

***Report on the capacity building visit on common
land issues from the UK and Ireland to Spain May
16th – 20th April 2010***

***Viv Lewis and the study team
June 2010***



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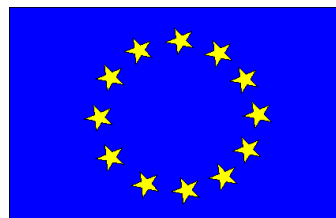
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1. Introduction

This report documents a capacity building/learning visit to northern Spain by farmers from Cumbria and Dartmoor accompanied by people working on common land issues from within the UK. A major purpose of the visit was to promote and foster a sense of community amongst commoners, widely dispersed and yet facing similar challenges, so that we can take on our responsibility as a community for advocacy and care of a unique and precious approach to landscape and farming¹. For details of the group see Appendix 1 (unfortunately our colleague from Ireland was unable to join due to flight cancellations caused by volcanic ash eruptions). Appendix 2 gives details of the visit programme.

¹ This is the purpose of the Foundation for Common Land see <http://common-threads.org.uk/pdf/Commoners%20ft%20Final.pdf>

The team



This report sets out a brief introduction to Common Land in Spain. It provides background to the three topics of interest we studied, namely a regional government programme in Castilla y León working with livestock farmers using traditional extensive systems to reduce forest fire outbreaks; research into reducing weed infestation of high mountain pastures by a regional agricultural research institute in Cantabria; and a farmer-led campaign in Asturias for European legalisation that understands and takes into account the practices of extensive livestock rearing. It then describes what we saw on the visit and provides some conclusions and lessons learnt.

2. Background

2.1. Common Land in Spain

Spain has considerably more common land than the UK and we were told that Spain has more common land than any other country in Europe. According to a recent source² Spain has more than 7.6 million hectares belonging to local communities and more than 1 million

² See INÄ AKI IRIARTE-GONÄ, 'Common Lands in Spain, 1880 - 1995: Persistence, Change and Adaptation' Rural History (2002) 13, 1, p 19-37, Cambridge University Press

hectares in the ownership of the state. Common land in Spain represents 17% on total land area. In comparison, in the UK there are around 428,000 hectares of common land in England (3% of total land area) , circa 204,000 hectares in Wales (9% of total land area), about 594,000 hectares in Scotland (7.5% of total land area) and 36,000 hectares in Northern Ireland (3% of total land area), totaling 1.262 million hectares³.

Common land has persisted in Spain for many reasons, two important ones are, first the commons are 'public' lands and this to some extent served as a break on massive privatization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Second, in the late twentieth century environmental conservation factors combined with a new decentralised administrative-political system in the shape of regional governments have spurred on a policy of common land acquisition, mainly in the heavily depopulated upland areas of Spain.

2.2. Fire prevention: Plan 42 in Castilla y León

The autonomous community⁴ of Castilla y León is not only the largest region of Spain, but the largest region of all the European Union. Most of the terrain of Castilla y León consists of a large portion of Spain's Meseta⁵ Central, surrounded by mountainous regions, including the mountain range of the Cordillera *Cantabrica* to the north which we visited.

Large forest fires are becoming more frequent in this area (and all over Spain) due to climatic factors, social factors including depopulation of rural areas and reduction in numbers of grazing livestock, and economic conditions. These fires are one of the most important causes of environmental alteration and land degradation because of the post-fire exposure of bare soil to rainfall.

Map showing location of Castilla y León



³ See 'Potential Observatory Services and RDP Cooperation: Feasibility Study' May 2010, Report produced for the Foundation for Common Land

⁴ There are 17 autonomous communities in Spain. They are the first level political division with rights to self-government. They have wide legislative and executive autonomy, with their own parliament and regional governments. Spain has become "an extraordinarily decentralised country", with the central government accounting for just 18% of public spending; the regional governments 38%, the local councils 13% and the social-security system the rest

