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Characterising permanent grassland-based farming systems in Europe



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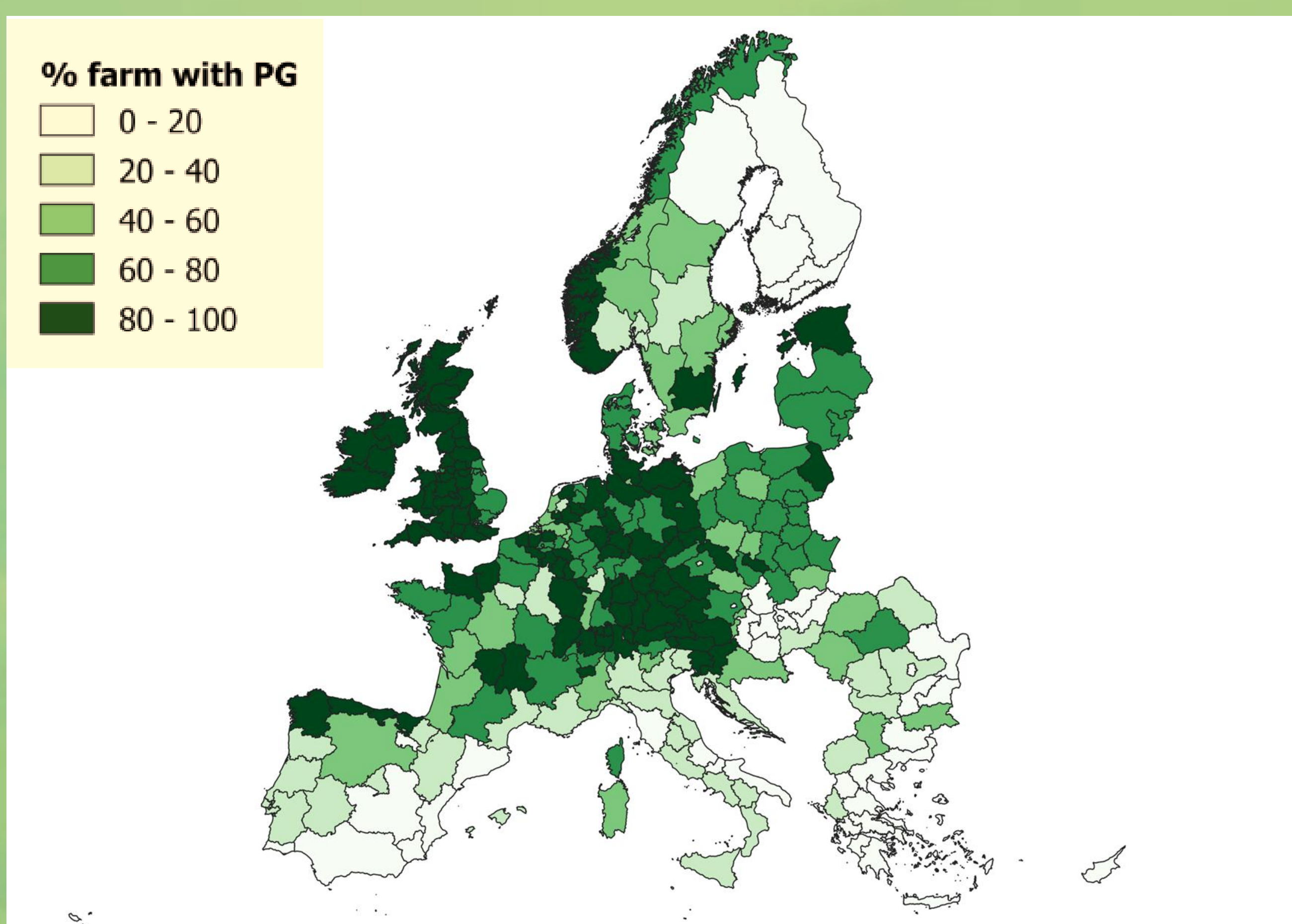
INTRODUCTION

Permanent grasslands (PG) provide a wide range of ecosystem services (ES). PG systems are threatened by abandonment and afforestation, intensification, or conversion to arable land. Farming systems (FS) are a result of conditions and management and are in many cases closely related to specific grassland types in that region.

