



The LifeWatch ERIC Biodiversity
& Ecosystem eScience Conference
PLOVDIV, BULGARIA 7-10 JULY 2026

Local (agro)biodiversity and food as social and cultural capital – beyond the labelling and marketing strategies

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08 July 2026



History of Food and Links to Territory in Bulgaria



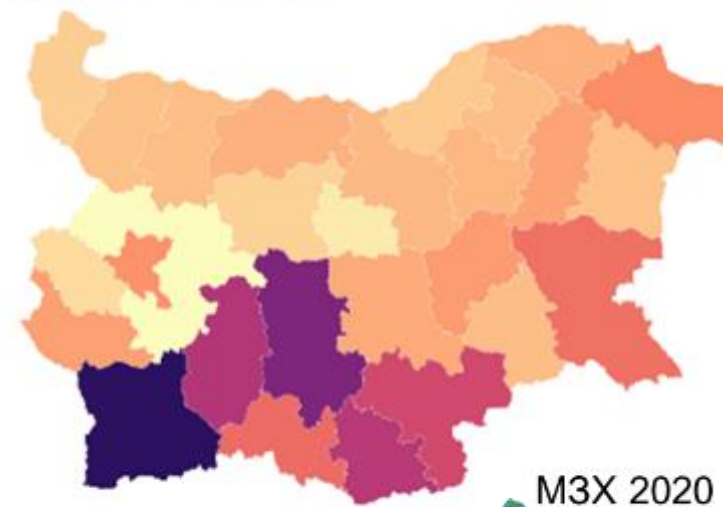
- Frequent and abrupt political changes
- Change in land ownership ➡ gaps in market history
- Quick and large-scale changes in production modes ➡ change in food quality
- **Local agrobiodiversity replaced by commercial varieties ➡ disruption of the ecological balance**
- Local food sheltered as family recipes ➡ rarely become family businesses

Diabolic structure of Bulgarian agriculture

Small Farmers as a Social Group

- High depopulation rate in rural areas;
- Advanced age of farmers;
- Limited mobility due to economic reasons, age, and every-day occupation in the farm
- Farmers' livelihood not attractive to youth
- Lack of continuity and a limited perspective
- Negative attitude to cooperation
- Limited professional education
- Additional income not a major business

Брой стопанства 2020



СЪЗДАНО С DATAKIT - БЪЛГАРИЯ • СЪЗДАНО С DATAKIT • СЪЗДАНО С DATAKIT

M3X 2020



Agrobiodiversity and local food – where can we find them in Bulgaria?

*Bulgarian...
Balkan...?*





Ark of Taste

62 results found

ARK / REGION / COUNTRY [v] X

Artisanal Trahana

Rakova / Sliven / Macedonia, and Vostanilo, near Kavadarci

INFO >

Find an Ark of Taste product

Bulgaria



all types



Slow Food® in Bulgaria

Local plant varieties and landraces as PDO/PGI?



PDO
„Strandzhanski bilkov chay”
/ ”Странджански билков
чай”



Local Breeds and PDO/PGI?



Karakachan
sheep



Long-haired
(Kalofer) goat



Practice to Protect?

PDO (without the wines)

