

Sustainable land management and tree conservation practices among livestock farmer groups in dehesa land use systems in Cáceres, Extremadura

Sjoerd Pietersen (1), Didi Stoltenborg (1), Aad Kessler (1), and Manuel Pulido (2)

(1) Soil Physics and Land Management Group, Wageningen University & Research Centre, Wageningen, The Netherlands (sjoerd.pietersen@wur.nl), (2) GeoEnvironmental Research Group, University of Extremadura, Cáceres, Spain (mapulidof@unex.es)

Dehesas or montados in the South West of the Iberian Peninsula are one of the most low productive and extensive land use systems of Europe. . Due to a mosaic of various land use systems and associated practices, Dehesas display various forms of agricultural management. As a result of successive reforms of the European common agricultural policy (CAP) as well as regional socio economic developments, over the past decades landowners have abandoned extensive farming practices, . In order to counter this irreversible development, regional rural development plans started to promote the implementation of sustainable land management practices to conserve the original and unique nature of the dehesas. However, recent assessments indicated a gap between the requirements that are formulated in regional land use policies and the local conditions of sustainable farmer managed dehesas. The objective of this study was to explore determinants that explain these differences amongst the targeted livestock farmer groups. Quantitative data on farm characteristics and institutional arrangements were collected from 64 farmers. In addition qualitative data on the influence of land use policies on dehesas was retrieved from key stakeholders and literature review. The results indicate that livestock farmers indeed display a high degree of heterogeneity in terms of farm characteristics and associated institutional arrangements, resulting in an overall ad-hoc approach to improve sustainable land use management. For example, farmers with large properties (<1000 ha) seem to invest significantly more in sustainable land management practices than smallholder farmers (>100 ha). Furthermore, younger farmers (>40 years) perceive significantly more frequently the adverse effects of land degradation processes in dehesas as potentially detrimental than aging farmers (<65). Interviews with key stakeholders further suggest that there seems to be a need to assist farmers with the implementation of collaborates actively with the landowners on the field. Due to the divergent physical character of dehesa farms and socio economic profiles of farmers, there is need for the design of integrated land management strategies on ideally a municipality scale level.