



WADDEN SEA FORUM

Working Group Agriculture and Nature Management

First meeting, Rastede (D), 20 September 2007

FINAL MINUTES

1. OPENING AND INTRODUCTION

The meeting was opened by Erich Hinrichs, who welcomed the participants (**Annex 1**). He expressed the hope that the meeting would result in a fruitful exchange of experiences, in particular on the issue of goose grazing. Ms. Even of the Chamber of Agriculture Lower Saxony had circulated a questionnaire to collect relevant information. The results are in **Annex 2**. Hinrichs then invited the participants to introduce themselves.

Erich Hinrichs. Dairy farmer in Kreis Wittmund. 90 cows, 65 ha grassland. President of Farmer's Union Ostfriesland, member of the boards of Farmer's Union Lower Saxony and Chamber of Agriculture Lower Saxony. Member of the Wadden Sea Forum (WSF).

Hans-Peter Witt. Farmer in Schleswig-Holstein. 1000 ha arable land, shared between 3 farmers. Chair of Farmer's Union Dithmarschen. 2nd vice-president Farmer's Union Schleswig-Holstein. Member of WSF.

Martin Wendeburg. Employed by NLWKN, the Lower Saxonian Agency for Water, Coastal Protection and Nature. Work field: Natura 2000 in north-western part of Lower Saxony, in particular agreements with farmers on breeding bird protection and goose grazing.

Kristen Fromsejer. Farmer in Tønder Marsh. Crop farmer in a marshland area. Representative of Danish Farmer's Union. Member of WSF.

Eckhard Asche. Employed by Chamber of Agriculture Lower Saxony. Work fields: Land planning, agrarian structures, rural area. Head of project "Ostfriesland Aktiv für Natur and Landwirtschaft". This project also deals with problems of goose grazing.

Karin Westra. Employed by the Directorate North of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Consumer Safety (LNV). Senior advisor to minister on nature policy matters.

Folkert de Jong. Employed by Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS). Work fields: Habitat Directive, Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Secretary of WSF.

Hilbrand Sinnema. Farmer in province of Groningen (potatoes, sugar beets). Representative of LTO North, the northern branch of the Dutch agriculture organisation. Chairman of the Wadden Sea Commission of LTO North. Member of WSF.

Jurjen Kingma. Employed by LTO North. Secretary of Board of LTO. Member of WSF.

Maike Neue. Employed by Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein.

2. NATIONAL REPORTS

Hinrichs invited to a round of reports from the different countries about experiences with goose grazing. This was in his view an issue relevant for all Wadden Sea countries.

Martin Wendeburg started with a presentation about the situation in northwest Lower Saxony.

Lower Saxony.

Bird Directive Areas have been designated in the Wadden Sea, Ems-Dollard and Jadebusen, along the coast, as well as in some inland areas. See figure 1.

