

REPORT OF THE CROSS-VISIT TO FRANCE BETWEEN 3/10 AND 5/10 2018

Greek Team:

- Serafeim K Felekis: President of the Management Authority National Park of Tzoumerka, Agrafa and Meteora
- Dimitrios Fragkopoulou: Municipality of Mouzaki, Pindos Network (NGO Association of mountainous municipalities of LA)
- Zoe Karra: Goat Breeder ,a semi-extensive farm of 1200 goats within the LA

**Along the French delegation (host), the Spanish team was also present during the visit.*

1. Introduction

The Greek delegation HNV Link team decided the cross visit in LA Causses and Cevennes, in France, due to the innovative schemes that have been adopted regarding pastoralism within a protected area such as the NP of Causses and Cevennes. More specifically the choice was done for the following two reasons

- a) The approach adopted in the Intercommunal Pastoral Pact among the many local stakeholders, decision makers and local breeders
- b) The actions taken regarding biodiversity preservation and pastoralism within a protected area.

Certain methods have been applied as a pilot in many areas from the Laboratory of Rural Space- University of Thessaly, the research team which consists the HNV Link –LA Greek team in the learning area the last twenty years, concerning the programming of pastor lands by applying innovative technologies. These methods have been used as a decision making tool by the breeders, the local government and the regional authorities.

Additionally, the Laboratory of Rural Space has commenced a formal cooperation, within the HNV Link LA program with the Management Authority of the Tzoumerka, Agrafa and Meteora National Park, since the whole of the learning area is within its borders and a protected area consisting of the parts of the following Natura2000 areas

GR1440002 Kerketio Mt- Koziakas

GR1440005 Antichasia Mt – Meteora

GR2110006 Acheloos Valley and Valtos Mt

GR21310013 Athamanika Mt

GR1410001 Tavropos Lake (Plastera Lake)

GR1440001 Aspropotamos area

Therefore, it was decided that a representative of the Management's authority National Park, should follow the delegation in order to witness action and plans done by the Causses and Cevennes National Park. Besides, both of these National Parks, are members of the



European Federation of protected areas - Europarc and both chartered as sustainable tourism destinations.

Within the above context, the greek team expects to witness the mechanics of the innovative approaches adopted in the French learning area, to learn from breeders and transfer knowledge and good practices of agro-tourism approaches in local farms. The questions that were set, prior to the cross visit, were the following:

-Can the Pact Pastoral Intercommunal be adopted with certain changes to the Greek learning area?

- At what extent the biodiversity management of a protected area can be implemented by local breeders and at which extent to their benefit?

- At what level the added value of the local products of breeders (milk, cheese and meat) can be gained by the producers and how this is happening in France?

Regarding the latter, since the farmer of the Greek delegation is regarded as a dynamic and innovative, will have the opportunity to transfer knowledge of agro –tourism farms, as it will be witnessed in the French learning area the management of pastor lands and of course the way that local products can gain the most of the value. Therefore, the Greek team expects to gain knowledge and transfer it to the Greek LA concerning:

- a) Pastor land management and the mechanics of the decision making process
- b) Activities of farmers to enhance their product value and generally enhance their income

2. Visit in Causses and Cevennes learning area

2.1. First Day in the Gard department (4/10/2018)

A late arrival the previous day (3/10/2018), gave the opportunity to the Greek delegation to meet with the Spanish team, the French –host team and representatives of local breeder association. The topics of the new CAP were covered and what could be done for particular areas such as the ones in the HNV Link, least advantageous, mountainous, protected areas of natural importance (high nature value areas).

2.1.1 Abattoir of Vigan

The very first visit, concerned the old municipal abattoir of Vigan, firstly established in 1983 as a small unit to cover needs of local butchers. Due to the decline of local butcher shops the last years, this has led the facility to close, along with hygiene problems as aroused by the public opinion.

The local farmers, initially six (6) in number were trained in order to work it under a cooperative scheme and now it has around forty (40) farmers that cooperate in order to work it and cover the needs of their customers in meat. During the visit, in October of 2018, it had a five (5) month operation. It usually operates once a week and the cost that each operator/farmer pays is per animal. It seems that it covers the expenses along the rent paid to the initial owner, the local municipal authority. It was presented a holistic, innovative



cooperative scheme from the local breeders in order to preserve a facility, operate it under a small cost and cover their needs in the vicinity of their farms rather than transporting the animals further away.



