

Farmer Clusters in the Dark Peak

Vision with Ambition for Nature Recovery

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Peak District Clusters



Hope Valley Farmers in Numbers

- Group formed in October 2017
- 52 farms/holdings are members
- Covering approximately 7400 hectares
- Largely beef and sheep enterprises with one dairy farm and several small holdings
- Habitats included within this area include moorland, native woodland, species rich grassland, riparian and rivers, scrub
- Predominantly Severely Disadvantaged Area with land rising to 605m (1985ft)
- Successful application made for additional three years funding from June 2022 – 95% of members signed up again



Bradfield Farmers

- Group formed in September 2019
- 34 farms/holdings are signed up members
- Covering approximately 7600 hectares
- A mixture of beef and dairy and large tracts of moorland equalling around 6000 ha
- Habitats included within this area include moorland, native woodland, species rich grassland, scrub, 'alpine arable' (!) and also eight Yorkshire Water reservoirs
- Predominantly Severely Disadvantaged Area with land rising to 450 (1650 ft)



What do we do?

1. Group events
2. Collaborative activity:
 - Wader survey
 - Tree and hedge planting
 - GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count
 - Soil sampling
3. Keeping members informed:
 - Newsletters
 - E-bulletins
 - Events and meetings
4. Engagement with local environmental groups and initiatives, eg. Hope Valley Climate Action



What benefits to farmer clusters bring?

To farmer members:

- Support during a very difficult period of change and transition
- Social interaction – improved mental well-being
- Source of accessible, up to date, independent and reliable information
- Training – to help them gain the skills and knowledge they need to implement environmental improvement
- A voice to promote their environmental achievements

What makes a successful group?

1. Strong farmer engagement in strategy, planning and delivery
2. Starts with an active steering group
3. Diversity of members – enterprise, farm size, age, interests
4. Locally based, enthusiastic facilitator with established roots in the area
5. Clear vision and objectives



Hope Valley Farmers is at North Lees Hathersage.

June 22 · Sheffield · 🌐



After a wet day, the clouds cleared just in time for our fabulous farm walk at North Lees Hall Farm, kindly hosted by the Denniff family.

We focused our discussion on pollinators and the importance of semi natural habitat for the range of declining species which are vital for our food chain.

North Lees Hall Farm boasts some fabulous species rich hay meadows and a mosaic of scrub, woodland, rough grassland, rush pasture and a lovely, bubbling stream.

We finished the evening ... [See more](#)



What benefits to farmer clusters bring?

To the wider public and the environment:

- More farmers delivering for the environment – planting trees, improving soil health, protecting water quality, managing habitats sensitively, conserving priority species
- Value for money
- A point of contact with the local farming community – for partner organisations, local communities, local leaders and representatives



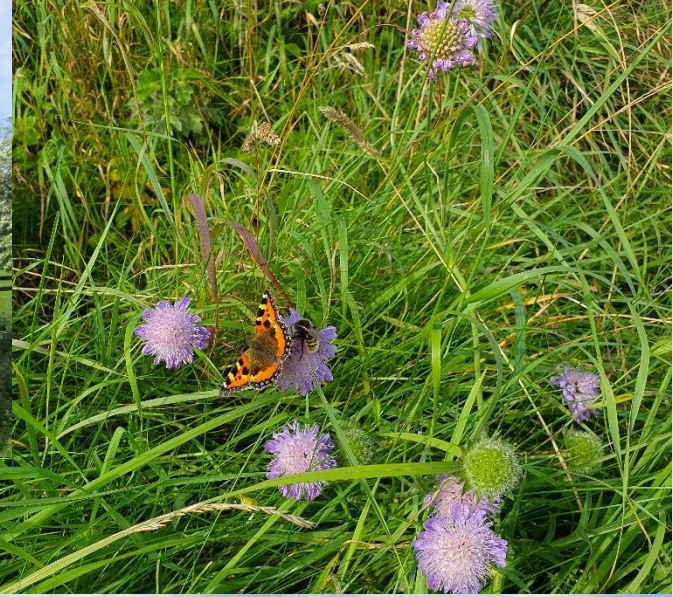
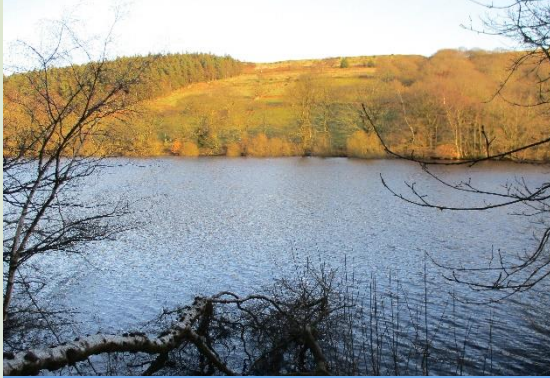
Representation



Why farmer clusters can deliver...