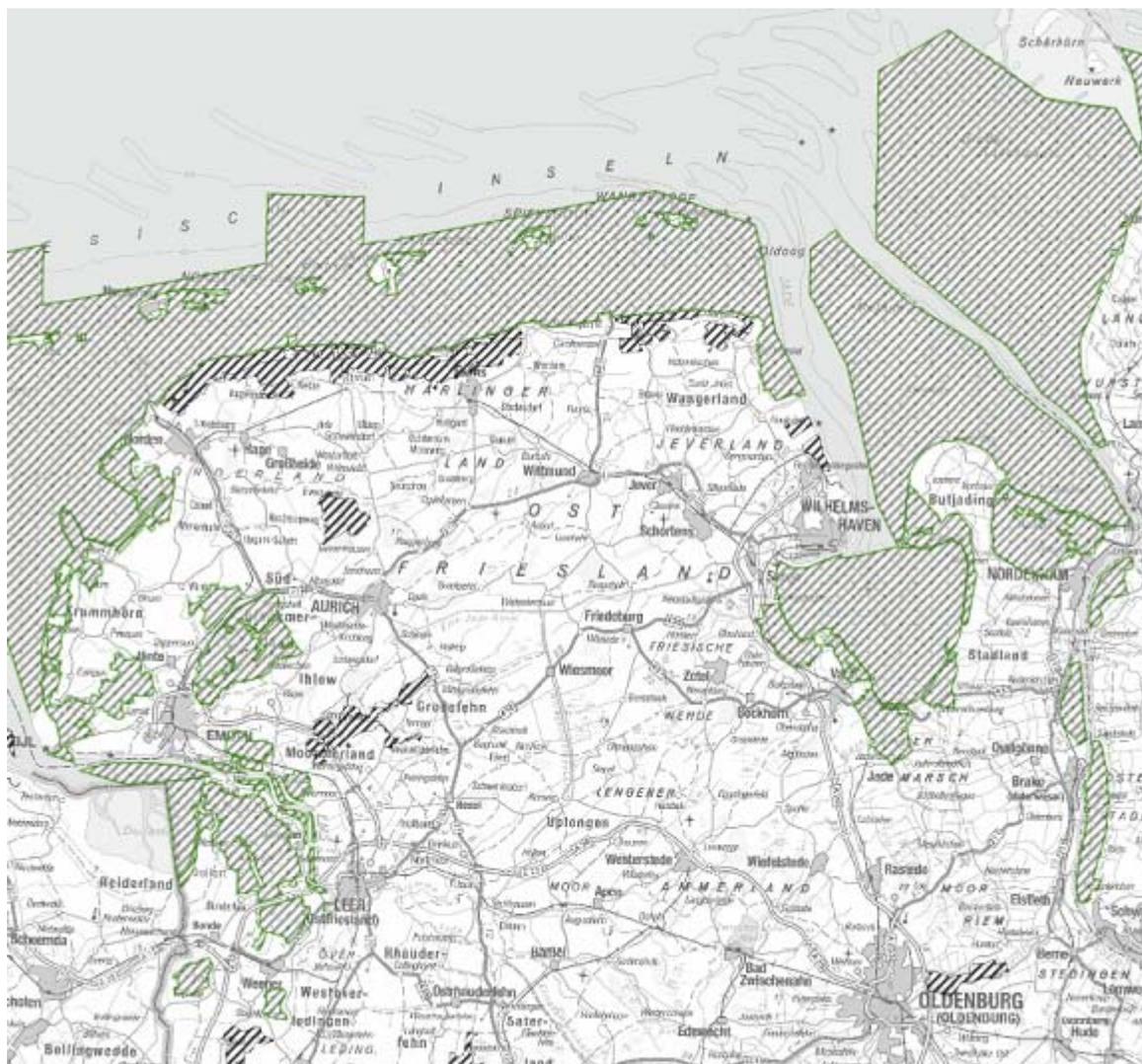


Figure 1. Bird Directive areas in north-western Lower Saxony. In areas with green borders, geese are predominant.

The concerned goose species (table 1) are, in order of population sizes (see also table 2):

Barnacle goose (also species for which special conservation objective is valid)

White-fronted goose

Greylag goose (increasingly breeding in the area)

Brent goose (only in the Leybucht and on salt marshes).

	UK	DK	D	NL
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Barnacle Goose	Bramgås	Nonnengans	Brandgans
<i>Anser albifrons</i>	White-Fronted Goose	Blisgås	Blässgans	Kolgans
<i>Anser anser</i>	Grey-Lag Goose	Grågås	Graugans	Grauwe Gans
<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Brent Goose	Knortegås	Ringelgans	Rotgans

Table 1. Goose species grazing on farmland.

During the period 2001-2006 a nature management programme on a voluntary basis was offered in Rheiderland. It concerned an area of 8000 ha, designated under the EU Bird Directive. 251 farmers with in total 6132 ha (70%) made use of the scheme.

