CHAPTER 3

High Nature Value farming and food security in Europe

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The impact of land take and soil sealing in urban pressure areas on food security and the environment has been recently addressed by the EU Commission. The possibilities of High Nature Value farming, mostly in marginal regions, to underpin food security in urban pressure areas are assessed, while taking into account the comparative advantages of minimized distances between food production areas and urban markets.

**Food security and urbanization**

The need for halting biodiversity loss and the weak provision for other public ecosystem services is broadly accepted in Europe. However, food security, which was a major reason for establishing the Common Agricultural Policy, has not received much attention in the last few decades in Europe. Only recently the continuing loss of farm land through land take and soil sealing in urban pressure areas (EC 2012) has brought the issue of food security back on the EU Commission’s agenda. While farm land is declining in urban pressure areas through the on-going process of urbanization, the area of farm land is also declining in marginal territories due to lack of income and declining populations despite the various efforts to support marginal regions in Europe. Much land is then simply abandoned, becomes overgrown by scrubs and ultimately turning into forest.

*Photo 3.1* Small scale farms with rye fields in the heathland area (Serra da Estrela, Upper Mondego Valley, Portugal) (photo: Jan Jansen).