



**PRÉFET
DU BAS-RHIN**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*



Crédits photo : CNRS



**CHAMBRE
D'AGRICULTURE
ALSACE**

European Hamster Conservation in Poland - Challenges and Perspectives
27-28 February 2025 - The Congress Center of the University of Agriculture - Cracovie, Pologne

Agricultural measures to improve the hamster's habitat in Alsace

*Stéphanie CASSARD (DDT du Bas-Rhin)
& Philippe OSSWALD (Chambre d'agriculture d'Alsace)*

SUMMARY



- 1- Inventory of agricultural practices in areas where the hamster is present before the implementation of protection measures
- 2- Implementation of Hamster conservation measures
- 3- Work together to implement these measures
- 4- Results and prospects

1- Inventory of agricultural practices in the area where the Hamster is present before implementing measures to protect it

A species
known to
farmers



BEFORE

The hamster was considered a pest, the number 1 enemy of Alsatian agriculture, until its decline in the 1970s

Bulletin Technique d'Information des ingénieurs des Services Agricoles
(203) : 819-828.

Agricultural Services Engineers Technical Information Bulletin

Un dangereux rongeur : le hamster

Intérêt d'une lutte généralisée

par J. HARRANGER, ingénieur en chef, inspecteur de la protection des végétaux
et J. KUCHLY, contrôleur de la protection des végétaux

A dangerous rodent: the hamster The value of a generalized control

by J. Harranger, Chief Engineer, Plant Protection Inspector

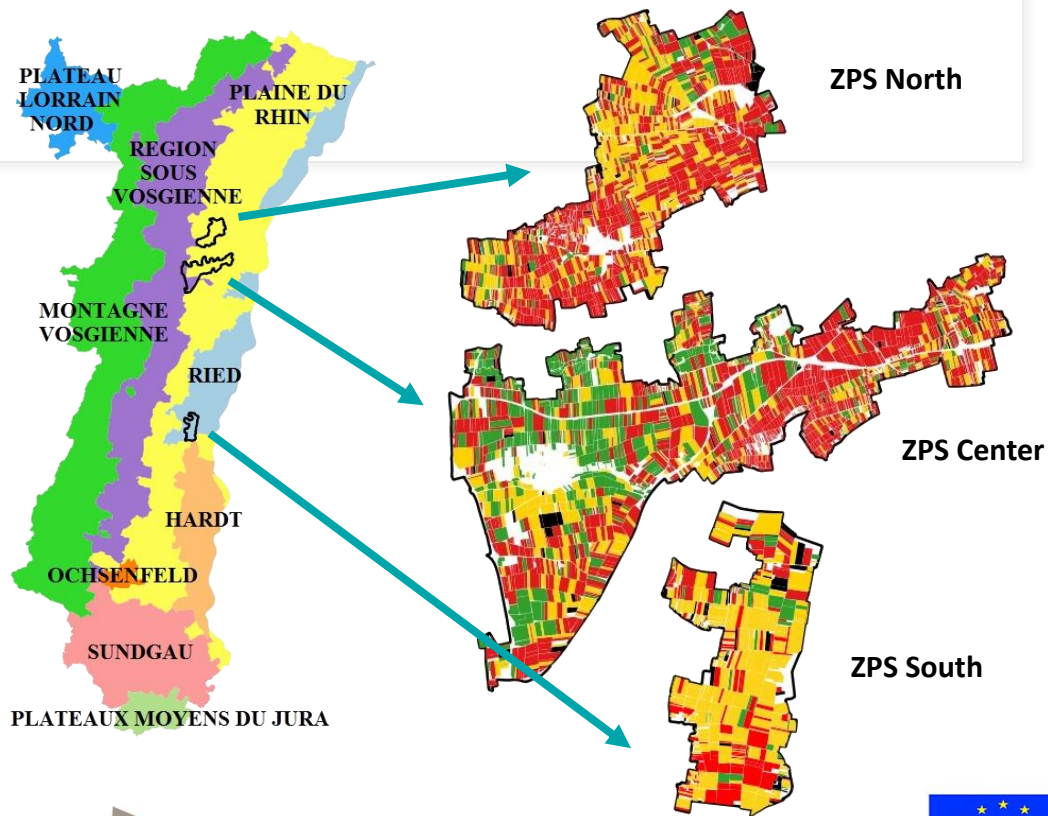
Typology of farms in hamster protection territories (2012)

