

## How can communication around farming systems based on permanent grasslands across Europe be improved?

**Objective:** Prevailing farming system classifications, centred on production types such as cattle, dairy, and sheep, are limited in their relevance for permanent grassland farming systems in Europe. This policy brief outlines an effort to redefine, classify, and summarise European farming systems based on permanent grassland. The ultimate goal is to develop a conceptual model of s 'typical' farming systems that are largely reliant on permanent grassland, and their potential to deliver a range of ecosystem services across Europe.

**Methodology:** To achieve these objectives, four primary activities were undertaken: 1. A questionnaire was circulated among the SUPER-G consortium to gather descriptions of main farming systems. 2. Assessment of the most relevant variables characterising the different farming systems. 3. Using these variables to interrogate two farm-based European datasets. 4. Using the data to produce farming system distribution maps and statistics for the main PG-based farming systems across Europe.

### Key Results:

A multi-level classification system was proposed that defines each farming system by a combination of criteria. The key levels include livestock type, stocking rate, share of permanent grassland, and exploitation regime (e.g., grazing, cutting, non-feed, or NA). Using this classification, 315 types of farming systems were identified, offering a nuanced perspective on the diversity within permanent grassland farming.

An important insight from this research emphasises the biogeographic context dependence of specific farming systems. For example, the prevalence of sheep and goat systems in the Mediterranean region underscore the necessity for customised policies that take into account the unique context and regionally significant characteristics of permanent grassland farming systems in Europe.

### Policy Implications:

Developing effective permanent grassland policy is difficult without a way to understand and account for differences across farming systems. The multi-level classification system outlined here provides the means for understanding and accounting for differences across "typical" farm systems.

The classification system can be used as a foundation for policy development that recognizes the importance and varied nature of ecosystem service delivery. For example, it can be used to establish a ranking system for farms based on their potential contribution to ecosystem services, allowing support to be directed towards systems that offer the greatest public benefit.

The classification system may also be used to create awareness among farmer associations and the general public regarding the broad spectrum of ecosystem services provided by permanent grassland farming systems that extend beyond traditional production metrics. Such efforts are needed to legitimise policy and leverage their support.

**Key References:** Korevaar, H., Sacco, D., Ravetto Enri, S., Lombardi, G., Ten Berge, H., Bufe, C., ... & Newell Price, P. (2019). Characterising permanent grassland-based farming systems in Europe. Proceedings of the Improving Sown Grasslands through Breeding and Management, Zurich, Switzerland, 24-27.