

*SUPER-G – Developing sustainable permanent grassland (PG) systems & policies*

# Future pathways for grassland management

Paul Newell Price & the SUPER-G consortium

**GO-GRASS FINAL EVENT**

**Unlocking the Potential of Grass: New business opportunities  
for rural areas**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2024**



# Outline

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- What range of ecosystem services can grasslands deliver?
- The importance of multifunctionality
- Influencing factors
- Future pathways for grassland management



# Grasslands can deliver a range of ecosystem services

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- Food production



- Biodiversity & pollination



- Climate regulation



- Water quality



- Mediation of water flows & erosion control



- Landscape & recreation



# Conclusions of large-scale integrated systematic review

Schils *et al.* (2022) Permanent grasslands in Europe: Land use change and intensification decrease their multifunctionality, *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*

- Preventing the conversion of permanent grassland to cropland or temporary grassland secures the provision of multiple ecosystem services
- Intensification of existing permanent grasslands threatens multifunctionality
- Prioritizing non-feed ecosystem services comes at a cost for the provision of animal feed

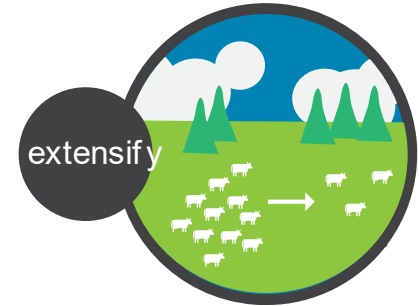
## Actions



**Multifunctional permanent grasslands increasingly important in agricultural systems**



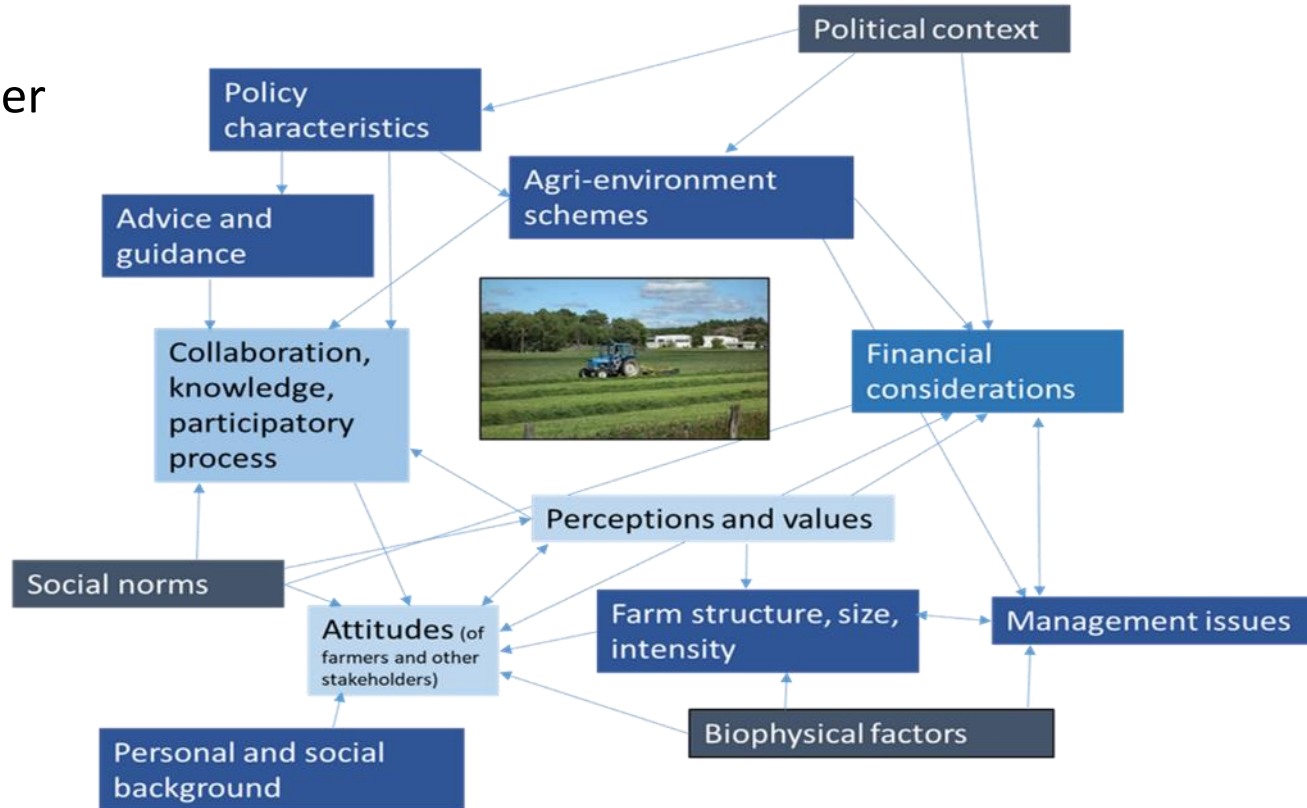
**Protection needed to prevent further decline**



**Optimise management intensity on existing permanent grasslands**

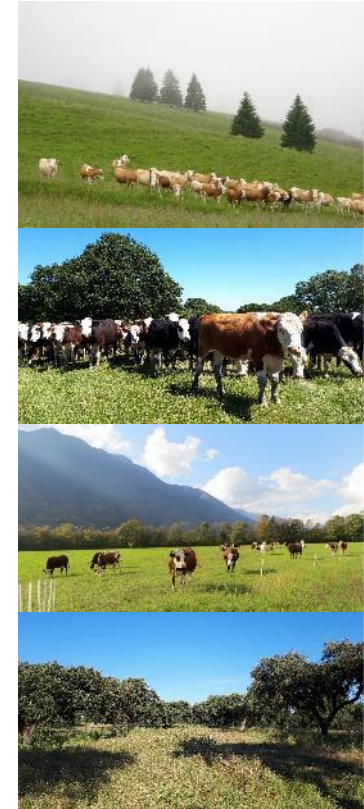
# Unlocking their potential for multifunctionality

A conceptual map of factors affecting farmer decision-making in relation to grassland management



## Future pathways – *less is more?*

- Less reliance on fertiliser
- Less reliance on purchased feed
- Less focus on specialist breeds
- Better grass utilisation
- Integrate livestock into arable rotations
- Lower cost and energy base
- Policy that recognises the value of ecosystem services
- From exploitation to stewardship
- More legumes
- Focus on meat & milk from grass
- Greater focus on hardy, ‘easy care’ & native breeds
- Forage systems that are more resilient and sustainable
- Greater rewards for cultural ecosystem services
- Where less demand for meat & dairy products:
  - Bio-based industries?
  - Re-wilding?



*“Because we have the capacity to ruin the biosphere on which we depend, we have the necessity to steward it” - Daniel Schmachtenberger, 2024*



# Thank you!

On behalf of all colleagues from the SUPER-G team

Contact: Paul Newell Price – [paul.newell-price@adas.co.uk](mailto:paul.newell-price@adas.co.uk)