COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 27 October 1977

SN-VS (77) 2 XX
Second revision

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Committee of experts for the conservation of
wildlife and natural habitats

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF BIOGENETIC RESERVES
(Concept of the work : procedural and
institutional aspects)

Secretariat memorandum
prepared by
the Directorate of Environment
and Local Authorities

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CONTENTS

AIM OF THE DOCUMENT

1. At its XVth Session, the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources instructed its "Group of consultants - biogenetic reserves" to elaborate the procedural and institutional aspects of the network. The Secretariat then prepared the draft resolution set out in this document.

2. With a view to explaining the concept of this work, clearly and with more detail, the Secretariat also prepared an introductory text.

3. These two texts were examined and amended by the Group of consultants at their meeting on 20 and 21 June 1977.

4. The Secretariat believes that this document and Resolution (76) 17 should be issued as a brochure, thus grouping together the most important points of the work.

Background

The setting up of the European network of biogenetic reserves complies with the conclusions adopted by the participants at the first Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Vienna in 1973 under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

Recommendation n° 3 of Resolution n° 2 of those conclusions proposed that the Council of Europe should prepare a "programme for the establishment of a European network of reserves (including frontier areas where necessary) to conserve representative specimens of European flora, fauna and natural areas".

The Preamble to the Resolution states : "The wild flora and the natural areas constitute a vital factor in, and excellent indicators of, the biological balance of the natural environment, are of great scientific, cultural, recreational and economic importance for modern man and for future generations and also of great value in the preservation of the world's genetic resources, and must therefore be protected and managed as irreplaceable natural assets."

In 1975 a Group of experts of the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources defined the general concepts and criteria which should govern such reserves. These were set down in Resolution (76) 17 on the European network of biogenetic reserves, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March 1976.

The Group subsequently worked out, in 1977, the rules for the network (the procedural and institutional aspects). These, after having been accepted by the European Committee, were the subject of Resolution (77) ..., adopted by the Committee of Ministers on .....

The term "biogenetic reserve" was chosen because, on the one hand, it indicated one of the major aims of the project, the conservation of the two main components of the biological environment, the wild flora and fauna, and, on the other hand, because it stressed the importance to man and his environment of plant and animal genetic material.

Summary of the project

Under Resolution (76) 17, a State may designate as a biogenetic reserve, with a view to its inclusion in the European network, any protected area of land or sea, or part thereof, enjoying legal status and characterised by one or more typical, unique, endangered or rare habitats, biocenoses or ecosystems.

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The area will become part of the network as soon as the Committee of Ministers, on a recommendation of the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, has pronounced in favour of its inclusion. To this end, the Committee will make sure that the information given on the descriptive card for the area is compatible with the concepts, objectives and principles appearing in Resolution (76) 17. If it is not, the inclusion of the area in the network will be refused. In case of doubt, an on-the-spot survey may be made by an independent expert. There is no time-limit for inclusion, but exclusion may be decided upon where one or more of the objectives and/or principles of Resolution (76) 17 is not observed.

Legally, a biogenetic reserve retains its original status and denomination (e.g. nature reserve, national park, etc.); consequently its inclusion in the European network does not imply any modification to the national terminology for protected areas. Nonetheless, the general regulations governing the area should, if necessary, be strengthened so as to conform to the principles and objectives of Resolution (76) 17.

The adoption by the Committee of Ministers of Resolution (77) ... on the rules of the European network signifies official recognition by Governments of the European network of biogenetic reserves, that is to say its creation.

Objectives

The diversity, the genetic potential, the representativeness and the relative stability of the different types of habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems are the result of evolution covering several thousand years. Natural disasters were often the reason for the extinction of flora and fauna species and of whole biogeographical units; nevertheless such upheavals were rare and widely separated in time. Nature was able to adapt itself to the new conditions which encouraged the appearance of new species of flora and fauna.