Fig. 1 Presentation of the Vigan Abattoir by local breeder

2.1.2 Presentation of the farming systems in the Causse and Cevennes learning area and the Unesco agro-pastoral cultural landscape

The next visit in the offices of the National Park in Vigan, bureau of Mont Aigoual, was to present the farming systems of the French area along with the actions made by the authority regarding the Unesco agro pastoral cultural landscape.

It was interesting to witness for the Greek delegation the similarity of the farming systems, throughout time and the different way that landscape was transformed due to flock breeding in the area. Although, no similar work is done for the Greek learning area at this extent, the Laboratory of Rural space has worked prior on the old transhumant roads that flocks were moved in summer within the learning area of western Thessaly. Additionally, since in the greater region of the Greek Learning area, the vast majority of Greek sheep and goat breeding is done, it would be beneficiary to exploit the cultural aspects of landscape transformation by pastor lands.

Of course, it has been presented that this process, which started in the mid –seventies ad concluded in the inscription in 2011 , was supported by national and regional authorities with continuous amended strategies and investments by them, something that needs a strategic planning for the Greek side, engagement in the long run and engagement of vast resources.

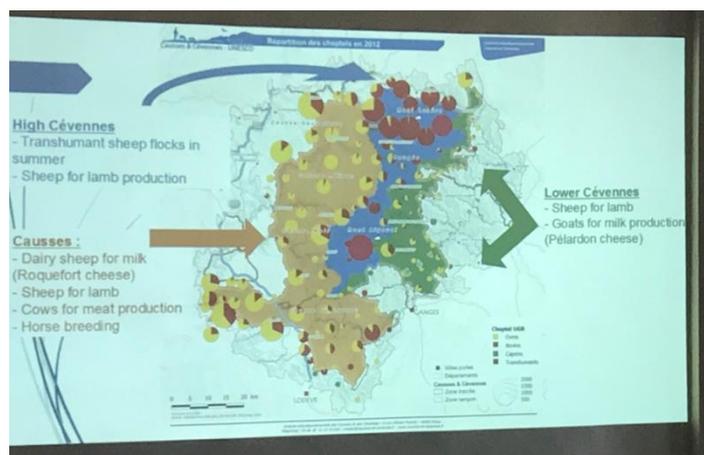


Fig. 2 Presentation of the farming systems in the National Park's Information Center

2.1.3 Visit to the farm of Mrs Calvet- Bredoire

The most anticipated visit, to a proper farm within the French LA, was accepted with great enthusiasm from the Greek team. The local farmer, Mrs Karra, was able to see a small sized farm of around 80 goats and the way that within its premises the local cheese pelardon des Cevennes is been produced.

The need for pastor lands, was also discussed by the farmer and the way that the work with local authorities, the Park and the forestry administration in order to open recently closed areas in the vicinity of the farm. With great interest we were presented that the locally produced cheese succeeds in getting high prices and their production is sold directly to the local market. It was discussed that the hygiene and building laws are not so strict, when it comes to small sized units, as the ones operated within farms, in comparison with the problematic laws that exist in Greece.

At the end of the farm visit, we were driven in pastor lands in the vicinity where it was presented the way that recently closed areas are opened up by controlled fires in the winter. Although, no further study has been done, we were assured that these lands, that are old pastor ones, are preferred a lot by the flock. Of importance is also, the program done, by exploiting these areas for certain years, usually four.



Fig. 3a In farm production of local pelardon des Cevennes cheese



Fig. 3b Visit and presentation of the farm of Mrs Calvet- Bevoire (left) newly opened pastor lands in the vicinity of the farm (right)

On the pastor land acquisition for the flock breeding was given by the Greek local farmer great importance. It was detected that this has not only to do with minimizing the cost but also getting in the first hand qualitative milk for the cheese production. Although, a problem in altering the Greek legislation in that does not exist and the technologies are there, specially by the work done by the laboratory of Rural space in detecting old pastor lands and specially areas of pastor richness, it needs the cooperation among many authorities and bodies in order for this to happen in the Greek LA and the country in general, as note by the Greek delegation.