⁵ The Meseta are the high plains of central Spain

Given that forest fires rank high on the list of environmental problems in Castilla y León, the Environment Ministry and Forestry Administration of the autonomous government initiated Plan 42 in 2003⁶ with the main objective to reduce forest fires. Research and investigation had shown that 90% of these fires were started by human agency so Plan 42 recruited advisers to work in the worst affected areas, the 154 municipalities⁷ that suffered 50% of all the fires. Plan 42 takes a multi-disciplinary approach and works with all sections of the community, but much of the training, information and communication activity has been aimed at extensive livestock farmers who for generations used fire in traditional pasture management systems on common land to encourage pasture regeneration and control scrub encroachment. In recent times cattle numbers have declined due to low profitability of the sector and farmers leaving the industry. With fewer cattle grazing the common pastures in the mountains, scrub encroachment has rapidly increased and the remaining livestock farmers continue to use fire as the primary form of scrub clearance. However with increased woody matter as a result of under grazing these fires are now much harder to control.

Plan 42 has, and is, promoting cultural change in pasture management systems on common land. Scrub burning has been banned since 2008 and replaced by mechanical scrub clearance. It is also supporting pasture improvement (lime and fertilizers), division of common land and activities to add value to the products from the area, including promoting collaboration between farmers, developing/ increasing market share of local products such as horse meat and supporting the set-up of cooperative ventures. Much of the work of Plan 42 is paid for through agri-environment measures of the CAP and local community funds administered by the municipalities.

2.3. Demand-led research into reducing pasture weed infestation and pasture improvement by CIFA (Centre for agricultural research and training) Cantabria⁸.

The agricultural use of common land in the high areas of the Cordillera Cantabrica has changed considerably over the last half century or so. Past communal land management systems have given way to more individual systems as fewer farmers manage the land. Farmers would keep cattle, sheep, goats and horses on the common land. Nowadays cattle dominate and horse numbers are increasing as they need very little management and labour input, while sheep have declined due to a lack of shepherds and forestry policies discouraged the keeping of goats. Farmers have shifted from a subsistence economy to a market oriented one, which nowadays is heavily dependent on subsidies (making up over 40% of income). These changes in farming practices coupled with more frequent drier summers have affected pasture species. One problem is the invasion of *Euphorbia polygalifolia*, locally known as *lecherina* in many of the high mountain communal pastures. It reduces biodiversity and productivity as cattle and horses will not eat it. Four municipalities and local farmers went to CIFA and asked if they could find ways to control the spread of *lecherina*.

⁶ See 'Resumen: El Plan 42: Un programa integral para la prevención de incendios forestales' <http://www.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/MedioAmbiente/es/Plantilla100/1132926921318/ / />

⁷ The Municipalities are the basic level of Spanish local government, they enjoy a large degree of autonomy over their local affairs and we encountered an additional second level sub division known as mancomunidad

⁸ See www.cifacantabria.org

Lecherina dominated pasture



CIFA have conducted experiments using distinct control methods (herbicides, brush cutting, lime, fertiliser and different types of grazing). They have found that the most effective control of *lecherina* is regular grazing by sheep. The challenge is how to apply these results over a wider area as sheep numbers have declined and the traditional system of transhumance - bringing sheep from Extremadura (the region bordering with Portugal) to summer graze these common pastures - is virtually extinct. A more local system of moving sheep from the meseta to the mountain pastures for the summer months is still intact, but there are few shepherds carrying out this practice

2.4. Campaign for specific European legislation for extensive livestock rearing⁹

We met with Xuan Valladares a farmer with native cattle breeds kept in a traditional extensive transhumance system. He is actively campaigning for the EU to develop legislation specifically for extensive livestock systems that take into account seasonal transhumance activities. Currently he is in dispute with the autonomous community of Asturias over fines for non-compliance with animal health inspections. His cattle were away up the mountain pastures when the authorities wanted to make the inspection and he refused to bring them down as this can take up to 2 days.