1. Grass roots base with local facilitator
2. Voluntary and free membership for farmers encourages engagement
3. Paperwork for the farmers kept to a minimum – schemes more accessible
4. Value for money
5. Can deliver legacy after the formal lifetime of the group is complete
6. Representation
7. Collaborative action

Public Goods – what can we provide?



Clean water, flood management, recreation, wildfire management, biodiversity, heritage....



Action on the ground...

- HVF Members have planted 16500 trees to date since founded with a further 1800 trees planted across the Bradfield area
- 1110m of hedges have been laid by members
- 5000m of new hedge planted on HVF farms and 3000m on Bradfield farms
- 6000m of hedges ordered for planting 2023/24
- >4000 m of stone walls have been restored (HVF)
- 12 barn owl boxes erected in autumn 2019 (HVF)
- 17 members of HVF involved in the Soil Health Project funded by Severn Trent delivering >100ha of works to improve soil structure and biology

Action on the ground... Severn Trent Soils Project



Collaborative action across the Hope Valley

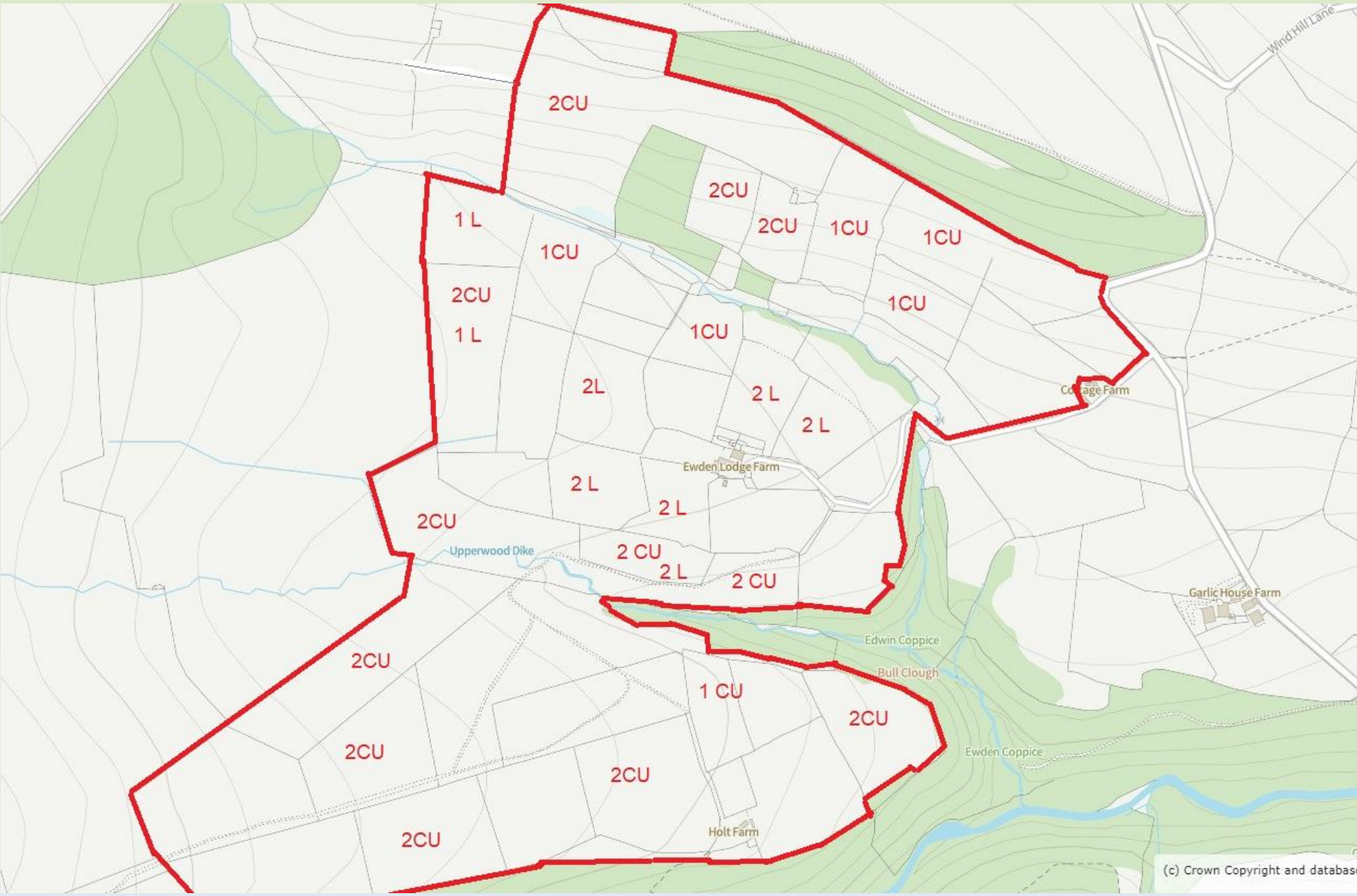


Soils - what has worked?

- We have not been able to monitor closely enough measure the physical benefits of the works
- Anecdotal feedback from members is very positive
- BUT members have worked closely together to make the actions happen – they have....
 - Shared equipment
 - Placed joint orders for lime
 - Done work for each other at ‘mates rates’
 - Shared experiences, learned from each other’s mistakes, asked each other questions
 - Established informal trials at an aerator event in August on each others’ farms testing different machines

Wader Survey

- A partnership project between the RSPB and Bradfield and Hope Valley Farmers
- PDNPA also involved to bring in farmers from outside the groups (Hayfield, Eastern Moors)
- Aim is to estimate breeding pairs – we are not yet measuring productivity
- This year 15 Bradfield and 16 Hope Valley members
- Over 40 volunteers recruited and trained by the RSPB
- Three visits per farm from mid April to mid June

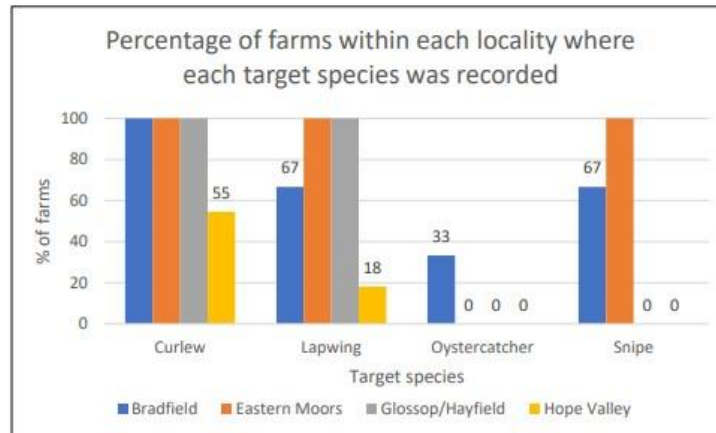
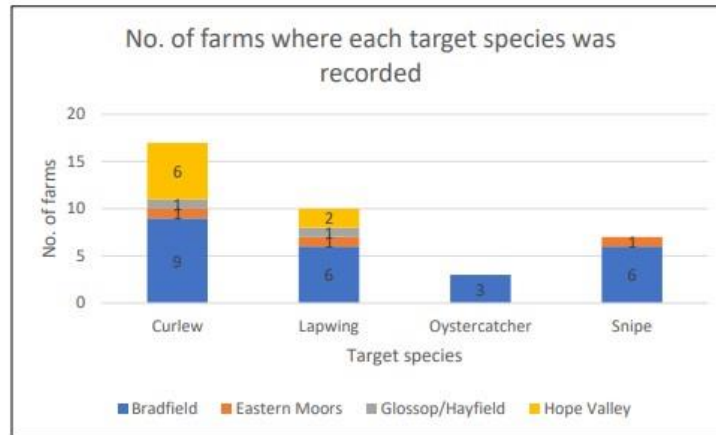


