

## How can grassland farmers be empowered to clearly demonstrate how they deliver a range of ecosystem services for society?

**Objective:** This policy brief outlines the development of a cutting-edge farm-level Decision Support Tool (DST) designed to assist farmers in making informed decisions by providing a comprehensive overview of ecosystem service delivery from permanent grasslands on their farms. Additionally, it explores farmer perceptions of existing tools and evaluates the demand for the newly developed DST.

**Methodology:** Farmers, landowners, advisors, NGOs, and researchers were engaged in a collaborative effort to develop the DST. The DST assesses six ecosystem services: food production, climate regulation, biodiversity, aesthetics and recreation, flood and erosion control, and water quality. Farmer perceptions of existing tools were gathered through working groups in Hungary and Northern Ireland. The new DST was introduced to farmers, and their feedback was collected.

### Key Results:

- Farmer feedback highlighted that existing tools fail to meet their requirements for assessing and quantifying ecosystem service delivery from permanent grasslands on their farms.
- Farmers expressed a strong desire for a new DST that provides user-friendly, intuitive, and evidence-based information on ecosystem service delivery.
- The newly developed DST calculates values for different ecosystem services based on user responses to a series of questions.
- Scores for six ecosystem services are generated, benchmarked against expected values, and presented using a 'traffic light' system followed by recommendations for improvement.
- Demonstrations to farmer working groups revealed that the new DST offers useful, intuitive feedback on farm ecosystem services.

### Policy Recommendations:

- Policy support is crucial for the further development, communication, and dissemination of the DST beyond the SUPER-G consortium and network.
- Recognise the clear desire among farmers for useful, intuitive, and evidence-based information on ecosystem service delivery at the farm level.
- Encourage policies that promote farmer engagement with the DST, ensuring its effective utilisation for sustainable land management practices.

The development of the DST represents a significant step toward empowering farmers with practical, user-friendly tools for evaluating ecosystem services on their farms. Policy support is essential to ensure the widespread adoption and continuous improvement of this innovative decision support system.

**Key References:** [https://www.super-g.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SUPER-G\\_Task\\_5.1\\_DST\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.super-g.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SUPER-G_Task_5.1_DST_Report_FINAL.pdf)