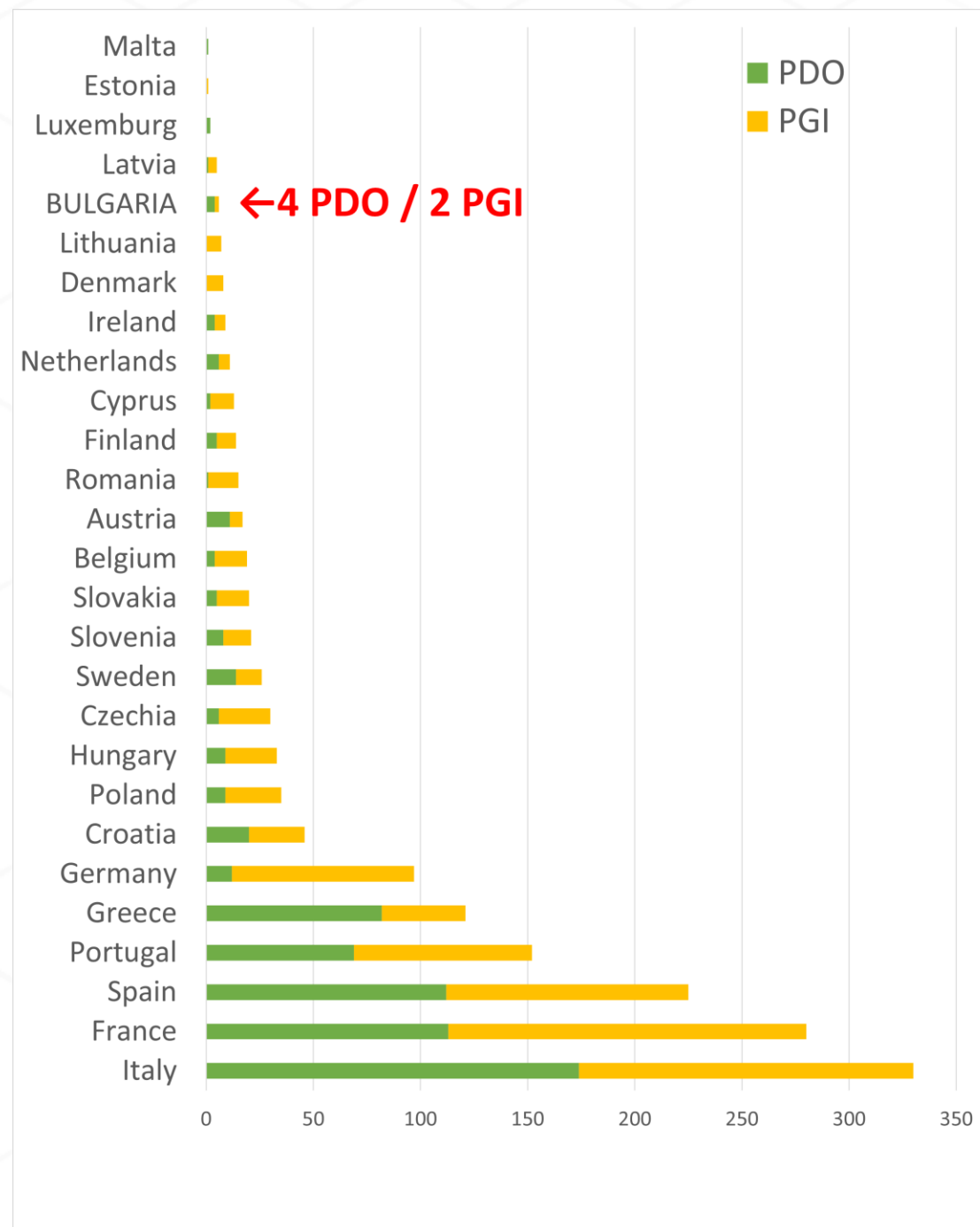
1. Strandzhanski manov med / Manov med ot Strandzha (honey)
2. Strandzhanski bilkov chay (herbal tea)
3. Bulgarsko byalo salamureno sirene (cheese)
4. Bulgarsko kiselo mlyako (yoghurt)
5. **Fresh Meat from East Balkan Pig***