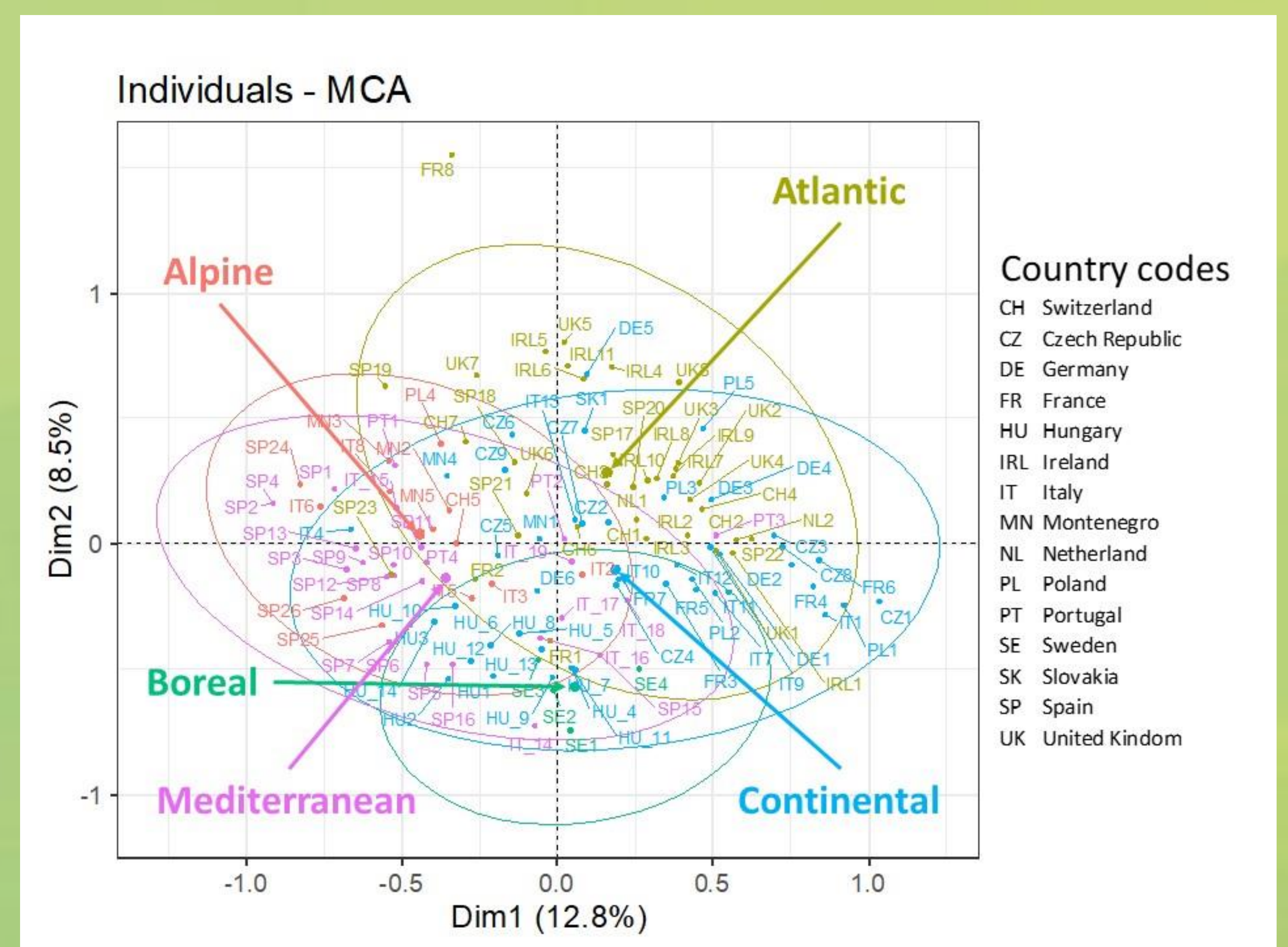
Aim: To make a classification of grass-based FS

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

We first made an inventory of PG-based farming systems in Europe as starting point for a FS classification. In total 129 FS were described from 15 countries.



We used these data in a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to highlight the differences and similarities among the recorded FS. Variables that discriminate between PG-based farm types: biogeographical region (BGR), farm products, PG exploitation, PG management, animal species, and PG proportion of total farm Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA).



Next step was to define each FS type by a combination of four levels: 1. livestock species; 2. stocking rate on total UAA, 3. PG share on total UAA, 4. exploitation regime. Management intensity at the field level is not included, as this is covered in the related PG typology (also being developed by the SUPER-G project).

In next months we will complete the description of the different FS in the different countries and will try to identify the drivers leading to specific FS in each BGR and we will link the FS classification to the PG typology.

CONCLUSION

Preliminary results showed that the position of FS along axes depends mainly on variables related to farm products, PG exploitation and PG management. The proportion of the farm area occupied by PG had limited power to separate FS types.