Later, Man added to these natural disasters and put increased and frequently uncontrolled pressures on the natural environment, wasting more and more of the natural resources. Species of flora and fauna which could rapidly adapt to these new environmental conditions are few. As a result, the quality of our biological heritage has declined and it has lost its diversity. The biological equilibrium on our continent has been profoundly changed, the transformation of the environment being even more apparent because of the high population density. Apart from some alpine biotopes and the arctic, no natural biotopes untouched by man remain.

Although in Europe man has upset the biological balance, the number of plant and animal species which have become extinct in recent centuries is smaller than in other continents.

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This is due partly to the fact that human intervention has been much slower there than in other parts of the world, especially Africa. Nevertheless, the present situation in Europe of fauna, flora and natural habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems seems to be reaching a critical point, as is shown by the studies carried out during the last few years by the European Committee :

- at least 30% of amphibian species (13 in all), 45% of reptiles (47 species), 12% of birds (59 species) and 12% of mammals (36 species) are threatened (in danger, rare or vulnerable) ;

- some 1,400 plant species are rare and/or endangered and more than 100 may soon become extinct ; this figure of 1,400 represents about 10% of all European flora ;

- the Mediterranean maquis, heathlands, hedgerow landscapes and wetlands are in immediate danger and their total number and area are constantly decreasing while erosion in the Mediterranean and Alpine regions is increasing.

The list of seriously damaged environments and threatened species may easily be lengthened.

As the biological heritage is of vital importance to all Europeans, from both the economic and the ecological viewpoints, it must be preserved. A European network of biogenetic reserves would contribute to attaining this objective ; it is therefore desirable that all Council of Europe member States and those States having observer status with the European Committee should take an active part in setting it up.

Governments should in particular propose the following types of protected areas, whose status and purpose are intended mainly to preserve the environment and conserve wild flora and fauna :

- areas under strict protection where the environment is still very close to that of nature ;

- areas in which traditional activities of Man are not predominant and those in which new activities are strictly controlled or even prohibited ;

- areas in which the biological balance is upset but could well be restored if managed according to ecological principles.

Other environments, not protected but of major interest to the network, should also be proposed, subject to Governments giving them protected status.

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The network should include two kinds of biogenetic reserves :

- those of great extent (some thousands of hectares) comprising one or more ecosystems

- those of medium or even small size (a few dozen hectares) provided that they are ecologically viable.

Because of the aims and principles of the European network, it would be unrealistic to hope to include the whole of any one biogeographical unit.

As mentioned in Resolution (76) 17, ecological research is one of the main purposes of the network and must be encouraged. To begin with, use must be made of research programmes already being carried out and observations made in the biogenetic reserves and results should be communicated to all managers of reserves in the network. At a later stage, a joint programme should be implemented, especially in reserves having comparable aims and/or belonging to the same type of environment. The European Committee could play an important part in the preparation of such a programme. The descriptive card should be brought up to date every five years, making it necessary for managers to keep a continuous watch on their areas and to have available information on the flora, fauna, plant communities, different types of habitat, biocenose or ecosystem, etc.

The European network of biogenetic reserves will form an important part of the work done, both by the Council of Europe and by the member States, to inform and train the public.

Some UNESCO biosphere reserves (Programme MAB) could be included in the Council of Europe network of biogenetic reserves and vice versa.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

ON RULES FOR THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF BIOGENETIC RESERVES

THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Having regard to the recommendation of the European Ministerial Conference on the Environment held in Vienna from 28 to 30 March 1973, concerning the preparation of "a programme for the establishment of a European network of reserves (including frontier areas, where necessary) to conserve representative examples of European flora, fauna and natural areas" (Resolution n° 2, point 3) ;

Considering its own Resolution (76) 17 of 15 March 1976 on the European network of biogenetic reserves, which defined the concepts, main objectives and principles of such protected areas ;

Adopts hereby the Rules for the European Network of Biogenetic Reserves, thus recognising officially the existence of the network.

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Article 1

1. Any protected area or part of such area, whether on land or sea, situated within the limits of national territory or across frontiers, which complies with the main objectives and the principles of the Committee of Ministers' Resolution (76) 17 may be included in the European network of biogenetic reserves (hereafter called the European network).

