieken B., 2004. Atlas van de Vlaamse broedvogels 2000-2002. Mededelingen van het Instituut voor Natuurbehoud 23, Brussel, 496 pp.).</p>	

Programme element 2 - Adaptive management	
<b>167.</b> Has your country identified management practices, technologies and policies that promote the positive, and mitigate the negative, impacts of agriculture on biodiversity, and enhance productivity and the capacity to sustain livelihoods?	
a) No	
b) No, but potential practices, technologies and policies being identified	
c) Yes, some practices, technologies and policies identified (please provide details below)	X
d) Yes, comprehensive practices, technologies and policies identified (please provide details below)	
Further comments on identified management practices, technologies and policies.	
<p><b>Flemish Region:</b> agri-environmental measures for biodiversity were identified.</p> <p>Various forms of management agreements between farmers and the Flemish Ministry can be implemented, including agreements for botanical management and management in favour of grassland birds.</p> <p>The Institute of Nature Conservation forms part of a wider European project, the so-called GREENVEINS project, which investigates biodiversity within the rural landscape. It aims to relate biodiversity with the intensity of agriculture in various types of arable land. By doing so, the project aims to develop a model which explains this relationship and which is applicable on a European scale.</p> <p><b>Walloon Region:</b></p> <p>1) La 'jachère-faune' existe en Région wallonne depuis 2000; elle permet l'utilisation des terres gelées pour l'installation de couverts végétaux constituant un habitat privilégié pour la faune. Cependant celle-ci n'a qu'un succès limité probablement du à une méconnaissance des agriculteurs et des chasseurs, à la sévérité des sanctions financières en cas d'infraction constatée et à la charge administrative qu'elle entraîne pour les agriculteurs et les chasseurs. A cet effet, la jachère faune a été revue pour 2005 et diverses contraintes ont été levées afin de viser une meilleure répartition et obtenir un maillage plus adéquat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- réduction de la dimension minimale des parcelles en jachère;</li> <li>- simplification des procédures.</li> </ul> <p>2) Il y a eu une révision des mesures agri-environnementales en Région wallonne. Un nouvel arrêté du Gouvernement wallon du 28.10.2004 prévoit des mesures d'incitations agri-environnementales notamment pour: la conservation des éléments du réseau écologique et du paysage (haies et bandes boisées, arbres, arbustes isolés, arbres fruitiers à hautes tiges, bosquets, mares), les prairies naturelles, les bordures herbeuses extensives, les prairies à haute valeur biologique, les bandes de parcelles aménagées.</p>	

3) Si une MAE est demandée pour une parcelle en zone SEP (Structure Ecologique Principale de Wallonie qui identifie les grandes zones d'intérêts écologiques, les principaux corridors écologiques qui les relient et les principales barrières écologiques qui les fragmentent), une plus value de 20% est accordée à la prime et ce en vue de cibler les primes pour les zones écologiquement importantes.

4) Une nouvelle subvention à la plantation de haies sera bientôt disponible et remplacera la précédente. Par rapport à la précédente, celle-ci prévoit:

- des primes plus élevées à la plantation de haies;
- des primes pour l'entretien de haies;
- l'intégration de nouveaux éléments tels que les alignements d'arbres et les vergers;
- et une simplification de la démarche administrative.

### Programme element 3 - Capacity-building

**168.** Has your country increased the capacities of farmers, indigenous and local communities, and their organisations and other stakeholders, to manage sustainable agricultural biodiversity and to develop strategies and methodologies for *in-situ* conservation, sustainable use and management of agricultural biological diversity?

a) No	
b) Yes (please specify area/component and target groups with increased capacity)	X

Further comments on increased capacities of farmers, indigenous and local communities, and their organisations and other stakeholders.

**Flemish Region:** this is being addressed by the promotion of organic farming. In the framework of Management Agreements under the agri-environmental programme of the Rural Development Programme (RDP), financial incentives and technical support are provided.