2.1.4 Presentation of the Intercommunal Pastoral Pact in the National Park's Information Center Serrereyde Pass - Peasant shop presentation by lcal producers

The final visit concerned the information center of the National Park in the Serrereyde pass, where the Intercommunal Pastoral Pact was presented. Prior to the presentation, a local breeder gave short greeting to both of the delegations, Greek and Spanish, and introduced the approach of the local stakeholders towards farming in the area.

The throughout presentation demystified all the mechanics and the process for such a difficult decision to be made for the area. The similarity of problems, faced prior to the pact by local producers, can be also detected in the Greek learning area. Closed up by vegetation old pastor lands, risks of wildfire, loss of biodiversity but also fragmented land that finally leads to rural decline and difficulty in welcoming new farmers. The articles of the pact concern the pastoral servitude and priority, the recovery, of course of pastor lands, the maintenance of transhumance routes and finally the pastoral transmission and installation.

Great importance, was given during the presentation, as anticipated in the process of constructing and making all the parties to agree upon the pact. As expected, since it is regarded a difficult task, it too almost 4 years with meetings with stakeholders, i.e. local government, public, authorities and breeders' association in order to deliver such an outcome. Upon these meetings, step by step outcomes were agreed and expectations were delivered at a latter stage. Of course the whole process, did not stop in 2015, when the final draft of the pact was agreed, but was closely monitored upon its implementation.

The establishment of a dedicated committee towards that, ensured that certain goals would be achieved. Financial resources, towards that end, were able to get by the EU and by national budget. Additionally, local government was informed for the available land tools, the local spatial planning plans were assisted in order to detect and maintain possible future areas and, most importantly, the mobility of the herds via the maintained routes was achieved.

For all the above to be achieved, the necessity of 'pastoral diagnosis' was presented. In order for the first seven (7) communities to participate in the pact, it was necessary to apply tools and new technologies in order to present to the local decision makers the need for adoption, of such a promising project. In cases, due to the fragmentation of land, that some owners did not want to participate, then they had to fence their property. Therefore the priority for breeders was not only given via the local spatial plans but also with guides and commitments towards that end.



Fig. 4a Presentation of the Intercommunal Pastoral Pact in the Information Center at the Serrereyde pass

Of importance, in achieving sound pastor land management and welcoming new farmers was the animation of the whole projects. Inhabitants, foresters even hunters were approached, in order to cultivate among them awareness on pastoralism. The whole project approach was presented to the other territories as well. Since, the particular presentation, was regarded, prior to the visit as an excellent effort, the whole of the Greek delegation was happy to receive the outmost information, regarding the process of setting up and implementing the pact.

Due to the common socio-economical and geographical characteristics, between the French and the Greek learning areas, it was understood clearly that the engagement in the beginning of many parties is important. This is the way, that now, seventeen (17) municipalities have signed the pact and participate to it. It concerns the pastor land of almost sixty (60) breeders with a long term planning of welcoming more, mainly by leaving

“free” in-between areas. The Greek HNV Link team of the laboratory of Rural Space has applied pilot projects for pastoral management but never in such a scale and never with the engagement up to that degree by local government. The lack of spatial planning, in the Greek rural areas, could also be regarded as a disadvantage in achieving such a coherent result, as in the French case.

On the vicinity of the National Park’s information center, the local producers maintain a peasant shop with goods produced by them. Additionally in the building the Tourism Center maintains an office, as the cooperative agreement indicates in the sign at the entrance. The local products such as cheese, onions, potatoes, honey, chestnuts etc. can be bought by tourists after they receive information on the protected area as a whole, adding value to the final product of eco- tourism.



Fig. 4b Agreement of ecotourism at the entrance of the park’s information center (left) and the peasant shop (right)

2.2 Second day visit to the Lozere department (5/10/2018)

After the overnight stay of both delegations, Greek and Spanish, accompanied by the host French team, in L’Esperou the next day involved the presentation on site of the pastoral groupment of Massevaques, the visit to the transformation workshop in Florac and the presentation of the Agrilocal innovation.

