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**Current measures to protect
the Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*)
in Germany**

*Document
prepared by
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Report on Current Measures to Protect the Common Hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*)

I) *Land Baden-Württemberg*

In Baden-Württemberg the common hamster is “**critically endangered**”. It is planned to put the common hamster into category 1 of the red list of mammals in Baden-Württemberg.

In **Baden-Württemberg** only **two common hamster populations** there are currently known (Mannheim district/Rhein-Neckar district/ Heidelberg district, Main-Tauber district). Due to its favourable climate, its deep soils and its dry summers the Rhine-Neckar area has long since been populated by hamsters. In the Baden-Württemberg **common hamster conservation programme** this area plays a key role. This is all the more important as this is the crucial common hamster population in Baden-Württemberg and since hamster populations in the densely populated Rhein-Neckar conurbation are exposed to a particular threat from municipal and infrastructural space requirements.

To establish a basis for concrete conservation measures **mapping** was carried out in the Rhein-Neckar area in 2001. The total area of land surveyed for hamster populations was 8,803 ha, **hamster populations** were found on **4,448 ha** (approx. 51 per cent) of agricultural land. However, this was not a coherent or closed population, it was an area fragmented by roads and human settlements. The maximum average summer density of burrows is 1.68 per ha populated area (Mannheim-Nord) and the minimum one 0.53 (remaining Rhein-Neckar area). The **spring density of burrows** is a representative **density index** and generally falls well below the values of the summer density.

Based on the maps provided, the nature conservation authority requested the elaboration of a state-wide “**Conservation Programme to Conserve and Sustainably Stabilize Hamster Populations in Baden-Württemberg**” in 2002 (Contractor: Dr. Ulrich Weinhold, International Common Hamster Work Group). The **conservation programme** submitted in the meantime is to be implemented by the district office for nature and landscape conservation (Bezirksstelle für Naturschutz und Landschaftspflege) in the Rhein-Neckar area and is primarily based on four components:

- **Protection of habitat areas by designating nature protection areas/landscape protection areas (NSG/LSG)**
- Concise proposals for the designation of protected areas are submitted within the framework of the conservation programme.
- **Protection of habitats through contract-based nature conservation.**
- To safeguard hamster populations and to network fragmented populations, concrete proposals are submitted for the contents of **landscape management contracts** to be concluded with farmers. Both acceptance and demand for these contracts are surprisingly high. Several contracts were already concluded.
- **Breeding and Reintroduction**
- It is planned to add reintroduction and relocation trials (with supportive breeding geared to conserving stocks) to complement this measure.
- **Public Relations Work**
- In July 2002 the Environment Institute of Baden-Württemberg (Landesanstalt für Umweltschutz, LfU) issued an information leaflet “**Ausgehamstert? Feldhamster brauchen Hilfe**” (“**No More Hamsters? Common Hamsters Need Help**”) to raise awareness among large groups of the general public. The leaflet was geared to informing farmers and the general public about threats and the protection of the now rare small mammals species.
- In 2003 eight **mobile information boards on “common hamsters”** were drawn up to supplement the LfU information booth on biological diversity. Together with a **video film on hamsters** and a **hamster burrow diorama**, this instrument was i.a. used at the Stuttgart Agricultural Fair (Landwirtschaftliches Hauptfest, (27-9 to 5-10, 2003), one of the largest of its kind in Baden-Württemberg. The presentation met with great interest, also among farmers.
- Further accompanying measures are planned.

To **conclude the state-wide hamster mapping exercise** it is planned to review potential hamster populations in the Main-Tauber district as well as other potential hamster populations **in 2004**.

II) *Land Thuringia*

Existing efforts were continued in order to establish a scientific basis for the elaboration of a species conservation programme for Thuringia:

For the year 2002 the following measures should be noted:

- Continuation of 5-year contracts with 8 farms in the Thüringer Becken.
- Continuation of project support for the scientific support of the above-mentioned contracts, accompanied by intensive assistance for farms involved. A report on the development of hamster populations in the area covered by the contract and in the surrounding area is drawn up annually.
- The data collection project on settlement behaviour of the common hamster in field margins (e.g. wind breaks, trail margins, ditches) in the Thüringer Becken continued in its third year.