2. The principal objective of the European network shall be to guarantee the diversity, the genetic potential, the representativity and the relative stability of the various types of habitat, biocenosis and ecosystem of Europe.

3. The main principles governing a biogenetic reserve are as follows :

   - the legal status must ensure the long-term viability of the wild flora and fauna and of the natural environment of which they are part ;

   - the reserve must satisfy at least one of the following criteria : typical, unique, rare or endangered ;

   - the management must conform with ecological principles and help to maintain and conserve, and if necessary restore, the natural environment.

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INCLUSION

Article 2

1. The inclusion of an area in the European network shall be dependent on the adoption of a resolution by the Committee of Ministers on a recommendation made by the European Committee.

2. There shall be no time-limit for inclusion.

3. Any biogenetic reserve included in the European network shall retain its original legal status.

Article 3

1. Any Government which proposes inclusion of an area in the European network shall make application to the Secretary General.

2. As soon as it is received, the Secretariat shall consider the Government's application and the descriptive card (Appendix II), which must have been completed by the authorities responsible for the area concerned. The particulars on the descriptive card shall be compared with the objectives and principles of Resolution (76) 17.

3. The Secretariat shall submit the proposal for inclusion to a committee of experts, which shall express a substantiated opinion to the European Committee. The European Committee shall take account of the Committee's conclusions when making its recommendation to the Committee of Ministers. The Committee of experts shall follow one of the three procedures set out below :

   3.1 If the particulars given conform, it shall propose inclusion in the European network.

   3.2 In case of doubt, it shall either :

   a) request further information on controversial points from the authorities responsible for the area,

   or

   b) survey the site. An independent expert, not a national of the country concerned, shall carry out an on-the-spot survey, accompanied by a member of the Secretariat. The expert shall be

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appointed by the Secretary General. The Committee of experts shall assign to him his terms of reference. His travel and subsistence expenses shall be borne by the Council of Europe. In his report, drawn up in either French or English, he shall state whether the area in question should or should not be included in the European network, giving his reasons. He may be requested to present his report at a meeting of the Committee of experts, his expenses being borne by the Council of Europe. The Government concerned may, at its own discretion and expense, arrange to be represented at the meeting. The Committee's decision shall take into account the conclusions of the survey.

3.3 If the particulars given do not conform, it shall propose that inclusion in the European network be refused.

EXCLUSION

Article 4

1. The exclusion of a biogenetic reserve from the European network shall be ruled in the event of non-compliance with one or more objectives and/or principles of Resolution (76) 17. Exclusion shall take the form of a resolution for adoption by the Committee of Ministers, on a recommendation of the European Committee ; the resolution shall set forth the reasons for the decision.

2. Any Government shall have the right to withdraw a biogenetic reserve from the European network. It shall inform the Secretary General officially, giving the reasons for its action, and also the European Committee, which shall then apply Article 4.3.

3. Any proposal for exclusion shall be dealt with in the same way as for inclusion. The Secretariat shall inform the Committee of experts which shall cause an on-the-spot survey to be made, subject to the same conditions as those set forth in Article 3, point 3.2 b . In his report, drawn up in either French or English, the expert shall state whether the area in question should or should not be excluded from the European network, giving his reasons. The expert may be requested to present his report at a meeting of the Committee of experts, his expenses being borne by the Council of Europe

   The Government concerned may, at its own discretion, and expense, arrange to be represented at the meeting.

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4. The Committee of experts shall give a substantiated opinion for the European Committee, saying whether it is for or against exclusion of the area from the European network. The European Committee shall take this opinion into consideration when submitting its recommendation to the Committee of Ministers.

OTHER PROVISIONS

Article 5

A signboard conforming to the model given in Appendix I shall be placed within the limits of each reserve by the Government concerned.

Article 6

1. The Governments and/or the managers of biogenetic reserves in the European network shall inform the Secretariat of any changes contrary to the objectives and principles of Resolution (76) 17 which affect or may affect the areas concerned.