2.2.1 Massevaques pastoral groupment presentation

The visit to the pastor park operated by the local breeders’ group, presented on site the innovations applied in the French area. During the presentation in the pastor park, representatives of Copage association, National Park, Unesco management authority, Chamber of Agriculture along with the local pastoral groupment were present.

It was clearly presented how the fifteen (15) groupments present in the area work among themselves. Firstly, Copage association organizes the meetings between the chamber of agriculture, land owners, the national park and coordinates the local breeders for the pastor land management. Additionally, as an association is searching for funding from the Eu, Region or municipalities. All the groups have around 12.000 animals and cover an area of approximately 5.000ha, that means that each group would occupy a pastor land of approx. 400ha and have around 1.200 animals.

Quite often they are called to solved interior issues of a group regarding the programming of of entering a new area, something that changed with 1972 Pastor Law, since until then as done only by one responsible breeder by each group. Also, twice a year a general assembly is organized among the groups of Lozere, before and after the summer. In these assembly meetings the opening of new pastor areas is being discussed and spatial- time programming of entering in new pastor lands is agreed.



Fig. 5a Presentation of the Massevaques groupment operation

On the other hand the short presentation done by the present local breeders, was able to detect the organization of such a group. The particular groupment has six members, operates in a form of any administrative body with its president and secretary. Their collective approach, apart from the programming of pastor lands includes the collective use of a vet doctors and other scientific consultation they may receive for the pastor lands. The good cooperation with the National Park's Management authority was also pointed out. Certain help, they get on tackling problems created by the wolf by electro-fencing their areas. Most importantly, as witnessed during the visit, was the building of the house by the Park and the lease to the particular groupment. It was also, pointed out that some producers have certified their products, since there are available two different types of certification for veal and two for lamb meat.

On the presentation followed by the National Park, it was given to the delegation the idea that pastoralism was in the central idea of the park's creation. The management authority buys pastor lands that leases to the local breeders, builds hoods, as mentioned before and generally supports the biodiversity but also local communities. Regarding the leasing of the particular facility it is in the price of 500€/annually. Generally, it was pointed out the close

relation and cooperation of breeders and the authority of the protected area. Besides, the national park employs around 70 people, some of whom are solely dedicated in pastor land management, biodiversity of these lands and assistance to local breeding groups.

On the final short presentation done by the federation of Pastoralist Groupings, their aim was presented which has to do with maintaining the relations with other stakeholders, tackling depredation, maintaining open pastor lands and searching sources of funding. Breeders come to pay a small membership but also each group pays independently a small fee. Norms are set about grazing and the wolf control risk is cooperatively dealt. On the wolf risk, legislation provides protection to local herds and pays any animal loss if a wolf is present in the area for over three (3) years.



Fig. 5b The delegation in front of the hood built by the National Park, close view and interior.

The mechanics of the coherent cooperation of many bodies was clear in this visit. Additionally, the organization of breeders in many bodies with sound duties has a long history in the French reality for many decades. The inclusion, within the park's goals and scope, of maintaining the pastoralisation in the area, is a reality one should not ignore. Overlapping problems and difficulties created by the many land owners, a reality also found in the Greek area and something typical for the Mediterranean south can be overpassed by leasing park's areas to the local breeders.

Collectively tackling these difficulties by organizing in groups is also an innovation, that has its roots also in the last many decades. The Greek delegation could transfer these knowledge and adopt it in a similar scale, perhaps at the level of community/village, regarding the groupment of breeders. Other than that, federation of groupments and the agricultural chamber are absent in the Greek reality. More specifically, any breeder association, which is newly established acts as an informal union or group with no further enhancement to its role, concerning the pastor land management at any spatial level.