The **Belgian Development Cooperation** supports a number of sustainable rural development programmes in South-America, Africa and South-East Asia, either through NGO or official bilateral channel, including the promotion of environmentally friendly agricultural practices (organic agriculture, rescue of indigenous varieties, etc.).

**169.** Has your country put in place operational mechanisms for participation by a wide range of stakeholder groups to develop genuine partnerships contributing to the implementation of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity?

a) No	
b) No, but potential mechanisms being identified	
c) No, but mechanisms are under development	X
d) Yes, mechanisms are in place	X

**170.** Has your country improved the policy environment, including benefit-sharing arrangements and incentive measures, to support local-level management of agricultural biodiversity?

a) No	
b) No, but some measures and arrangements being identified	
c) No, but measures and arrangements are under development	X
d) Yes, measures and arrangements are being implemented (please specify below)	X

Further comments on the measures taken to improve the policy environment.

**Flemish Region:** a number of actions have been taken in the Flemish Region, e.g. management agreements to sustain grassland birds, management of parcel edges, conservation of small-scale landscape elements and botanical management. These actions are described in the Decision of the Flemish Government (October 2003) concerning the development of management agreements in order to support rural development (EU legislation: Provision (EEC) nr. 1257/1999).

Furthermore, benefit-sharing arrangements have been achieved through the delineation of multi-functional areas in which agriculture, forestry, landscape based recreation and biodiversity are meant to develop in mutual coherence (so-called 'interweaving nature areas' that are part of the ecological network).

**Walloon Region:** voir mesures d'incitations décrites sous la question 167. De plus, les Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature (PCDN), les Contrats de Rivières, les Parcs Naturels et les Commissions de Conservation Natura 2000 sont quatre outils participatifs visant notamment à la gestion locale de la biodiversité agricole.

#### Programme element 4 – Mainstreaming

**171.** Is your country mainstreaming or integrating national plans or strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity in sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and programmes?

a) No	
b) No, but review is under way	
c) No, but potential frameworks and mechanisms are being identified	
d) Yes, some national plans or strategies mainstreamed and integrated into some sectoral plans and programmes (please provide details below)	X
e) Yes, some national plans or strategies mainstreamed into major sectoral plans and programmes (please provide details below)	
Further comments on mainstreaming and integrating national plans or strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity in sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and programmes.	

**172.** Is your country supporting the institutional framework and policy and planning mechanisms for the mainstreaming of agricultural biodiversity in agricultural strategies and action plans, and its integration into wider strategies and action plans for biodiversity?

a) No	
b) Yes, by supporting institutions in undertaking relevant assessments	X
c) Yes, by developing policy and planning guidelines	X
d) Yes, by developing training material	
e) Yes, by supporting capacity-building at policy, technical and local levels	X
f) Yes, by promoting synergy in the implementation of agreed plans of action and between ongoing assessment and intergovernmental processes.	
Further comments on support for institutional framework and policy and planning mechanisms.	

**173.** In the case of centers of origin in your country, is your country promoting activities for the conservation, on farm, *in-situ*, and *ex-situ*, of the variability of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including their wild relatives?

a) No

b) Yes (please provide details below)

X

Further comments on of the conservation of the variability of genetic resources for food and agriculture in their center of origin.

**Flemish Region:**

- universal gene bank of banana;
- supporting gene bank of old fruit races and indigenous breeds of livestock;
- support for agrobiodiversity in permanent grasslands;
- support for biological agriculture in general.

**Box LXV.**

Please provide information concerning the actions taken by your country to implement the Plan of Action for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators.

**Box LXVI.**

Please elaborate below on the implementation of this programme of work and associated decisions specifically focusing on:

- a) outcomes and impacts of actions taken;
- b) contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention;
- c) contribution to progress towards the 2010 target;
- d) progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
- e) contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- f) constraints encountered in implementation.

