



Title: Landscape conservation in the Black Forest, Germany

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Name of Organisation:

German Association for Landcare (Deutscher Verband für Landschaftspflege, DVL)

in cooperation with

Landcare Association Central Black Forest (Landschaftsentwicklungsverband Mittlerer Schwarzwald e.V., LACBF)

Summary:

The German Association for Landcare (DVL) is the umbrella organization of 155 Landcare Associations (Landschaftspflegeverband, LA) distributed all over Germany. The independent local LAs manage the cultural landscape in Germany, which has been shaped the last centuries by regional land use systems. Not only many species, but also large parts of the German cultural heritage depend on those socio-ecological production landscapes. It is the task of all LA and the DVL to restore and maintain the cultural landscapes by working in cooperation with local municipalities/ authorities, farmer organizations and nature conservationists to strengthen local communities, protect biodiversity and enhance a sustainable livelihood.

The Landcare Association Central Black Forest (LACBF) is committed to preserve the cultural landscape of the Black Forest in the southwest of Germany. Due to its traditional land use this regions reflects a mosaic of forests, pastures and grassland. Many species have adapted to the mosaic rich landscape and is dependent on its continuing land use. The LACBF organizes pasture management to keep the grasslands open, supports regional products and offers educational trainings to raise awareness for the very specific country side in the Black Forest.

Themes: forests, agricultural fields, grasslands

Keywords: cultural landscapes, cooperation, nature conservation, landcare, Black Forest, Germany

Map Location:



City Schiltach, Black Forest Area

Maps: <http://www.google.de>

Google map link:

Latitude: 48.2917596

Longitude: 8.3468916

Main Body:

1. Regional background of the Black Forest



(Pic. 1: Cultural landscape in the Black Forest)

The Black Forest is located in the southeast of Germany, Central Europe. In former times Europe and the region of the Black Forest were originally covered by thick forests. But as humans started to settle down they began to cultivate the land and thus influence the landscape. They used forests as pastures for their animals and chopped down the valuable wood for either fuel or construction purposes. The resulting open spaces were used as pastures or ploughed to cultivate field crops. The diverse structure was also shaped by the regional characteristics of the Black Forest, which are steep slopes and deep valleys. The traditional land use created and preserved a mosaic rich structure of forests, grasslands and cultivated fields, which represents the characteristics of the Black Forest.

By the traditional land use system several ecosystem services are offered. Three important services are described as follows:

- 1) Because of the mosaic rich landscape many species of flora and fauna found their habitat in the cultural landscape of the Black Forest. Many light dependent and also endangered species can be found there. The species rich grasslands and pastures also provide high quality fodder for animals.
- 2) The beautiful landscape and traditional villages attract many tourists to the region. This strengthens the rural economy and also gives a local identity to residents.
- 3) The open grasslands and fields also provide fresh air in the valleys. Open spaces let the air cool down faster in the evening and at night fresh air flows down the riches donating fresh air to the villages in the deep valleys.



(Pic.2: Traditional farm house in the Black Forest)

Despite those benefits for people and nature, the cultural landscape of the Black Forest faces big challenges. A lot of grassland has been fallen fallow over the last years because traditional - and mostly sustainable- land use is too expensive and elaborate. Although technical development offers new options, still many slopes in the Black Forest have to be cut and harvested by hand labour. The cultivation of field crops is focused only on cost effective fields



in the lowlands, which causes an unsustainable intensification of those fields and results in the abandonment of extensive grasslands and pastures. Also the traditional way of life, which formed the typical landscape of the Black Forest, is in the process of being lost. Being a farmer and doing the hard work is no longer attractive.

For those reasons the Landcare Association Central Black Forest (LACBF) was founded. It is committed to promote a sustainable development and the conservation of the cultural landscape to maintain benefits both for people and nature in the Black Forest.

2. Current challenges and solutions

The biggest challenge right now is to stop the loss of the traditional land use carried out by small agricultural holdings. The resulting changes, the loss of biodiversity, cultural landscape and its services have a big impact for people and nature. Consequences are the change in the landscape (e.g. reforestation) and the quality of life (e.g. fresh air) in the Black Forest. Therefore the LACBF works together with municipal authorities, conservationists and farmers to find a cooperative way of a sustainable development. As a nonprofit organization the LACBF contributes to and organizes discussions amongst the stakeholder groups. In cooperation they find solutions for a sustainable land use system and measures which can be carried out to conserve the landscape. The cooperative way of nature conservation and regional development have proved their success over the years and have built an effective and trustfully network amongst stakeholders in the region.