He believes that tradition extensive livestock systems are important for 14 reasons:

- They produce high quality food

⁹ See <http://foroasturianorural.blogspot.com/>

- They are able to use and maintain ecosystems of high environmental importance
- They make use of land of low productivity that has little alternative use
- They conserve the vegetative cover of the poorest soils and increase organic matter
- They contribute to climate change mitigation
- They control scrub invasion and prevent forest fires
- They maintain rural populations
- They generate jobs
- They maintain landscape and biodiversity through grazing
- They deliver landscapes important for tourism
- They sustain local traditional livestock breeds in Europe
- They are an economically sustainable activity
- They are good for animal welfare
- They deliver important cultural heritage

3. Field visits

3.1. Plan 42 activities

3.1.1. Introduction

Accompanied by technicians working for Plan 42 we met with livestock farmers, local officials and project officers in four rural municipalities working with Plan 42. In all four areas the key issues were:

Threat of abandonment of common land due to insufficient income from traditional extensive grazing systems

- Loss of traditional grazing systems, local breeds of livestock and cultural heritage
- Increasing scrub and weed infestation of common lands
- Fewer young people prepared to continue traditional extensive livestock farming on common land
- Increasing incidents of fires due increase in combustible woody material on common land

We were shown examples of the ways Plan 42 are tackling these issues, with the type of activity varying according to local circumstances and interests of the participants. The initiatives we saw were:

- Dividing up common land into sections to aid scrub control and pasture improvement methods through cutting and adding lime and fertilizer
- Strengthening links between farmers and the local municipalities, providing further support and local recognition of their role.
- Supporting short distance transhumance of sheep with improved infrastructure for shepherds such as improvements to tracks, water, sheds and shepherd huts
- Employing a project officer to market /promote human consumption of horse meat
- Supporting development of a cooperative of 9 livestock farmers to supply and manage a butchers shop

3.1.2. Brief description of the extensive livestock farming systems

Before reporting on the initiatives it is important to describe the ways the farmers we met manage their livestock, their resources and constraints, the level EU payments for livestock and

compliance with EU regulations. In general these farmers own smallish extensions of land near to their farmstead and have rights to rent public common grazing. Suckler cows and calves are the main commercial enterprise with farmers often keeping a mixture of pure bred imported breeds (mainly limousin), cross bred cattle and the local breed Tudanca. Average herd size is 75 suckler cows and we were told that this allows farmers to make a living of sorts, but the economic return is low. Ideally the cows calve once a year to take advantage of grassland growth. The cows and calves will stay close to the farmstead and many farmers separate the cows from their calves during the day, with the calves staying inside (we saw examples of calves tied up in byres or loose housed in sheds) and offered concentrates. In the UK sucker cows are not separated from their calves until weaning. The cattle we saw were of good conformation. Calves are sold to local dealers, or if they have the facilities finished at 12 -15 months.

The rest of the cattle (mainly heifers and dry cows) and horses from different farms graze together on the common land from late spring (April /May) to mid autumn (October/November) depending on the weather with early and late snowfalls being the main influence on the length of the grazing season. They move up the mountain, first grazing the mid valley areas in spring and also in late autumn. During the summer months (June to October) they go the high summer pastures at around 1,500 – 2,000m above sea level.

Predators such as wolves (more than 50% of all the wolves in Spain are found in Northern Castilla y León), vultures and eagles can present a serious problem, but are more dangerous to sheep. We were told that implementing individual herd improvements in a system where cattle are owned by different people and managed collectively can be a problem. The farmers resolve this issue, to some extent, by keeping the breeding cattle separate on land they own until they are in-calf. This can work if the farmer has sufficient privately owned land. However, we did not have time to probe in detail and gain a real understanding of these issues.

Tudanca Cattle



Horse numbers are increasing as they are less labour intensive than cattle and can be left out on the common land all year round. Most are the native Hispano Breton breed with good conformation and carcass weights of 300kgs.

Sheep are not traditionally kept by the farmers in this area but the high mountain pastures are grazed by Merino sheep driven on foot from the plains around 50 km away. The shepherds will stay with their sheep and live in mountain huts for three months of the year (June - August). These shepherds live in the meseta but often have close family ties in villages in the Cordillera Cantabrica and graze their flocks on the common land associated with their village. This short distance transhumance has replaced the traditional long distance transhumance where shepherds from Extremadura moved their sheep to this area. The average flock size is 300 and the ewes will lamb on average 3 times in two years (February and July) with a 200% lambing percentage. (The productivity per ewe is much higher than that achieved by the farmers in our group who are constrained by a worse climate and poorer quality land). Lambs are mainly sold as light lambs at approximately 2 months or so. Like the suckler cows the lambs are separated from the ewes and kept in a corral to reduce the chance of predation by wolves and vultures. The sheep are guarded by specially bred guard dogs known as Mastin.

