

EAA and EAC Working Group on farming, forestry and rural land management

Purpose

This Working Group is a joint group of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) and Europae Archaeologiae Consilium (EAC) - see <http://www.e-a-c.org/18-0-EAC-Europae-Archaeologiae-Consilium-Welcome.html>).

The purpose of the group is to improve understanding and management of the impacts on the historic environment of farming, forestry and those forms of rural land management which lie beyond the remit of the spatial planning systems of European member countries.

The group was established at the 10th Annual Meeting of the EAA held in September 2004 at Lyon and was adopted as a working group of EAC in March 2009.

Background

Agricultural intensification and the restructuring or abandonment of land as a result of the changes to farming and other land-based industries are recognised as significant threats to the archaeological resource in a number of European states, both within the European Union and beyond its boundaries. These intensive agricultural processes threaten not only archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains, but also the cultural landscapes and historic buildings associated with traditional farming systems.

Similarly, while forests are an important aspect of the cultural landscape and can be important repositories of well-preserved archaeological remains, intensive and highly mechanised forestation processes can also damage archaeological remains and be insensitive to the cultural dimensions of landscape.

These processes, which generally lie outside the spatial planning and development control systems of most European countries, may now represent the greatest threat to the continued survival of the archaeological resource in these countries, particularly as they increasingly adopt archaeological impact assessment and mitigation measures as part of their spatial planning process.

Pressures arise from:

- the use of bigger and more powerful farm and forestry machinery;
- adoption of more invasive cultivation and forestation methods;
- the drainage of wetland areas;
- the continued use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides;
- the cultivation of permanent pasture and other semi-natural areas;
- the removal of historic boundary features;
- the abandonment of traditional extensive grazing regimes;
- the restructuring of traditional land holdings; and
- the increasing functional redundancy of historic farm buildings..

These processes are mirrored in a comparable degradation of fundamental natural resources such as water and soil and in a decline in the biodiversity of farmed landscapes.

These are not new processes, but they have been exacerbated during the last half century by a European agricultural policy geared towards ever greater production through intensification. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union has been particularly influential in this respect, although global pressures have resulted in similar pressures to intensify outside the EU.

Successive attempts to reform the CAP since the 1980's have included measures intended to reduce production and, increasingly, to direct resources to environmental land management measures (so-called agri-environment schemes). In some EU member states, most notably in the the UK and Eire, agri-environment measures extend to the positive management of the cultural heritage, including selected traditional buildings, historic landscapes and archaeological sites. Progress is also being made in Belgium and Holland.

Terms of reference

The EAA/EAC Working Group on farming, forestry and rural land management, working closely with other relevant EAA/EAC Standing Committees and Working Groups, will:

- 1a. Monitor the implications for the conservation of the historic environment of developments in farming, forestry and rural land management and related environmental policy and organization in Europe;
 - 1b. Collate information on the activities of international organizations and nation states which will have an impact on the historic environment component (including buried archaeological remains) of farmed and forested landscapes;
 - 1c. By encouraging the development of specific projects, contribute to assessing the impacts of agriculture, forestry and rural land management on the historic environment in Europe, and the responses to these impacts by archaeologists and other managers of the historic environment;
 - 1d. Seek to inform and influence international agendas and organizations (eg the European Union, Council of Europe, UNESCO) in order to promote enhanced conservation of the historic environment within farmed and forested landscapes, with the approval of the Board;
 - 1e. Encourage European governments to establish or support arrangements to engage farmers and other land managers in the positive management of the historic environment; with the approval of the Board and
 - 1f. Identify and disseminate guidance on research and best practice.
2. Advise and assist the EAA and EAC Executive Boards on these matters.
 3. Establish an e-mail discussion group and convene an appropriate forum at least once a year.
 4. Brief the EAA/EAC membership on issues discussed at the working group forums and also on other relevant matters.

Membership

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Useful links

Further information on the Common Agricultural Policy and measures to secure its reform are available at:

<http://www.europa.eu.int> (select Agriculture)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk> (select Farming>Farming Policy).

<http://www.cap2020.ieep.eu/>

Audits of the state of the archaeological resource, including the impacts of agriculture, forestry and rural land use are available at:

<http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/camsarreport.pdf>

<http://www.miljostatus.no/en/Mal-og-nokkeltall/Mal-og-nokkeltall/Kulturminner/Tapet-avverneverdige-kulturminner-skal-minimaliseres/Prosentvis-arlig--tap-av-registrerte-arkaeologiske-kulturminner-/Tap-av-arkaeologiske-kulturminner/>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritageatrisk>

Audits of the state of the traditional farm building resource are available at:

<http://www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/HFB-ext.pdf?1254148012>

Research on the impacts of agriculture on archaeology is available at:

<http://e-a-a.org/wq2.htm>

Information on archaeology and agri-environment schemes and on advice to farmers and other land managers is available on:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/farmadvice>

<http://www.scottisharchaeology.org.uk/advice/farming.html>

<http://www.archsax.sachsen.de/Themenportal/88.htm>

Information on forestry and archaeology is available at:

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/heritage>

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/lidar>

http://www.forstzentrum.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23&Itemid=56&lang=de