Wader Survey

- Data from visits is processed by the RSPB and all participating members receive reports and maps of the results
- Follow up with an event in the autumn to present and discuss results and share best practice
- Bradfield supports significantly larger wader populations and more species than Hope Valley
- Reasons? Habitat, cattle grazing, more extensive predation control, fewer visitors.....
- Next steps – wader management plans, habitat creation and management



Species occurrence



- **Curlew** spotted on more farms than the other 3 target species
- **Lapwing** second most commonly recorded
- **Oystercatcher** only found on surveys in Bradfield
- **Snipe** not recorded in the Hope Valley

Next Steps:

Peakland Environmental Farmers

- Peakland Environmental Farmers was born after an uplands conference in Castleton, May 2022
- Covers the entire Dark Peak Area
- A cooperative of farmers who have come together to ‘create ambitious environmental outcomes at scale’
- Over 70 farmers/landowners are members covering an area of in excess of 38,000ha (94,000a)
- A steering group made up of local landowners, farmers, advisers, representatives of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Moorland Association, NFU and HVF/BF Facilitator

Next Steps:

Peakland Environmental Farmers

Vision: to enhance nature, to provide climate mitigation and carbon sequestration, and to improve water quality in the Peak District for the public good, alongside sustainable food production and game management.

- Legally constituted as a limited company, plans to form a Community Interest Company
- Already negotiating with local authorities, developers, green finance organisations to secure private funding for nature conservation delivery
- Developing a conservation plan to cover the Dark Peak and to be delivered by farmer and landowner members
- Next step will be recruiting a local coordinator



PEF

nov 9th, 2022

207 photos · 102 views



Future vision

We want to develop our vision for the farmed landscape across the Dark Peak:

- What does it look like?
- How will our members make it happen?
- How will it be funded?
- Who should we work with to help us deliver?

It needs to:

- Be sustainable – environmentally and financially
- Support the future livelihoods of farming families and their communities
- Increase the natural capital of the Hope Valley and Bradfield areas and the wider Dark Peak area
- Produce high quality food which can reduce food miles, support excellent standards of animal welfare and contribute to the improved health of those who eat it



Delivering the vision:

Barriers to success

- Limited timescale for group funding – three years or less – establishing true collaboration takes time
- Difficulties with agri-environment funding currently - CS Mid Tier does not adequately reward the management of existing high quality habitat
 - Limited choice of suitable options
 - Poor payment rates for species rich grassland
 - Targeting is erroneous; for example - UP2 upland breeding bird option, NFM priority areas
 - Extremely complex and risky, even for advisers!
 - Farmers put off by lack of flexibility, penalties for minor breaches, excessive administrative burden

ELM must address these issues to ensure uptake

Delivering the vision:

Barriers to Success

- RPA management of CSFF groups is punitive, bureaucratic and rules are very restrictive limiting how facilitators can identify on farm opportunities and support action on the ground
- The removal of BPS is proving to be damaging for many upland farms – no headspace for forward thinking
- It's a delicate balance... we must acknowledge the importance of food production alongside environmental delivery – grass fed, low input beef and lamb creates the landscapes people love

And...ELM MUST DELIVER OTHERWISE FINE WORDS WILL COUNT FOR NOTHING



THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground is dominated by a dense, dark green forest. Beyond the forest, there are rolling green hills and fields, some of which are divided into smaller plots by stone walls. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

WHITE PEAK LANDSCAPE RECOVERY: Thriving Farms, Dales & Nature

WHITE PEAK LANDSCAPE RECOVERY

Collaborative project:

44 farmers

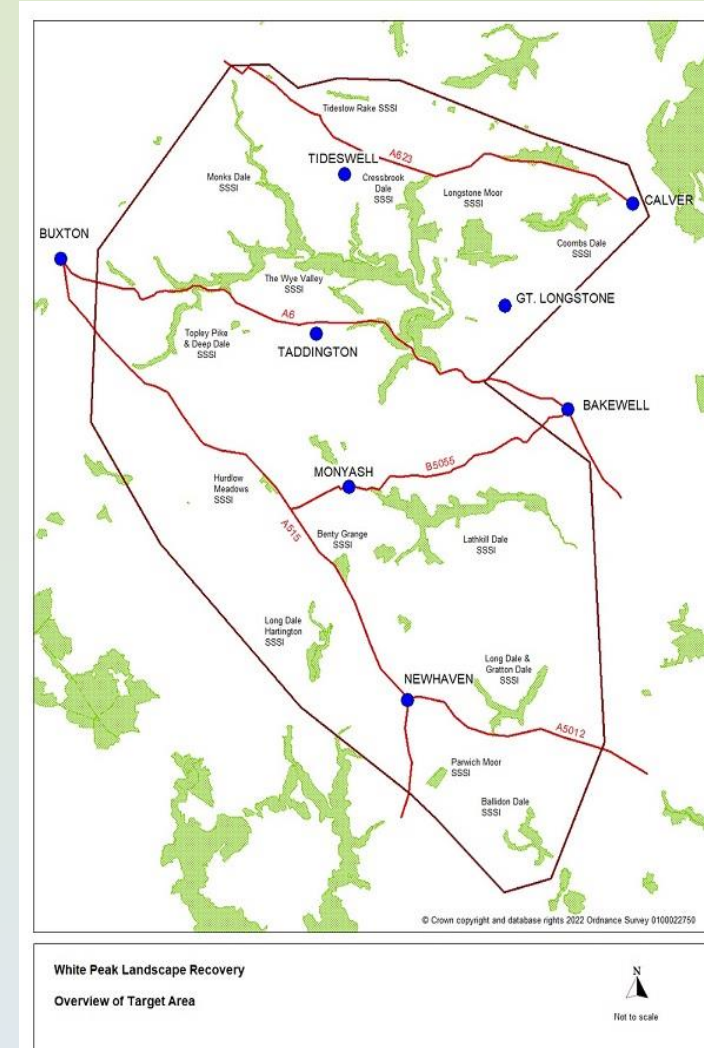
14 additional partners including smallholders, conservation organisations, quarry companies etc

5000ha with ambition to include the whole of the White Peak

Aim to enhance the high value habitats in the limestone dales and extend and link these across the White Peak plateau.

Everyone involved will help decide what the project covers which could include:

- traditional and nature-friendly mixed farming with swards rich in legumes & herbs
- planting scattered trees along field edges and corners
- enhancing existing flower-rich grasslands, hay meadows and limestone hilltop grasslands
- low-input woody pasture or agro-forestry on the dale-tops



WHITE PEAK AND LANDSCAPE RECOVERY: Background

The White Peak - most fragmented of all National Park landscapes with the dales separated by a highly fertile plateau.

Lawton principles of Bigger, Better, More and Joined
Landscape scale change to address both Nature Recovery
and ambitions for Net Zero.

Builds on a range of initiatives including

- the White Peak Trials
- Catchment Sensitive Farming work
- Wye Valley Nature Recovery Project
- Peak District Dales Protected Site



WHITE PEAK AND LANDSCAPE RECOVERY

Funding - mix of green finance and core Defra

Will need to develop

- attractive funding package
- Farmer group that can manage the finances

Development Phase – expected timescale March 2024-March 2026

Hosted by the PDNPA

Hope to recruit in part from the farming community

Monitoring will include element of citizen science –

role for Tideswell

Environmental Group





**PEAK
DISTRICT
NATIONAL
PARK**

Farming in Protected Landscapes



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

£5.5 million

July 2021 – March 2025

Farmers and Land Managers

Part of the Agricultural Transition post Brexit

Administered by the PDNPA

Themes:

Nature: habitats, species, linkages

Climate: trees, carbon audits, herbal leys

People: new permissive paths, upgrades, volunteers,
educational access

Place: landscapes, cultural heritage, sustainable
businesses





Land managed through regenerative farming (ha)	626
Projects to improve soil health (no.)	14
Projects to reduce flood risk (no.)	14
Projects reducing carbon emissions (no)	19
Hedgerows planted or restored (metres)	10759
Trees planted (no.)	5511
Positive management on SSSIs (ha)	2310
Habitat improved or created (ha)	3259
No. of ponds created or restored	35
Permissive access: no. of new paths created	10
Projects delivering educational visits (no.)	8
Volunteers engaged through the programme (no.)	311
Historic structures, buildings and features conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively	49
Total Farmers engaged in programme (no.)	362
Farm clusters created or supported	7
Projects supported (no.)	205
Land supported (ha)	4290