In 2002 the following means from the support programme mentioned above were used:

- to compensate for economic hardships in eight farms: 27,292.76 Euro
- to scientifically accompany the project and to collect data: 7,450.03 Euro

34,742.79 Euro

The first six of the eight management contracts mentioned above terminated after five years time at the end of 2002. The results gathered by scientific monitoring do not indicate a clear impact of the measures on hamster populations. It thus seems logical to prolong the studies on the areas surveyed so far. The farms have long since indicated their agreement, however a continuation is not possible because of budget reductions in the support programme of the *Land*. This means giving up a comprehensive and large-scale trial which required considerable organisational efforts, in particular when it came to convincing farmers of the project, a project which to my knowledge was unique in the central European range area of the common hamster and which contained potential for an envisaged E&E project (test and development project) to be financed by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). Detailed studies using telemetry and similar sophisticated methods are considered indispensable for the perfection of our know-how about the behaviour of these animals. Only if these methods are implemented will we be able to draw up a species conservation programme which allows for the efficient population management of a species in locations in which this is required.

Compensation measures for interventions into hamster habitats, granted in connection with the construction of the A 71 motorway near Erfurt, constitute a completely new approach. So far reliable experience with guiding instruments and link tubes destined to prevent the fragmentation of habitats does not exist. Arrangements agreed between the Highway Authority (Autobahnamt) and farmers along the route geared to more closely taking into account the requirements of the common hamster in an area of several hundred hectares must pay off. A special hamster protection area (approx. 15 ha) is to compensate for the consumption of land "well suited for hamsters" alongside the motorway. To prove the compensatory character of the measure outlined, the area will be monitored for 5 years. The cost incurred will be borne by the Highway Authority. At this point in time this seems to be all that can be done to conserve common hamsters in case of such interventions, except doing without the intervention altogether.

The 10th annual meeting of the International Common Hamster Work Group took place in Tongeren /Belgium in October 2002. About 100 participants from Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, North- Rhine Westphalia, Lower Saxony, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia (2 representatives)) and Hungary -for the first time- attended the meeting. Unfortunately there was no progress in terms of identifying major sources of impact for the large-scale population reduction of the species. An excursion to a site close to Maastricht made it possible to visit a common hamster introduction programme in the Netherlands on an area of 60 ha.

The experience gained in Thuringia with the species conservation programme and the farm assistance measures arising from it were presented at the meeting. Ms Martens made a presentation on this topic in English. A publication on the meeting will be issued.

In 2002 representatives from other *Länder* have shown interest in the details of our above-mentioned contracts with farmers and our experience gained so far with these contracts and with compensation measures relating to the construction of the motorway A 71 (e.g. the nature and landscape conservation department of the Leipzig Environment Authority (Staatliches Umweltfachamt), the Magdeburg highway construction authority, Fabion Office, Würzburg).

For the year 2003 the following measures should be noted:

- Continuation of 5-year contracts with 2 farms in the Thüringer Becken.
- Continuation of project support for the scientific support of the above-mentioned contracts, accompanied by intensive assistance for farms involved. A report on the development of hamster populations in the area covered by the contract and in the surrounding area is drawn up annually.
- The data collection project on settlement behaviour of the common hamster in field margins (e.g. wind breaks, trail margins, ditches) in the Thüringer Becken was continued in its fourth year.

In 2003 the following means from the support programme were used:

- to compensate for economic hardships in two farms: 12,316.76 Euro
- to scientifically accompany the project and to collect data: 2,548.18 Euro

14,864.94 Euro

III) Land Lower Saxony

Following the identification of common hamster populations in the **Göttingen city area**, in particular in the Universität/Nord suburb, comprehensive compensation measures were launched within the framework of development planning.

Local zoning plans included an expert contribution "nature and landscape" to ensure that species conservation issues based on an up-dated population inventory and habitat definitions resulting from it were taken into account. This was done in close cooperation with the Nature Conservation Agency and the Lower Saxony Ecology Authority. At the same time interventions into sites and habitats were assessed and the possible prevention and minimization of interventions was ensured by designating areas to be excluded from any building measures or to be kept open as migration corridors for different sub-populations.

