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Grasland area in Natura 2000 sites in Flanders

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Reason for advice

Mr. Stilmant (Centre Wallon de Recherches agronomiques, Section Systèmes agricoles) asks about information on the extent of the Natura 2000 network and the amount of grassland within these sites in Flanders.

Surface area of Natura 2000 sites in Flanders

The Natura 2000 sites consist of the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Community Interest (SCIs, named as Special Areas of Conservation once officially assigned) in compliance with the European Birds and Habitats Directive, respectively. In Flanders, these sites occupy the following surface area (Table 1):

Special Protection Areas (SPAs; Birds Directive):	98243,11 ha
Sites of Community Interest (SCIs; Habitats Directive):	104888,11 ha
Sites which are both SPA and SCI:	36943,64 ha

Total area of Natura 2000 sites in Flanders: 166187,57 ha

Table 1 Surface area of Natura 2000 sites in Flanders (SPA: Special Protection Area according to Birds Directive, SCI: Site of Community Interest according to Habitats Directive)

	Area (ha)
SCI only	67944,46
SPA & SCI	36943,64
SPA only	61299,47
Total	166187,57

Surface area of grassland in Natura 2000 sites in Flanders

The surface area of grassland in Natura 2000 sites is given in Table 2 according to several data sources:

- Biological Valuation Map: a landcover map of Flanders with a valuation of each polygon; grasslands are extracted as all mapping units starting with the character "h" (for more info, see [INBO website](#) or Paelinckx et al. 2009). Since not all polygons consist of grassland only, the grassland area might be an overestimation of the actual area.
- Permanent & temporary grassland: derived from the land use survey of all Flemish agricultural parcels (VLM 2003), limited to permanent and temporary grassland. This area only covers the grasslands used by farmers and other authorities registered by the VLM (e.g. land owned by nature organisations which is managed by grazing).
- Permanent grassland: derived from the land use survey of all Flemish agricultural parcels and limited to permanent grassland (VLM 2003). Grassland is considered as permanent if it is being managed for at least 4 years continuously as grassland
- Habitat Map: a translation of the Biological Valuation Map into Natura 2000 grassland habitat types, i.e. all habitat codes starting with the number "6"; for more info, see [INBO website](#) or Paelinckx et al. (2009)

Important note: in general, we have to state that the surface areas mentioned underneath are not free of error. Each data source has its own shortcomings that can lead to inaccurate estimates (see references of data sources for more information). A decent estimate of these errors remains, however, impossible to make.

Table 2 Surface area of grassland (ha) according to several data sources (see text above).

	Biological Valuation Map	Permanent & temporary grassland, often in agricultural use	Permanent grassland, often in agricultural use	Natura 2000 grassland habitat (incl. 6430*) Habitat Map
SCI only	15514	10375	8842	1679
SPA & SCI	7776	8052	6391	687
SPA only	18263	17263	11854	488
Total	41554	35691	27088	2855

