

The role of sheep in conservation of the landscape of Gorce National Park

Summary

Sustaining community grazing is an important element of landscape protection. Cultural grazing prevents negative changes in flora and degradation of architecture, and moreover contributes to economic activation of mountain regions. Cultural herding is a testimony to the maintenance of regional customs and traditions, and thereby helps to preserve regional identity. The aim of this study was to draw attention to the significant role of herding in protecting the natural environment and to the positive impact of sheep grazing in the landscape of Gorce National Park. The study was carried out in the form of a questionnaire regarding five herds of sheep in the Park and the surrounding area. The questionnaire contained 58 questions divided into 5 groups: identification data – 4 questions, pastures and their owners – 9 questions, grazing organization – 17 questions, production and economic problems associated with grazing and milk processing – 14 questions, and social and cultural aspects of sheep grazing on the pastures – 14 questions. The study revealed considerable variation in the size of flocks among sheep farms. Grazing over a large area is a natural form of landscape conservation and economic activation of the region. Furthermore, products obtained from sheep milk are the main source of income during the pasture season. Sheep herding is an important cultural factor in the region.

KEY WORDS: grazing sheep, landscape, national park, nature conservation