A new scheme for the period 2007-2013 is now being offered for nordic migratory birds. The scheme applies to (Habitat and Bird Directive) areas where geese are predominantly present and concerns both arable and grassland. For arable land 1000 ha has been selected, for grassland 8200 ha. Contracts are made directly between individual farmers and the Chamber of Agriculture. Supervision is done by the nature management authority at the Kreis level (untere Naturschutzbehörde).

For an overview of payments and conditions, see **annex 2**. An important condition is that geese may not be chased away. This, however, applies to all habitat and bird directive areas, irrespective of whether or not a farmer has signed a management contract.

Farmers had expected that within the new scheme compensation payments would be made on the basis of numbers of grazing geese and, thus the actual damage. This was not possible because EU support is not possible for damage, only for reduction of farming intensity.

This has greatly reduced the acceptance of the programme because numbers of geese show an increasing trend (table 2) and also the actual damage. This is especially the case for the so-called "foraging peaks" (Rastspitzen), where often so much damage is done that crops have to be sown anew.

The problem seems to be increasing, i.e. in terms of numbers of birds, (see table 2), length of bird's stay (especially barnacle goose) and extension of the area used by the geese. The latter is especially the case for the white-fronted goose. Furthermore, the grey-lag goose is increasingly breeding in the area.

In order to find appropriate solutions for the foraging peak problem (including development of standards for assessing damage and creating a fund for prefinancing), a pilot project has been started.

Species	Maximum 96/97	Maximum 02/03	Maximum 03/04	Maximum 04/05	Maximum 05/06
Barnacle Goose	31.400	49.800	80.000	38.900	52.200
White-Fronted Goose	41.500	51.700	48.000	35.800	51.500
Grey-Lag Goose	3.700	7.000	8.000	2.900	5.000

Table 2. Maximum numbers of goose species in Ems-Dollart region.

Schleswig-Holstein

The situation in Schleswig-Holstein was presented by Ms. Newe. She stated that the west coast of Schleswig-Holstein offers good conditions for geese. There has been a strong increase in the numbers of, especially, barnacle geese, from 100,000 in the 1950s to some 300,000 today. Moreover, the length of stay had increased from 180 - 210 days. The Grey-lag goose is increasingly breeding in the area. These factors are responsible for increasing damage. Especially this year there was high damage from geese grazing. Also disturbance of other meadow birds had been observed.

Since 2001 there has been a programme (Vertragsnaturschutz) for geese grazing in "traditional areas", i.e. areas where geese usually occur. A new programme has started in 2007, which hardly differs from the old programme.

The programme offers a compensation varying from 85 Euro to 125 Euro for grassland, depending on the demands to the farmers. With a payment of 85 Euro there are less restrictions. The payment of 125 Euro is paid when farming activities start mid June.

For arable land 205 Euro per ha is paid, but there is little interest in this option because of fertilisation restrictions.

Another programme is the "Hallig" programme, which is only valid for the Halligen. It aims at extensification of agriculture and also contains a part related to protection of Brent geese. Up till 50,000 Brent geese forage on some 1700 ha.

Also in Schleswig-Holstein the foraging peak problem is the central problem.

Denmark

Kristen Fromsejer reported that in Denmark there are no geese programmes. The problem of geese grazing is increasing in Denmark because species are moving north. The salt marshes are intensively used by the geese, which takes away some of the pressure from the inland farm areas.

There are programmes for extensification of agriculture but these concern all water birds (see annex).