Work carried out as part of the Life

Alister Project: Ensuring the survival of the common hamster in cultivated plots without compromising agricultural activities

3 hamster protection zones (ZPS) = 8300 ha:

Reconstruction of crop rotations between 2006 and 2012



Crop rotations between 2006-2012:

Maize and diversified maize farmers

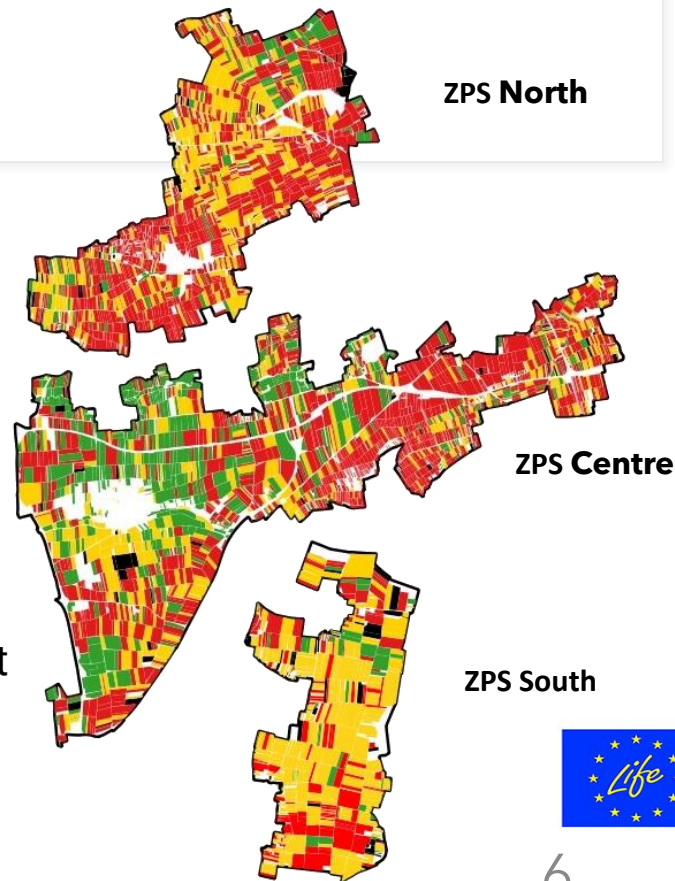
8 to 10%
winter
crops

- 6 x Corn – 1 soft winter wheat
- 6 x Corn – 1 Beetroot
- 6 x Corn – 1 potato
- 6 x Corn – 1 cabbage
- 5 x Corn – 1 Wheat – 1 Beetroot
- 5 x Corn – 1 Wheat – 1 Potato
- 5 x Corn – 1 Wheat – 1 Cabbage