2. The managers of the biogenetic reserves shall inform the Secretariat of any observations made in their reserves which are directly relevant to the objectives and principles of Resolution (76) 17.

Article 7

1. A list of the biogenetic reserves in the European network giving the characteristics of each area, shall be prepared by the Secretariat and brought up to date regularly, at least every five years from the date of adoption of the above-mentioned resolution.

2. To enable the list to be revised, the managers of biogenetic reserves shall bring the descriptive cards up to date regularly, at least every five years, and shall forward them to the Secretariat.

Article 8

It is recommended that managers should prepare large-scale maps showing the physical and ecological characteristics of their reserves, such as maps showing the distribution of the main plant communities, the flora and fauna species, the climate, the geology, the geomorphology, the pedology, the land use, etc. Moreover, these documents shall mention the buffer zone around the area, if any. Where such maps are not available at the time the reserve is included in the network, they should be prepared as soon as possible.

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Article 9

1. Every five years from adoption of the above Resolution, the managers of biogenetic reserves shall prepare progress reports containing the main facts relating to planning, management, research, training, information and any other point that has played a part in the evolution of the area during the period under review.

2. At the same intervals, the Secretariat shall draw up a consolidated report on the results of research carried out in the biogenetic reserves.

3. The managers shall inform the Secretariat of publications concerning the reserve.

Article 10

At the discretion of the European Committee and at the invitation of a member country, meetings of the managers of biogenetic reserves shall be held. The objective of such meetings shall be to enable biogenetic reserves of a given type or in a particular region to examine the results of research, discuss different methods of management, training programmes, information, etc. Participation in such meetings shall depend on the subject chosen.

Article 11

The provisions of Resolution (76) 17 and of the present Resolution shall also apply to non-member States having observer status with the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

APPENDIX I

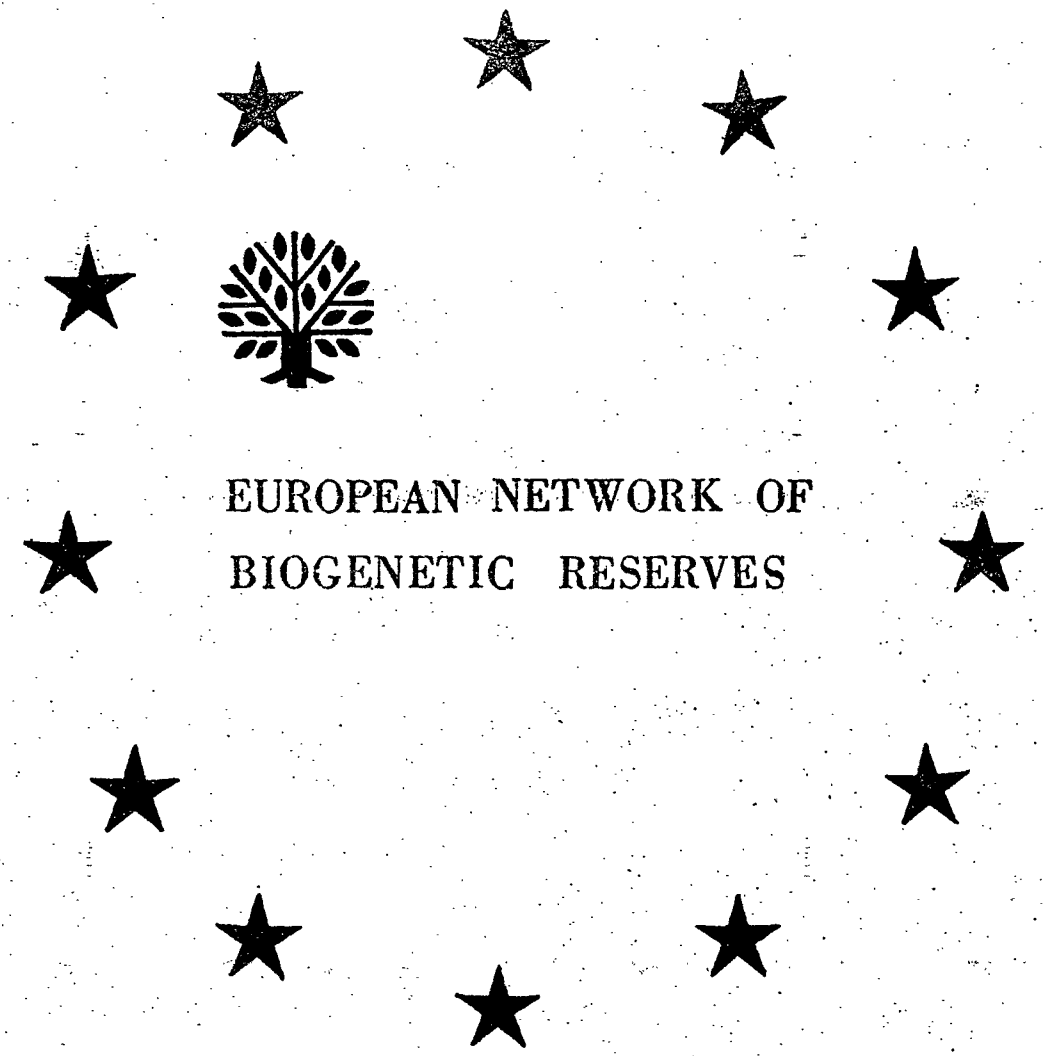
MODEL FOR A SIGNBOARD FOR BIOGENETIC RESERVES

