



19th EGF Symposium Alghero, Sardinia (Italy) 7-10 May 2017

'Grassland resources for extensive farming systems in marginal lands: major drivers and future scenarios'

The Institute for Animal Production System in Mediterranean Environment (ISPAAM) – Department of Biology, Agriculture and Food Sciences (DiSBA), of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) organizes the 19th Symposium of the European Grassland Federation.



Why in Sardinia?

Approximately 50% of the Sardinia Island's surface is covered with permanent and temporary pastures and grasslands represent 85% of the Utilized Agricultural Area. Moreover, natural and semi-natural grasslands whether herbaceous, shrubby or wooded in many Sardinian areas are of remarkable environmental interest. Sardinia is considered a hotspot for plant diversity in the Mediterranean region and its flora includes 2400 taxa, of which 11% are endemics and 5% are exclusive of the island.

Grasslands are the main fodder source for almost all the extensive Sardinian livestock farming systems. Sardinia is the main national producer of sheep milk, suckling lamb meat and goat milk, holding 65, 17 and 46% of the national market share, respectively. Sheep milk is almost totally processed into cheese, mainly in dairies owned by a number of private bodies or cooperatives. The PDO Pecorino Romano cheese represents a relevant

resource for the Sardinian economy and it is mostly sold in consolidated international commercial channels, 60% of its production reaching overseas markets.



Background and objectives of the Symposium

Extensive grassland-based farming systems play a pivotal role in less favoured areas, because they often support the local economic growth based on typical food products (e.g. cheese, meat). These systems are generally threatened by increased costs, insufficient protein feedstuff, decreased livestock prices and climate change. Extensive farming systems integrating grasslands and other forage resources offer a really good perspective for satisfying the general expectations on agriculture for an increased food and feed quality and for reducing impacts on the environment. This integration entails the development of more complex farming systems: in fact, the management of forage combined resources implies the organization in time and in space of both crops and animals. There is great scope to develop flexible farming systems in which crops (cereals, annual forage crops) and legume-based pastures are balanced in order to lower production costs, maintain adequate output levels and decrease environmental impacts. Nonetheless, there are high research needs on the complex interactions between livestock, grasslands and environment under rain fed conditions. Scientific advances on how to improve sustainability of extensive grassland-based farming systems will be presented and discussed during the Symposium.



Topics

Three subthemes addressing the different aspects of the overall theme will be covered:

Session 1. Extensive animal production systems and product quality

Key aspects are the design of innovative extensive farming systems and the preservation of the traditional low-input systems, based on the utilization of diversified natural forage resources, including the valorization of products (i.e. organic farming systems, quality of products, PDO, etc.).

Session 2. Sustainable grassland management in high nature value areas

In constrained environment, the sustainable use of forage resources by livestock has to combine production and conservation within high natural values (HNV) areas. This subtheme focusses on methods aimed at improving the efficiency of extensive farming systems under a climate change scenario. Yet, the aspects related to the improvement of

persistence and resilience by means of a suitable management of permanent grasslands will be covered.

Session 3. Alternative and multiple-uses of grassland resources

The main function of managed grasslands is the production of forage for ruminants but grasslands also support the commodity production and several environmental, economic and social functions beyond the farm context. These externalities include the maintenance of biodiversity and landscape, soil, air and water quality, recreation, rural employment and social benefits. This subtheme will cover the potential uses of grasslands in relation to their performances in all the possible alternative functions.

Provisional programme

The sessions will be introduced by two key-notes, followed by short oral presentations selected by the Scientific Committee. Posters of each session will be summarized by the chairpersons and will then be the basis for a general discussion.

Prior to the Symposium, on the Sunday 7th May, we will create the opportunity for working groups to offer **workshops** and a welcome drink will take place.



Mid-Symposium tour

On Tuesday 9th May, a half-day technical tour will be organized and at the end a social ethnic dinner will be held on farm.

Post-Symposium tour

Following the Symposium, an optional post-conference tour will be organized (conditioned to the number of people who wish to participate). The tour will start immediately after the conference on Wednesday 10th May 13:00 h and will end on Friday 12th early afternoon.

Detailed information about tours will be available from next September.

A programme for **accompanying persons** is also planned.

Venue

The meeting will be held on 8th – 10th May 2017 in the Science and Technology Park of Porto Conte Ricerche, 20 km from Alghero (Italy) in the North-West coast of Sardinia Island.

(<http://www.portocontericerche.it/>)



Language

The official language of the Meeting will be English.

Submission of papers and deadlines

The deadline for submitted abstracts is **30 September 2016**. The submission of abstracts will be through OASES platform, active from 1st September. The text should not exceed 200 words.

The deadline for submitted full papers is **15 December 2016**. The length of plenary papers is restricted to a maximum of 10 A4 size pages including tables, figures and reference list. The length of offered papers is 3 A4.

Registration fees

Delegate, normal rate, until 31-01-2017:	450 Euro
Delegate, higher rate, from 01-02-2017:	550 Euro
Associate delegate:	400 Euro
Post-conference tour, single room:	450 Euro
Post-conference tour, double room:	400 Euro

The delegate fee includes attendance to the Symposium, three lunches, refreshments, welcome drink, welcome reception, social dinner, mid-conference tour, the volume *Grassland Science in Europe*.

The associate delegate fee includes three lunches, welcome drink, welcome reception, social dinner, mid-conference tour and a programme for associate delegates.

Accommodation

Participants will be accommodated at Alghero Hotels, 20 km to the Meeting venue. A Symposium bus shuttle will link the Center of Alghero town with the Symposium venue for the beginning and the ending of the daily work sessions. The second circular will include details of hotel reservation and payment. Also, please check the web site time by time for information.

Grants

A limited number of grants will be available to support young European researchers attending the EGF Symposium in Alghero.

Contact

For the scientific programme, please use this email address: egf2017@ispaam.cnr.it
Questions on accommodation, travels, tours may be sent to info@egf2017.org