



The birth of a new Network for Pastoralism and Grazing Livestock Systems in Spain



sociedad
redes
territorio
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The facilities of the Real Jardín Botánico of Madrid held, last October 25th, 2013, the birth of a new platform which aims to coordinate the emerging social, scientific and technical support pastoralism and grazing livestock systems are receiving as key activities for nature conservation and rural livelihoods.



Under the coordination of entretantos foundation, representatives of farmers and herders, universities and research centres, government agencies, NGOs and other organizations are working together on some of the key issues with an impact on pastoralism and grazing livestock production, namely the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the need for an adequate legal framework to maintain pastoralism and grazing livestock activity, the governance of livestock territories or the social visibility of pastoralists and farmers.



Pasture-based farming and pastoralism, key activities for nature conservation

Grazing livestock farming (including pastoralism) is a range of livestock production systems that efficiently profit from local pastures and resources using adapted species and breeds. They combine good production levels with environmental sustainability and offer valuable social and environmental services. Pastoralism uses very efficient management tools and involves essential elements such as local breeds, livestock mobility, animal welfare and a model of grazing tightly adapted to spatial and temporal availability of fodder resources in each location. Thus, grazing livestock systems are considered essential for both society and territory: they produce top quality food, contribute to landscape configuration, help to reduce the risk of wildfires, regulate water and nutrient cycles, preserve biodiversity, maintain soil fertility and help to protect both natural and cultural heritage as well as people's identity.

A place for exchange, debate and networking

This platform is a forum that brings together organizations and individuals aware of the urgent need to support pastoralism and pasture-based livestock systems. We are decided to work together with a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach and join our efforts, expertise, contacts and knowledge. Our aims include lobbying on behalf of pastoralists and farmers, representing their needs and points of view and promoting participation in public policies affecting this field. Moreover, the network will work in the fields of sensibilisation, communication and education to promote a better knowledge and understanding of pastoralism and their products, including the ecosystem services they provide.



Some of the topics discussed in the 'Meeting at the Botanic Garden', all of them relevant for future lines of work inside the Platform, are described below:



The need for a coherent and effective legal framework

A new legal framework for pastoralism and grazing livestock production is needed in Spain. The current situation demands specific public policies and a clear differentiation from industrial livestock husbandry. A new Pastoralism Act is therefore demanded to specifically regulate pasture-based livestock production. This act should contribute to unify and coordinate regional policies and become a useful tool to protect pastoralists and extensive farmers. The objective is not to add new laws to the complex existing livestock regulations but to differentiate, support and protect pastoralism, recognising its role as a driving force for biodiversity and a provider of ecological services. The benefits expected from this regulatory act include the boosting of visibility both within the government agencies and the whole society. Also, a new legal framework might put together the extremely diverse range of rules and regulations that currently affect pastoralism.



The need to properly address pastoralism and grazing livestock systems on the Common Agricultural Policy

The implementation of the CAP in Spain should properly address the diversity and complexity of agroecological production systems found all over the country, including regional and local variations. In particular, pastoralist and grazing systems on high natural value areas should be regarded in a totally different way to that of intensive livestock breeding facilities. The actual CAP is still based on a productivity paradigm without properly considering several key issues related to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. However, CAP regulations are flexible enough to allow Spanish and other Mediterranean countries authorities to develop a better CAP, increasingly adapted to each territory needs.



Social visibility and image of pastoralism and pasture-based livestock farming

People from urban societies are actually unaware of the realities of pastoralism and grazing livestock and the essential goods and services they provide. Consumers and other stakeholders need more information in order to make better decisions and improve their influence. The Network is planning to develop a strong effort to explain, together with the farmers and herders, the high interest of pastoralism and pasture-based livestock systems for land, nature and society. This explanation requires undoubtedly to strengthen links between two worlds which nowadays are very distant from one another: the urban and the rural. Thus, it is essential for consumers to be informed, so they can distinguish and choose pastoralist products, and for the rest of society to realise that supporting this activity is the least we can do in return for the services provided.



