

**SMALL RUMINANTS PROJECTS IN LEADER-PRODER
EUROPEAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE
SOUTH OF SPAIN: A SURVEY ANALYSIS**

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Summary

Mountain livestock systems, and particularly those based on breeding small ruminants, traditionally constituted a mainstay element of the local economy in Southeastern Spain's mountainous areas. With the rural exodus, which began in the early sixties, these systems were in critical danger of disappearing, due to, among other causes, the scarcity of shepherds and goatherds, the breakdown of an equilibrium between agriculture and animal farming, the small herd sizes, management and handling problems, etc.

In spite of this, there have recently been several attempts by the local population to develop the mountain livestock sector by recovering autochthonous breeds, solving sanitary and livestock handling problems, and the commercial revalorisation of dairy products and their derivatives. EU aid to the breeding of small ruminant animals, through among others LEADER and PRODER European Rural Development Programs, has no doubt helped promote these efforts.

This paper, after a brief description of the small ruminants systems in the Penibetic region, comments the main results of a survey performed to the Local Action Groups (LAG) representatives, and analyses the extent of the inclusion of Southeastern Spain's mountain area livestock projects in the EU rural development programmes (LEADER and PRODER).

Finally some conclusions and main strategic actions are drawn to take full advantage of the potential of small ruminant projects for the design of sustainable rural development processes in less favoured rural areas.

Keywords: mountain livestock system, small ruminants, leader, proder, rural development

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Introduction

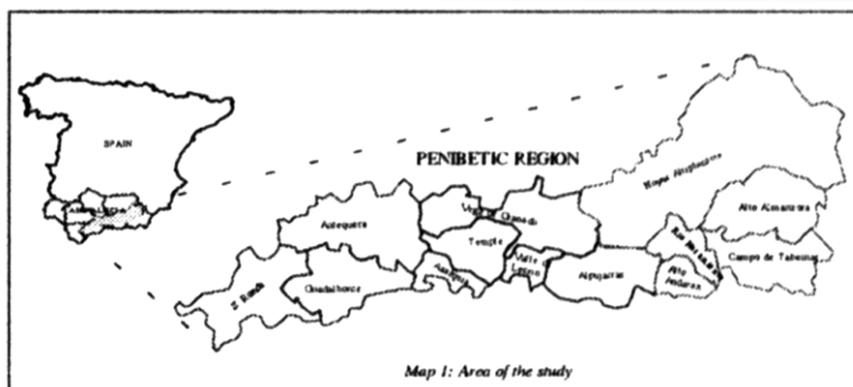
Within the framework of EU Programs, such as the Integrated Development Programs, LEADER, and others, the development policy in mountainous areas *has often been oriented towards 1st, secondary and tertiary sector, while the primary sector has been largely left behind, particularly those related to small ruminants livestock.*

That at least is the hypothesis proposed as the point of departure of this paper, which objective is to analyse to what the extent the UE rural development policies have generated or supported projects aimed at improving, revamping, or transforming and developing products derived from breeding small ruminants in Southeastern Spain (hereinafter Penibetic region).

Methodology

A survey was carried out in December 2001 among those in charge of 17 Local Action Groups (LAG) located in the Penibetic area, in which they were asked questions regarding the *nature of the projects* backed by the LAG since 1995 (Leader II and Proder). In addition to their *opinions regarding the relative importance of livestock in the rural development* of their respective geographic areas. Based on this information, the participation level of projects related to small ruminants included in the strategic development plans was analysed.

In the region of our study there are 13 agrarian zones and 17 LAG groups distributed between the provinces of Granada (GR), Almeria (AL) and Malaga (MA) (South of Spain). The Penibetic region encompasses almost 2 million hectares, most of them *highly mountainous* (see Map 1).



Results

Small ruminants livestock in the region

In the region of the study (here are almost *1.3 million sheep and goats*). The number of small ruminants has grown of 9.3% in the 80's decade, and of 50.55% in the 90's (1990-2000). One fourth of the herds are less than 50 head, amounting to less than 4% of the total livestock, whereas less than one fifth of the breeders, with more than 300 head each, possess over half of the total livestock. The *average sized herd in the region, of 187 head*, is quite variable among the zones, oscillating between 99 head and almost 260. Mixed herds are a rarity in the region, due to the species' diverse behaviour in the open field. Mixed herds tend to be the smallest ones.