Comprehensive compensation areas were defined to improve common hamster habitats in the UNI- Nord district in the long term. Depending on the building progress to be made, these compensation areas will be subject to hamster-oriented management. A conservation and management plan, elaborated by a well-known expert office contracted by Göttingen University, was submitted for the UNI-Nord district. Within the framework of an "urban planning contract", management guidelines were also elaborated for compensation areas north of the Otto-Hahn-Strasse. To reduce negative impacts both the core area for hamsters and the compensation area were fenced in with a game fence.

When several zoning plans were submitted for the **Braunschweig city area** and implementation started, hamsters in the area were caught and relocated appropriately to agricultural land purchased for hamster conservation (approx. 10 ha). These relocation measures were implemented by a competent expert office and scientifically accompanied by the Braunschweig Technical University (TU Braunschweig).

To improve common hamster habitats in the long term, these areas will be subject to hamster-oriented management measures that will be taken as building progresses.

The same procedure was used when zoning plans were drawn up for the **Salzgitter city area** and the **Peine district** (municipality of Vechelde). By designating compensation areas the long-term conservation of hamsters has been secured.

The Lower Saxony Office for Ecology acted as a consultant in the elaboration of all zoning plans and all other projects which have an impact on hamster areas. Within the past two years various studies on the population situation of the common hamster were conducted in selected areas of Lower Saxony, thus providing the latest data for an expert assessment in areas to be developed.

Implementation of common hamster relocation

Relocation measures must be implemented by an expert office/experts and take the following considerations into account:

The catching and relocation process must be concluded by the beginning of September at the latest, since this is the only way to ensure that hamsters have sufficient opportunity to build new burrows for hibernation and collect sufficient food for the winter.

Burrow entrances in the relocation area are mapped in March/April/May and in July/August of the relocation year and again after 3 and 5 years in order to monitor the long-term success of the project.

Labelling of burrow entrances in the relocation area, drilling and marking (with GPS) of holes (on the slant, diameter of 5-7 cm, depth up to 100 cm) in the area to be made available for relocation. Provision of feed in these holes, which must be covered with cereal plant. Provision of animal feed in the area (wheat, cereal) at different feeding sites, food must be covered.

Installation of rocking rat traps in the trapping area: traps must be fixed, bait and food must be added. Traps must be covered with straw (protection against rain and vandalism) in the evenings just before dawn. Traps must be checked over a period of 10 days by 23 and 6 hours. Traps must be removed in the mornings, small mammals caught must be identified and released. If hamsters are caught, their sex must be identified and they must be marked (to the extent possible). Burrow entrances must be closed with light soil/straw to allow for monitoring. Traps in which common hamsters are caught must be taken to the areas destined for hamsters, and hamsters must be released in front of the holes drilled.

Weekly monitoring of artificial burrows and other burrow entrances in the relocation area up to the hibernation period to study settlement behaviour.

Monitoring of the area in which building activities take place to identify burrow entrances until October or right to the end of building activity to check potential new hamster burrows.

Example for hamster-oriented management (City of Braunschweig)

Management of relocation areas for hamsters (German identification code: Gemarkung Lamme, Flur 2, Flurstück 191/63) (size of sub-plot: approx. 1.2 ha) must be as follows:

Management in line with organic and ecological agriculture, the following criteria must be observed in particular

- no use of semi-liquid, liquid manure or sewage sludge
- no use of plant protecting agents
- no use of rodenticides
- site-specific fertilisation admissible, no liquid fertiliser, use of P/K fertilisers only shortly before soil cultivation
- no irrigation
- maximum tillage depth: 20 cm
- soil tillage only from October 15 to March 31 (in case of particularly adverse weather conditions up to the 3rd decade in April)
- reduction of standard drill power by 50 per cent (wheat/barley up to a maximum of 100 kg/ha, oats/rye up to 80kg/ha)
- increase of drill row spacing from 24 to 50 cm

- harvest may start after October 15, if not, crops must be chopped. Soil tillage for spring cereal crops can only start in spring. The separation strip and the mixed vegetation strip should not be chopped before spring. Lucerne and headland strips should be chopped between mid-June to mid-July and again in October.
- soil modelling and increase by 80 cm to 1 m in north- south direction throughout the area
- soil modelling, the establishment of sand islands, undersowing of lucerne and winter wheat should all be done in autumn 2003 if possible.

