



Foto: M. Spittel/ FNR



Growing Solutions: How countries **support** Peatland **Rewetting and Paludiculture** within and beyond EU's Common Agricultural Policy



Foto: Tobias Dahms/lensscape.org

Sabine Wichmann

Power to the Peatlands
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UNIVERSITÄT GREIFSWALD
Wissen lockt. Seit 1456



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Paludiculture requires a paradigm shift

- 1) **Water retention** instead of drainage
- 2) **Crops and machinery** adapted to high water tables
- 3) Develop new **utilisation** options + **markets**
- 4) Redesign **legal and policy framework** —————>

EU CAP / National Strategic Plans:
DE, DK, FI, FR, IE, IT, NL, PL; + UK



Peatlands in CAP 2023 – 2027

→ New level of attention at European level

1) Conditionality

(+) Protection of wetlands and peatlands

(–) Protection of permanent grassland

2) Eligibility of paludiculture

- Permanent grassland
- Cropping paludiculture
- Eligible hectare (derogation rule)

3) Interventions

- New eco-schemes
- Agri-Environment-Climate measures
- Investments
- Cooperation
- Advise / training



Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy [...] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R2115>

1) Conditionality: protection of peatlands

GAEC standards (good agricultural and ecological condition) set basic requirements for income support

EU

- New minimum standard for the protection of carbon rich soils (GAEC 2)
- Details left to Member States
- Simplification package 2025 → compensation possible (**PL**: AECM)

Awareness raising,
e.g. all MS have to
provide detailed maps
on organic soils

Member States

- Very heterogenous national implementation
- At best: additional drainage restricted or prohibited
- No minimum water levels (**NL**: higher water levels need to be accepted)

Drainage based peatland
use remains the standard
across the whole EU +
eligible for CAP payments



1) Conditionality: protection permanent grassland

GAEC – Standards for good agricultural and ecological condition

GAEC 1: Protection of permanent grassland

→ quantitative, approval required, new grassland as replacement

GAEC 2: Protection of wetlands and peatlands

→ some MS prohibit grassland conversion in GAEC 2 areas

GAEC 9: Protection of sensitive grassland (Natura 2000)



→ may hamper rewetting for paludiculture

→ **DE + NL**: derogation rule established for cropping paludiculture in GAEC 2 areas



2) Eligibility for direct payments

a) Permanent grassland

directly eligible, also if non-fodder species > 50%?

b) Agricultural activity (Article 4, 2 a)*

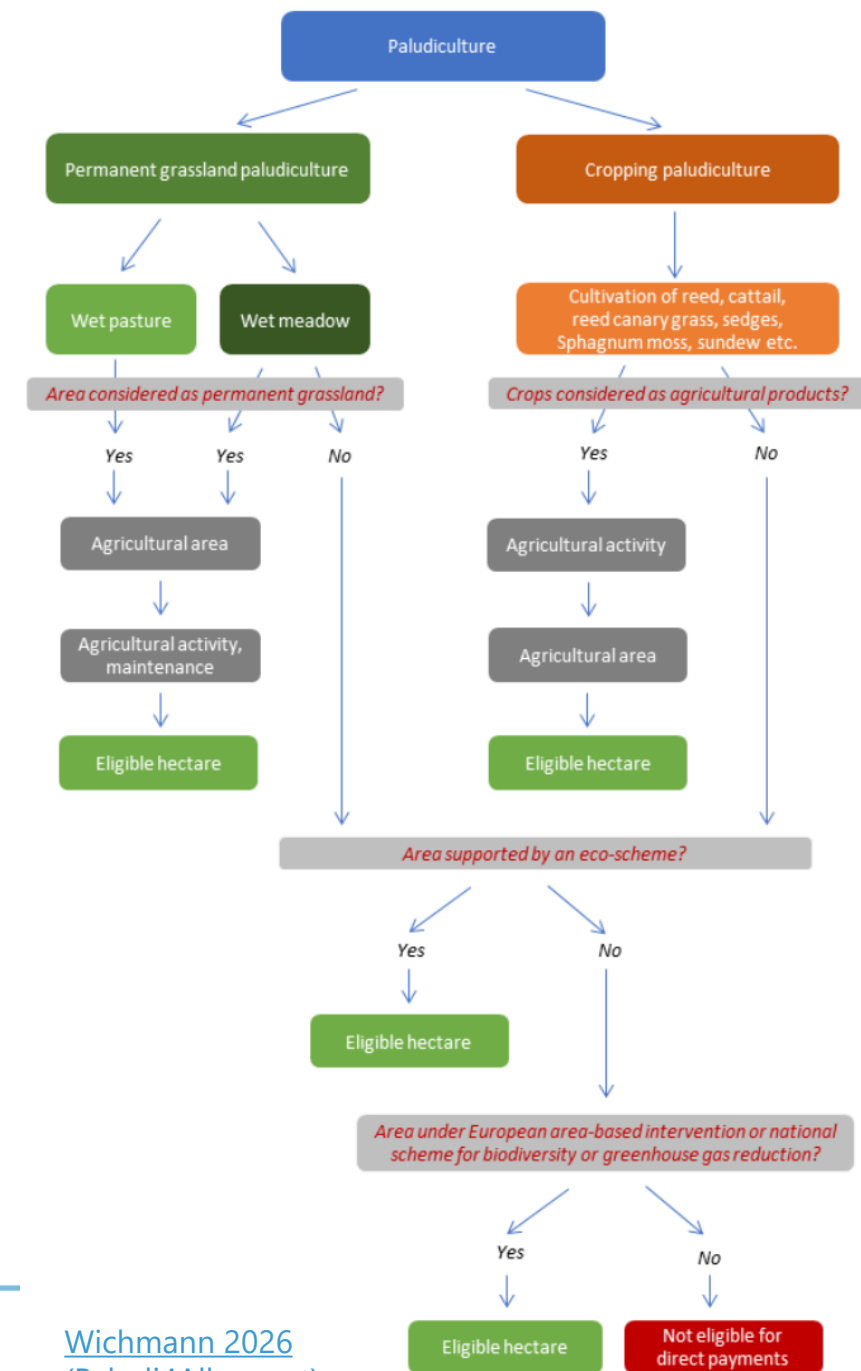
paludiculture mentioned 1st time in definition in CAP Legal Act
only agricultural products (Annex 1**) → no improvement