Farmers receive EU payments on a headage basis similar to the old UK suckler cow payment. The payment for cows is 200 Euros per head per year with an additional 100 Euros extensification payment, 130 Euros per mare (for local breeds - not necessary to be pedigree) and 12 Euros per ewe per annum.

Active graziers also receive payment from a local common fund administered by the municipality. This fund is made up of income from hunting, tree felling, mushroom picking licenses and a tax on wind turbines¹⁰, amongst others. 15% of this fund goes to support Plan 42 activities for farmers.

Like their counterparts in the UK, these farmers are complying with EU animal health and movement regulations including using boluses for electronic identification rather than electronic tags used in the UK

3.1.3. Grazing and pasture improvement interventions

In all three locations the majority of the land was in public ownership with lesser amounts of land owned by the farmers themselves. For example in Virtus there is 3,600 ha of land in public ownership, 500 ha in private ownership, 20 farms, 1,500 head of cattle and 10 ha of cropping land. In these areas agreements have been made between the municipality and graziers with the support of the Plan 42 technicians to divide and fence part of the common land into large parcels and allow individual farmers to bid for these plots for 5 years, with the opportunity to renew for another 5 years (see the blue divisions on the map Appendix 3). These farmers are paid by the common fund to cut scrub gorse, heather, bilberry and sedum¹¹ and then paid to apply a lime based fertilizer of 4 ton per hectare to encourage stock to graze after scrub

¹⁰ In the visit to Rionela by the Cantabrian border we saw 86 wind turbines on the hill skyline. The local municipality receives 2,000 Euros per year for each smaller turbine and 6,000 Euros for the large ones.

¹¹ This is usually undertaken by outside contractors with large machinery, as the local farmers don't have the right equipment. One farmer complained that this money goes straight out of the local economy.

clearance. We saw examples of reclaimed pasture with significantly increased grassland productivity. From this short visit it appears that partial individualisation of the common land coupled with adequate payments for pasture improvement is working. There is less combustible material, thus reducing the fire risk and conflict/ competition among farmers for land did not appear to be an issue as livestock numbers are low and land abandonment is a greater problem. Moreover, with more control over pasture management and productive pasture species the profitability of their livestock enterprises is likely to increase. It remains to be seen whether this initial capital investment in scrub clearing will be maintained by cattle grazing. Much will depend on the future economics of livestock farming.

3.1.4. Supporting short distance transhumance systems

We visited the fairly remote village of Salce which has 3,000 hectares of common land and small plots (300m²) of privately owned land. Like many villages in the area the population has declined considerably since the 1960s with waves of out-migration of former residents. Now there are only 4 farmers left and the land is under-grazed with scrub encroachment and increased risk of fires. The Plan 42 technicians are working with the local farmers using agri-environmental measures for scrub clearance and maintenance of extensive grazing systems of cattle and horses (as above). But crucially these farmers do not have enough animals to control scrub growth and important areas, such as the species rich alpine pastures furthest away from the village at heights of 1,700 – 2,000m are under threat of under-grazing and scrub encroachment. Here Plan 42 is supporting/ encouraging the continuation of short-distance transhumance of flocks of sheep to graze these pastures in the summer months through capital improvements to the tracks, mountain huts and sheep handling facilities and some financial support to the shepherds.

We met two shepherds from the meseta area approximately 50 km to the south. One is continuing the transhumance system and the other has given it up as he has sufficient land/ access to land at home and does not need to bring his sheep to the mountains. The shepherd who does practice transhumance say he will continue to do so as he believes it is important to keep the tradition going and he enjoys going up to the mountain for the summer months. It takes 4 – 5 days to walk his 400 or so merino sheep to the mountain on drove roads. He will usually stay up for 7 -10 days at a time and if he can get someone to watch his sheep he will go back home for a couple of days. The sheep lamb on these pastures and the lambs fatten quickly allowing him to take advantage of the better price for summer lambs. He can get a mobile phone signal (which reduces isolation) and has asked for solar panels on the hut for lighting, TV and hot water. From his hut he can see two other huts and can meet with the other shepherds if they are about. Both the shepherds we met have sons, and both say that it is unlikely that their sons will continue in farming.

