

# Ground nesting birds and agroenvironment in a pilot area– Wallonia (Belgium) Success key factors and what's next?

*Birds@farmland initiative, june2021*



In Wallonia for 15 years, well designed and targeted AECM for ground nesting birds in arable land

And... advisers to help farmers choose the best places and terms of reference of the contract

Adviser's technical report mandatory for farmers



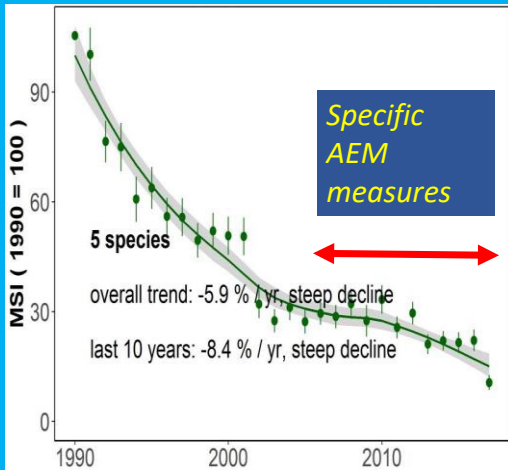
### Strips and small plots seeded with very extensive meadows



### Strips or small plots of unharvested wheat



### 2016 evaluation: sound measures but no result for ground nesting birds !

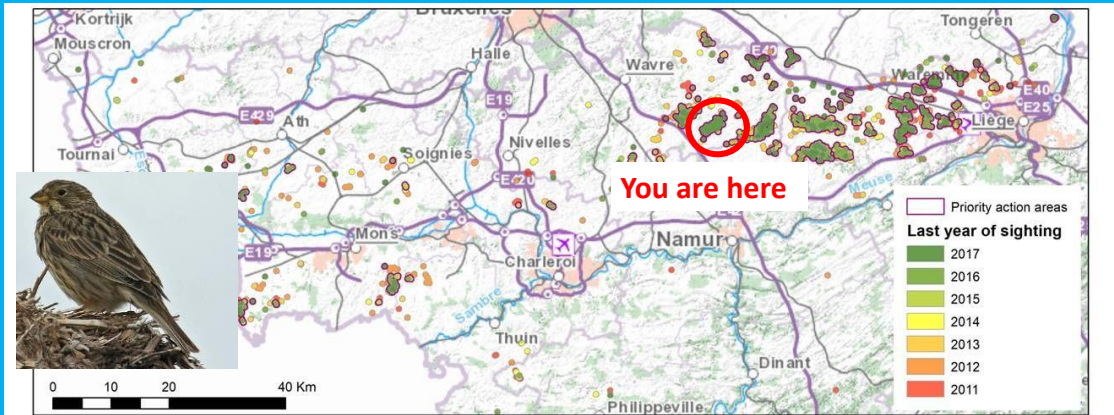


Reasons for failure:  
 Too small a proportion of arable land was under contract in key areas for ground nesting birds

Currently 0,7% of crops under contract –  
 Required: min. 4 to 5% !

2016: Let's try to show how to improve and increase ground nesting bird populations in a key area with our toolbox of AECM!

*Project area: one of the last nesting areas for Corn bunting*

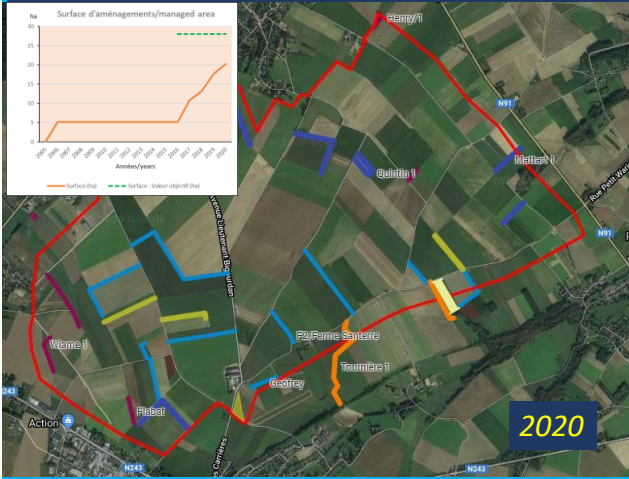


- 700 ha
- 28 farmers
- 20 different crops
- wheat (34%), sugar beet and inulin chicory (25%)

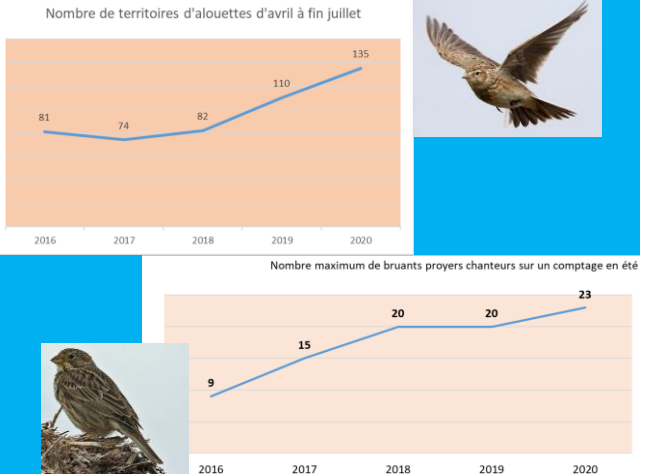


## Where do we stand?

### Network in progress (grass part)



### Birds in progress



### Success key factors (our project)

- Effective adaptative toolbox (+technical modifications possible in running AE contracts);
- Sound basic ecological datas; « Quite easy » flagship species (CB, Skylark);
- Close long term technical/admin and environmental support is crucial and available;
- Field support essential and available (a step further than advice from the desk);
- High skilled advisers (agronomy and nature);
- Sound scientific monitoring (impact monitored, with feedback to farmers );
- Time to develop ownership + visibility (farmer's efforts). Communication via agricultural and local press, municipalities...
- Be patient with farmers and let the project mature (long term project and budgets).

**Pay for what you want! Good will and compensation for average loss of income is not sufficient (managed strips in the most productive areas); Technical problems in managed areas are not «average problems » for a real farmer.**

### What's next for our birds?

- It works => «easier » to amplify and extend under the new CAP;
- More dedicated AE advisers working in key areas for birds;
- Higher payments in key areas via a specific eco-scheme (additional payments for farms with more than 10% of managed land for birds in key areas).
- More money for local conservation projects (natural park, rural development projects ,...).

**Considering birds as an «environmental product » for public money in high productive agricultural areas is not uppermost in the minds of the vast majority of farmers and advisers from agricultural services. Nor in the minds of most civil servants and decision makers. A lot of work remains to be done to make it change! (Weakness )**