c) Eligible area (Article 4, 4 c ii)*

new derogation rule includes paludiculture also non Annex 1-products:
implemented by **DE, DK, FR, IT, IE, NL** → underutilised: only 6 of 27 MS

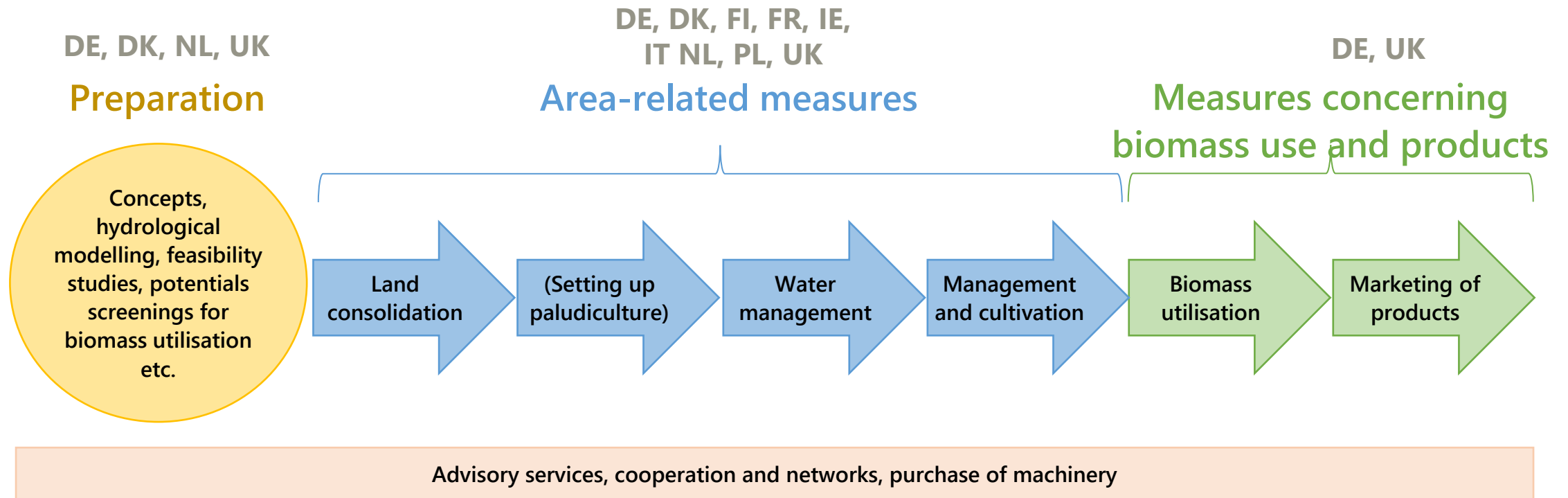
* Regulation (EU) 2021/2115

** Annex 1 to the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union)



3) Interventions

→ Multiple incentives for rewetting + the transition to paludiculture within + beyond the CAP



