

Press release

II Grazing on the Grids Conference in Cistierna Grazed areas in the mountains of León show higher biodiversity and lower fuel biomass

Livestock farmers, energy companies, universities and environmental organisations have concluded that extensive grazing provides many services to society, including food production, biodiversity, income diversification for farmers, fire prevention and rural development.

Grazing on Red Eléctrica and Enagás infrastructure in the mountains of Pola de Gordón, La Robla and Villamanín is creating biodiversity corridors.

Cistierna (León), 5 July 2024

The grazed areas in the mountains of León in Folledo (Pola de Gordón), Casares de Arbás (Villamanín) and Rabanal de Fenar (La Robla) currently have a higher biodiversity rate than other non-grazed areas, with less combustible plant mass and therefore a lower risk of forest fires.

This is two years after Red Eléctrica and Enagás began using extensive livestock farming and grazing to manage the vegetation around their infrastructure in the Leonese mountains. Instead of using traditional mechanical clearing methods, both companies opted to work with farmers, shepherds and the company Agrovidar to draw up a grazing plan and bring cattle, sheep and horses to their facilities. To measure the impact of the livestock on the vegetation, the initiative includes the use of drones equipped with multi-spectral cameras and the installation of GPS trackers on some of the animals in each herd.

Samples and data collected during this time show a greater presence of arthropods, butterflies, pollinators and floral units in grazed areas compared to ungrazed areas, demonstrating that livestock are a key vector for increasing biodiversity rates and turning Enagás' gas pipelines and Red Eléctrica's power lines into biodiversity corridors.

In addition, the combination of "munching" consumption, trampling and the contribution of organic matter by livestock has reduced the volume of biomass and changed the type of vegetation from shrub or bush substrate to herbaceous cover, helping to reduce the risk of fires.

The two companies shared their experiences and knowledge in the mountains of León at the II Grazing on Grids Conference, held yesterday and today. Other extensive grazing initiatives such as Grazing for Nature, of the Global Nature Foundation, or Granja Zael, in Burgos, were also presented. Participants also reflected on how to integrate innovation, technology, knowledge and talent into rural development and extensive livestock farming processes, and

on the possibilities for cooperation between energy companies, farmers' and shepherds' associations, companies providing services to the sector, public administration, universities and environmental organisations.

The assembled experts concluded that extensive grazing in areas crossed by major energy transmission facilities offers benefits to society and nature beyond income generation for the livestock sector, provision of grazing land and food production.

“Extensive grazing promotes rural development, favours biodiversity, prevents fires and is a sustainable tool for vegetation control of energy infrastructures. The Red Eléctrica and Enagás projects in León are also an excellent example of cooperation between the energy sector, a company that provides services to the agricultural sector and a group of farmers who put their knowledge and their livestock at the service of society and the planet”, says Ramiro Palacios, from Agrovidar.

“Red Eléctrica was already a pioneer in Europe in the grazing of transmission grids. We started in La Rioja, continued in Castilla y León and Galicia and will continue to expand this practice, which has such a positive impact on rural areas. This is the commitment to sustainability of our parent company, Redeia: to generate value in the territory and contribute to solving its needs”, adds Redeia’s Sustainability Director, Antonio Calvo Roy.

In the words of José Miguel Tudela, Director of Sustainability and Climate Action at Enagás, “the Folledo extensive livestock project is an innovative initiative within Enagás’ global sustainability strategy, with a strong commitment to the development of local communities and the improvement of biodiversity. Thanks to this project, we are making a further contribution to sustainable development in rural areas, enabling us to make further progress towards our goal of a net positive impact on nature by 2050.

The Grazing on the Grids Conference was organised by Red Eléctrica, Enagás Agrovidar, the Global Nature Foundation and the Uned campus in Ponferrada, in collaboration with the Cistierna Town Council, the León Mountain Livestock Association and the León Provincial Council.

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