Livestock projects in LEADER and PRODER Rural Development Programs: a survey analysis

Of the 17 existing LAG groups in the region, 8 are LEADER II and 9 are PRODER. According of the survey, the total number of projects financed have been 2,856 with an average of 178 projects per LAG. The LEADER II project average is much higher (214.5) than that of the PRODER (126.6). Of these projects, *barely 1% are activities related to small ruminants, which contrasts with the census of 1.3 million heads of goat and sheep livestock in the region, and with a cultural and gastronomic tradition largely based on the breeding of small ruminants (meal, cheese, etc.) in the region*. Likewise, it contrasts with the facts above 23.5% of those responsible for the LAG believe that promoting activities associated with *small ruminants at present would not only help develop the area but are in fact key factors in its development*, and 47% consider that, although they are not key factors, they are important. Considering also *future, 35% respond that activities connected with small ruminants are, or could potentially become, key activities in the tone's development*, which indicates that 11.55% of the LAG consider that, even if today they are not key elements for development due to the livestock breeding state of crisis, they could become key factors if measures are taken to redirect the livestock activity toward modernisation.

For strategic purposes, the elements which should receive attention with the greatest priority, as identified by the regional LAG representatives of the small ruminant population, are as follows (three priority elements per answer):

	% of the total LAG groups
- Create livestock co-ops for milk collection, cheese making, trading, etc.....	64.10
- Implement training programmes whose aims could be changing breeders' attitudes, arousing social interest in the activity, stimulating the introduction of young breeders, informing on the aid options, on dairy products, on markets, etc	52.94
- Generate greater returns through the elaboration of the dairy products by the breeders themselves	47.06
- Improve marketing and distribution both of milk and cheeses	29.41
- Organise the marketing of the meat by taking advantage of local and province markets, and tourism.....	29.41
- Preserve autochthonous breeds best adapted in all ways to the natural resources of the area	23.52
- Include in the rural tourism and agro-tourism programmes, already in operation, livestock breeding related activities: visiting animal farms and cheese factories, tourist participation in farm activities and in the elaboration of handcrafted cheese, lasting of dairy products typical of the region, etc.....	17.65
- Modernise the present herds: mechanical milking, introduction of new, more highly specialised, productive breeds, etc	17.65
- Upgrade the assistance and direct aid to breeders	5.90

These priority actions, although each zone is influenced, logically, by its own situation, presents, in general, a significant coincidence, fundamentally in the three first points, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Closer, stronger association among breeders.
2. More advanced training and formation.
3. Greater returns through elaboration of dairy products.

Let us compare this "desideratum" as manifested by the LAG representatives as activities for development, and the scarce projects actually financed. The nature of the projects funded in connection with small ruminants has been as follows:

Nature of the small ruminant's projects funded by the LAG	% total
Cheese factories.....	38.80
Technological modernisation of animal farms	33.40
Livestock market-fairs and seminars.	16.60
Milk collection and treatment plant	5.60
Meat treatment and commercialisation facilities (slaughterhouses, etc.)...	5.60

None of these projects involves a livestock breeder association; they are all practically *individual projects or involving small family limited societies*. Of the three strategic lines considered to be priorities by the LAG representatives: **Close Producer Association, Training, and Local Elaboration of Dairy Products**, only the latter is clearly reflected in the activities financed by the LEADER II and PRODER programmes, and this is so not because the LAG representatives are actually going against what the priorities of the area demand, but because of the enormous difficulties in managing to carry out activities that would involve the creation of associations among the small ruminant breeders, as well as the very project funding dynamics of the LEADER II and PRODER programmes, where, in order to maximise efficiency in assistance management, projects and activities which already have "rural entrepreneurs" willing to implement them are given preference over those projects which are basically non-existent, and whose inception would require an extensive, long-term and in-depth awareness programme of "rural extension", in its most classical sense, with very real possibilities that it may all come to naught, as would occur when collective decisions were required.

In this sense, it is surprising that none of the activities financed for the elaboration of cheese has resulted in an association of smaller and middle-sized breeders in order to obtain better returns from the milk they produce, in the elaboration and marketing process.

Conclusions

From the survey of the LAG representatives the following *conclusions* can be drawn:

- In spite of the importance of goat and sheep livestock holdings in the Penibetic mountains, the number of projects related to small ruminants that are financed is extremely small.
- However, and paradoxically, a consensus exists among the Local Action Groups (LAG), Leader and Proder, on the key role that the livestock activities of these small ruminants could play in the local sustainable development of the mountain areas of Southeastern Spain
- Creating associations, training and encouraging livestock breeders, and elaborating dairy products from milk locally, are among the measures with the highest priority if the small ruminant sector is to be revamped. All the local GAL coincide in this fact. However, it is mainly in the latter measure (that of the local elaboration of dairy products) that the Leader and Proder have clearly taken any steps in financing projects.