Establishing special plots:

Management strip with a width of approx. 3m with adjoining furrow

Unused separation strip , 2 m wide, between management strips, soil to be tilled every 2 years

At the head of the fields, headland separation strips with a width of approx. 5-10 m, remain untouched. Soil should be tilled annually.

Percentage of use:

Total	Width (m)	Per cent
Mix	6	5.9
Lucerne	12	11.8
Peas	6	5.9
Spring wheat	18	17.6
Winter cereal	18	17.6
Spring barley	18	17.6
Oats	18	17.6
Separation strip	6	5.9
Total	102	100.0

IV) *Free State of Bavaria*

The Bavarian hamster populations have been classified as “endangered” in the up-dated Red List of endangered animals (2003). Therefore an Action Plan was prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency (LfU) in 2002, and in spring 2003 a species aid programme (entitled “Feldhamster-Hilfsprogramm” or FHP) was launched, starting with a two year pilot scheme. After intensive coordination with both nature conservation and agricultural authorities and supplemented by direct talks with farmers and NGOs, two main programmes were developed: either “fallow land for hamsters” or “hamster-friendly cultivation”. The latter alternative can be combined with growing alfalfa, with leaving unharvested strips until September, with leaving stubbles until autumn and with a complete abandonment of rodenticides. Important pre-condition: There must be hamster-burrows on or nearby the field.

A flyer for potential farmers was given to the lower nature conservation authorities for further distribution. It contains a short overview of the hamster biology, names recent hazards, describes the retreat from the borders and the decline in the whole area which causes a need for help and, finally, outlines the measures of the FHP and the amount of compensation money provided. The flyer can be downloaded as pdf document from http://www.bayern.de/lfu/natur/arten_und_biotopschutz/ahp/fhp-faltblatt.pdf.

At the same time several farmers’ meetings were held in selected regions to promote the programme. Finally, around 30 farmers throughout Lower Franconia were found willing to participate in the FHP with approximately 60 ha in the first year (2003). For this purpose special hamster contracts had to be designed under the regular Bavarian “conservation by contract programme”.

The pilot scheme also includes monitoring the success by counting the number of hamster burrows as well as controlling the extensivisation measures. Several evaluation meetings are planned by the LfU for winter 2003/04. Public relations work will be extended, also in cooperation with the local

NGO area manager for the “Agrarlandschaft Mainfranken”. Above and beyond this, a geographical scope (“support scenario”) for the FHP with deliberate focal points has to be developed.

At the beginning it seemed rather hard to convince land users that hamsters are not a pest but an endangered species worth protection. Meanwhile the benefits of FHP have been recognised by farmers in the Frankonia district, and so far (October 2003) the number of participants will double in the second year of the pilot scheme with an expected area of over 100 ha. However, there are still some problems that need solutions; here are only a few:

- What is a reasonable duration for a FHP contract? Five years, like in most of the other nature conservation contracts, seems too long.
- What happens if there is real damage (e. g. in sugar beet) not only on a FHP field, but on a neighbouring field?
- What kind of cooperation is necessary between nature conservation authorities (managing the FHP) and infrastructure authorities (e. g. road construction offices) in charge of compensation areas for new roads which go through hamster land?
- What is an optimum size? Do we have to limit size and number of fields per farmer? Do we have to limit the programme at all?
- Is it possible to combine the well-established species aid programme for montagu’s harrier with the FHP?
- What technical problems can evolve (and fall back on the participating farmer) by overlaps with regular agricultural programmes, especially if they are co-financed by the EU?
- Will it be possible to reintroduce individuals (e. g. from a “successful” FHP field) in areas where hamsters are already extinct? Considering the population scale, this is undoubtedly necessary.
- What is the status the hamster population in Upper Frankonia around Hof? So far there is very little information available on this issue.