* 6430: Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels

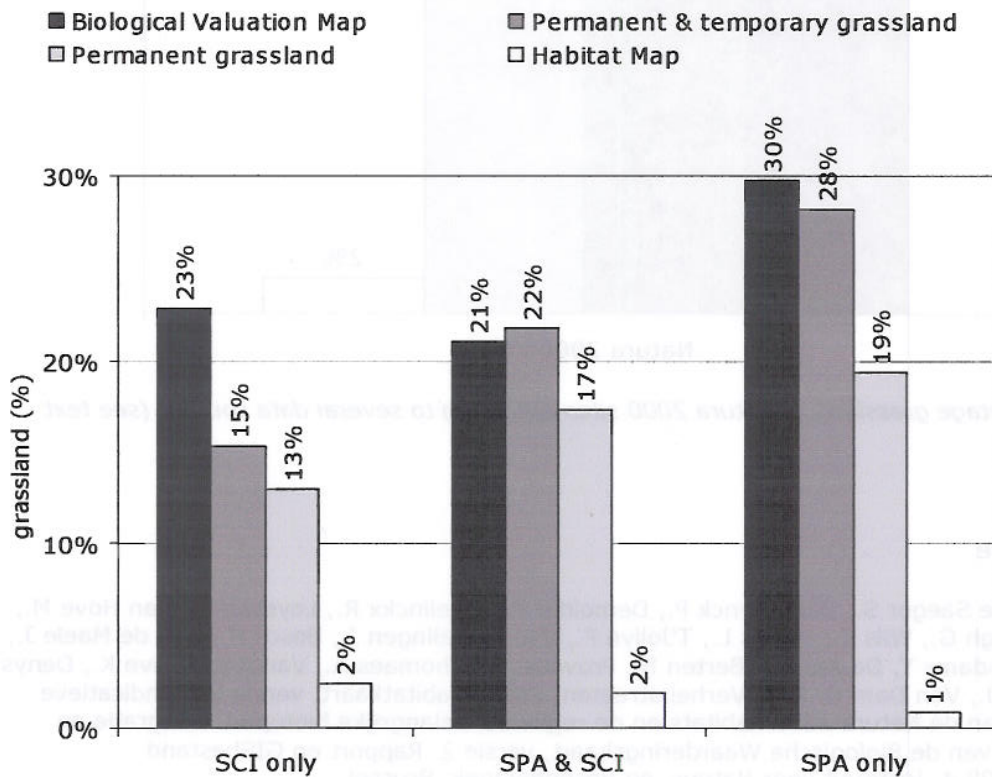


Figure 1 Percentage grassland of Natura 2000 sites according to several data sources (see text above) and split up for the SCIs, SPAs and their overlapping areas.

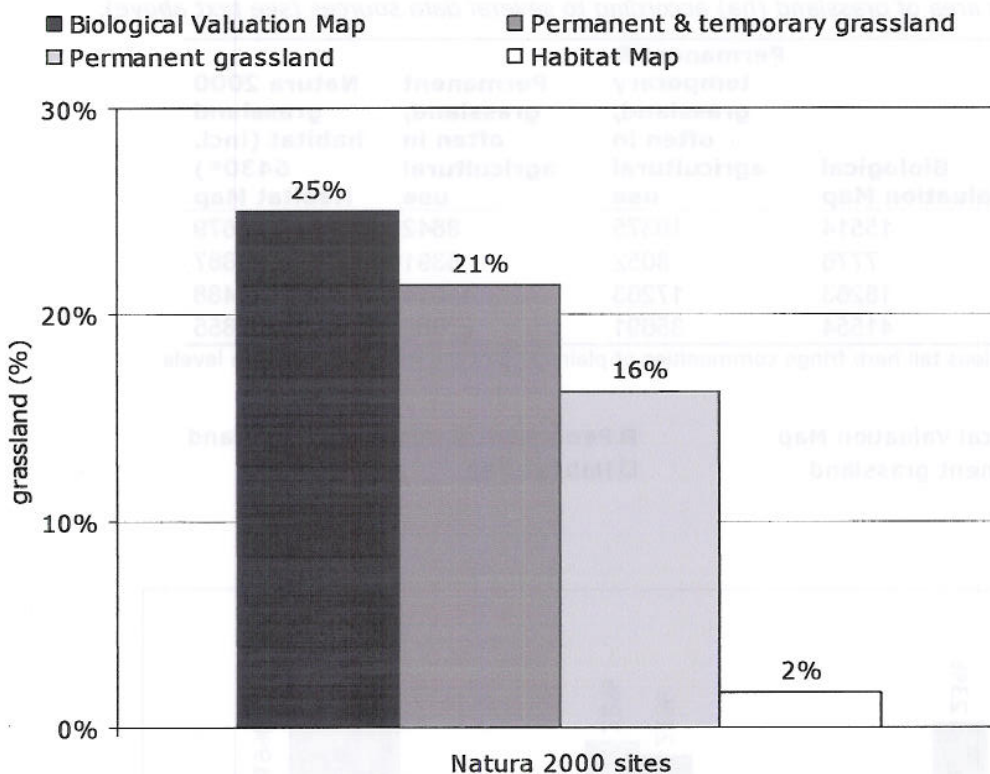


Figure 2 Percentage grassland of Natura 2000 sites according to several data sources (see text above).

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With kind regards,

Dr. Jurgen Tack
Administrator-General