



## Transhumance and local breeds

Navarredonda de Gredos – Avila - Spain

20 June 2024

# TRANSHUMANCE in SPAIN



Transhuming Segureña Sheep Santiago Pontones-Andalucia

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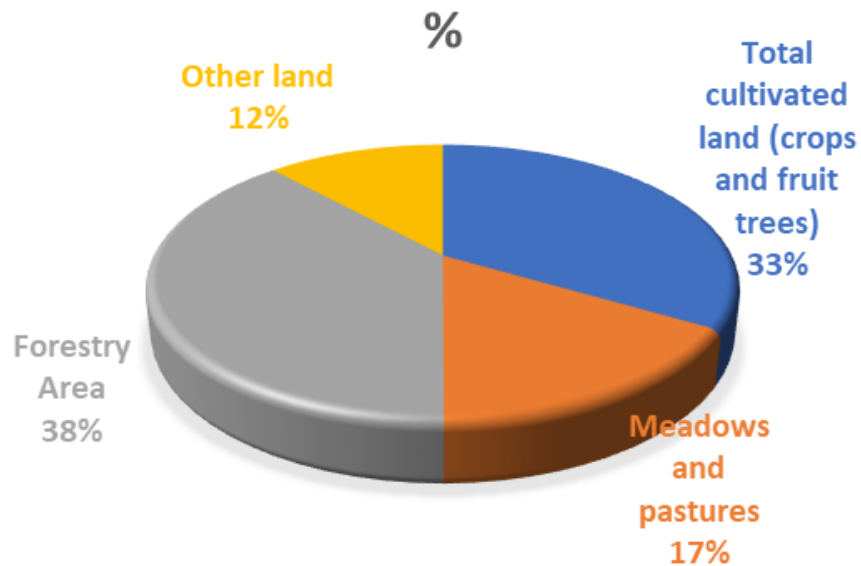
Email: [fpasettib@gmail.com](mailto:fpasettib@gmail.com)



Transhuming  
Avileñas cattle  
breed - Avila

# SPAIN its land use, ecosystems and pastoralism

- Total Spain: 50 Mio Km<sup>2</sup>
- **Potential Grazing Land** 44 Mio Km<sup>2</sup>
- Other Land: 6 Mio Km<sup>2</sup>