The shepherds



Clearly this system is close to the edge of disappearing and if it goes so will many valuable public goods such as local traditions, knowledge and skills, culture and heritage and biodiversity amongst others. We had mixed views among our group as to the attractiveness of the job and whether you could keep the existing shepherds, and bring young shepherds and their flock to the mountains. We came to the conclusion that current economic circumstances demand that many people have to work away from their families during the week and perhaps this is no different. Basically to keep shepherds and transhumance systems going, sheep farming will have to provide a reasonable livelihood based on a mix of income from production and support mechanisms that motivate the shepherds to continue and aid common land management.

3.1.5. Promoting the consumption of horse meat

In reality the consumption of horse meat in Spain is low and not profitable for the farmers or butchers as there are few outlets. Plan 42 is paying for a project officer to promote horse meat through informing the general public, taster sessions in bars and restaurants and recipes. On talking to the officer the work is going slowly as changing consumer habits requires a long term perspective. The project office has 1 year left on her contract which may be insufficient to make a difference.

3.1.6. Cooperative 'Carne de Vacuno de Calidad Montañas de León

As part of its multi-disciplinary approach Plan 42 is supporting the creation of direct marketing cooperatives owned by farmers to sell their produce. We visited a butchers shop in the town of Villablino owned by a cooperative of 9 livestock farmers from the surrounding area. Plan 42

started the idea based on a feasibility study. They invited local farmers to take part in the project and after many meetings a core group of 9 farmers took the initiative forward with training from Plan 42. They had to borrow 30,000 Euros and opened the butchers shop in 2009. Sales have gradually increased over time, but they are slowing down due the current economic downturn. They have created 2 jobs and slaughter 3- 4 steers (bred by the members) per week. They are planning to open another butcher's shop in the larger provincial town of León. One benefit of this system over similar projects in the UK is that the lower quality cuts can be made into traditional sausages and salami.

They suggested that the ingredients for success are:

- Start small, have a viable idea, keep it simple and grow on demand
- Offer quality meat at an affordable price, get a brand
- Get the right help and good quality training
- Ensure ownership and commitment of all members and a desire/learn to work cooperatively

3.2. CIFA research visit

We were given an excellent presentation about livestock systems in the Cordillera Cantabrica and the research programme to control the spread of *lecherina*. Unfortunately we were unable to visit the area where they conducted the trials as the road was still blocked by snow. We were taken to an area lower down to see trial plots comparing mechanical systems of gorse control with controlled burning. These trials are at an early stage.

As a group we were impressed with the practical nature of the research and the fact that the researchers were working directly with farmers to find solutions that would bring commercial as well as environmental gains. However, there were clear difficulties with the introduction of sheep into an area that is traditionally a cattle area and farmers are naturally reluctant to take on sheep as they have neither the knowledge nor the infrastructure. Also bringing in sheep from outside the area can be problematic for local farmers as the tradition has virtually died out and some of the old infrastructure has disappeared.

3.3. Xuan Valladares

We visited Xuan's farm on our last morning. He keeps local Asturiana de Montana cattle in traditional extensive system with his cows grazing on common pastures in the summer months about 4 km from the farm. The highlight of this visit was a shared understanding that our extensive livestock systems using common land are not sufficiently considered, understood or included in the design of EU regulations. Xuan told us about his campaign to ensure that future EU legislation contains adequate frameworks to cover extensive grazing systems. We agreed to flag up this issue in our Federations and Associations in England and look at ways to support his campaign.

4. Conclusions and lessons learnt/ ways forward

Despite the different climate, topography, livestock and management in the UK and the area of Spain we visited, we found common factors to indicate that active grazing of common land using extensive livestock systems is under threat. Specifically,

- The number of active graziers is in significant decline
- The economic return from common grazing is insufficient to encourage many young people to continue the practice, whether it is transhumance in Spain, or maintaining hefted flocks in the UK

As a result it is likely that the number of active extensive livestock farmers will continue to fall in both countries leading to:

- a further loss of skills and heritage that cannot be regenerated, once lost
- the capacity of common land to provide increasingly important public goods (fire prevention, semi-natural ecosystems a large diversity of flora and fauna, food, landscape and culture etc) will be undermined.