The signboards placed in biogenetic reserves shall conform to the model shown on the following page. There are no rules for the material used.

The standard dimension is 70 cm by 50 cm. Nevertheless, any other dimension may be used provided the proportions of the model are retained.

If colours are used, they must be those of the Council of Europe's emblem (blue and yellow).

The inscription shall be in the language of the country concerned.



EUROPEAN NETWORK OF BIOGENETIC RESERVES

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

THE NATIONAL PARK (or RESERVE etc.) WAS INCLUDED IN THE EUROPEAN NETWORK IN 19 ...

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK IS TO PRESERVE REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF THE VARIOUS EUROPEAN BIOTOPES AND OF THE GENETIC MATERIAL FOUND THEREIN, WITH A VIEW TO MAINTAINING NATURE'S BIOLOGICAL BALANCE

APPENDIX II

DESCRIPTIVE CARD

CONCERNING

BIOGENETIC RESERVES

10 Name of the area :

11 Country :

12 Region :

13 County :

14 Map reference of the centre of the area and ordnance map references for the topographical map to be joined to the application

° north ° east/west

15 Minimum and maximum altitudes :

16 Size of area :

17 Owner :

18 Name and address of the managing authority :

19 Protection status :

20 Date status granted

21 Regular supervision (yes/no)

22 Number of wardens :

23 Objectives and originality :

24 General physical description :

25 List of principal protection measures in key words :

Wild flora and fauna :

Other aspects of the environment :

26. List of the various habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems according to their predominance :

27 List of the most characteristic and important plant species (including if possible subspecies and varieties) :

Indicate by a letter the species considered at national level as :

- threatened (rare, vulnerable, in danger) A
- endemic B
- immigrant C

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28 List of predominant plant formations (simple or complex) with an indication of the degree of artificialisation. It is important to add the names of the most predominant species.

29 Indication of aspects of the potential natural vegetation

30 List of the most characteristic and important species of fauna (including if possible subspecies and varieties). Indicate by a letter species considered at national level as :

- threatened (rare, vulnerable, in danger) A
- endemic B
- migratory C
- not indigenous D

31 List of extinct species of flora and fauna and those re-introduced into the area. Indicate the year of disappearance. For re-introduced species, add "R" to the year of re-introduction.

32 Traditional human activities

Yes/No/Restricted/Forbidden/Envisaged/Favourable/Unfavourable

Effects on the ecosystem

Agriculture
Forestry
Grazing
Mining
Fisheries
Gathering
.....
.....