PGI

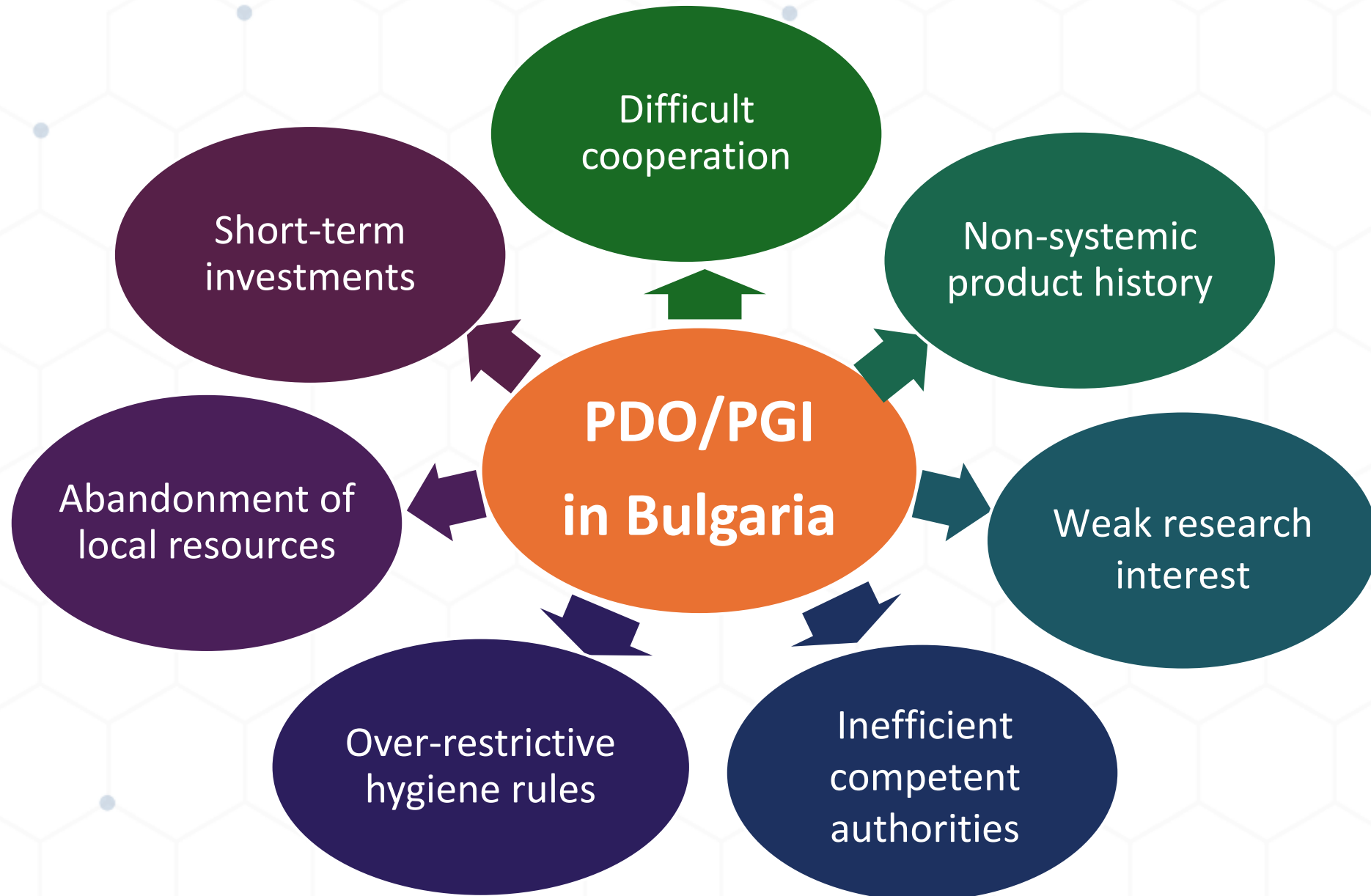
1. Bulgarian Rose Oil
2. Gornooryahovski sudzhuk (dry sausage)

TSG (foods)

1. Kayserovan vrat Trakiya (cured meat)
2. Role Trapezitsa (cured meat)
3. File Elena (cured meat)
4. Lukanka Panagyurska (dry sausage)
5. Pastarma Govezhda (dry sausage)
6. Troyanska lukanka (dry sausage)
7. Tarnovski Sudzhuk (dry sausage)



Can Quality Schemes be More Beneficial in Bulgaria?



Meat from East Balkan Swine – PDO?



- 2500 years of history
- The last remaining free-range local pig breed of Bulgaria
- Specific silvopastoral (acorn-rich) way of breeding in NATURA 2000 habitats
- Breeding is a specific cultural ecosystem service
- Climate-friendly breeding practice
- High-quality “marbled” meat, rich in Omega-3 fatty acids



Due to ASF and related biosecurity limitations:

- Population dropped from ca. 5000 to ca. **500 live animals**;
- The animals are kept **fenced** – high stress; change in behavior; impact on meat quality
- Still **no permanent measures** to reconcile the free-range breeding with biosecurity
- **No trade**, even small batched for slaughtering are an issue

Meat from East Balkan Swine
№ AO-2549/ 30.12.2016
Canceled!

Rangelands, Grazing Systems, Pastoralists

2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists



To **hold** the interconnected climate, biodiversity and land degradation crises:

- **Preserve** the rangeland ecosystems
- **Support** the people who sustain them.

