



Comprehensive analysis of conventional land management in privately-owned rangelands of Extremadura (SW Spain)

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Extensive grazing is a key factor for the conservation of High Nature Value (HNV) farming systems such as woody rangelands (dehesas or montados) or grasslands (pastizales) in SW Europe. They have been created from clearing the former Mediterranean forest and have been subject to land use and management changes, particularly during recent decades. Environmental and economic consequences of those changes have been scarcely studied so far.

In this study, the land management of 10 privately-owned farms (ranging from 200 to 1,000 ha in size) has been analysed from various perspectives: [1] environmental (soil quality, land degradation, tree regeneration, etc.), [2] economic (inputs, outputs, infrastructure and vehicles) and [3] sociodemographic (type of exploitation, generational relay, etc.). Data were obtained through field surveys, aerial image analysis and personal interviews with owners and shepherds.

The results showed negative economic consequences (e.g. more expenses on food supply) on farms where soils are more degraded. Approximately 30% of the farms had negative economic balances, compensated by subsidy payments from the European Union. Furthermore, 50% of the samples do not have guaranteed the generational relay. The obtained information is relevant to evaluate the sustainability of these farming systems. However, a larger number of cases is still necessary in order to draw definitive conclusions.

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