Here it was clear that apart from the collective approach to land management, similar approach was given to certifying their products and even tackling the difficulties that come with the pastor land management. Of importance was also the role of the National Park, serving a totally different aim than the one in the Greek LA. It could be noted that biodiversity management is done here mainly, but not solely, for the local breeders. Mr Felekis, president of the Greek National Park of Tzoumerka, agreed with the representative of the French National Park to further enhance their cooperation for knowledge and good practices sharing

2.2.2 CFPPA Transformation Workshop – Agrilocal initiative

The second visit was done in the transformation workshop in Florac where its facilities were presented along with the operation and the Agrilocal initiative. Concerning the CFPPA workshop it serves a dual role. Apart from the renting of the workshop rooms for transforming meat and agricultural goods it also serves a center for job training. Training is very important as it has a great demand, as noted by the workshop director.

Firstly established as a small unit of 70 sq.m. in 1999, it now covers an area of 700 sq.m. Operation is equally divided between job training and production. Almost 2000 breeders lease its premises for cutting their animals by paying around 80€/day. It has also areas for juice production by fruits, pre-cooked meals and vase wrapping. Totally, there are two department concerning meat transformation, two department for milk bottling and two department for fruits and agricultural products.



Fig. 6a Visit to the transformation workshop
(up) storing of final produced goods (right)



The costs cover its operation and the personell of three, including its director. An annual investment of around 10.000€ is necessary for the mechanical equipment. If asked they also provide the service of qualitative control but generally every producer that leases its premises is responsible for the quality of the transformed product. Apart from the necessary hygiene purposes that this facility provides to its users, i.e. the local producers, it also provides an easy and adequate way of transforming their products at an economic level. Although, not presented at the moment, the training is also important, as it offers a viable and good service to local communities and their people.

Question by the Greek delegation had to do with the viability of such an investment, mainly by the representative of the Municipality of Mouzaki, Mr Fragkopoulos and how difficult it could be for a local government to operate it. The idea, that was received is that this should focus on certain products, for instance wine was not bottled in the particular workshop, and any enhancement should be done step by step.

Regarding the Agrilocal initiative, which covers thirty five (35) of France’s preferctures, it counts five (5) years of life. It comes as a necessity in the continuous rise of demand for agricultural nutritive products but also bakery ones and generally locally produced food. Through its e-platform it gives information on local producers, recipes and even restaurants. Through its mission is clear the support they give to local economy and traditional cuisine.



Fig. 6b presentation of the Agrilocal Initiative

At the end of the presentation, Mr Fragkopoulos, mentioned an idea that are thinking to work in the Municipality of Mouzaki, regarding building an e-platform for selling agricultural products such as oil and fruits for covering needs of schools or army camps.

2.2.3 Visit to the tourist diversified Farm in Lasalle-Prunet

The final visit of the day, that was continued the following morning as well for the Greek delegation was done in the Farm in Lasalle – Prunet. An old farm that tourist may visit, stay overnight, buy local products and see the process of cheese production from milking up to proper transforming it to the local pelardon.

The unit is viable with less than seventy (70) goats due to the diversification of the service offered and the high value of the product. Although no proper presentation was done, the Greek team along with the Spanish one, were able to wander in the premises, witness the service offered and understand how important this could be for the Greek reality. At a well preserved old building, it was obvious that in some cases this could be the solution to the continuous deprived agricultural income. Tourists, apart from enjoying a good environment and high services in a protected area, see the production of the local cheese through specifically designed windows, the milking of the goats and generally get a real ‘farm experience’.

It was accepted as a visit with great joy and interest, since Mrs Karra, the Greek breeder participated in milking and spend quite a time in the cheese production facility.

3. Conclusions

The cross- visit is regarded successful, as the Greek delegation had the opportunity to witness the good practices done in the French learning area. The initial questions set by the HNV Link team and the delegation members were answered and, additionally, new ideas were given.

Of importance is the mechanics of setting the intercommunal pastoral pact, among its many stakeholders and the way pastor land management is adopted in Causses and Cevennes. Specially since this is done in a national park area, like the Greek learning area. The practices of the French Park’s management authority are also worth commenting and worth adopting, after further communication between the two parties. It was also, beneficiary for the Greek breeder to witness practices, not necessarily in the everyday process of work, but as ideas for in farm cheese production and making a farm open for tourists and the public.

Highly is expected to be the knowledge transferred to the representative of the Municipality, as the role of local government in the French area is also very important. A quite memorable visit for the Greek team for the well- organized timetable by the French host. Regards and congratulations to the host members for making this happen.