The work of the LACBF consists of different projects. In general they can be divided into four main tasks. There are even more responsibilities for the LACBF, but the following points are selected to give an overall impression.

a) Landcare measures

As described above the traditional land use is crucial for the existence of open spaces and biodiversity in the Black Forest. If the land falls fallow shrubs will invade very fast and even small trees will start growing after a short time. In the long run forest will be back on those fields. On already abandoned fields the LACBF discusses with the local municipality and land owners if there is a cost effective and ecologically reasonable way to carry out a landcare measure to clear up the field and restore the grassland. If so, the LACBF will mandate a local farmer to do the selected measure on the ground. Doing this, farmers can

even earn money by helping to protect the landscape. Often those measures are financially supported by the German federal state or the European Union. The LACBF can apply for the subsidies and pass them on to the farmer. But a landcare measure to clear a patch only makes sense if the land will stay in use afterwards. Therefore the future way of use and the farmer who will do this have to be specified even before the measure starts.

b) Pasture management



(Pic.4: Pasture in the Black Forest, photographer: Christoph Ziechaus)

For the land which has already been restored or is in danger to fall fallow the LACBF conciliates with famers to ensure the land use. The proper use of those sites is pasture management because of its species rich fodder and the ability of the grazing stock to prevent reforestation. The LACBF acts as kind of a broker. It either finds a farmer who can use those fields as additional pastures or supports farmers setup their own herd of cows, sheep, or goats. The network of the association is crucial for the communication and the overall success. A lot of confidence is needed to speak directly and clearly with land users about possibilities. With the right choice of management system the LACBF can not only support landscape conservation but also contribute to the farmers´ income.

c) Regional products and added value in the region

A permanent land use is essential for the diverse landscape in the Black Forest. Technical revolution and land-use intensification made farming on steep slopes ineffective. If the yield of intensified fields in the lowlands is higher than the extensive and elaborate farming on the slopes, why should the farmer keep those fields in use? The LACBF is searching for alternative ways of land use to make the farming on the slopes worth the effort. As an



example the restoration of orchards shows the connection between land use, biodiversity and added value to the region. One example is the sell of local juice from orchards in the region, which supports the work of its owners. The local juice initiative has already developed a regional identification. It also stands for high quality and sustainability. Local people, who care for their orchards, can now earn money from this traditional land use system. Species rich orchards are preserved and in use due to the regional marketing. People cut the meadows underneath the trees, prune the trees and harvest the fruits to

(Pic.5: cheese sold by a local farmer; photographer: Christoph Ziechaus)



generate an additional income which makes all the work worth it. Not only tourists, but also people in the region buy this local product and generate an added value chain in the region of the Central Black Forest. The marketing initiative “echt Schwarzwald” (original Black Forest) sells many local products in the region, e.g.: smoked ham, liquor, honey, bread, dairy products, etc. Even “show kitchens” or public production sites can be visited. Here local people and tourists can learn about the product and its impact on the landscape. The LACBF supports the exchange of network contacts, experiences and gives hand to foster the marketing on the one hand and on the other hand offers advice on a sustainable land use which is adapted to the Black Forest. A small brochure, which is available in all town halls, informs people about direct marketers of agricultural products. Special events are organized to show the connection between the landscapes and the products.

d) Awareness rising

It is very important to rise peoples´ awareness addressing the connection between the regional landscape, land use and nature conservation. It is essential that local people get an idea and feeling about the landscape where they live. Therefore the LACBF organizes public events to explain the link between pastures, forests, grasslands, biodiversity, ecosystem services and the resulting quality of life in the region.

School kids are very important groups to train, because it is crucial to raise their awareness for their home landscape. They will also discuss with their families what they have learned and spread their knowledge. The LACBF organizes school projects right on the local orchards to train the children. They have developed different modules for pupils addressing them age specific. The aim is to bring the children closer to nature with all the natural linkages, dependencies and changes, to arouse interest and convey knowledge in a playful manner. Each class participates in three or four action days a year. The field trips are carried out on local orchards, as here the changes during the year and the different habitats can be observed particularly beautiful and clear. Actions during the field trips are for example to write diaries about their experiences on the ground, solve riddles or make fresh juice from self-harvested apples.



(Pic. 6: exploration of local orchards by school kids)

Together with the marketing organization “echt Schwarzwald” and the farmer’s organization the LACBF arranges local events, e.g. markets, to introduce the local products and to illustrate the work farmers perform to the public. Technical guidance and discussions on topics regarding the conservation of the landscape and regional development are offered as public forums, too.

To inform local politicians and decision makers about the progress in the landscape the LACBF offers daytrips to explain specific projects or discuss ongoing issues. They bring together all stakeholders to get an impression and overview of their commitments and challenges.



3. Landcare Associations and the German Association for Landcare

Over all it's the general task of the LACBF to moderate processes and bring stakeholders together, to find out about someone's fears and challenges and look for common solutions. It is the aim to find a cooperative way to support a regional sustainable development in the landscape without losing its functions for people, food and nature.

This case study shows a range of typical tasks LAs carry out all over Germany. Most German federal states have their own specifics and it is obvious and essential that the LAs are adapted to it to find a cooperative way together with conservationists, farmers and local authorities to care for the landscape and its sustainable development.

The German Association for Landcare (DVL) is the umbrella organization in Germany. On the one hand it provides services to its member organizations. The DVL supports the exchange of experiences and knowledge between the LAs. It organizes trainings on specific topics which are relevant for their work. The DVL also realizes projects to gain new experiences about new topics or measures. The results are passed on directly to the member organizations. On the other hand DVL informs and influences the decision makers at all levels, from the local level up to the Commissions of the European Union. Thus DVL supports the work of its members and contributes to the European Environmental Action Plan.