Communal Land in Galicia (Spain)
Pasture management, problems and solutions

I Networking Event on Common Grazing in Europe.
Brussels, 18/19 November 2015

Eloi Villada Legaspi
Galician Grass and Forage Society
Scale and importance

• Usually communal lands in Spain are municipal property, except in Galicia.

• In Galicia the most important communal lands are property of local communities (parishes or villages). They are called ‘Monte Veciñal en Man Común’: MVMC.

• 22% of the country is MVMC.

• The situation in north Portugal is very similar (Baldios).
### Scale and importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>MVMC Sup. (ha)</th>
<th>Total Sup. (ha)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Coruña</td>
<td>43.512</td>
<td>793.086</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugo</td>
<td>209.203</td>
<td>980.298</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ourense</td>
<td>268.439</td>
<td>727.830</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pontevedra</td>
<td>130.486</td>
<td>446.456</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Galicia</strong></td>
<td><strong>651.640</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.947.670</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communal land in Galicia

In some mountaneous areas MVMC represent more than 50% of territory.
Scale and importance

Land uses in MVMC are diverse from one to another, but in general:
- Scrublands are the main cover, in some cases grazed, in some not
- Forest, in many cases pine plantations (coming from previous times)
- Herbaceous grasslands
- Other crops, rarely. Although in the past cultivation of cereals was an important activity in MVMC.
Extensive grazing

Three different situations of well managed shubbry grasslands in communal land.
Institutional context

• Communal lands in Galicia are regulated by:
  – Spanish Law 55/1980 (only applied in Galicia)
  – Galician Law 13/1989 of MVMC
  – Regulation for communal lands (MVMC) 260/1992
  – Other:
    • Civil Law of Galicia 2/2006
    • Forestry act of Galicia 7/2012
BUT

• During the 40’s MVMC were transferred to the municipalities, like in the rest of Spain. During the 70’s a new law returned them to local communities.

• Much of the area was afforested, sometimes by force, with unequal results.

• This process still affects current management and view of MVMC.
Governance structures

• The holder of the rights is the community itself
• MVMC cannot be taken away by proscription, seized or transferred
• All families living in the village or parish where the MVMC is located are part of the community:
  – If you move, you lose your right.
  – If you come, you get your right (‘houses with fire and smoke’)
• Governance:
  – Assembly:
    • One representative of each family
    • Must meet at least once a year.
  – Steering Board: a president, vocals, secretary and treasurer. Elected for a period of 4 years or less.
• If the community desapears, the responsibility for the protection and management goes (temporarily) to the Galician Government.
Main issues being faced

• Demographic decline:
  • Some MVMC without Steering Board
  • Even some without community at all
• Legal uncertainty:
  • processes of declarations as communal land or of reversion still going on
  • boundary conflicts
  • Illegal occupation by private or public actors
• Land use conflicts:
  • Forest vs. Livestock
  • Livestock vs. Environment (much less)
  • Land grabbing?: mining projects, windmill parks, industrial developments...
• Not understood by Common Agricultural Policy
  • Coefficient of eligibility for pastureland (CAP)
  • Implementation of Climate-Environment measures
• The Coefficient of eligibility for pastureland (CAP) in pastured bushy areas.
Innovative actions

Program for maintenance and recovery of grazing systems in MVMC (Since 1984)
Main issues

• At the present time the process for claiming more communal lands is open.
• Occupy much of the surface in the areas of greatest neglect, demographic decline and fires.
• Represent a ideal base for new projects for silvopastoralism activities.
• Also in heavily populated areas (SW Galicia), are again interested in recovering grazing in forested hills.
Consequences of the lack of grazing
Grazing, a solution against wild fires

Extensive livestock controls spontaneous vegetation and reduces fuel!
Innovative actions

• Since 1984 several programmes were developed to improve and maintain pastoral systems on communal lands.

• It was a successful process that has enabled improvements in both sides, the management of pastures and working conditions and the economy of the people who live there.

• More than 500 projects have been developed.
Innovative actions

Three different situations of well managed pastures under trees in communal lands
Livestock: a strong weapon

Starting grazing in shrubby grassland 1990, and 8 years later, after increasing stocking rate.
Livestock: a strong weapon
Livestock: a strong weapon

Heather grazed by goats April 2006
Heather recovering after grazing June 2006

Broom grazed by goats
Approximately 5 years later
Thanks for your attention