Accompanying measures

DE, FI, IE, NL, UK

(Wichmann 2026 , after Hirschelmann et al. 2020)

Country case: Denmark

- Rewetting: 140.000 ha by 2030 for climate mitigation and water quality
- Transition to paludiculture not in focus

Water- and climate projects (2nd pillar, INVEST)

- **Feasibility studies:** a) interest of land owners + compensation preference; b) Environmental benefits, risks
- **Implementation project:** land purchase and consolidation, construction; selection of project: synergies, cost efficiency

+ **Management** (2nd pillar, ENVCLIM)

- **Compensation:** one-off payment instead of selling the land
- Maintain eligibility for income support (1st pillar)

+ **negative incentive** (national)

- **CO₂e tax** for emissions from C-rich soils, from 2028 (ca. € 5 per ton)



Country Case: Ireland

Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) (2nd pillar, ENVCLIM)

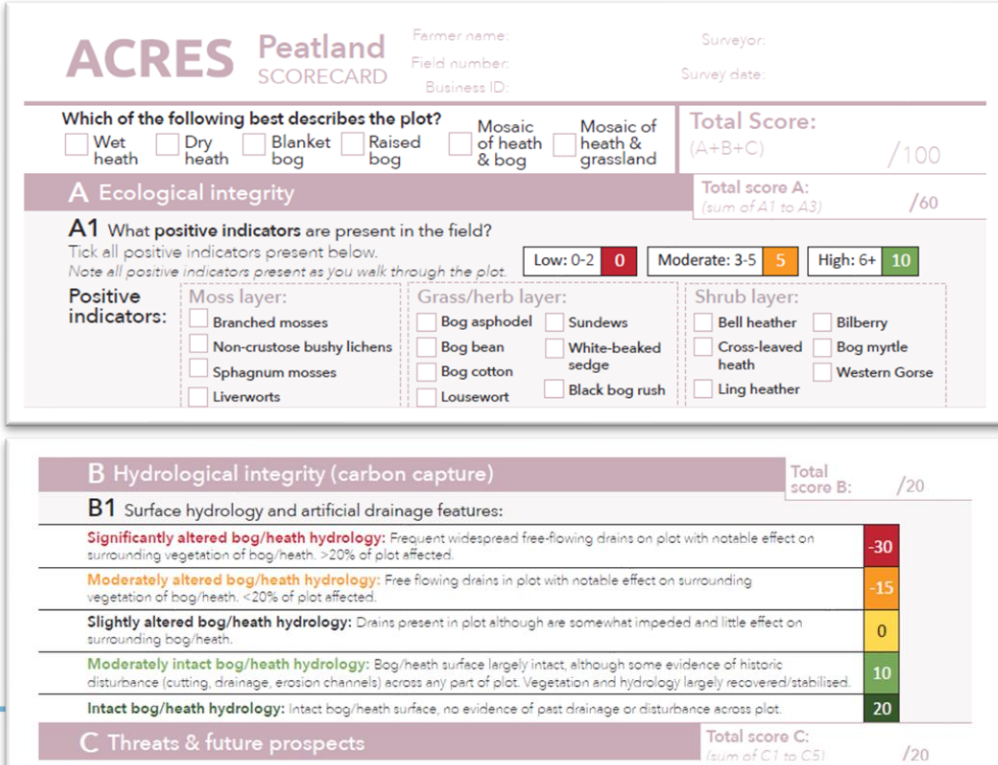
- **Peatlands:** low-intensity grassland with high water tables, rewetting & restoration
- **Result-based:** score card, different payment levels, clear recommendations

Support of cooperation (2nd pillar, COOP)

- Eight priority areas
- Objective, e.g safeguarding carbon stores in peatlands

Advisory service / training (2nd pillar, KNOW)

- **Compulsory** for farmer with ACRES, expense allowance
- Professional training for advisors, e.g. climate protection, carbon farming, paludiculture



The image shows a sample of the ACRES Peatland SCORECARD form. It is a structured document for assessing peatland health. At the top, it includes fields for 'Farmer name', 'Field number', 'Business ID', 'Surveyor', and 'Survey date'. The main section is divided into three parts: A (Ecological integrity), B (Hydrological integrity), and C (Threats & future prospects). Part A includes a section for 'Positive indicators' with checkboxes for various plant species like mosses, lichens, and heathers. Part B includes a table for 'Surface hydrology and artificial drainage features' with descriptions of different levels of alteration and their corresponding scores. Part C is partially visible at the bottom. The form uses a color-coded system for scores, with green for positive and red for negative.