**Flemish Region:**

a) the outcomes and impacts of actions taken are summarised in the Nature Report (NARA), a bi-annual publication of the Institute of Nature Conservation, which reports on the state of nature in the Flemish Region. The most recent report was published in May 2005 (Dumortier M., De Bruyn L., Hens M., Peymen J., Schneiders A., Van Daele T., Van Reeth W., Weyembergh G. en Kuijken E., 2005. Natuurrapport 2005. Toestand van de natuur in Vlaanderen: cijfers voor het beleid. Mededeling van het Instituut voor Natuurbewoud nr. 24, Brussel).

d) a number of initiatives have been taken and implementation of conservation of biodiversity is being carried out through various programmes (e.g. Natura 2000, Flemish Ecological Network, Ramsar areas, etc.).

f) limited stakeholder involvement; farmer's lobby; different ministries dealing with agriculture and biodiversity conservation/management; etc.

Question 169) additional information of the **Walloon Region:**

Les Plans Communaux de Développement de la Nature (PCDN), les Contrats de Rivières, les Parcs Naturels et les Commissions de Conservation Natura 2000 sont quatre outils participatifs.

Les PCDN sont des initiatives communales. L'élément de base d'un PCDN, c'est le partenariat de tous les acteurs concernés par la biodiversité de leur commune. Se rassemblent ainsi autour de la table des négociations: responsables communaux, naturalistes, chasseurs, pêcheurs, agriculteurs, responsables touristiques, industriels... Chacun avec ses compétences, ses attentes et ses contraintes. Tous ensemble, pour échanger des points de vue et élaborer un programme commun d'actions pour le développement de la nature dont le but est la préservation et le développement de la biodiversité sur fond de réseau écologique.

Les Contrats de Rivière consistent à mettre autour d'une même table tous les acteurs de la vallée, en vue de définir consensuellement un programme d'actions de restauration des cours d'eau, de leurs abords et des ressources en eau du bassin. Sont invités à participer à cette démarche les représentants des mondes politique, administratif, les riverains, les gérants d'infrastructures touristiques, les pêcheurs, les amoureux de la nature, les agriculteurs, les industriels, les propriétaires terriens... tous disposent maintenant d'une plate-forme commune, le Comité de Rivière, pour exprimer leurs souhaits sur la qualité de leurs cours d'eau, pour entendre et prendre en compte le point de vue des autres et ainsi établir ensemble des priorités dans les actions à programmer.

Un Parc Naturel est un territoire rural, d'un haut intérêt biologique et géographique, soumis à des mesures destinées à en protéger le milieu en harmonie avec les aspirations de la population et le développement économique et social du territoire concerné. Pour atteindre cet objectif ambitieux, les acteurs régionaux (responsables communaux et régionaux, agriculteurs, secteur du tourisme, secteur forestier, associations de protection de la nature, etc.) se rassemblent pour trouver ensemble des consensus qui soient satisfaisants pour tous. Le pouvoir organisateur d'un parc doit nécessairement être une autorité publique locale (communes, intercommunale, province, etc.). En dehors du pouvoir organisateur, une commission de gestion du parc est nommée par le Gouvernement wallon. Ses missions: donner un avis, et dans certains cas un accord, pour ce qui concerne des autorisations nécessaires à l'exercice de certaines activités dans le périmètre du parc. Dans les cas les plus lourds comme la construction d'une autoroute, par exemple, l'avis de la commission de gestion doit être favorable pour que l'autorité compétente puisse délivrer le permis correspondant. Dans les autres cas, la commission doit simplement être consultée mais l'autorité compétente ne pourra s'écarter de son avis que par une décision spécialement motivée.

Huit Commissions de Conservation Natura 2000 sont mises en place depuis fin 2004. Elles ont comme objectif d'assurer le suivi de la gestion des sites Natura 2000. Elles rassemblent des représentants des administrations (agriculture, aménagement du territoire et environnement), et des représentants d'associations (conservation de la nature, professionnels, gestionnaires et propriétaires). Ces Commissions seront effectives dans le courant de l'année 2005.