V) *Land North-Rhine Westphalia*

The *Land North-Rhine Westphalia* has intensified its efforts to conserve common hamsters in 2003. The following measures have been carried out:

1. Contract-based nature conservation

The common hamster conservation programme in NRW elaborated by the *Land NRW* in October 2001 was forwarded to the Permanent Committee of the Bern Convention with the last but one report on German conservation measures as Annex T-PVS/Inf (2002) 38 (Action Plan for the Common Hamster [*Cricetus cricetus*] in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany.) Following the conclusion of initial (one-year) contracts with farmers on hamster-friendly management of land with existing hamster populations within the framework of implementing the species conservation programme in 2002 (see last year's report), a guideline on allocating grants within the framework of the common hamster conservation programme in NRW is currently being drawn up, based on the experience gained by the *Land NRW* in cooperation with the Rhineland agricultural chamber and the State Office for Ecology, Land Organisation and Forestry (*Landesanstalt für Ökologie, Bodenordnung und Forsten* - LÖBF). According to this guideline farmers will receive financial compensation for hamster-friendly management. This compensation not only covers additional expenditure that arises and contractual losses, it also provides a financial incentive. The funds required for implementing this guideline will come from *Land* resources that are made available within the framework of the species conservation programme (€250,000 per year for 5 years). The goal of these measures is to improve the living conditions of common hamsters in the known populated areas and to conserve the species there. Furthermore, these measures promote all fauna typical for borders, including small game.

According to this guideline farmers can chose between two difference main contract types for a hamster-friendly crop management (commitment period of at least 2 years.) Beyond this there is the option of concluding a transitional contract before concluding one of these contracts for the first time

(for approx. 3 months.) A special follow-on contract can be entered into after the expiry of one of these minimum two-year contracts in the case of desired root crop cultivation where in part lucerne or clover/grass ley is sown. The cornerstones of the supported measures in all contracts are the postponement of soil cultivation (e.g. grubbing) and relinquishing part of the harvest until 15 October or over winter until 28 February and the cultivation of a crop favourable to hamsters. Depending on the type of contract a compensation payment of €150 (transitional contract), €680, €1000 or €1976 (follow-on contract with root crop cultivation) is made per ha and year. The conclusion of contracts is only possible for plots on which hamster burrows have been found in recent years (2000 or later) and on surrounding fields. Irrespective of the above management contracts, the guideline also promotes the notification of hamster burrows by farmers. Every farmer that provides notification of one or several hamster burrows on fields he cultivates or neighbouring separation strips receives a premium of €150 per burrow once the existence of the population has been confirmed.

The guideline should apply until 30 June 2008.

An informational brochure on this funding guideline was published in 2003 (see also 4 - *further public relations work*).

2. Establishing a coordinating office

A coordinating office was set up in May 2003 at the NABU nature conservation station Euregio Naturpunkt e.V. in Wegberg (Heinsberg district) to implement and provide expert assistance for the species conservation programme locally.

The "coordinating office for the common hamster conservation programme" employs one part-time expert, with funds for an additional part-time assistant employed by means of a service contract for the mapping work. The office is financed by *Land* resources.

The coordinating office's tasks include coordinating and implementing common hamster mapping in Rhineland, reviewing incoming hamster notifications and promoting contracts for hamster-friendly land management.

3. Mapping

The mapping of common hamster populations in the Rhineland that was started in 2002 successfully continued this year. The following results have been recorded:

a) Mapping by the coordinating office for the common hamster conservation programme

The selection of areas to be mapped was made in accordance with the latest data from the LÖBF, latest notifications and information from farmers, information from the telephone survey by Dr U. Weinhold (Heidelberg University) and K. Ohnesorge in 2001 (supplemented in 2003, see *b* below) and in-house expertise. Beyond this, a survey was carried out on behalf of the town of Zülrich within the framework of a planned amendment to the land-use plan.

Mapping was primarily carried out between 30 June and mid-September following cereal harvesting; in Zülrich (Euskirchen district) and Driesch (Neuss district) mapping was also carried out in spring. In summer the survey focussed almost exclusively on cereal fields including their separation strips, and in spring on individual turnip fields and a potato field.

Burrows were found in 4 areas in North-Rhine Westphalia:

- Donselen (Heinsberg district)
- in the southern district of Neuss
- northern Jülich (Düren district)
- Zülrich (Euskirchen district).