33%
winter
crops

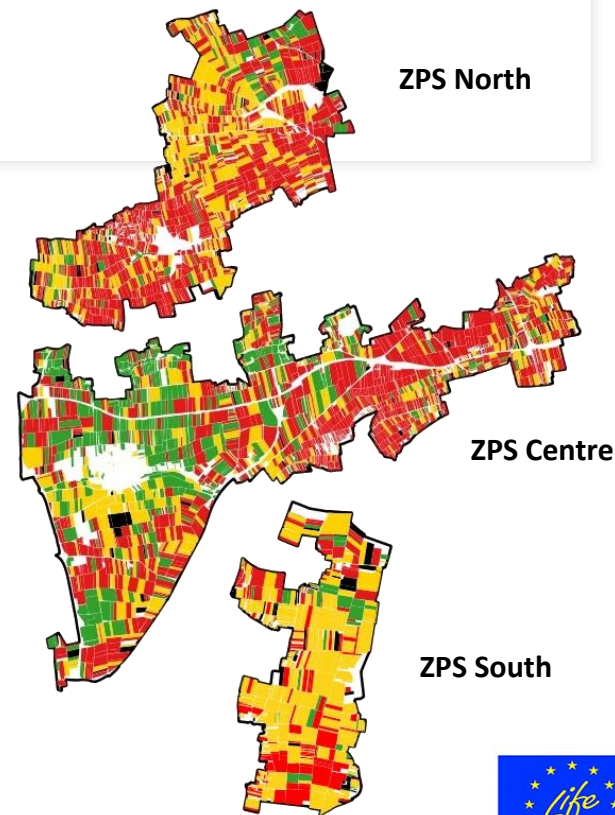
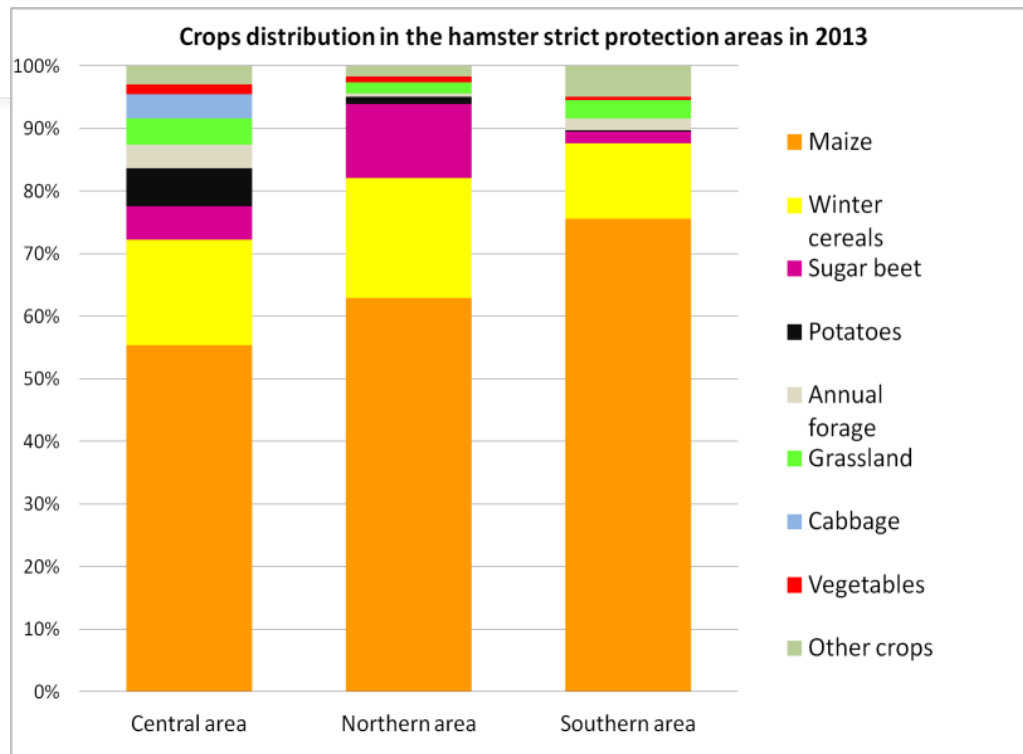
Diversified including breeders:

Grain corn – corn silage – soft winter wheat



Distribution of crops in 2013 in the protection zones of the hamster.

Source: CAP 2013 parcel register



2- Implementation of Hamster conservation measures



destruction

preservation

Disappearance
of hamsters

PNA 1

PNA 2

PNA 3

PNA 4

Individual aid
at the parcel level



- **Individual aid**: aid for non-harvesting (part of parcels)
- **Collective aid** at the level of collective areas



