



Woodlands Grazing Issues in Mediterranean Basin

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In Mediterranean basin, woodlands grazing still continue to be important commercial owners' benefits. These owners manage woodlands vegetations as if they were not at risk of degradation and declining. Frequently, no temporally grazing set-aside is taken into account to avoid overgrazing of annual and perennial vegetations. Although less common, in the northern shore of Mediterranean basin undergrazing might increase the frequency and the number of catastrophic forest fires. This under/over grazing regime occurs in the Mediterranean basin woodlands with contrasted differences on land property rights, local economies and government livestock policy incentives. Spain and Tunisia are examples of these Mediterranean livestock contrasts.

Most of Spanish Mediterranean woodlands and livestock herds are large private ownerships and owners could maintain their lands and livestock herds properties on the basis of moderate cash-income compensation against land revaluation and exclusive amenity self-consumption. The later is less tangible benefit and it could include family land legacy, nature enjoyment, country stile of life development, social status and so on. In public woodlands, social and environmental goals –as they are cultural heritage, biodiversity loss mitigation, soil conservation and employment– could maintain market unprofitable woodlands operations. Last three decades Spanish Mediterranean woodlands owners have increased the livestock herds incentivized by government subsidies. As result, grazing rent is pending on the level of European Union and Spanish government livestock subsidies. In this context, Spanish Mediterranean woodlands maintain a high extensive livestock stoking population, which economy could be called fragile and environmentally unsustainable because forest degradation and over/under grazing practices.

Tunisian Mediterranean woodlands are state properties and livestock grazing is practice as a free private regimen. Livestock herds are small herd's family ownerships. These poor livestockkeepers could maintain their livestock regimen on the basis of low cash-income earnings and crops self-consumption in extremely poor family living conditions. In this state woodlands, social an environmental goals –as they were noted above– could generate high trade off between family basic needs and soil degradation because woodlands and crops operations. As result, grazing rent is pending on the low opportunity cost for family labour. In this context, Tunisian Mediterranean woodlands maintain the highest livestock rate population, which woodland economy could be called for poor people subsistence and environmentally unsustainable because soil erosion, forest degradation and over/under grazing.

These study present three study cases where Mediterranean basin grazing resources economies are analyzed in the contexts of Tunisian developing economy (Iteimia woodlands, North West of Tunisia) and Spanish developed economy (Jerez de la Frontera and Monfragüe woodlands, South and West of Spain). The results show the crucial role that livestock (goat, sheep and cattle) play in maintaining the working Mediterranean woodlands landscape. People, woodlands and livestock grazing dependences are changing so fast in Mediterranean basin that they appear too complex for being accurately forecasting by rangeland economists. In this context, perhaps a question might be a more suitable concluding remark: ¿will does woodlands extensive livestock become a quasi-wild management for urban landowners pleasure aims in rich Mediterranean basin countries?