

## What role do cultural ecosystem services play in preserving permanent grasslands?

**Objective:** Cultural ecosystem services are often overlooked in research and seen by many as the least important aspect delivered by European permanent grasslands. This policy brief outlines the role cultural ecosystem services play in promoting (and degrading) European permanent grasslands and provides implications for integrating them into policy.

**Methodology:** A literature review examined 71 papers addressing threats to cultural ecosystem services (CES) and permanent grasslands, as well as threats originating from CES to grasslands. The underlying causes, direct threats, consequences, and suggested solutions mentioned in the extracted studies were summarised.

### Key Findings:

Agritourism is highlighted as a successful tool for farm income diversification and provides educational benefits about agriculture and rural traditions alongside recreational opportunities for tourists. Extensively managed traditional areas support more CES than modernised, homogeneous areas.

Recreational activities may result in environmental damage and differing perceptions between stakeholder groups about aesthetic landscapes and allowed recreational activities contribute to conflicts. Studies comparing the attitudes of residents to tourists or experts reveal differing preferences, with locals often favouring open landscapes like pastures and meadows.

Industrial activities and associated pollution are identified as major threats to CES, impacting human well-being, health, ecosystems, and their services.

### Policy Implications:

New agri-environmental programs are needed that support CES, especially in marginal areas, and should be integrated into the new Common Agricultural Policy.

Developing strategies to bring permanent residents back to rural areas are needed while agritourism is advocated to maintain the connection between CES and traditional land use. Knowledge transfer to tourists, inclusion of relevant stakeholders in landscape planning, and educating residents about the value of grassland ecosystems are emphasised.

Improved access to rural regions are proposed to promote responsible recreation in Europe. Improving infrastructure for tourists to access remote areas is (counterintuitively) suggested to minimise potential impacts of unrestrained recreation.

Negative impacts should be anticipated and addressed during the planning phase of new recreational areas, tailored to specific circumstances.

**Key Reference:** Pellaton, R., Lellei-Kovács, E., & Báldi, A. (2022). Cultural ecosystem services in European grasslands: A systematic review of threats. *Ambio*, 51(12), 2462-2477.