

National Report

UK

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SnailVille

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REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

| ID | Reference | Title |
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| 1 | 2020-1-UK01-KA204-079017 | SnailVille Proposal |
| 2 | | |

APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Context

Despite being among the most prolific consumers of snails in the world, European countries that consume snail meat do not produce sufficient quantities domestically and must instead rely on import to cover demand. Given this, in addition to its apparent profitability, rapid return on investment, and low capital required for an initial investment snail farming (Heliculture) could be a good fit for those who may be low-skilled, unemployed, farmers without substantial capital, or other who aspire to augment their income.

1.2 Project Objectives

The Snailville project aims to develop a heliculture training game for low-skilled marginalised adults that can help them set up cooperatives in rural areas. This training game will function as a single information point guiding a potential snail farmer on how to start a profitable business depending on their situation (financial capability, business skills, geographical location, etc.) by minimising the risks associated with traditional snail farming (snail diseases, egg hatching, formulation of the best feed, mortality rate).

The project also hopes to contribute to the preservation of the snail population in the wild by promoting heliculture.

1.3 Project Target Group

There are a few main target groups – most centrally low-skilled adults from rural areas that can support heliculture, heliculture enthusiasts, and of course snail farmers themselves. More broadly, assorted persons and organisations in the field of agriculture will be targeted, including for example university or college agriculture departments, government ministries or agencies relating to agriculture, or rural development organisations.

Aside from this, game developers may also be targeted for the more technical aspects of the project relating to development of the game.

2. National Report

2.1 The Objectives of the Report

The national report concerns the identification of the current state of play in the heliculture sector in each partner country, and in particular the identification of barriers that heliculturists face in each country. These national reports will form the basis of the Snailville training game, influencing its structure and content, that will guide users and target groups to gain the skills necessary for and surmount the barriers to success in snail farming.

Therefore, the National report will examine the current situation in partner countries with reference to snail farming and the barriers to successfully undertaking it (the "AS-IS" situation). The next step comprises the identification of the actions, skills, and context required for the ideal situation in which to practice heliculture (the "TO-BE" situation).

2.2 The methodology

Partners will conduct desk research on the current situation around heliculture and the barriers to it in their own country. They will identify qualitative and quantitative data to describe their national “AS-IS” situations, and may present good practices in the field that will be used as examples to provide motivation and ideas to the project participants.

Good practices from countries outside of the partnership will also be identified, setting out the TO-BE situation, with particular support from the domain experts on the project at UTH.

Lastly, a comparative report will be put together based on the findings of the National reports to identify the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the partner countries.

2.3 The results

2.3.1 Briefly outline the size, importance, and general context of snail farming in your country

It could very reasonably be said that snail farming is a niche market in the UK, and particularly in Scotland. A mixture of conditions, including climate, national taste and cuisine, and general lack of awareness mean that heliculture is not, and is not likely to become, an enormously popular pastime in the country. While snails can be raised and bred in the UK, it often requires very particular conditions to be maintained indoors, or else outdoors, which presents its own problems such as making sure that any nearby plants or crops are protected and that the many predators of snails are warded off. Where heliculture is undertaken, the difficulties of how to sell them and to whom can be considerable, as snails are not in great demand in British cuisine, and tend to be seen as something of a foreign oddity even where they are consumed.

Indeed, heliculture is so niche that it is difficult to find much hard data on the size of the industry in the UK or Scotland at all. Qualitative reports seem mixed - on the one hand, there is plenty of discussion of the advantages of snails and snail farming, that they are a relatively healthy type of meat and that the environmental impact of raising them is relatively small. On the other hand, however, reports note that many - perhaps even most - of those who have attempted to capitalise on these benefits have gone out of business over the last ten or twenty years. As such, the snail farming economy in the UK remains decidedly niche, with little sign of this fact changing in the near future.

2.3.2 What laws or standards do heliculturists follow in your country (local, regional, national, or EU level)?

Heliculturists in the UK adhere to EU level regulations relating to food hygiene, which encompasses the rearing and processing of snails. Snails fit for human consumption are defined in point 6.2 of Annex I of Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 as ‘terrestrial gastropods of the species *Helix pomatia* Linné, *Helix aspersa* Muller, *Helix lucorum* and species of the family Achatinidae’. Of these species, ‘Roman snails’ (*Helix aspersa*) are commonly harvested, cooked and consumed in the UK. These snails are native to certain regions of Europe, living in wooded areas, including mountains, valleys, vineyards and common gardens. They are referred to as the ‘Roman snail’, as the Romans may have introduced them to mainland Britain.

The UK complies with the specific food hygiene legislation set out by the EU, including Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 and Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004. The former introduces pre-requisite requirements necessary to operate a food business, ultimately with the aim of supplying snails to

consumers. The latter covers the requirements necessary for killing and preparing snails to sell for human consumption. There are some exemptions to this regulation with regards to retail-to-retail supply.

Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 also highlights the application of food safety management procedures, which are based on 'Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles'. These seven principles cover procedures to identify food safety hazards, ensuring they are responsibly and transparently managed. The HACCP is expected to cover both primary production', or rearing of snails, and 'secondary production', or processing of snails. The Regulation also stipulates for 'pre-requisite hygiene requirements'; with regards to heliciculture, this can include design of rearing facilities, use of potable water for rearing and harvesting and controlling temperatures for processing snail meat.

