

## BIO-AGRICULTURE AND NATURE CONSERVATION IN HUNGARY

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In Europe there are only a few countries, where a large part of the territory is under agricultural cultivation. More than 70% of Hungarian land is plough-lands, pastures, meadows and plantations. This distribution of land-use is a determinative factor in the economy of the country. On the other hand, Hungary is the home of natural treasures with European significance; by the end of this year, nine national parks will be established. In this densely populated area, in a country having developed agriculture, the efficient protection of nature and economic development have to be simultaneously achieved.

The Danube basin is a valuable agricultural region; on the other hand, it is the last genuine biotope of the endured European gallery forests and the flora and fauna belonging to these forests. On behalf of their preservation, the Duna-Drava National Park was established in 1996, and the Duna-Ipoly National Park will be developed by the end of this year. Farming practices that strictly protect the living conditions of these biotopes have to be introduced.

Considering the fact that nearly the full reach of the Danube basin in Hungary is an agricultural area, the most adequate method of farming is the wide spreading of bio-methods. The promotion of bio-farming is one of the most important, practical goals of Hungarian nature conservation. This is why useful programmes are going to be organised. Bio-farming experts can directly introduce nature conservationists, as well as field-users and farmers, to their methods.

In Hungary, non-governmental organisations dealing with bio-farming have even achieved international appreciation. In conferences and practical demonstrations, long-term bio-farms are organised. Today, a reference farm is in existence in Hungary. It operates in 3,000 hectares with Danish and German support and with such results that are above the Western-European crop-average.

Bearing in mind the circumstances of the country, it is stressed significantly that bio-farming applies not only to the agriculture and cultivation of crop plants. One of the most important programmes of the region of the Danube basin in Hungary is the one concerning grasslands, as the remaining grasslands, of Hungary and of Europe, are becoming a rarity. One of the possible preservation goals of these grasslands is animal husbandry, which already has a practical tradition. We speak not only about preservation and bio-use of the region, but also about the further maintenance of the autochthonous Hungarian species of animals having genetic worth.

The wide spreading of the agronomic methods of bio-farming in Hungary is basically the task of nature conservation. The important area of this work is the reach of the Danube in Hungary, where two national parks will be formed. Since the Danube and its tributaries are border-rivers, the work should be of international significance. That is why we count on the active co-operation of our colleagues in the concerned regions.

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**Dr. Karoly Szoke** completed his doctoral studies at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Godollo. He later worked at the Animal Husbandry Department at the same university, before becoming Main Sector Manager at the Co-operative Agricultural Farm in Maglód. He was Chief Engineer at the AGrober-Agroinvest Foreign Trade Company, and served as Deputy Secretary of State at the Hungarian Ministry of Culture. He is currently Chief Expert at the Institute of Environmental Management, Service for Nature Conservation.

Professor **Istvan Major** graduated from Rolando Eotvos University in Budapest, and later served as Assistant Professor at the University of Agrarian Sciences, Godollo. He has worked as Senior Advisor at the National Office of Nature Conservation and Research Fellow at the University of Agrarian Sciences. He was Scientific Advisor at DNOCS Fortaleza in Brazil, and later Head of the Department for Wildlife Protection at the Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy of Hungary. Before obtaining his current position as Professor at the State

University of Ceara in Brazil, he was Director of Service for Nature Conservation at the Institute for Environmental Management. He has authored 93 publications, including 3 books, and has engaged in several scientific expeditions to Libya, Cuba, Colombia, Equador and Syria. His research activities focus on environmental ecology, tropical ecology, soil ecology, nature protection and environmental education.