



## Agriculture and Biodiversity in Germany

About half of Germany's land area is used for farming. This means that the farmland countryside plays an important role in preserving the biological diversity to which Germany has pledged itself in terms of the CBD and other international agreements.

The designation of individual nature reserves does not go far enough to guarantee biodiversity in the long term. The real challenge is to manage the entire countryside in a way that a great variety of habitats and flora and fauna, as well as a broad genetic diversity, is retained.

This can only happen in cooperation with the farming community, as it is the farmers who shape the face of Germany's cultivated countryside.

With the introduction of the advancement award for farms committed to the conservation of nature, the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the other project partners wish to demonstrate that efficient agricultural production is compatible with nature protection and conservation aims.

Fotos: Dominic Menzler, Dirk Sthamer

## Project partners

The Farming Conservation Award is a joint project of various German organisations and institutions active in the fields of nature protection and agriculture.



More information on the project and links to the websites of the organisations involved, is available at [www.naturschutzhoefe.de](http://www.naturschutzhoefe.de)

The competition is funded by the initiating body, the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation:

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# Förderpreis Naturschutzhöfe

## Nature conservation on farmland



## Farming Conservation Award

A competition to recognise achievements in the field of nature conservation on farms

[www.naturschutzhoefe.de](http://www.naturschutzhoefe.de)



## The idea behind the award

The Farming Conservation Award recognises those farms that include exemplary and comprehensive nature conservation measures in their farm management practice. The commitment of such farmers is an important contribution to preservation of the flora and fauna of the farmland countryside. This comprises activities in various areas:

- Land management and use which take natural requirements into consideration and promote diversity such as extensive use of grassland or flower-rich crop farming.
- Countryside forming measures such as planting and care of hedges, field borders and edges or meadow orchards.
- Preservation of biological diversity by, for example, the provision of nest boxes, care of biotopes, keeping of rare cattle breeds and planting of old crop species.

The achievements are recognised by presentation of the award and by communicating the results to a wider public. The approaches can often be applied elsewhere and therefore encourage other farms to commit themselves to nature conservation. Numerous studies show that many farmers are prepared in principle to serve conservation aims. Concrete examples and information on how to integrate such approaches into daily practice are however often lacking.

## Two successful competitions

With 233 entries, the first competition in 2006 was a big success and showed that farmers have a great interest in the subject.

Three farms received prizes for their exceptional achievements and nine others were singled out for their exemplary methods. With arable farming, use of grassland, orchards and vineyards, mixed crop farming, countryside conservation and livestock husbandry, they represent the wide variety of German agricultural practices.

Nature conservation activities range from flower-rich pasture and fodder crops, conservation headlands and flower stripes and mixed and catch crops and from reseeded and care of meadow orchards, flower-rich and careful soil working in vineyards to the preservation of typical country landscapes by careful management of species-rich open grassland.

In a second announcement of the competition in 2008, the focus lay on another topic. Ideas and concepts were sought for ways and means for farms to present their conservation achievements externally, and to communicate their commitment to conservation of species and habitat diversity to the public at large.

Among the 57 competition entries there are many good examples of successful activities. The farms demonstrate through the use of flyers, brochures, information stands and websites – but above all by direct contact during guided tours and events – that they are a great deal more than just foodstuff producers. Professional education and training offers, nature tours and trails, as well as farmyard parties bring young and old not only in contact with farming but also with nature, which is part and parcel of this branch of the economy.

## The way ahead

The numerous activities involved are intended to be widely disseminated and emulated by others. For this reason the exemplary farms and the conservation measures they pursue are presented on the [www.naturschutzhoefe.de](http://www.naturschutzhoefe.de) website. Selected measures will be published in autumn 2008. In addition and as far as possible a network of farms committed to conservation is to be established to foster the exchange of experience and ideas between the farms and with interested colleagues, as well as the external impact of the positive examples on experts, the public and politics.