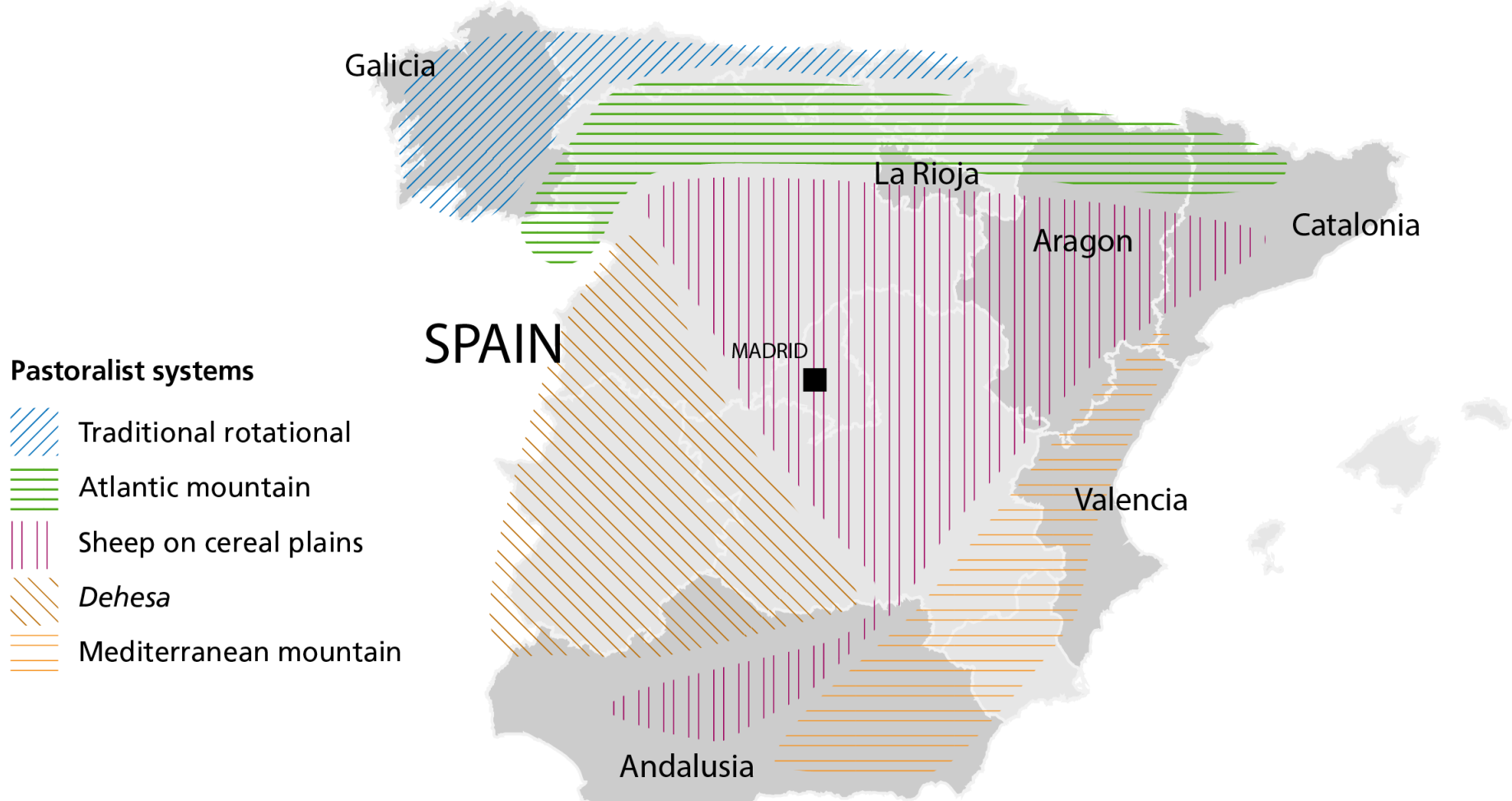


- Spain has very high biodiversity: > 1 million species, of which 30% are endemic.
- **Pasture, in Spain, has been defined as any land and its vegetation where any forage can be harvested by grazing and/or cutting.**
- **88% of Spain can be used for pasture at some time of year.**