At the moment the Danish Forest and Nature Agency is in the process of making management plans for some species, but so far no management plans have been made for waterfowls. Some of the Danish NGO's have been talking of making management plans for some rare species. Last week the Wildlife Management Council (WMC) had a meeting where they touched the subject of overgrazing by the geese species *Branta leucopsis* on the Danish island Mandø. The WMC contains representatives of all major NGO's in Denmark concerned with wildlife management, the council advice the minister of environmental affairs in relation to hunting and wildlife management. In the present case, the farmers on Mandø could not feed their cattle, due to enormous flocks of grazing water birds during the winter there was no grass left for the farmer's cattle. Not until very late in the season the cattle were able to feed on the pastures on Mandø. This could result in a total stop of management of the grasslands on these locations, at the cost of the farmer's livelihood and the loss of an important habitat for waders and waterfowls. Therefore the WMC touched on 3 subjects. a) Possibility of compensating the losses of the farmer. b) Priority questions, which protection should have the higher priority? The protection of *Branta leucopsis*, or the protection of some of the rare waders in the area. c) Possibility of allowing local hunting seasons for the problem species. The WMC agreed on the possibilities of compensating the farmers for their economic losses as a result of the overgrazing. The priority question will call for further information on the impacts on other species of the high concentration of *Branta leucopsis*. Finally it was concluded that a hunting season is not an option, as the *Branta leucopsis* is not placed on annex II in the Birds Directive.

Netherlands

Jurjen Kingma and Hilbrand Sinnema reported about the situation in the Netherlands.

There are two types of payments. First, contracts with farmers are offered for an area of maximally 80,000 ha (2007) of grassland and arable land. In 2006 contracts for a total area of 56,000 ha were made, for which 5,8 million Euro was paid, which is an average of some 100 Euro per ha. These payments are co-financed by the EU and concern, actually co-financing for extensification measures. Outside these areas, no contracting is possible, but damage can be compensated through the so-called fauna fund. This fund has no EU co-financing but is a purely national fund. The damage compensation by the Fauna Fund was 3 mi Euro in 2006 (average payment 134 Euro per ha). The maximum area covered by the Fauna Fund is 80,000 ha. Before payment for damage is possible, geese have to be chased away or hunted.

An overview of conditions and payments of the two programmes is in the Annex.

The main problem is that many farmers (25-35%) have more damage than is actually paid for. This situation is becoming worse because of the increasing numbers of geese (see Annex). Like in Germany the foraging peak is the most important reason for high damage.

Another effect cause by the increasing geese number is that other bird species get disturbed.

Also in the Netherlands there is an increasing breeding population of the grey-lag goose. An interesting difference between the Dutch situation and the situation in Germany is that there is no or hardly geese grazing in Natura 2000 or Bird Directive areas, because agriculture areas have not been designated as such. Natura 2000 and Bird Directive areas are used by the geese as resting areas. Foraging is done on the high food-quality grasslands and arable lands.

3. DISCUSSION

The participants **agreed** that the core of the problem was that management is focused on areas and not on populations. Management would need to focus on population and address the question of maximum population sizes of geese. Moreover, management would need to have an international dimension. The meeting extensively discussed possible causes of the population increases, amongst which changing conditions in the breeding regions (hunting, temperature) and increasing availability of high quality food on farmland in winter. Also methods for regulating population size were discussed, amongst which hunting and natural predators, but these were not considered effective or feasible. Furthermore, recultivation of nature areas and insurance for farmers were put forward as possible options.

Karin Westra stated that the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture and Nature Management was currently discussing an approach in which maximum numbers for certain habitats would be fixed.

The meeting also **agreed** that the problem cannot be solved by the current EU regulations.

It was **agreed** to present the problem to the WSF-11 meeting and to propose that WSF would send a letter to the EU Committee of the Regions to address the problem.

The meeting also **agreed** that more facts were needed about population developments and the reasons for the changes. In this respect the decrease in hunting pressure in Siberia was mentioned.

It was **agreed** to ask the geese expert Kruckenberg to give a presentation at the coming WSF meeting about the population development of relevant goose species. Information can also be found on www.blessgans.de.

The meeting finally **agreed** that also the relevant agriculture lobby organisations/persons in Brussels would be approached and informed about the problem.

4. FUTURE ISSUES

The meeting **agreed** to discuss management schemes for meadow birds in a meeting to be held 2 April 2008 in the Netherlands, starting at 9:30 hours.