Rangelands - point of interaction between humans, domesticated and wild animals and plants

- ½ of the world's land
- Home to unique biodiversity
- Provide the livelihoods of pastoral communities

Pastoralists - key custodians of rangelands

- Have created and maintain the rangelands
- Preserve autochthonous breeds
- Contribute to food security
- Support wild biodiversity
- Hold cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge

Defining and labeling of Grazing Systems

Strongly pastoral	Intermediate	Non-pastoral
Nomadism	Agropastoralism	Mixed crop-livestock
Transhumance	Extensive ranching	Rotational grazing
Open-range grazing	Silvopastoralism	Organic livestock farming
Communal grazing	Conservation grazing	Feedlots
Semi-nomadic systems	Extensive grazing	Zero-grazing



East Balkan Swine



Karakachan sheep



Maremma cattle, IT

FAO, EU and Bulgaria on grazing

FAO Perspective

- Broad spectrum of grazing systems;
- Focus on livelihoods, food production, ecosystem services and sustainable use of rangelands.

Grazing is both an **agricultural activity** AND a **mechanism to maintain** landscapes, biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

EU Perspective

- Policy-driven approach;
- Focus on permanent grasslands, biodiversity conservation and environmental objectives under CAP.

Emerging understanding about the importance of grazing:

- for maintaining habitats;
- preserving ecosystem services;
- supporting climate objectives.

Bulgaria's Gap

- Lack of a consistent national definition of outdoor grazing;
- Absence of a shared understanding of grazing systems and their environmental and agricultural functions;
- Uncertainty for farmers, decision makers and policymakers.

Focus on administrative eligibility and compliance issues rather than on the complex role of grazing

- Grazing policies are at the intersection of agriculture, animal husbandry, environment, climate, biodiversity, and sustainable rural development.
- Responsibilities distributed across multiple institutions with different mandates, planning horizons and performance indicators.
- Respect for institutional boundaries rather than ecosystem realities.
- Agricultural authorities - prioritize farm viability, productivity and CAP implementation
- Environmental authorities - water protection, habitat conservation, and biodiversity objectives (mainly related to wildlife).



The **flexibility** to define grazing practices, permanent grasslands, eligible areas and environmental requirements **allows adaptation to local conditions but also results in considerable variation in their understanding, regulation and support across the EU.**

The Policy Fragmentation in Bulgaria



Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF)



Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW)

Operate largely independently,
despite their inherent
interdependencies

- Lack of integrated strategies for land use, water resources, and food systems.
- Conflicting regulations that undermine sustainable practices and local initiatives.
- Challenges in aligning national priorities with EU Green Deal objectives due to siloed approaches.

