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**Entrance speech for the international “Biodiversity & LEADER”
conference in Vienna on April the 3rd 2014**

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen

First of all I'd like to thank the organizers for inviting me to this excellent event.

I am very pleased to be able to present, the Allgaeu wide cooperative project, “Allgäuer Steueverwertung”, to you today.

The Allgäu landscape in the south of Germany, which is so enjoyed by tourists, is characterized by many areas of Molinia meadows. In order to preserve these rich meadows in all their flora and fauna diversity, they have to be mown to establish a basis for continued use.

In recent decades, many smaller farms stopped managing the meadows. This was partly because the younger generation was no longer interested in carrying out the labour-intensive mowing and processing involved. It was also because the smaller, more sensitive machines for the job, were no longer available. In addition, there had been a change to animal husbandry without bedding.

Therefore, the wet meadows in the Allgaeu were no longer mown. As a result, these areas were overtaken by bushes, and the meadows slowly broke down. The richly inhabited meadows, have been lost in recent years, as they were not cared for.

The bedding from the meadows was viewed negatively by farmers until 2010. There was often the attitude that the mowing and harvesting of the meadows was too much effort, too labour-intensive. Furthermore, farmers thought that expensive specialist machines would be needed. In addition, they thought that the poorer quality of bedding couldn't compete with straw. It was also seen as a potential cause of illness for the animals.

Therefore, several environmental groups, saw it as urgent to develop farming concepts, to effectively harvest and use the Molinia meadow



bedding to maintain these wet meadows. Central to the concept was to raise awareness for how useful the bedding could be. If quality control and standards are good, it is a high quality material.

For this reason, on the first of January 2010, the Allgaeu wide cooperative LEADER project "Allgäu Streueverwertung" was founded. The aim of the project was to preserve the Molinia meadows in the Allgaeu and promote their use.

The Allgaeu-wide LEADER cooperative project, consisted of the counties of Ostallgaeu, Oberallgaeu, Unterallgaeu and Lindau. The planning phase of the project was also supported by the local LEADER action groups from each of these counties. The starters and sponsors of the project were the landscape management associations of Unterallgaeu, Oberallgaeu and Lindau. The overall management during the whole project came from the landscape management association of Ostallgaeu.

The focus and tasks were continually checked and agreed with officials for the preservation of nature from all 4 counties.

How did the project develop?

During the time of the LEADER project, the quality of the meadows improved! The main reason was because of the work to raise the profile of Molinia meadow bedding. This was done through a great deal of public relations work and advice from farmers.

Many innovative uses were tried out. For example, a compressed ball of bedding was created to occupy horses. An exchange of special technical developments was started, and efficient techniques were established and promoted. The trading of bedding products between farmers, was established, and even continues today. But the most important thing for this project was the founding of a central person of contact!

In this way, the natural diversity of the unique regional landscape in the Allgaeu was preserved. Additional economic value for the farmers was created, as well as indirectly for the tourism industry.

The diverse landscape of the Allgaeu is one of the most popular - all year round - tourist areas in Germany. It has hundreds of thousands of guests each year. This makes the preservation of the key features of the landscape, in particular the Molinia meadows, essential.

A concept to use the various qualities of the bedding was developed. The better quality of bedding was used for the animals as additional feed. This is particularly good for horses, as it contains less protein. The poorer quality is used for bedding only.

Traditionally, during the regeneration of the meadows, over a period of 3 to 5 years, the bedding was thrown away as waste. During the project, the poorer quality bedding was used efficiently to create heat and electricity.

The entire project ran over 3 and a half years.

How did the project develop after this time?

An independent business concept couldn't be developed directly for the LEADER project. In order for this to happen, a profit has to be made. The product would have been too expensive. It is also the reason why farming organisations didn't want to get involved with it. This, and the fact that too many tasks are involved - for example maintenance, quality control, mediation and technical developments.



Where is the project now?

Everyone involved in it and beyond, said that the project had been very successful. The interest was great to continue with it, in some form. It was understood, that there was a danger of it breaking down, if it wasn't guided. Therefore, a follow up project for another 3 years was immediately founded. The focus was widened to include, not only the regeneration of the Molinia meadows, but also to preserve the moorlands in the Allgaeu generally.

I recommend to you to come to the Allgaeu, spend your holiday in this lovely region and enjoy all this beautiful landscape has to offer.

Thank you for listening.

- It applies the spoken word -