33 New human activities

Yes/No/Restricted/Forbidden/Envisaged/Favourable/Unfavourable

Effects on the ecology

Industry
Infrastructure
Energy protection
Housing
Rubbish dumps
.....
.....

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34 Recreation and leisure

Yes/No/Restricted/Forbidden/Envisaged/Favourable/Unfavourable

Effects on the ecology

Hunting
Fishing
Camping
Sports
Facilities (hotels ...)
Visitors
.....
.....

35 Degree of artificialisation of surrounding territories

Nil/slight/fairly slight/average/high/intense

36 List of principal research projects in progress (title, objectives, body responsible)

37 Research projects which it would be desirable to carry out if the objectives and principles of a biogenetic reserve are to be more fully satisfied

38 Administrative and restoration measures in hand or planned, intended to improve the condition of habitats, biocenoses and ecosystems ; plans to be sent if available

39 List of main reports on the reserve published by the management

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Explanatory notes for item 28

1. Types of predominant plants and classes of height

High ligneous	HL1	2 to 4 m	Herbaceous	H1	0 to 0.50 m
	HL2	4 to 8 m		H2	0.50 to 1 m
	HL3	8 m		H3	1 m
Low ligneous	LL1	0 to 0.50 m			
	LL2	0.50 to 1 m			
	LL3	1 to 2 m			

2. Complexity

The complex formations are indicated by the initials of the predominant plants separated by the sign / (stroke)

3. Regularity of the vertical and horizontal plant structure

1. Regular vertical and horizontal structure

2. Regular vertical structure and irregular horizontal structure

3. Irregular vertical structure and regular horizontal structure

4. Irregular vertical and horizontal structures

4. Cover

It is expressed in aggregate percentages for each type of predominant plant in each kind of simple or complex formation. The expression "degrees of density" may be used for the vegetation at various vertical levels :

Dense d	75 to 100%	Sparse s	25 to 50%
Fairly sparse fs	50 to 75%	Very sparse vs	0 to 25%

5. (see following page)

6. Example

Let us take as an example a "low (1 to 2 metres), simple, ligneous, sparse, plant formation, with irregular vertical structure and regular horizontal structure, which is being extensively exploited. The most important species is the kermes oak"

It will be shown thus : LL3-s-3-II

Explanatory text of item 35

High : Intensive to very intensive working ; large-scale farming

Intense : Very urbanised environment ; industries ; housing areas

Nil to average : see explanatory text under item 28

Degree of artificialisation	Simple high ligneous formations	Simple low ligneous formations	Simple herbaceous formations
I NIL	+ unworked + climax forests (some beech and oak woods ...)	+ unworked + climax heathlands (plantations of rhodorae)	+ unworked + climax alpine meadows + reed beds
II SLIGHT	+ very extensively worked + pene- or paraclimax forests + natural forests, formerly managed. Almost wholly abandoned for 20 years	+ very extensively worked + maquis, garrigues, heathlands - grazed, burnt + very extensive new growth of copse woods	+ very extensively worked + very extensive grasslands, alps, mountains + herbaceous pastures : growths of brachypodia bromi, rushes + plantation of ferns + old, herbaceous wasteland, maintained as grass
III FAIRLY SLIGHT	+ extensively to semi-extensively worked + managed natural forests : full-grown stands, brushwood	+ extensively to semi-extensively worked + very ancient, ligneous grazed wasteland + maquis, garrigues, heathlands where improvement techniques have been applied	+ extensively to semi-extensively worked + continuously mown and grazed meadow land = "STH" of the agro-economists
IV AVERAGE	+ semi-intensively worked + adult artificial forests, most frequently conifers (full-grown timber, pole-plantations, saplings)	+ semi-intensively worked + regular woods of young trees, frequently coniferous, with cultivation techniques restricted to essentials	+ semi-extensively worked + temporary and artificia meadow lands + recent and usually grazed herbaceous waste lands ; unworked fallow land