- There is a lack of in-depth studies on the livestock systems in the various LAG areas.
- The projects on small ruminants respond almost exclusively to individual initiatives, no social economy related projects appear, involving livestock associations.
- The initiative of the projects does not derive, in general, from the GAL, but from the farmers themselves.
- The projects are aimed mainly to cover the local (provincial) markets, without views to a wider, more daring share of the market as regards expansion (national and international).
- What has just been said is due not so much to the lack of marketing strategy as to the fact that we are dealing with small industries and the existence of an abundant local demand. In view of these conclusions, several *recommendations* could be put forward:
 - Efforts should be made to prioritise and generate projects involving the creation of breeder associations either for processing and/or trading processes.
 - Besides their role as subsidy managers, the LAG's role in promoting small ruminant related projects should be emphasised. It is important not only to back the existing local initiatives, but to promote and induce the initiatives, of a priority character, which do not come about spontaneously, particularly in a sector which is in a such a crisis as that of the small ruminants.
 - It would be interesting to carry out an analysis and detailed studies of the small ruminants livestock systems in order to be able to better emphasise its effective participation in the sustainable development processes in south-eastern Spain.
 - Training activities should be increased both considering technical aspects of breeding small ruminants and processing milk into cheese and other products.
 - Also institutional features have to be included into training activities, emphasising in associated and co-operative farm management, processing and trading.

PROJEKTI ZA MALE PREŽIVAČE U LEADER PRODER PROGRAMIMA ZA EUROPSKI RURALNI RAZVOJ U JUŽNOJ ŠPANIJSKOJ: ANALIZA IZVJEŠTAJA

Sažetak

Iz izvještaja predstavnika LAG-a mogu se izvući sljedeći zaključci:

- Uprkos važnosti stočarskih posjeda za držanje koza i ovaca u Penibetskim planinama broj financiranih projekata u vezi s malim preživačima vrlo je malen.
- Međutim, i paradoksalno, postoji suglasnost među Skupinama za lokalnu akciju (LAG), Leader i Proder-a, o ključnoj ulozi koju mogu imati stočarske aktivnosti ovih malih preživača u lokalnom uzdrživom razvoju brdskih područja jugoistočne Španjolske.

- Stvaranje udruga, osposobljavanje i poticanje lokalnih stočara i lokalna obrada mliječnih proizvoda mjere su najvišeg prioriteta ako se želi modernizirati sektor malih preživača. Svi se lokalni GAL-i slažu u tome. Međutim, uglavnom su u tome (lokalna obrada mliječnih proizvoda) Leader i Proder jasno poduzeli korake u financiranju projekata.
- Postoji pomanjkanje temeljitih istraživanja stočarskih sustava u raznim LAG područjima.
- Projekti o malim preživačima odnose se gotovo isključivo na pojedinačne inicijative, ne pojavljuju se projekti u vezi sa socijalnim gospodarstvom koji bi uključivali stočarske udruge.
- Inicijativa za projekte, općenito, ne potječe od GAL-a već od samih farmera.
- Cilj je projekata, uglavnom, pokriti lokalna (područna) tržišta bez ciljanja na širi, smioniji udio na tržištu u širenju (nacionalnom i međunarodnom).
- Ono o čemu je riječ nije toliko pomanjkanje tržišne strategije koliko činjenice da se radi o malim proizvodnjama i postojanju velike lokalne potražnje. U vezi s ovim zaključcima moglo bi se iznijeti nekoliko preporuka.
- Valja se potruditi stvarati i dati prednost projektima koji će obuhvatiti stvaranje udruga uzgajivača za prerađivanje i/ili prodaju.
- Pored uloge upravitelja poticaja treba naglasiti ulogu LAG-a na promicanju projekata u vezi s malim preživačima. Važno je to ne samo za podupiranje postojeće lokalne inicijative već i za promicanje i uključivanje prioritetnijih inicijativa koje ne nastaju spontano, osobito u sektoru kao što je sektor malih preživača.
- Bilo bi zanimljivo provesti detaljnu analizu i detaljna istraživanja sustava malih preživača kako bi se moglo bolje istaknuti njegovo djelotvorno sudjelovanje u održivim razvojnim procesima u jugoistočnoj Španjolskoj.
- Potrebno je povećati aktivnosti osposobljavanja s obzirom na tehničke aspekte uzgoja malih preživača i preradu mlijeka u sir i druge proizvode.

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