

PREVENTIVE LIVESTOCK GRAZING (RAPCA PROGRAMME)

Goat and sheep farmers are rewarded for helping with biomass reduction in fire-prone landscapes.



Sheep grazing in Spain.

BACKGROUND

Fuel breaks: eliminating fuel continuity by establishing vegetation structure and characteristics that improve capacity to manage wildfires.

Fuel treatments through biomass reduction are of key importance to wildfire prevention efforts. These include pruning, thinning, prescribed burns and grazing. However, mechanical clearings are expensive and sometimes difficult to implement in challenging landscapes.

Livestock grazing has become an option for many European countries, including Spain, to make landscapes more fire resilient.

Previously grazing has had a negative image in many Mediterranean countries due to overgrazing and use of fire for pasture renewals, leading to desertification. However, the role of grazing is important for wildfire prevention, and controlled grazing is also seen to have many positive effects, both socially and environmentally, such as economic savings, and improved land-use effectiveness. It is also said to be an ecologically sound technique compared to other fuel treatment methods.



In Andalusia, a successful example of payments for preventive livestock grazing provides sheep and goat farmers with additional income.

LOCATION

Andalusia



ACTORS



Local shepherds and their herds, Spanish Research Council CSIC, Regional Department of the Environment, Public Agency of Environment and Water (AMAYA)

CHALLENGE



Forests occupy more than half of the territory in Andalusia in southern Spain: 4.6 million hectares.

Wildfires pose a very significant threat to the biodiversity of the region's natural environment. As with many other Mediterranean regions, rural abandonment together with effective fire suppression efforts have led to fuel build-up in Andalusia, increasing the risk of future fires.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

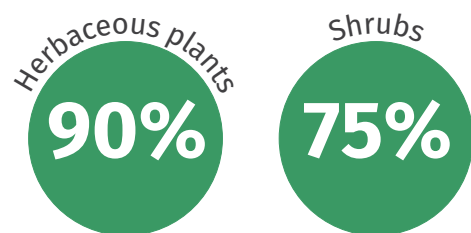
Monetary rewards for biomass control and fuel break maintenance

The **RAPCA programme** in Andalusia is a payment scheme that rewards shepherds for services of biomass control and fuel break maintenance on public forest land at high risk of wildfires. The reward is dependent on the size of the area, success, and difficulty of the effort. Testing for the programme began in 2003, but the official scheme was launched in 2005.

What's the deal?

Graziers are required to consume a certain amount of vegetation growth annually, namely 90 % of herbaceous plants and 75% of shrubs. Contracts are made with the local environment and water agency, who also assess fuel breaks suitable for the programme, and the results of the grazing, leading to payments. Monitoring is done once a year.

Annual consumption



By 2016 there have been **223 shepherds** with more than **6100 ha** of grazed land.

Success factors

By 2016, 223 shepherds with more than 6100 ha of grazed land had received payments as part of the RAPCA scheme.

Success factors include:

- + Extensive groundwork by researchers at CSIC (Granada), including pilot testing and provision of support for programme expansion
- + Strong political commitment
- + Programme embedded in the wider wildfire prevention plan (INFOCA)
- + Positive relationship between the environmental administration and farmers

RAPCA programme

*Red de Áreas
Pasto-Cortafuegos de
Andalucía*

*Network of
Pasture-Firebreak
Areas of Andalusia*

The RAPCA programme is directed by the General Directorate of Management of the Natural Environment and is executed through the Environment and Water Agency, as a continuation of the collaboration and scientific advice of the Group of Pastures and Mediterranean Silvopastoral Systems of the Superior Council of Scientific Research (CSIC).

More information of the programme (in Spanish):

- ▶ www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/portal/



Sheep and goat herds can reach vegetation in terrains that would be otherwise difficult to manage.