However, we did notice an importance difference in the attitude of many of the 'experts' in Spain towards farmers employing extensive livestock systems in the mountain areas. For example Plan 42 has built its programme around the premise that maintaining extensive livestock systems is crucial to reducing forest fires and maintaining the vital public goods and benefits produced by these systems. As a result relations between farmers and technicians are generally more collegial and cordial than those found in the UK. We were impressed by the way the Plan 42 technicians, the municipalities and staff from the research centre were using multi-disciplinary and participatory approaches and taking time to work with the farmers and understand the farming systems as part of the project design and delivery to meet common objectives of reducing forest fires and maintaining an active farming population. In stark contrast, our experience in the UK is that extensive livestock farmers are often inadequately consulted by the environment/conservation 'experts' when local schemes and strategies are being developed. However, the Spanish experience may give us confidence to aim for more equal partnerships in future.

While the farmers appeared to have good relations with the agencies and officers, there seemed to be less formal communication between the graziers on the commons than there is in the UK. The presence of commoners associations is strength for those managing commons in the UK. Perhaps this is something that those from Spain on any return visit might like to comment on.

One unfortunate similarity is that extensive livestock farmers in the both countries face the burden of EU regulations that are often difficult and/or expensive to implement especially with livestock on common land. Building on Xuan Valladares' example we plan to raise this issue through our local federations, the Foundation for Common Land and with European colleagues. Through this type of collaboration and sharing of experiences we are more likely to inform and influence decision makers at an early stage.

One difference that we discussed is that of land abandonment. Clearly in Spain there is a fear of abandonment of people and land and therefore the system of farming as well. This is unlikely to happen in the UK as there will always be people to buy land, even common land. The more

likely threat is abandonment of the traditional extensive livestock systems of farming and it is these that maintain the commons for both agriculture and the environment. Therefore the challenge within the UK is to make an effective case to government and agencies that the farming system and the habitat are closely intertwined and should not be separated, if they are then there is a danger that neither will be maintained in the longer term.

Finally, this visit has improved mutual understanding between farmers with common land in Cumbria and Dartmoor as we had many opportunities to discuss our respective farming systems during the trip, also between the farmers and the other members of our party. We also increased our knowledge and understanding of extensive livestock systems in northern Spain and would like to extend an invitation to the farmers and technicians to come and visit us in the UK.

Appendix 1

Brief profile of people attending study trip. Castilla y León, Cantabria y Asturias. 17-20 May 2010.

Mary Alford: I farm a Dartmoor hill farm of 850 acres in partnership with my son attached to the farm we have extensive grazing rights on the commons of Dartmoor and graze cattle sheep & ponies. I am an elected member of the Dartmoor commoners council, a Trustee of the Forest of Dartmoor (the largest ESA in the UK) and chairman of the Dartmoor Hill pony association. I am also a Devon committee member of the CLA representing them on the London committee for Agriculture & Landuse. Our farming consists of traditional hill breeds that are able to cope with the harsh weather conditions of Dartmoor doing bull beef and store heifers, fat lambs and store mule ewe lambs. No college qualifications but have learnt by mistakes!! Still trying and still learning!!!

Gwyn Jones: I am working full-time for the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism, alongside Guy Beaufoy and Concha Salguero. Our interest is in raising awareness of the ecological importance of low-intensity farming and of the policy needs of such farming. We are working in a number of countries in Europe and in Spain we have been particularly involved recently in Navarra. We are particularly concerned that the policy difficulties of farmers on common land are poorly understood by policy makers and that they will be forgotten as the CAP reforms continue. See <http://www.efncp.org/>

Viv Lewis. I have just taken over the role as part-time administrator of the Federation of Cumbria Commoners and I am also a member of a cooperative that provides support to rural community businesses (see www.secod.coop). Preceding this I worked for three international charities in some of the poorest countries of the world. I managed projects supporting food and livelihood security working with smallholder farmers. My first job was running a family dairy farm in Cumbria.