Some Examples for Institutional Discrepancies

Veterinarian Authorities

Priority to biosecurity
and prevention of deceases



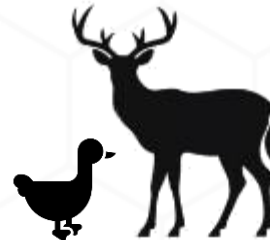
Genetic Resources Agencies

Priority to preservation of the
gene pool of endangered
domestic breeds



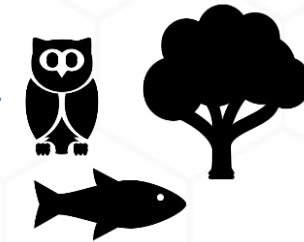
Hunting Authorities

Priority the populations of
certain game species



Environmental Agencies

Priority to conservation of
habitats and wild species



Agricultural Authorities

Priority to farm viability
and production targets



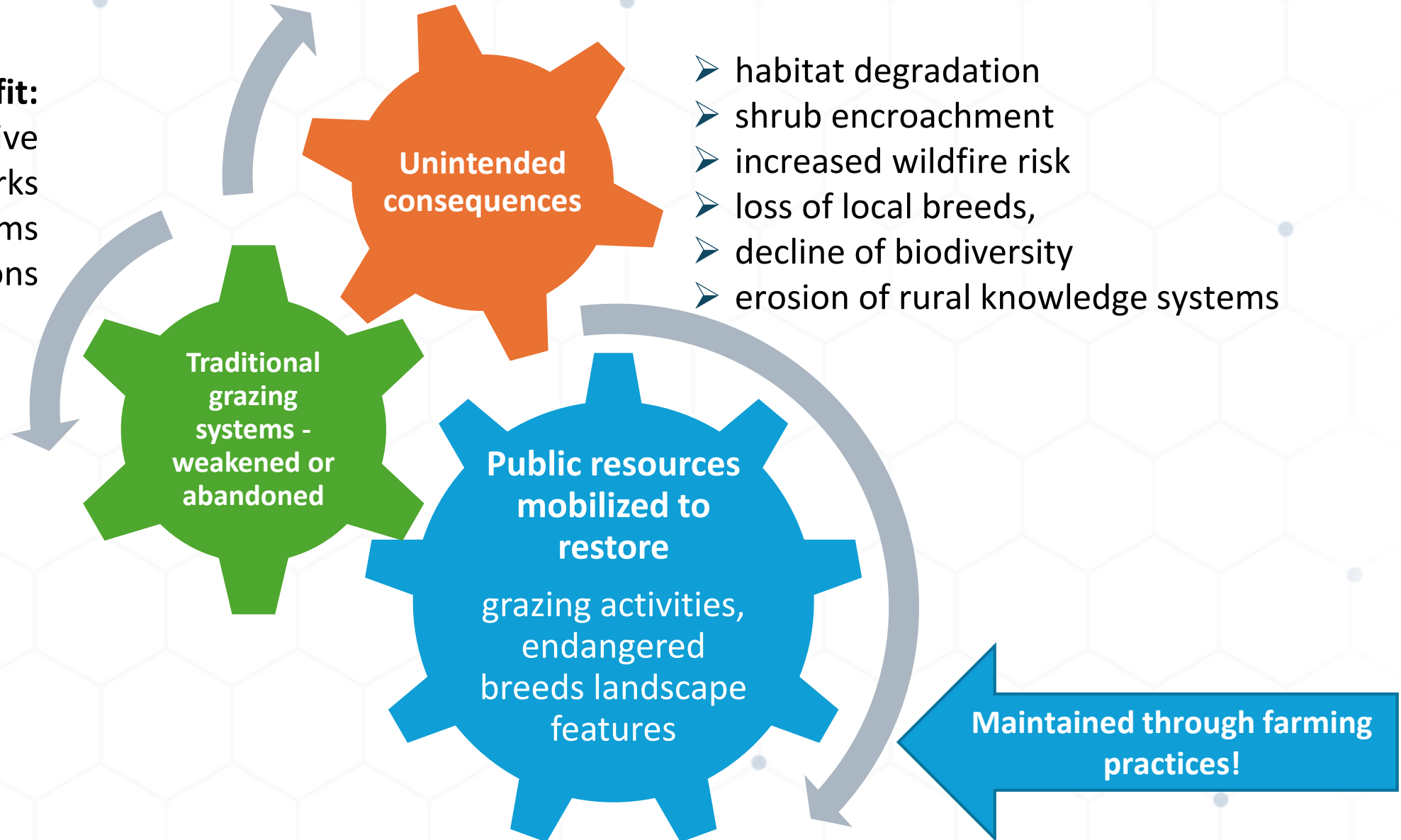
Administrative and cognitive challenge - **different institutions may operate under different definitions of sustainability and prioritize different outcomes:**

- conflicting incentives
- decisions are taken within separate administrative silos
- lack of integrated landscape-level planning of grazing

(Restoring) What was Lost – the Recurring Policy Paradox!

Do not fit:

- Current administrative frameworks
- funding mechanisms
- market conditions



FROM central policy challenge for EU and Bulgaria

Stronger cross-sectoral
coordination

Pricize and
coherent
definitions of
grazing systems
and practices

Shared understanding:
grazing is an agricultural
activity, a land-
management practice
and an ecological process

TOWARDS complementary policy actions for shared landscape strategy

What might be the benefits?

Health benefits

(Bio)cultural heritage and
resources

Traditional Knowledge
Social Innovations
Viable rural areas
Diverse food for consumers

Ecological perspectives –bio-
economics, climate change

Cultural benefits (local cuisine,
diets, cultural ecosystem
services)

Landscape changes– modern
rural perspectives



THANK YOU!



ФОНД
НАУЧНИ
ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО И НАУКАТА

Funded by BNSF under “Traditional food practices - a basis for diversification of the food market and social innovation in rural areas” project (КП-06-H66/11)

Reach out to us

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