ACRES Peatland SCORECARD

Farmer name: _____ Surveyor: _____
Field number: _____ Survey date: _____
Business ID: _____

Which of the following best describes the plot?
☐ Wet heath ☐ Dry heath ☐ Blanket bog ☐ Raised bog ☐ Mosaic of heath & bog ☐ Mosaic of heath & grassland

Total Score: (A+B+C) /100

A Ecological integrity **Total score A: (sum of A1 to A3) /60**

A1 What positive indicators are present in the field?
Tick all positive indicators present below.
Note all positive indicators present as you walk through the plot.

Positive indicators:

Moss layer:	Grass/herb layer:	Shrub layer:
☐ Branched mosses	☐ Bog asphodel	☐ Sundews
☐ Non-crustose bushy lichens	☐ Bog bean	☐ White-beaked sedge
☐ Sphagnum mosses	☐ Bog cotton	☐ Black bog rush
☐ Liverworts	☐ Lousewort	☐ Ling heather
		☐ Bell heather
		☐ Bilberry
		☐ Cross-leaved heath
		☐ Bog myrtle
		☐ Western Gorse

B Hydrological integrity (carbon capture) **Total score B: /20**

B1 Surface hydrology and artificial drainage features:

Description	Score
Significantly altered bog/heath hydrology: Frequent widespread free-flowing drains on plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. >20% of plot affected.	-30
Moderately altered bog/heath hydrology: Free flowing drains in plot with notable effect on surrounding vegetation of bog/heath. <20% of plot affected.	-15
Slightly altered bog/heath hydrology: Drains present in plot although are somewhat impeded and little effect on surrounding bog/heath.	0
Moderately intact bog/heath hydrology: Bog/heath surface largely intact, although some evidence of historic disturbance (cutting, drainage, erosion channels) across any part of plot. Vegetation and hydrology largely recovered/stabilised.	10
Intact bog/heath hydrology: Intact bog/heath surface, no evidence of past drainage or disturbance across plot.	20

C Threats & future prospects **Total score C: (sum of C1 to C5) /20**

Country case: Netherlands

→ Climate agreement: 1 Mio ton CO₂e ↓ from peatlands by 2030

Eco-scheme (1st pillar)

- Eco activity „wet cultivation“ (e.g. Typha, Reed), qualifies for income support (1st pillar)
- Points + assigned value contributes to gold level, i.e. maximum payment for whole farm

Agri-Environment-Climate Measures (2nd pillar, ENVCLIM)

- Collective (since 2016); biodiversity, water; since 2023: [climate mitigation and adaptation](#)

Support for cooperation in peat meadow areas (2nd pillar, COOP)

- Cooperation among dairy farmers → [Area management plans](#): water level ↑, emissions ↓, area target 15,000 – 20,000 ha

+ Peat meadow programme (national)

- target: 80,000 ha moderately raised water levels + 10,000 ha paludiculture or „wet nature“;
- Two approaches a) support [technical adjustments](#), b) support for relocation of farms or [exit farming](#)



Foto: S. Wichmann



Growing solutions ... – but substantial disparities across peatland rich countries

- **EU:** GAEC 2 | derogation rule for eligibility | interventions = door opened widely for peatlands + paludiculture, but clear guidance required to scale-up implementation
 - a) Define paludiculture as eligible **agricultural activity** at EU level (similar to cotton and SRC)
 - b) Harmonised + more **ambitious standard** for protecting carbon rich soils across EU
 - c) **Phase out wrong incentives**, e.g. payments stabilising drainage-based peatland use (1st + 2nd pillar)
- **Member states:** good examples of using tool box, but too few
 - **learn from others:** adapt regulations | complementary incentives for whole transition | policy mix (+/-)
 - **improve funding:** stacked income opportunities + blended finance (EU, national, regional, private)



For further reading 😊

Wichmann, S. (2026) Funding for peatlands and paludiculture within and beyond the EU CAP 2023-2027. EU Horizon Paludi4All, 77p.

www.paludi4all.eu/resources/reports



Contact: wichmann@uni-greifswald.de



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