Chris Short: I am a Senior Research Fellow at the Countryside and Community Research Institute and my main research interests lie in the relationship between different land uses for agriculture, forestry, nature conservation, equine businesses and recreation. I have particular interests in the development and implementation of integrated rural development and agri-environment policy. I have considerable expertise in issues relating to collective action and shared resources, notably common land and town and village greens within England and Wales. See <http://www.ccri.ac.uk/AboutUs/Staff/short.htm>

Concha Salguero: I work for the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism delivering various projects, including two international projects on pastoralism between Spain and other EU countries (UK and Romania). I am also the EFNCP representative on two Consultative Committees of the European Commission. Before this I worked as an independent consultant for various organisations in the area of agriculture and the environment.

Dave Smith: My family and I farm about 200 hectares on the side of the Pennines above Dufton in Cumbria. We have fell rights for just over 700 sheep and keep Swaledale and Lleyen sheep as well as a herd of mainly Limousin cross suckler cows. The farm is in various agro-environmental

schemes (ELS, HLS and shortly UELS as well). We are also part of a countryside stewardship/WES agreement on the fell. I have just taken over as the Chair of the Federation of Cumbria Commoners and I have been chairman of our local commons association for a number of years so with that and my farming experience I am pretty familiar with the issues surrounding commons.

John Waldon: I am not a farmer. Following 20 years working for an ngo (RSPB) I have, over the last 7 years, worked with and for hill farmers in the SW of England. During that time I have facilitated projects that help explain the long term ambitions for the SW uplands and provided networks for hill farmers. A founder member of the South West Uplands Federation (a farmer led initiative) I now act as its secretary. Recently I produced model deeds for agri-environment agreement applications funded by the Dartmoor Commoners Council and guidance on Commons Councils for the Foundation for Common Land and Natural England.

Carl Walters: My family and I farm 107 hectares of land rising to over a 1000 feet. Our farm is on the eastern side of the Lake District, Cumbria, it faces north east on very steep ground, with rights on Bampton Common. We have 65 suckler cows; mainly pure limousin crossed with a Belgian Blue; 800 Swaledale sheep; 18 pure Blue faced Leicester sheep, also chickens, cats and dogs. There is an ESA scheme on the farm and the Bampton Commoners Association are working towards a Higher Level Entry scheme and have just completed an environment management plan for the common.

We work with the RSPB and our landlord, United Utilities, to encourage bird life, mainly lapwings in the spring and finches over winter. We have three small arable plots and cultivate 10 acres a year of barley, turnips, and/or lupins. We have also been participating in a 'Wealth of Wildlife' scheme for 3 years, recreating hay meadows (under Tier 2 ESA) using plug plants and over-seeding. See <http://www.cumbriahillfarming.org.uk/lowhullock/index.html>

COMMON LAND project. SPANISH VISIT.

Castilla y León, Cantabria y Asturias.
16-20 May 2010

FINAL PROGRAMME.

Sunday 16 May.

Arrival at Santander Airport. Transfer by car to Merindades area (North of Burgos province) to the village of Soncillo. Staying at Hotel “ El Capricho de Clemente”, where we will also have dinner.

Monday 17 May.

10.30 h: We will meet our Spanish hosts from Castilla y León Environment Ministry Plan 42¹², ANGEL DE LA FUENTE and ERNESTO MUÑOZ, and departure to the village of Santa Gadea, where we will meet the local authority councilor and some farmers and will see examples of communal and private management.

13.00 h: We will go to Virtus (in Valdebezana Valley), where will meet the Mayor and a farmer where we will see an example of shared management between farmer and landlord.

14.30 h: Lunch where will meet GEMMA GASPAS, local development officer in the area, who will tell us about the equine meat promotion actions in the area. We will have the opportunity to taste this meat in our lunch.

16.30 h: Visit to communal land of Rionela (5.000 has.) in Valdeporres, by the Cantabrian border. We will be showed an example of shared management between farmers from Burgos and Cantabria.

19.00 h: John will join us at the Hotel.

Tuesday 18 May.