**Two main pastoral strategies** have evolved:

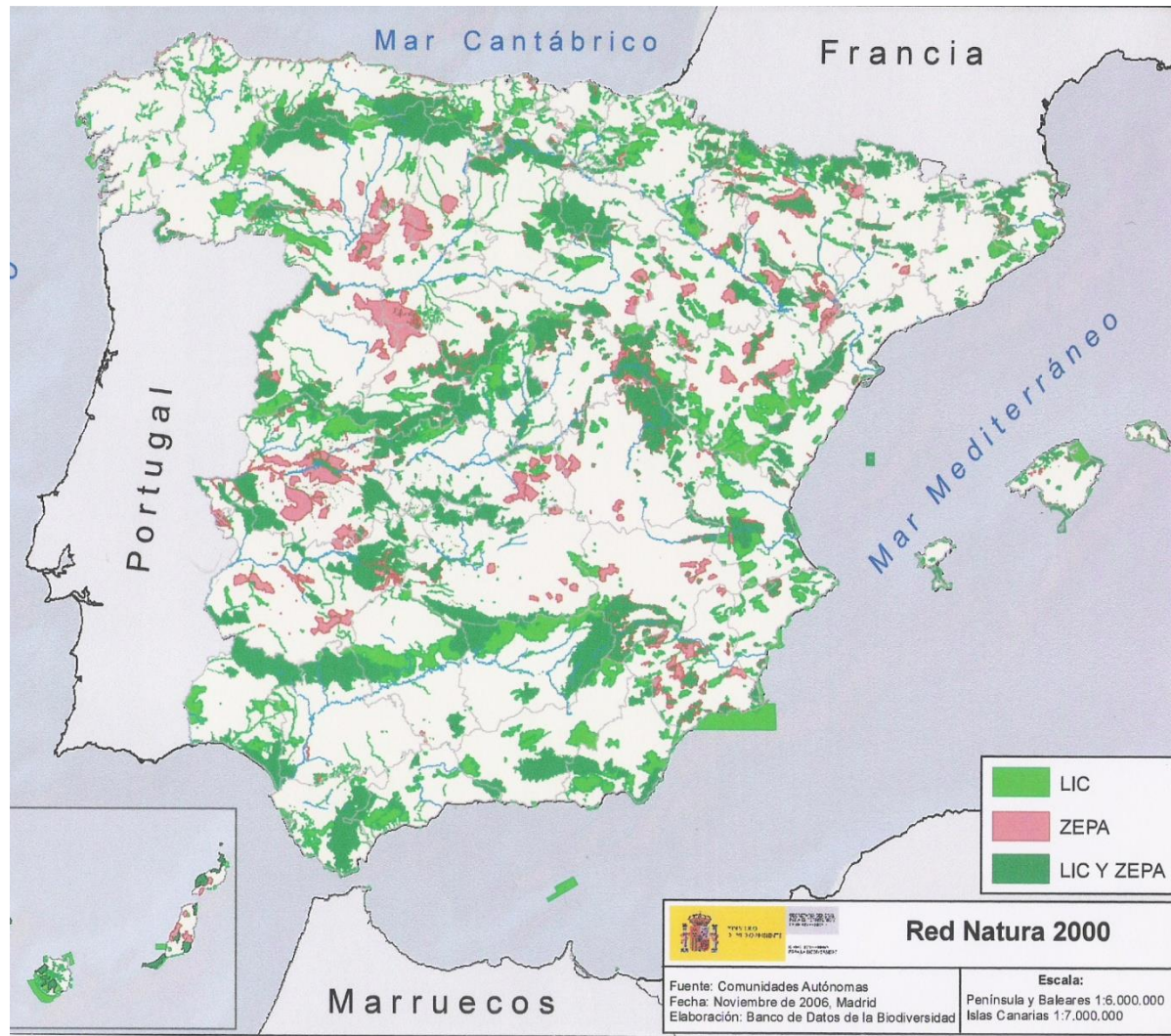
- **Transhumance = Mobile Pastoralism** involves moving animals between winter pastures (usually plains) to summer pastures (often mountains).
- **Agro-silvo-pastoralism** involves grazing animals on pasture and **crop residues**, as well as in **natural forests** and/or **tree plantations**.

# Most important Pastoralist systems in Spain



**Dehesa: semi-natural open forests**, (less than 100 trees/ha, mainly oak-*Quercus* spp), **without shrubs**, where trees, native grasses, crops and livestock interact positively.  
4 Mio Ha Spain, 1 Mio Ha Portugal





- Spain has **> 1 million species**, of which **30% are endemic**.
- Mountain chains and valleys, with their rivers, are mainly **oriented East-West**





A network of interconnected livestock trails protected since 1273, King Alphonse X “the Sage”

Cañadas reales: 73 m  
 Cordeles: 37,5 m  
 Veredas: 20 m  
 Coladas: < 20 m

- 125.000 Km of protected Pastoral trails
- 400.000 ha

- A MAIN DROVE ROADS**
- A. Cañada Real Burgalesa
  - B. Cañada Real Soriana Occidental
  - C. Cañada Real Leonesa Occidental
  - D. Cañada Real de la Plata
  - E. Cañada Real Leonesa Oriental
  - F. Cañada Real Segoviana
  - G. Cañada Real Riojana
  - H. Cañada Real Soriana Oriental
  - I. Cañada Real Conquense

- 2 SUMMER PASTURES**
- 1. Cantabrian Mountains
  - 2. Northern Iberian System
  - 3. Southern Iberian System
  - 4. Pyrenees
  - 5. Central system
  - 6. Andalusian mountains

Livestock trails (Cañadas Reales) used by transhumants **are green corridors**

between mountain systems that would be genetically isolated

- 4500-5000 seed day
- Climate change adaptation



Which are the difficulties of transhumants?  
What do we find on the livestock paths?



# Family

## Family related problems:

- The reconciliation of family life.
- Special allowances for distance learning during certain periods.
- Learning the skills for generational renewal



# Shelters

To give some degree of stability to transhumance by fitting out shelters on livestock trails, allowing people and animals to be provided with accommodation at certain times (storms, heavy rains, etc.).





# Partnering



Individualised sector:  
There are no associations of transhumant livestock breeders that can communicate with the administration and advocate for their interests.