Specification
Hamster **01**

Hamster **01'**

Hamster **02**

Hamster **03**



1990

2000 -2004

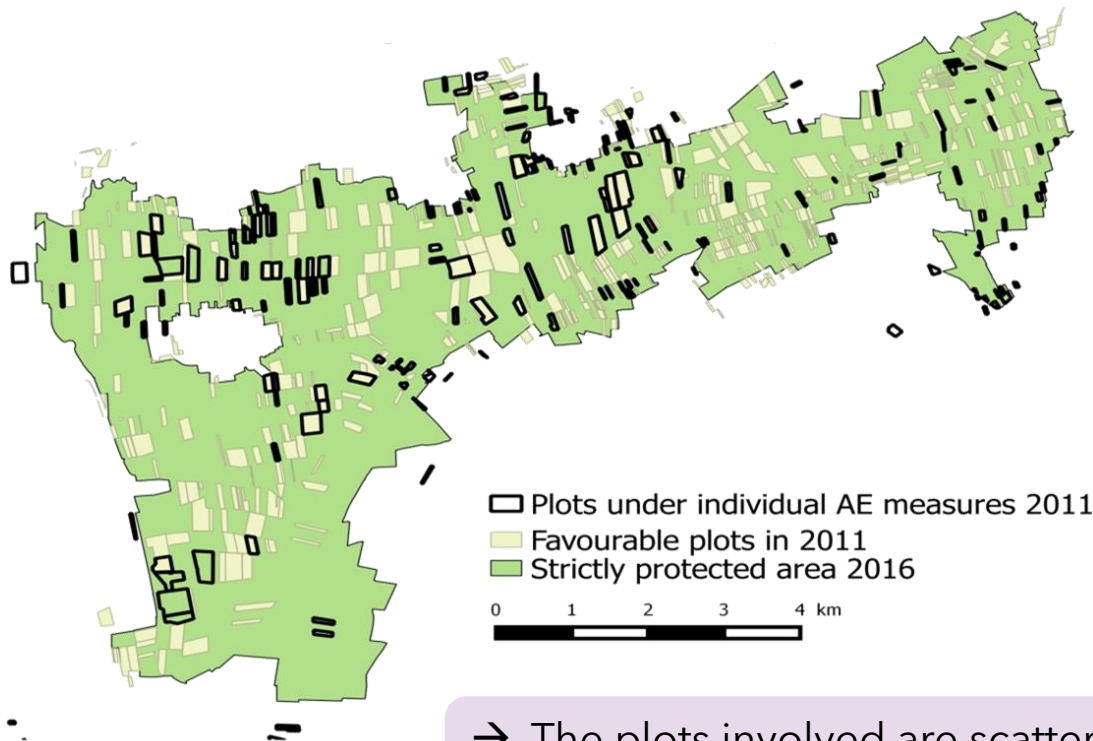
2007- 2011

2012- 2016

2019 - 2028



Individual aid 2007-2012



181 ha (2007) → 798 ha (2011)

5-year contract, per plot:

- 3 years minimum = winter cereals

Or

- 3 years minimum alfalfa, maximum 1 year maize

→ The plots involved are scattered = not very efficient
→ not necessarily close to hamster populations



TODAY, two state aids : one individual aid and one collective aid



Three objectives :

- 1 --> Meet the hamster's dietary needs
- 2 --> Protect the hamster from predators
- 3 --> Increase hamster population

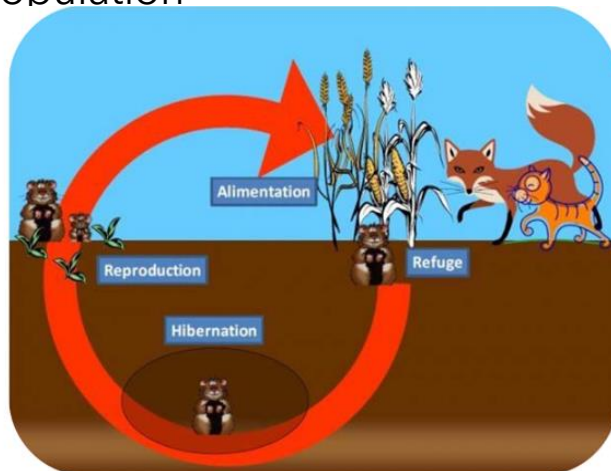


Figure 1 : Cycle de vie du hamster commun, C. Habold (CNRS)



Individual aid : aid for non-harvesting



Bands of wheat around burrows held **until 15 October**
and on reintroduction plots for two years