5. CLOSING

Erich Hinrichs closed the meeting at 16:30 hours. He thanked the participants for an informative exchange of information and a good discussion. He informed the participants that the meeting and the lunch had been sponsored by the Landwirtschaftlicher Hauptverein Ostfriesland.

ANNEX 1. PARTICIPANTS

Name	First Name		Institution	Country	Email
Asche	Eckhard	Mr.	LWK Niedersachsen	Germany	eckhard.asche@lwk-niedersachsen.de
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Hinrichs	Erich	Mr.	Kreislandwirt	Germany	Erich.Hinrichs@ewetel.net
Kingma	Jurjen	Mr.	LTO Noord	Netherlands	jkingma@LTONoord.nl
Newe	Maike	Ms	Bauernverband Schleswig- Holstein	Germany	Maike.Newe@bauernverbandsh.de
Sinnema	Hilbrand	Mr.	LTO Noord	Netherlands	hsinnema@xs4all.nl
Wendeburg	Martin	Mr.	NLWKN	Germany	Martin.Wendeburg@NLWKN-OL.Niedersachsen.de
Westra	Karin	Ms	Ministerie van Landbouw	Netherlands	k.l.westra@minlnv.nl
Witt	Hans- Peter	Mr.	Bauernverband Schleswig- Holstein	Germany	wiebke.witt@gmx.de

ANNEX 2. OVERVIEW OF FACTS REGARDING GEESE GRAZING

Netherlands	Lower-Saxony	Schleswig-Holstein	Denmark
1. Nature conservation contract programmes for farmers			
<p>On max. 80.000 ha grass- or arable land</p> <p>Grassland management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tolerating geese from nov. 1 - april 1 - No disturbance in this period - Low intensive grazing - Payment: 102 euro/ha plus max. damage 134 euro/ha <p>Management arable land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From nov. 15 - april 1 fields cultivated with wintercereals or winter rape - No disturbance in this period - Payment: 48 euro/ha plus max damage 342 euro/ha 	<p>Untill 2006: Cooperation-Program "Biologische Vielfalt" (Nordic migratory birds) in certain areas, contracts will end in 2009" in the promotion periode 2007-2013 the contracts on grassland will go on and additional programmes for arable land will be started, duration of the contracts 5 years,</p> <p>"Basic terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no maintenance (including grazing) no disturbance from 01.11. till 31.03. the following year (some areas till 30.04.) - no storage of agricultural machines, manure, - on the whole farm no chasing away of geese, <p>Additional terms:</p> <p>a. arable land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the fields must be cultivated with winter cereals (not allowed is rye) or winter rape (no special crop rotation but one time winter rape must be cultivated), Sowing till 15.10. - special terms for fertiliser, herbicide use - Payment: 210 EUR per hectare <p>b. grassland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must be used for agriculture at least once in a year - special terms on fertiliser, - Payment: 115 EUR per hectare" 	<p>The following programmes may be regarded as "geese relevant" agri-environment schemes:</p> <p>1 "Vertragsnaturschutz" (special contracts with farmers) Different options with with different terms possible. Payment: 85 - 125 EUR per hectare</p> <p>2 "Halligprogramm" in the "Halligprogramm" the payments for the farmers contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a maintenance benefit, - a mowing benefit, - a benefit for tolerating a special geese (Brent goose) on their land, - a benefit for low intensive grazing <p>Payment: all together ca. 200 EUR per hectare</p>	<p>The Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business describes different schemes for grassland management, restoration of wet grasslands or maintenance of semi-natural grasslands. The landowner can get payment for establishment of fences for grazing, for gazing and if he cuts the grassland. The main purpose of these schemes is, beside reduced leaching of nitrogen from the arable land to the watercourses, conservation of waders and waterfowls. There exist no other programmes concerning waterfowls. The following Agri-Environment-Measures may be regarded as "Goose relevant" protection schemes:</p> <p>1. Support to Environmentally friendly farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting ecological production and production with less use of pesticides - Low intensitiy grassland and arable land - Payment: ca. 268 Euro per hectare <p>2. Agri-environment schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different grassland management measures, - restoring wet grassland - Payment: ca. 94 Euro per hectare

