

# Le reseau espace - The ESPACE network

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The disappearance of traditional grazing practices endangers biodiversity in many important environments: damp meadow, marsh, peat bog, moorland, and dry grassland. Concerned to safeguard this living heritage, the managers of protected areas in France have experimented with “ecopastoralism” - the management of the environment by extensive grazing. Amongst these, thirty pilot sites have been assembled within a national network for research and demonstration to aid in the sharing of results and experience. This network is known as E.S.P.A.C.E. (Entretien des Sites à Préserver par des Animaux Conduits en Extensif)

Data collected on the pilot sites has enabled information to be established on the management of natural environments by grazing, and to encourage the involvement of the main actors.

The programme aims to define: performance and adaptive capacity of the animals in response to their management and environmental conditions, appropriate stocking rates to achieve the environmental management objectives, the impact of the animal on the vegetation and dynamics of significant species, and the cost of management of a given environment given specific objectives.

This information ought not only to contribute to the

establishment of management plans in the protected sites, but also to the definition of economic ways to manage many land types facing agricultural decline. These concerns have a wider significance than the protected areas of France and apply to all the marginal areas of Europe.

The ESPACE network brings together the French networks of nature reserves, regional natural parks, national parks, regional site conservatoires, into a common programme. While representing a wide range of habitat types, all the sites have, as an objective, the maintenance or restoration of an open landscape by extensive mixed or single-species grazing with cattle, horses or sheep.

To keep up with the state of progress, and to reflect on the subject of “ecopastoralism”, land managers have an annual meeting. Communication is enhanced by regular publications and a newsletter, “Pique-Boeuf”.

The ESPACE programme is cofinanced for 5 years by the Ministry of Land Management and the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the National Office of Hunting (*Office National de la Chasse*) and the European Commission (DGXI, LIFE environment) and Nature Reserves of France. The project is co-ordinated by the Federation of Regional Nature Parks.

## ELPEN: European Livestock Policy Evaluation Network

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Given the huge diversity of livestock systems and environments within the European Community, one of the challenges facing policy-makers today is how to achieve a balance between the negative and positive economic, social and environmental impacts of livestock policy. The European Livestock Policy Evaluation Network (ELPEN) is funded by the EC (FAIR3 CT96 1586) and one of its first tasks was to complete an assessment of policy-makers' needs to better appraise the impacts of livestock policy. The results of this assessment were then incorporated into the design of a workable framework within which European livestock systems can be characterised for the purposes of economic, environmental and social impact analysis on a regional basis.

One of the first steps towards achieving this was the elaboration of a classification system. This system consists of 16 different modules, each of which represents one aspect of livestock systems and is filled with a list of variables and

indicators which adequately describe this. The system represents a way of ordering and storing large amounts of data for the purpose of interrogation. Once populated with relevant data the system will also enable European livestock systems to be characterised in economic, environmental and socio-economic terms.

In order to do this, existing statistical data can be combined with expert knowledge and *ad hoc* sources formalised in a “knowledge system”.

In order to assess policy impacts on a regional basis, in particular, environmental and socio-economic impacts, the data contained in the classification system will be presented spatially to produce regional typologies of livestock systems using GIS (Geographical Information Systems). This has already been completed for selected examples in which livestock data is combined with other variables, such as climate, soil type, latitude and altitude.