1 --> Meet the hamster's dietary needs



2 --> Protect the hamster
from predators



3 --> Increase hamster population



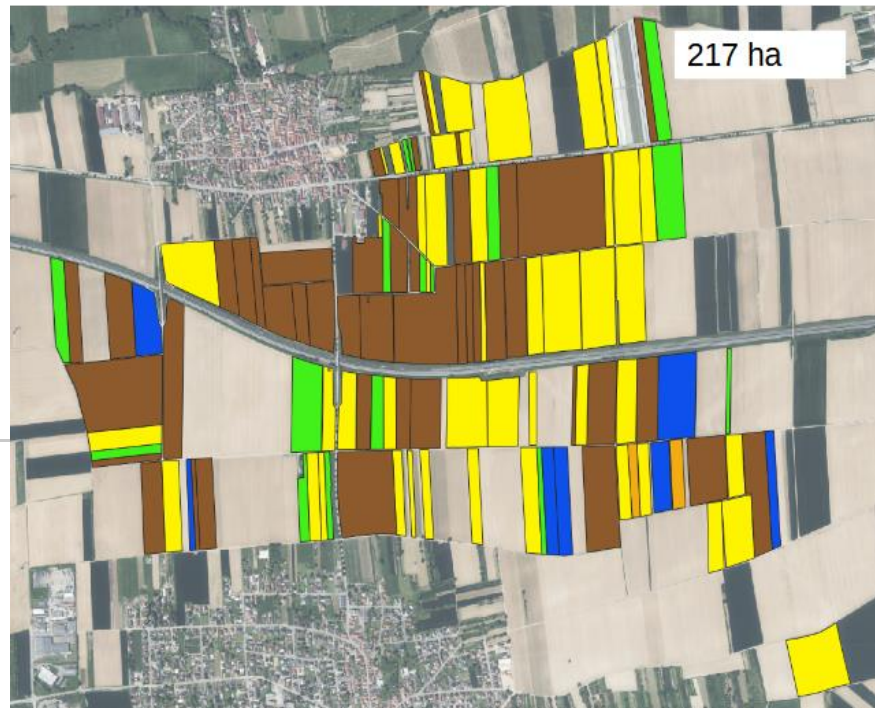


Collective aid at the level of collective areas

Collective area :

a set of parcels of
farmers engaged or not

a collective of farmers
engaged for 5 years with
the State





Collective aid

1 --> Meet the hamster's dietary needs

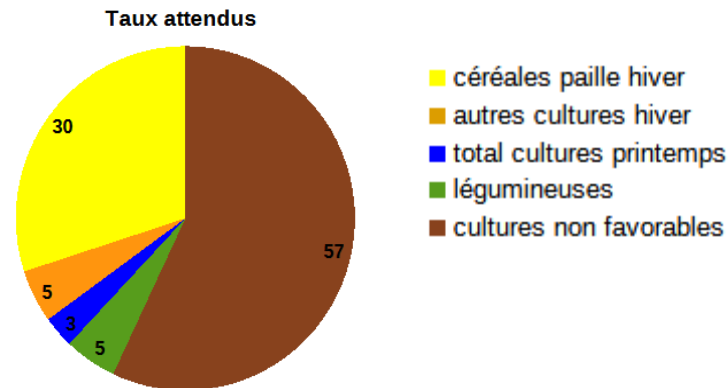


- Payment to farmers for planting hamster-friendly crops
- Obligation to collectively meet thresholds on a collective area :

30% of winter straw cereals

3 % of spring crops (excepted maize)

5 % of legumes





Collective aid

2 --> Protect the hamster from predators

- Intercrop [grasses + sunflowers + legumes] after winter crops and spring cereals until 15 October



- partial mowing (half the surface at a time) of alfalfa fields until 1st October