The areas in Zülrich (Euskirchen district) and Rommerskirchen-Butzheim/-Frixheim (southern district of Neuss) appear to be the particularly significant focal areas at present. The population in Zülrich is primarily located in the border area of the land subject to the planned amendment to the land-use plan. In a surveyed area of around 80 ha (area in land-use plan and surrounding), an average

burrow density of 0.45 burrows/ha was identified, although in the key area alone - an 8 ha plot - there were 18 burrows. The burrow density was somewhat lower in the Rommerskirchen area.

b) Research and data from Heidelberg University

A dissertation is currently being written on hamster populations on the left side of the Rhine in North-Rhine Westphalia (focal point: existing populations) by Ms. K Ohnesorge at the Institute for Faunistics at Heidelberg University (supervised by Dr U. Weinhold, expected completion date spring 2004). As part of this work, the telephone survey of farmers started in 2001 on previous and existing hamster populations was restarted and continued in 2003. The latest survey of over 40 farmers in the Neuss district this summer resulted in 3 notifications of possible populations. The random sample surveys in 8 fields following a tip from Rommerskirchen Mitte in July 2003 resulting in a find of 7 burrows, spread across 4 fields (around 80 further burrows were found during the subsequent search by the coordinating office in the surrounding area.)

c) Other surveys

Several surveys, in particular local surveys, were carried out in 2003 as part of planned interference. With the exception of the find in Zülpich (cf. a) all mapping was negative.

4. Information events and other public relations work

- Information events

At the end of February 2003 a major information event was held by the *Land* NRW together with the Rhineland agricultural chamber and the LÖBF in Düren. This event informed local farmers, competent authorities and biological stations in the Rhineland about the common hamster conservation programme and presented and addressed the funding measures.

Two further information events took place under the chair of the Rhineland agriculture chamber and the *Land* NRW in July in Düren (for the Heinsberg, Düren, Euskirchen and Aachen districts and the city of Aachen) and in Auweiler (for the Erft and Neuss districts.) The participating farmers were, in addition to the above points, informed about latest finds by the coordinating office, and about the contractual elements of the funding guideline and the procedures for concluding these contracts.

- Other public relations work

In February 2003 the *Land* NRW published a colour brochure on the common hamster conservation programme and funding measures.

Various articles have been or are due to be published this year in agricultural and other relevant magazines on this conservation programme and the options for funding.

More information on the common hamster conservation programme (in German) can be found on the LÖBF website at <http://www.loebf.nrw.de> under the common hamster icon in "Daten & Fakten".

Furthermore, the setting up of a supporting working group is planned to promote interaction between nature conservation and agriculture within the framework of the species conservation programme and to provide expertise (if necessary modification of measures) and to ensure implementation in practice. This group should comprise representatives from the relevant district offices of the agricultural chambers, the biological stations, the lower agricultural authorities, the farmers participating in the programme and the LÖBF.

VI) Land Saxony

Conserving and stabilizing hamster populations and safeguarding original and suitable habitats are still priorities of nature conservation in Saxony. Studies show that common hamster habitats are located in an 80 square kilometre area east and west of the A9 motorway in the northern part of the Leipzig Land (Leipzig district, deep loess soils).

Natural population fluctuations have increased due to extreme weather patterns in the last months (long-term drought and heat in summer 2003, long-term frost in winter 2002/2003 and extreme humidity in summer 2002).

The climatologically induced temporary depression of populations in the north of Saxony has also hit the common hamsters relocated in 2001 (Wiedemar industrial area). Recovery of the populations can be expected, in particular because there is geographical contact with hamster populations in Saxony-Anhalt.

In parallel, a regional species protection project with specific protection measures was elaborated by local and regional nature conservation authorities in cooperation with the highest-level nature conservation authority.

Above and beyond the populations in the Leipzig area, there is another limited common hamster population in the eastern part of the Oberlausitz (Oberseifersdorf area).

As from 2004, studies on the general distribution of further common hamster habitats are to be launched at *Land* level. If appropriate, these studies may allow a targeted follow-up search for further common hamster populations and the derivation of common hamster protection criteria for Saxony.

Concrete protection measures for this species are hard to take, since environment measures in agriculture which are eligible for funding are currently not feasible for common hamster protection. To implement common hamster protection in practise, we concentrate efforts on voluntary cooperation with farmers and jointly look for suitable and feasible protection strategies and measures. This endeavour is supported by an exchange of experience with other *Länder*, in particular Thuringia.

Against the background of stringent EU stipulations on common hamster protection it will be necessary to provide sufficient funding options (at least as from 2007) which offer sufficient financial incentive for nature conservation measures on intensively used agricultural land, in particular for common hamster protection.