6th Conference on Sustainable Development in Municipalities
European Dialogue on the municipal implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Strengthening biodiversity through cooperation with agriculture

Municipalities as intermediaries and supporters of local farms

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In view of the extinction of species, agriculture is currently subject of strong criticism. However, only particular cultivation methods are responsible for the decline in species. In fact, there are agricultural practices that are able to develop and sustainably use diverse and species-rich parts of the cultural landscape. So, on the one hand farmers are cause of the problem, on the other hand they are important partners for municipalities and states regarding nature conservation measures. This balancing act daily determines municipal action for biodiverstiy.

Initial situation

- Numerous compensation, municipal and protected areas in Wiesbaden‘s exterior area are cultivated by local farmers following the principle ‘grooming through use‘.
- Currently, 15-20 farmers can be supported by public funding (e.g. municipality, state, EU). This contributes to the diversification of farms.
- Basis for this principle: The city‘s qualified landscape plan (land use plan-level), two strategies [1. NATURA 2000-areas/nature conservation areas—development in cooperation with farmers (Upper Nature Conservation Authority/ Lower Nature Conservation Authorities) 2. compensation areas—70% to 80% through extensive farming] and a model of the city‘s landscape parks (use of cultural landscapes up to the city) .
- Considerable deficits in biodiversity in the urban landscape exist in green spaces and in agricultural areas as well as in habitat structures of paths and roads. Reasons are, among others, further intensification and improper maintenance.

Objectives

- With the support of ‘municipal farmers‘, species-rich parts of cultural landscape in the city‘s rural areas will be connected to the settlement areas and inner city.
- Green areas will be extensified.
- In agricultural areas the trend of increasing the size of cultivated areas will be reversed.
- New structures for small wild game will be created (feasibility study is carried out: working towards being a biosphere-region which would be the 17th of its kind in Germany).

Implementation

- Further development of the nature parks with integration of farmers and their methods.
- Further development of green areas. Biodiversity, recovery, preservation of historical monuments and aesthetics are equal criteria (farmers are partly responsible for the maintenance of big areas).
- Field-meadow-program of the state Hessen with the project area Wiesbaden-Ost.
- Development program ‘flourishing landscapes‘.
- Rehabilitation of tracks—common land—multi-functional tracks.
- Rotation model ‘compensation areas‘/eco-account for farmers.

Achievements

Success

- Field-meadow-program started with 100 areas (20 hectares).
- Three green areas with focus on compensation and recovery.
- Positive trends towards conversion to organic farming observable.
- Ban of glyphosate implemented on municipal agricultural areas.
- Model areas of flourishing green spaces have been implemented.

Deficits

- Farmers do not apply agri-environmental measures offered by the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU.
- So far, there are no changes in intensive agriculture observable.
- Farmers show great demand for more diversification, but, currently, appropriate instruments and investments are missing.
- Area availability: competition with settlement areas and other needs.
- The instrument of ‘ecological land consolidation‘ is not in use at the moment.

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