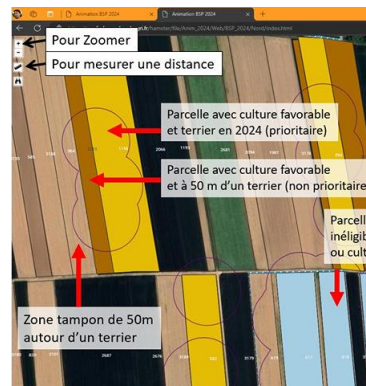
Animation of farmers' groups

- Collective commitment by the group of farmers
- Collective management of crop rotations, with a minimum of 40% favourable crops (cereals and winter protein crops, alfalfa, soybeans, potatoes, beets), replacing maize, which is largely predominant in the Alsace plain.
- Adapt the location of favourable crops as best as possible according to the location of the hamster burrows.
- Unharvested 40-acre refuge strips, in the immediate vicinity of hamster burrows.
- Exchange of technical information and discussions on the importance of preserving biodiversity



Animation of farmers' groups

- At the start: numerous meetings to form groups of volunteers and decide on the territory for the implementation of the measures.
- Then animation each year :
 - **End of summer:** Meetings to prepare for the following year's crop rotation, sharing of information on the hamster file, pre-identification of release sites.
 - **Spring:** Information on the results of burrow censuses, choice and contracting of unharvested plots and hamster release sites (Email + Internet page + individual contacts)
- + meetings of the management Board and the General Assembly of the association



Madame, Monsieur, chers adhérents,

Les prospections sur le terrain permettant d'évaluer chaque année l'état des populations de hamster viennent de s'achever, et les services de l'Etat ont communiqué la carte des parcelles hébergeant au moins un terrier au printemps 2024. Nous vous expliquons ci-dessous quelles sont les conséquences pour vous.



Le cahier des charges des mesures dans lesquelles vous êtes engagés, prévoit :

- le paiement d'une prime pour les parcelles en cultures favorables hébergeant au moins un terrier au printemps (255 €/parcelle avec au moins 1 terrier) pour les mesures agrienvironnementales et les mesures compensatoires extensives. Cette prime n'est pas prévue pour les parcelles engagées en mesures

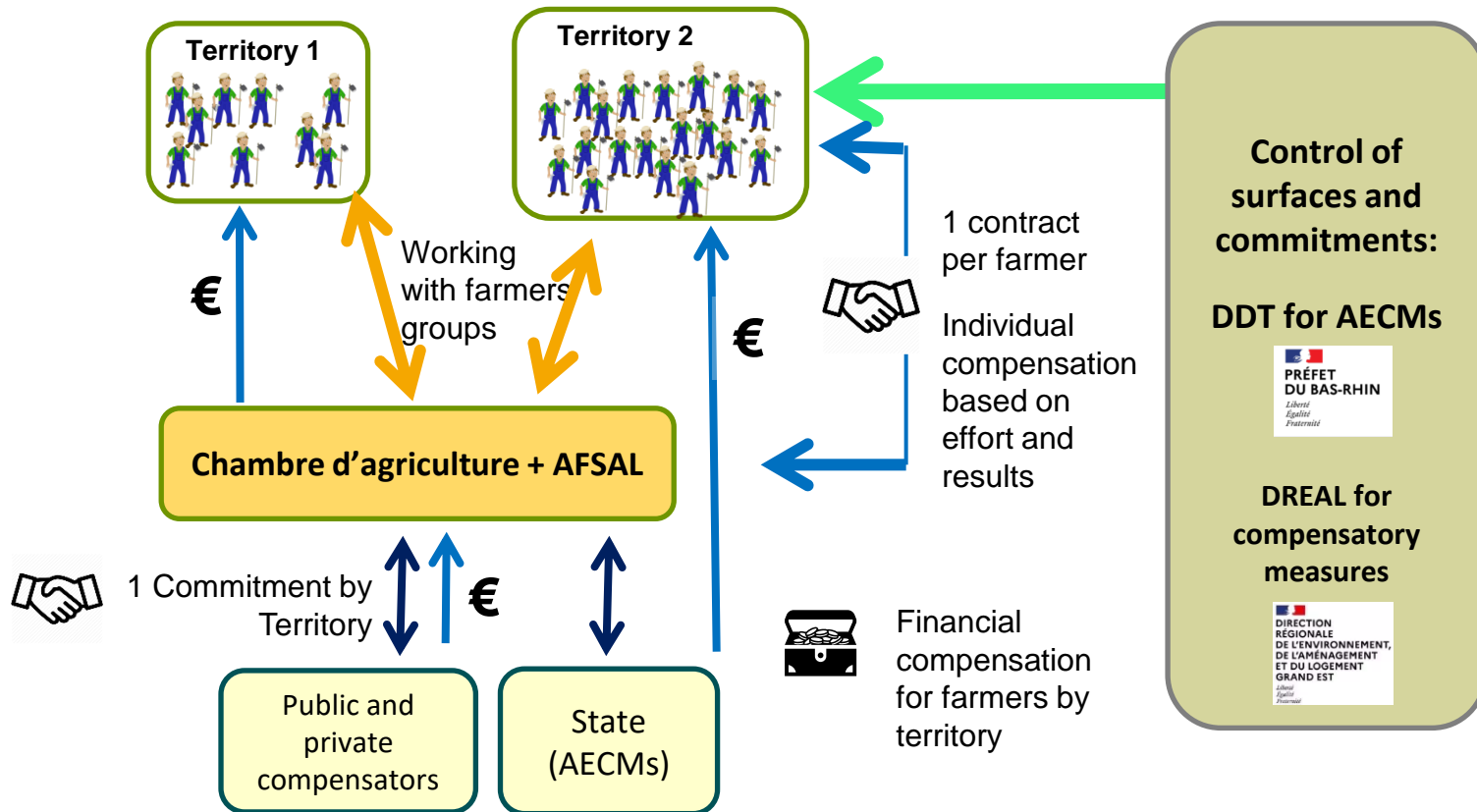
Farmers represented in an association (NGO)



