

CASE STUDY SI-4

NATURE CONSERVATION ENABLING SOCIAL SECURITY IN FARMING IN SREDIŠČE OB DRAVI

BRIEF PROFILE OF THE CASE STUDY

- The case study area (Slovenia) is planned to be designated **Landscape Natural Park**: it includes a **riparian flooded forest** (~230ha) and **mosaic agricultural landscape** (~200ha) in a remote area of Slovenia facing **demographic and economic decline**. The meandering river creates a **unique habitat** (designated Natura 2000). There are almost no infrastructure (field paths, trails) and a **heterogeneous high nature value agricultural landscape**. The agricultural policy of the 1970s stimulated intensification (corn, oilseeds). The **river floods**, washing away soil thus also resulting in nutrient leech. Forest is not commercially interesting.
- Key environmental and social benefits of the case study are the mosaic agricultural and forestry landscape character which also provides for important **habitats and biodiversity**; this is also closely related to **rural vitality as preserved agricultural landscape** depends on farmers.
 - Actors: BirdLife Slovenia, municipality (support), farmers, various local associations, famous oil mill (pumpkin oil tradition), new LAG;
 - Governance: Conservation policy (national, Natura 2000), agricultural policy (Direct payments, agri-environment schemes and LEADER); Life project LIVEDRAVA. There is support from public actors too for the project.
 - Currently there is no local market for regional products other than small oil mill shop. There is **no accommodation** available in the area.



Meandering river

KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

- **Farmers** are divided to some extent, mainly due to negative past experiences and **mistrust**. The previous attempts to establish a natural park failed due to **poor communication**. People are **reluctant to cooperate** economically: small municipality, influence of essentially unrelated disputes; part of farming community is concerned about potential further tightening of obligations (e.g. of the current Natura 2000 regulation) and historical grudges. Farmers see sustainable land management practices as a threat and adopt a risk adverse or a conservatism attitudes which blocks entrepreneurial spirit. This is also linked to age and education level.
- Increasing awareness about the **development potential associated with the natural park brand**. Some local actors plan to capitalise on it.
- Initiative of environmental NGO **accepted** by local community (proud of preserved nature, special attitude towards river) as an opportunity for **economic development** through **new/transformed practices** and **collective action** (currently lacking), still some **scepticism** and **lack of cohesion** to be overcome.
- The EU single market and the aftermath of the economic crisis are pressuring **uncompetitive farmers** to search for **new niches**, but they lack knowledge, capital, ideas and willingness to cooperate.

EMERGING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



Riparian forest

- The landscape park could bring **economic benefits** for the local population.
- **Individual** willingness and ability are key. More positive experiences are needed to permanently stimulate collective action: good practice demonstration, dialogue, **cooperation**.
- Coordinated and well-conceived efforts are also needed for **marketing** and **increasing visibility**, to improve the area's appeal as a **touristic destination** and to promote its specificities through a unique experience.
- Inclusive approach between the NGO BirdLife Slovenia and the municipality.
- Policy: direct payments offset the positive impacts of Pillar 2 measures on biodiversity and water quality by maintaining intensive production.
- More proactive role of **agricultural extension service** is required
- Adding value without re-investing in nature preservation could result in irreversible environmental and social damages.

