

Implementation of Voisin's Rational Grazing to restore and increase the productivity of pastures in Mediterranean mountain zones

Summary

The theory of Rational Grazing by Andre Voisin is based on a combination of the knowledge of regrowth ecophysiology of the pastures and of the needs and welfare of the animals.

The main parameter, and the cornerstone of this method, is the optimum length of the rest period of the pasture. The combination of the optimum length of this period and the needs of the animals leads to the 4 Laws of Rational Grazing.

In Mediterranean mountain areas, the lack of experience in implementing these laws requires adaptation, and evaluation of the biological, technical and social parameters is needed for their full-scale implementation.

Objectives

To adapt the parameters needed for implementation of Voisin's Rational Grazing (VRG) to Mediterranean mountain conditions:

1. To evaluate the adaptation of biological parameters to implement VRG for a range of characteristic Mediterranean mountain environmental conditions.
2. To evaluate full-scale implementation of the adaptation of the technical parameters of VRG for Mediterranean mountain conditions.
3. To evaluate adaptation of VRG to Mediterranean mountain socio-economic conditions.

Description of project activities

Action 1: Initiation of two pilot experiments in a representative range of Mediterranean mountain climatic conditions. The main parameters to be adapted for its implementation in a Mediterranean zone are: description of the productive cycle of the animals, calculation of the load and stock evolution during the first years of VRG implementation, definition of a sanitary framework, discussion of the implementation of the VRG laws, landscaping, division of the area and livestock management.

Action 2: Monitoring of two pilot experiment pastures to evaluate the implementation of the biological parameters of VRG. The main parameters that will be looked into are: obtaining a growth curve of the pasture, defining the optimum length of pasture rest period during the different seasons in each of the pilot experiments, and evaluating an empirical method to determine the optimum length of the rest period.

Action 3: Participatory process and joint discussion between experts and farmers. The options and characteristics of VRG implementation in the current social and economic conditions in Mediterranean mountain zones will be discussed. For each of the National Parks that participate in the operational group (Capçaleres Ter Freser, Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa and Albera), a participatory workshop will be organised, conducted by an expert and with the participation of technicians and farmers. In these workshops, the interest and the limitations of VRG implementation in the territorial conditions where the workshop is taking place will be discussed.

Expected results and practical recommendations

- A document containing the definition of the biological parameters of VRG implementation, adapted to

Mediterranean conditions: pasture growth curves, calculation of the optimum length of the rest period for a range of environments, on-site definition of an empirical method to determine the optimum length of the rest period, comparison between the zone's productivity by VRG and by traditional systems.

- A document containing a discussion of options and characteristics of VRG implementation in the current social and economic conditions in Mediterranean mountain zones, depending on the type of property and surface, topographical conditions and type of production.
- Two real-life VRG experiments, which may be visited to show clearly on-site VRG operation and its advantages.

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Keyword-category

Animal husbandry and welfare

Farming practice

Territorial scope

Province

Girona

County

Ripollès

Garrotxa

Alt Empordà

Project dissemination *(publications, seminars, multimedia...)*

Project website

Other project information

Project period**Approved budget**

Starting date (month-year): Maig 2017

Total budget: 132.800,00 €

End date (month-year):

Funding source DARP: 54.697,20 €Project status: *Ongoing**Funding source EU:* 41.262,80 €*Own funds:* 36.840,00 €**With the support of:**

Project funded by Operation 16.01.01 (Cooperation for innovation) of the Rural Development Program of Catalunya 2014-2020.

Basic regulation: Ordre ARP/96/2016, de 27 d'abril, per la qual s'aproven les bases reguladores dels ajuts a la cooperació per a la innovació a través del foment de la creació de grups operatius de l'Associació Europea per a la Innovació en matèria de productivitat i sostenibilitat agrícoles i la realització de projectes pilot innovadors per part d'aquests grups, i es convoquen els corresponents a 2016.

Project id.: E+C 2016