11.30 h: Meeting in Muriedas with Juan Busqué, researcher at the CIFA Offices (Agriculture Research Centre in Cantabria Regional Government. www.cifacantabria.org). Juan will make a presentation about livestock systems in the Cantabrian Mountains.

Lunch: (around 14.00)

Afternoon: field trip to the Sejos area - a 7,000 hectares common area owned by 4 municipalities. CIFA has designed and tried a project about the communal management using

¹² Plan 42 is a Project whose ultimate aim is fire prevention through working with livestock farmers.

ovine in order to stop the invasion of a flora species rejected by bovine and equine, managed and implemented by the 4 municipalities joint administrative body (Mancomunidad) and funded by the Cantabrian Regional Government. The grazing management model of this project can be found in (Spanish):

http://www.cifacantabria.com/Documentacioncifa/view.php?sess=0&parent=66&expand=1&order=name&sortname=ASC&id=186&action=file_details.

Evening: transfer to León province and dinner. Staying at Hotel Pandorado www.hotelpandorado.com

Wednesday 19.

10.00 h: We will meet ROSI CADENAS and other technicians from Castilla y León Regional Government Plan 42 (see list at the end of the programme) , from where we will go to visit the village of Salce with 3,000 hectares of commons managed through zonification of the area and rotation of the cattle depending on the season. We will meet some farmers who will explain to us their management actions.

14.00 h: Lunch. Depending on weather conditions it will be a picnic in the area nearby or sheltered in a restaurant. In both cases, we will be fed with a typical local menu.

16.00 h: Visit to a cooperative and a butcher shop in the village of Villablino. Both have been created by farmers working with Plan 42 as an integrated step in the maintenance of the traditional pastures in the Cantabrian Mountains.

We will meet some farmers who will explain the project they are developing within their Cooperative "Montañas de León".

Thursday 20 May.

Morning: leaving the hotel at 8.00, transfer (approx. 2h30 mins) to Posada de Llanes (in Asturias Region), where we will meet XUAN VALLADARES, farmer and coordinator of the Asturian Forum for Rural Development.

Transfer at 12.30 to Santander (approx. 1h.30 mins), hopefully arriving at Santander around 14.00.

Lunch: we can have a quick/tapas lunch in one of the places around the Brittany Ferries area, leaving John embarked.

Afternoon: transfer to Santander airport to get the flight back home.
End of the visit.

Participants from the Spanish side:

Monday, Burgos:

Angel de la Fuente: technician from Castilla y León Regional Government Plan 42, in Burgos province.

Ernesto Muñoz: area management technician from technician from Castilla y León Regional Government in charge of the area management.

Gemma Gaspar: local development officer in the area.

Tuesday, Cantabria:

Juan Busqué, researcher at the CIFA Offices (Agriculture Research Centre in Cantabria Regional Government).

Wednesday, León:

Olga Rada: Plan 42 Coordinator (Castilla y León Regional Government)

Rosi Cadenas: technician from Castilla y León Regional Government Plan 42, in León province. She is also in charge of the subsidies for measures on improvement of extensive farming and social facilitator for the area.

Isabel García: Boss of “Management and Improvement “ Section in the Environment Department (Castilla y León Regional Government)

Ignacio Martínez: technician from “Management and Improvement “ Section in the Environment Department (Castilla y León Regional Government). He is in charge of “Common lands for public use” in the area.

Manuel García: boss of “la Magdalena” area in the Environment Department (Castilla y León Regional Government).

José Prieto: Beef cattle farmer in the commons and “Junta Vecinal” president (Committee for local commons).

Manuel: Beef cattle farmer in the commons.

Abel: Beef cattle farmer in the commons.

Asturias, Thursday:

Juan Antonio (Xuan) Valladares: Beef cattle farmer (breed “Asturiana de Montaña” or “casina”, native breed, hardy and suitable for the harsh conditions in Asturian Mountains). He owns 12 hectares and uses a 4,000 ha commons along with other farmers from the municipality. He is a biologist and also works in this area as freelance. He is developing a botanical garden in Picos de Europa National Park at the moment. He also is coordinator of a rural development association (FAR) and president of Extensive Farmers Association (AGTA), where they are trying to promote the extensive farming in Asturias through different projects.