Netherlands	Lower-Saxony	Schleswig-Holstein	Denmark
2. Other programmes for waterfowl protection			
<p>Compensation-programma of damage caused by geese outside the 80.000 ha Special protection of the Brent goose</p>	<p>No other special support programmes for protection of nordic migratory birds but there are pilot projects concerning this issue.</p>	<p>Large SPA areas are part of the national park „Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wattenmeer“, declared as nature conservation area („landeseigene Naturschutzköge“) some are public properties, "Vertragsnaturschutz" is only offered outside these designated protection areas</p>	<p>There is a strict protection of the birds within the Danish Natura 2000 areas. Furthermore al meadows above 2500 square metres and lakes above 100 square metres and are protected under Danish law, through the so-called § 3 protection in the nature protection law.</p>
3. Authorities involved			
<p>Programmes are offered by Ministry of Agriculture and the provincial governments</p>	<p>The ministry of environment is offering the "Cooperation programm nature conservation", the funding comes from the EU- und Lower Saxony (EU 55%, Lower-Saxony 45%), the institution for approval/authorization is the "Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen" technical support and attendance comes from the "Untere Naturschutzbehörde - local authority", NLWKN is involved concerning advice, support and monitoring</p>	<p>"Vertragsnaturschutz" is managed by the "Landgesellschaft Schleswig-Holstein", the Halligprogramme is managed by "Amt für ländliche Räume Husum"</p>	<p>The Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business administrates the agri-environmental schemes. Several authorities are taking part in the administration of the natural protection, but after the reform of the administrative system in Denmark the local authorities have taken over most of the contact with the land owners and the control.</p>
4. Area covered and numbers of farmers participating			
<p>The area of the management programmes is max. 80.000 ha (56.000 in 2006)</p>	<p>In the old promotion periode 6.500 ha grassland was protected by contracts in the "Rheiderland" and "Krummhörn/Westermarsch", ca. 140 farmers, at the moment contracts are still on 2.400 ha in the "Rheiderland" and 300 ha in "Krummhörn/ Westermarsch", for the new promotion periode there are announcements arable land</p>	<p>In the „Halligprogramm“ 48 farmers participate with 1.600 ha (2007), in the „Vertragsnaturschutzes“ 45 farmers participate with 1.030 ha in SPAs (mostly bird protection area Eiderstedt, 2007)</p>	

Netherlands	Lower-Saxony	Schleswig-Holstein	Denmark
	around 1.000 ha, announcements for grassland 5.500 ha		
5. Species concerned + Size of population			
<p>The damage payments in 2006 were about 3 million euro. In the management program was additional 5,8 million euro.</p> <p>Geese in the Netherlands totally: 1,5 million of which:</p> <p>White Fronted Goose 600.000 Grey Lag Goose 250.000 Barnacle Goose 350.000 Brent Goose 80.000 Other species 220.000</p>	<p>The nordic migratory birds at the North Sea coast in Lower Saxony are Barnacle Goose, White-Fronted Goose, Grey-Lag Goose and Brent Goose</p>	<p>The focus of the „Vertragsnaturschutz“ are meadow birds; also included are the special habitat needs of the Barnacle goose. In the „Halligprogramm“ the special needs of the Brent goose is an important issue</p>	<p>The programmes are not specified for a single species, though some projects have been undertaken under LIFE for some specific waders amongst other <i>Crex crex</i>, but not the national programmes.</p>

<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Barnacle Goose	Bramgås	Nonnengans	Brandgans
<i>Anser albifrons</i>	White-Fronted Goose	Blisgås	Blässgans	Kolgans
<i>Anser anser</i>	Grey-Lag Goose	Grågås	Graugans	Grauwe Gans
<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Brent Goose	Knortegås	Ringelgans	Rotgans