- AFSAL (Farmers and Wildlife Alsace) : Association under local law created on 10 May 2013
- Object : « support practices that are favourable to small field fauna and in particular to hamsters»
- --> management of Agri-Environmental Measures and then collective compensatory measures
- 216 member farmers in 2022
- Managed by a Board of Directors made up of 19 representatives appointed by the farmers' groups of each territory.



administrative and financial operations of the collective measure



Collective management: a sociological dimension?

- Individual measure :
 - « *It's useless if the other farmers don't participate* »
 - « *Why it's up to me to solve this problem?* »
 - « *If I change my farming practices for the hamster (former "pest"), what will my farmer neighbors, my father, my grandfather think?* »
- Collective :
 - « *If everyone does it, maybe it will have an impact?* »
 - « *We share the same territory and we are facing the same challenges* »
 - « *I will be able to explain to the older generation (who fought against the hamster) that it was a collective decision and that I did not want to exclude myself from the group.* »
 - « *Together we are stronger to respond to pressure from the administration and criticism from nature protection associations* »

Many levers to use to make progress

Demonstration and exchange days between farmers, financed by EU funds

Scientific knowledge, Science Popularization Documents, and Training of farmers

Pooling of equipment purchases in CUMA*



Jérôme Labreuche (Arvalis), Hubert Charpentier (agriculteur, ex CIRAD), Inforama Rütli, Zollikofen (CH)

Protéger le Hamster commun



*Cooperative for the Use of Agricultural Equipment

4- Results and prospects

	2013	2024
Number of farmers who are members of AFSAL	64	220
Area committed to hamster agricultural measures	1 438 ha	4 400 ha
Average rate of favourable crops within the perimeters in collective measures (* cultures d'hiver et luzerne/légumineuses fourragères)	27,1%	45 % *
Number of burrows counted by the OFB	319	1 155
% of burrows located in an area committed to agricultural measures	23,2%	92,6 %

4- Results and prospects

Strenghts	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coordination of measures at the scale of a territory in relation to the needs of the species - support between farmers in collective areas - coordination between different actors (state service, association, farmers, ...) - attractive financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complex for implementation (specific tools) - perception of the level of remuneration by farmers - obligations rest on all farmers / may only rest on a few farmers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application of the scientifics results (dietary needs) - long-term continuity (landscape ecology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 single device of this type and 1 single region concerned - financing

Thank's for your attention !

