

Innovation Hub Factsheets 2024

High Nature Value Farming in Western Stara Planina, Bulgaria

The Western Stara Planina innovation hub sits in north-western Bulgaria. It is a High Nature Value farming and forestry area with biodiversity richness of national, European and global importance. Geographically, it is close to Sofia. Its purpose is to create an environment where it is financially and socially possible to farm in harmony with nature, without further damaging this exceptionally beautiful mountainous region, rich in wildlife and flower rich pastures. The project works closely with the advisory service, research institutes and other NGOs, gaining the trust of local farmers and residents.



In-field monitoring



Landscape in Western Stara Planina

Notable successes and challenges 2023–2024

- STEP and its partners agreed on key grassland indicators species to be used in the pilot Result-based agri-environment payment schemes (RBAPS) in Western Stara Planina, following two years of desk-based studies and field tests.
- Field visit to three new farms were undertaken to test the proposed lists for the indicator species, while work continues improving the plant species list created for RBAPS.
- Two meetings were held with the Bulgarian Bird Protection Society (BSPB) looking for synergies and ways to cooperate on RBAPS testing in the Sakar and Strandja Mountains in 2025.

STEP and BSPB also released two beautifully shot short films demonstrating the importance of these landscapes. They also participated in Agroecology-TRANSECT webinars focusing on policy work.

Summary

The team continues to develop and adapt the proposed lists for the indicator species and testing of RBAPS protocol. It follows closely the implementation of the CAP Strategic plan in Bulgaria especially the implementation of the eco-schemes supporting the extensive grazing practices and the maintenance of the green infrastructure and landscape features.