

press release

## **Palatinate, Germany: pathfinder for more biodiversity**

### **“Just-there areas” are the trump card of agricultural landscapes**

**Berlin, 11 June 2013** – Insects visiting and pollinating blossoms such as honeybees, bumblebees, solitary bees or butterflies need suitable habitats and sources of food, which both not always available in our agricultural landscapes. In a mutual scientific study in Rhineland-Palatinate, the Institute of Agro-Ecology and RIFCON GmbH have therefore determined “just-there areas” in close proximity to areas either used by agriculture or for settlements, and have evaluated these areas from an ecologic viewpoint. The results of this research have been published in the experts’ meeting “‘Just-there areas’ in agricultural landscapes – habitats not only for bees” in Neustadt / Weinstrasse, Germany, today.

The calculated medium potential of such areas, which according to the definition are neither used for agriculture nor for ecologic measures so far – and insofar are “just there” – amounts to approximately 5 percent of the total area of Rhineland-Palatinate. Road- and waysides as well as traffic refuges, ditches or small terraces belong to these “just-there areas” which could be valorised in order to promote the diversity of species in general and the diversity of insects visiting blossoms in particular. Having initiated this project, Fördergemeinschaft Nachhaltige Landwirtschaft e.V. (FNL – Association for the Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture) supports the determination and evaluation of the “just-there areas” in Germany as part of its initiative “Innovation and Natural Environment”. Estimates with regard to the potential all over Germany will be available following the analysis of further research areas in the federal states of Lower Saxony and Brandenburg – representing intensively used agricultural areas – in spring 2014.

*“Whenever the protection of biodiversity in our agricultural landscapes is addressed, all eyes are focussed on agriculture. EU-Commission for example has claimed that about 5 percent of arable land of our farmers should be identified as ecological compensation areas in the future. These areas would than no longer be available for the sustainable intensification*

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*which is badly needed within agricultural production”, says Dr. Anton Kraus, general manager of FNL. “The protection of biodiversity, however, is an issue for all of us. This important task may not be put as burden on the backs of farmers alone. Given the present public discussion, the “just-there” project is of central importance. With this project, we have a trump card we may not gamble away.”*

In order to really use the identified potential of “just-there” areas, hence markedly contributing to improving habitats not only for bees, dedicated supporters from municipalities, agriculture, science and economy are essential. This was also one result of the concluding discussion of the expert round table, where chances and obstacles of an area management approach were discussed. Andrea Adams, deputy general manager of the Farmers and Wine-Growers Association of Rhineland-Palatinate, Prof. Dr. Karl Keilen, local Mayor of Bornheim, Dr. Peter Rosenkranz, Regional Office of Apiculture of Hohenheim University, Prof. Dr. Christoph Künast, Eco-System Consulting, Dr. Matthias Trapp, Institute for Agricultural Ecology, and Dr. Michael Riffel, RIFCON, evaluated the project from their individual and specific experts’ point of view.

**About the initiative „Innovation & Natural Environment“**

The initiative „Innovation & Natural Environment“ was founded under the umbrella of the Fördergemeinschaft Nachhaltige Landwirtschaft e.V. with the objective to contribute to a better understanding in society that a sustainable and productive agriculture is not contrary to the natural environment, but that both elements depend on each other.

**About the Association for the Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture e.V. (FNL)**

Within FNL, organisations, associations and enterprises of agriculture as well as up- and downstream sectors have joined forces with the common aim to inform about the multiple accomplishments of today’s agriculture.

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