## **Water**

One of the main problems for transhumance.

It is essential to have drinking troughs with water along the route.

This should be included in the National Safeguarding Plan for the restoration and recovery of livestock trails.



More recently, many transhumant herders have switched to transporting livestock by trucks.

Although this system makes transport easier, it entails certain **risks for animal welfare**, as the animals are submitted to **sudden changes** in temperature and feeding.



The problem of **adaptation** when transhumance is done by truck.

# **Pesticides** in the roadside pastures



- Treatment with chemicals is often poison for transhumant livestock, causing numerous deaths along the routes.
- This also deters new people from joining these livestock management models..



# Bureaucracy



- Different regulations,
- Different interpretation criteria
- Requirement of multiple documentation and formalities

2022

Working Paper

# Assessing the policy frame in pastoral areas of Europe

NORI, Michele  

Working Paper, EUI RSC, 2022/03, Global Governance Programme-461, [PASTRES]

 Cite

Unlike other regions of the world, the policy framework in Europe is in principle favourable to extensive livestock farming. EU policies recognise the multiple values of pastoralism and its contributions in terms of cultural heritage, environmental management and territorial cohesion. Recognising that these public goods are not sustainable without remuneration, the EU supports pastoralists with direct and indirect measures, including subsidies. These are considered as forms of compensation and reward for producers operating in Less Favoured Areas and High Nature Value settings. However, over recent decades, the number of extensive livestock farms has declined sharply, generational renewal amongst pastoralists is scanty and mountainous, island, and inner territories all over Europe are undergoing processes of socio-economic and agro-ecological desertification. The outcomes of the CAP political and financial commitment in pastoral contexts are hence quite disappointing. Translating good intentions and societal appreciation into effective social facilities and economic returns appears to be a major challenge for policy makers and administrators across Europe. On the one hand, the European Green Deal and its 'Farm to Fork' strategy show high levels of ambition in reorienting agriculture and enhancing the transition to





## The Predators

- Predators on the prowl.
- Lack of a specific regulation to pay compensation for losses.
- One more reason to further discourage its recovery.

# Bovine versus ovine



- ❑ The land traditionally used by sheep is being replaced by cattle
- ❑ which are
  - occupying up much more land
  - pushing up prices,
  - driving out the traditional animal of transhumance: the sheep.





We would like to thank **Ganaderas en Red** for their contributions to the knowledge of the daily practical problems they face in the practice of this centuries-old farming system.







A unique kind of Transhumance in Spain: transhumance of “Spanish Fighting Bull ”



Transhumance of Avileñas breed



**Some transhuming families make cheese, with raw milk of local sheep breeds**

- in Gran Canaria, (**Queso de Flor DOP**)
- in Extremadura (**Torta del casar DOP**) with Merino breed)
- Basque country (**Idiazabal DOP**): Latxa and Carranzana breed (Facerias)





## Awarded Woman Livestock breeder and Pastoralists



### Maite Sanchez - Excellence in Innovation Rural Women Award

Organic farmer of the wild native "Betizu" cow in Goizueta - Spain

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJSbnLzGdB8>

**Maria Pia Sanchez**, coordinator of **Ganaderas en Red** and president of **Fedehesa**, receiving an **award from the Siruela Town Council** in December 2017, for her work in favour of **extensive livestock farming and transhumance**.

June 2024 awarded one of the 10 best Spanish **sustainable producers** (for her ecological sheep meat) by **BBVA and Celler Can Roca**

Article:

<https://www.bbva.com/es/es/sostenibilidad/bbva-premia-a-los-diez-mejores-productores-sostenibles-de-espana-en-2024/>





# Examples of native transhuming breeds - Spain



Churra Sheep, one of the oldest Breed of Spain



Merino sheep



Transhumant horses of Merens - Pyrenees



Tudanca Local Breed Cantabria,



Pajuna Breed of cows- Typical of Transhumance in Sierra Nevada (about 700 female left) - Spain



Majorera Goat Fuerteventura, existing in Canary Island before arrival of spaniards (XV century)



Spanish Mastiff



Zamorano-Leonés donkey



# FEDEHESA



FUNDACIÓN  
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Y NATURALEZA

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# THANK YOU