The EU regulations detailed above are applied in each country via: The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 (SI 2013/2996); The Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006, as amended (SSI 2006/3); The Food Hygiene (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2007, as amended (SI 2007/373 (W.33)); and The Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, as amended (SI 2006/14).

In addition to following the above EU regulations, UK heliculturists must also adhere to national laws. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 for England and Wales, in addition to the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Animal Health and Welfare Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 and the Animal Welfare Act (Scotland) 2006, specify the requirements by which Roman snails are to be reared on a farm. These acts require heliculturists to provide their snails with an appropriate diet and suitable living environment, in addition to protecting them from suffering and disease.

Finally, there is the General Food Regulations 2004, which relates to the sale of 'ready-to-eat' escargot (i.e. snails that are already cooked or blanched). This regulation enforces the adherence of strict labelling and traceability measures for snail meat or by-products, in addition to requiring snail farmers to keep supply and trade records.

2.3.3 What are the main barriers preventing people from starting snail farming, in particular as a business?

There are a handful of barriers preventing people from starting snail farming. One barrier to consider is that of environmental conditions. Snails thrive in an environment with a constant temperature and humidity; they are usually reared in pens outdoors or indoors, covered greenhouses or in polytunnels. The establishment of these structures may require a few hundred square metres of land, or if you plan on having a larger operation, as much as 30 hectares of land. These pens must ensure that snails are protected from predators, pests and commercial crop treatment (i.e. certain fertiliser or spray); they must also ensure that snails do not escape and migrate onto neighboring properties, especially if they are commercial, agricultural properties where snails could damage crops.

In addition to the set-up costs to build snail habitats, entering into heliciculture requires a budget for specialist equipment. According to a June 2020 summation of snail farming in the UK by Croner-i, such specialist equipment can include pH testing kits to manage soil health, 'PVC coated hex wire' to keep out pests, and climate control equipment, such as a sprinkler system, hygrometer and thermometer. The article goes on to state that farmers who are looking to supply 'ready-cooked, blanched or frozen escargot', will also need to budget for kitchen and cooking equipment.

2.3.4 What are the main barriers preventing snail farmers from growing their business, earning money from their snail farming, or otherwise becoming more successful?

Snail farming in the UK may be considered a niche market, with only a handful of local farmers supplying restaurants, fishmongers, speciality food retailers and in some instances, individual consumers. Though this can be interpreted as an opportunity to build brand awareness for heliculturists in the UK, it also comes up against the barrier of a general lack of public awareness of the health and environmental benefits surrounding heliculture. Snail meat is packed full of protein, plus rearing and harvesting them is less intensive than other, more common livestock in the UK. According to Somerset Escargot, a snail farm in England, rearing Roman snails 'uses 45 times less land per kilo of protein compared to lamb'.

Another, somewhat similar barrier for British snail farmers relates to the British culture of when, where, and how snails are consumed in the UK. For example, escargot, which is a type of *Helix aspersa* or Roman snail, is oftentimes consumed in a fine-dining environment and is not a daily part of British diet. A British heliculturist therefore should be flexible in terms of the ways in which they sell their produce - in a limited market like that of the UK, one can't always afford to be fussy.

2.3.5 What are the particular strengths of the way snail farming is done in your country?

The niche nature of the heliculture market in the UK can be a strength as well as the aforementioned barrier to success. The fact that the industry is so small means that knowledge sharing can in some ways be easier, and at some levels competition can be less of an issue. Some reports suggest that existing heliculturists have been willing to share their knowledge with each other, and there are even some snail farming businesses that offer courses on raising snails and heliculture.

Furthermore, there is much advice available from government and other agencies on snail farming and how to comply with the laws that do exist. These include advice from the Food Standards Agency (Food Standards Scotland in Scotland), which can give clarity to new heliculturists.

2.3.6 Is there any heliculture-focused training offered in your country?

There is not an over-abundance of formal training offered in the UK that focuses on heliculture. That said and as noted above, there appears to be a co-operative farm-to-farm knowledge sharing approach to introduce heliculture enthusiasts to the various ways of starting a snail farm. For example, H & RH Escargot Farm based in Kent offers an online snail farming course for those interested in taking the heliculture dive.

Additionally, there is resource and knowledge support provided by the Food Standards Agency, an independent government department operating for food operators and consumers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as Food Standards Scotland, operating for food businesses and consumers in Scotland. These non-ministerial agencies provided small food businesses in the UK with advice to produce food safety management systems in accordance with HACCP principles, which ultimately ensures their business is compliant with regional and EU regulations. Since snail farming is relatively niche and many heliculturists in the UK are self-taught, these types of resources are indispensable.

2.4 Conclusions

Overall, the start-up costs for heliculture in the UK is relatively small and mostly requires an enthusiasm and drive for self-directed learning about heliculture to get started. As such, barring the

occasional industry training course and government agency legal explainer, there is a clear gap in the market for a tool or set of tools that would inform those considering snail farming as a business or a hobby.

That being said, information on the particular strengths and weaknesses of heliculture in the UK, while existent, remains somewhat thin, so the content and best practices may in large part have to come from other countries of the consortium.

3. References

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<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/about-us/who-we-are>

Full Title Name: Legal Protection Of Animals in the Uk

Alice- Collinson - <https://www.animallaw.info/article/legal-protection-animals-uk>