

**Proposal for the identification of potential "strict protection" areas according to EC guidelines<sup>1</sup> for the implementation of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030.**

**A. Silvopastoral mosaic landscapes (agro-forestry) with high conservation value, represented by the mix of grassland-forest-woodland habitats.**

<b>Conservation values considered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological functionality of the mosaic silvo-pastoral (agro-forestry) landscape consisting of <b>a mix of forest/forestry</b> habitats outside the national forest and permanent grassland (see A.1)</li> <li>• The mosaic silvo-pastoral (agro-forestry) landscape maximises its conservation value if <b>wetlands</b> and <b>cliff/grotto habitats</b> are included.</li> </ul>
<b>Priorities for designation:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) increasing the <b>ecological connectivity of forest habitats</b> by 'enveloping' isolated forest bodies in NFF contained in the mosaic</li> <li>(ii) improving the ecological <b>connectivity</b> of the <b>network of protected natural areas</b></li> <li>(iii) areas providing <b>ecological connectivity</b> at regional level and which have been included in <b>ecological corridors</b> identified by scientific projects funded/received by the authorities</li> <li>(iv) areas in designated <b>protected natural areas</b> where forests/tuparials are identified and mapped as <b>Habitats of Community Interest</b> through the AP Natura 2000 MPs</li> <li>(v) areas located in <b>catchment areas at risk of flooding</b></li> <li>(vi) pastures affected by land degradation in <b>need of reconstruction</b> or NbS interventions to mitigate erosion or flood risk</li> <li>(vii) isolated landscape-level grassland-woodland mosaic areas functioning as biodiversity pacemakers for ecologically weak adjacent areas</li> </ul>
<b>Note:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correlation with National Forest Fund distribution (i).</li> <li>- Correlation with AP network distribution (ii)</li> <li>- Correlation with ecological corridors identified through scientific projects received by the competent authority (iii)</li> <li>- Correlation with protected natural areas MPs (iv)</li> <li>- Correlation with Flood Risk MP where maintaining this mosaic has significant implications (v)</li> <li>- Correlation with APIA database (vi)</li> </ul>
<b>Management measures</b>
<p>Strict protection of the <b>mosaic silvo-pastoral (agro-forestry) landscape</b> through <b>active management measures</b></p> <p><b>Restrictions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Deforestation<sup>2</sup> forest vegetation</li> <li>✓ Mining of mineral aggregates</li> <li>✓ Change of use category (e.g. to access roads, intravilan) on more than 5% of the landscape (which is why potential area proposals should be declared &gt; 10% ).</li> <li>✓ Afforestation with non-native species</li> </ul> <p><b>Active management measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mowing and grazing activities, including in woodland/woodland areas</li> <li>✓ Timber harvesting (i.e. annually max. 1% of the volume of timber per foot, no more than 2 stand height openings)</li> <li>✓ Harvesting of fruit and mushrooms (with limitations laid down in regulatory acts)</li> <li>✓ Work on natural disaster prevention interventions</li> <li>✓ Ecological reconstruction</li> <li>✓ Establishment of physical blocks eligible for APIA payments and on wooded areas to maintain this mosaic landscape</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/criteria-and-guidance-protected-areas-designations-staff-working-document\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/criteria-and-guidance-protected-areas-designations-staff-working-document_en)

<sup>2</sup> According to the EUDR definition

**A.1.** Grounds for the identification of **high conservation value agro-forest mosaic landscapes** consisting of grassland-forest-woodland habitats as potential "strict protection" areas: (i) **high conservation value** for biodiversity; (ii) increases coherence of the Natura 2000 network and improves connectivity of Natura 2000 sites; (iii) fulfilment of **ecosystem services** for **adapting to** and combating the effects of **climate change** (4.1.4. Other ecosystems)

**Representativeness:**

- ✓ Community interest/priority **issues**
- ✓ EU and RO **species of Community interest** or priority/strictly protected **species**
- ✓ the transition area between permanent grassland and forest is an **extensive area of ecotone** that harbours a **high specific biodiversity**.
- ✓ essential for **preserving the cultural identity of local communities** in areas where there is **traditional use**

**Proportionality:**

- ✓ covers **specific large areas at national level** (more than 3 million ha at national level)

**Connectivity:**

- ✓ ensures maintenance/improvement of **functional connectivity** of isolated forest bodies in NFF for **forest dependent species** with reduced dispersal capacity (e.g. insects, fungi etc.)
- ✓ constitute **core distribution areas of connectivity networks** (i.e. they are natural landscapes with high favorability for mammals); constitute a mix of favorable habitats included in **ecological corridors** (see connectivity projects implemented in RO for large carnivores as umbrella species)

**Functionality:**

- ✓ ensures **the functionality of protected areas** through the conservation of habitats of Community interest (convergence with Natura 2000 site management plans)
- ✓ together with grassland habitats, functionally support **zoocenoses specific to transition zones**
- ✓ have a **higher resilience** compared to artificially created forests (through afforestation of agricultural land), being naturally established through **natural processes of succession**
- ✓ have a **high adaptability**, with a high capacity for evolution due to the increased dynamics and the large number of characteristic edifying species

**A.2** Technical and governance grounds

- (i) Non-forest forests/woodlands (except for those which are designated as Habitats of Community Interest by management plans), **can be legally deforested** because: (\*) they do not benefit from dedicated management regulations, and (\*\*) the APIA payments for permanent grassland encourage the increase of eligible physical blocks to the detriment of areas covered by forests/woodlands.
- (ii) **Does not** affect existing **APIA** payment schedules for grassland
- (iii) Land on which forestry vegetation is in place will retain its agricultural use. **Conservation subsidies/payments may also be granted for these areas**, which will become eligible for payment to support conservation efforts

- Background.** According to the [EU observatory on deforestation and forest degradation](#), Romania has about **9 million ha** of land covered by forest vegetation (according to the FAO definition of forests). Romania reports **7 million ha of forests** (according to [the National Forest Inventory](#)), of which only **6.4 million ha** are classified as national forest land (**NFI**), for which the forestry regime is applicable. Approximately **1.2 mil ha** are lands covered with forest vegetation (wooded pastures) which together with permanent meadows / pastures and cliffs form a mosaic landscape with high conservation value of over **3 mil ha**, absolutely significant at national level especially in terms of biodiversity.
- (iv) **It prevents legal deforestation** and ensures the **conservation of forest vegetation** outside the national forest estate and supports the **achievement of timber harvests** within the projected limits for forestry set in the context of EU climate and energy policies for 2030 (**LULUCF, RED**).
  - (v) **Anticipates the settlement of binding European provisions:** [EU Nature restoration law](#) and [EUDR](#) (EU Reg. 1115/2023 "Deforestation-free")