



# Impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy on the Sustainability of Extensive Small Ruminant Farming in Spain

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## Introduction

From 1960 farming in Spain has shifted to more intensive forms of production resulting on the abandonment of small scale small ruminant farms (SRFS) due to the low profitability and the growing rural exodus of the traditional areas where this kind of farming was carried out as well as the lack of effective public policies.

The overall census of small ruminants in Spain has been declining at a rapid pace during the last decades, due to numerous causes, the abandonment of the SRFS entails the added loss of environmental services they provide such as soil quality loss, wildfire prevention, biodiversity preservation and landscape protection among others.

**Re-thinking the production models and policy support, is essential to boost the sustainability of the SRFS** and meet the social demands regarding the protection of the environment and animal wellness, but also to mitigate some of the challenges that the sector must overcome:

- Rural exodus.
- Social perception on livestock production.
- Change in consumption habits.
- Globalization of the markets.

## FORTEX

This study is developed within the framework of the FORTEX project, which aims to support the sustainability of extensive small ruminant farming system in Spain.

The project is led by a research team from the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the Center for Studies and Management of Agronomic and Environmental Risks (CEIGRAM).

The present study focuses on analyzing of the perceptions of the farmers and farmers' organizations as well as support institutions (cooperatives, producers' organizations, civil organizations) of the impact of the CAP interventions on the sustainability of the extensive small ruminant farming systems.

## Methodology

We carried out a qualitative analysis of the policy's impact using perception-based interviews conducted with the main stakeholders in the SRFS in Spain.

- A selection of interventions of the Spanish CAP Strategic plan (2023–2027) with direct impact on the SRFS was co-designed with SRFS stakeholders.
- Selected interventions were grouped under convergent objectives. In addition, five CAP sustainability indicators were selected (Table 1).
- 32 interviews were conducted with farmers (7), cooperatives and farmers organizations (6), civil organizations (8), research (7) and administration (4). Finally, an impact assessment analysis was conducted by creating an impact assessment matrix.
- A network graph was created to ensure a holistic view of the system taking in consideration the relation in between indicators by the stakeholders.

*\*Esta investigación está enmarcada en el proyecto FORTEX, financiado por la Comunidad de Madrid a través del convenio-subsidiación para el fomento y la promoción de la investigación y la transferencia de tecnología en la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, en la Línea A, Doctores Emergentes.\**

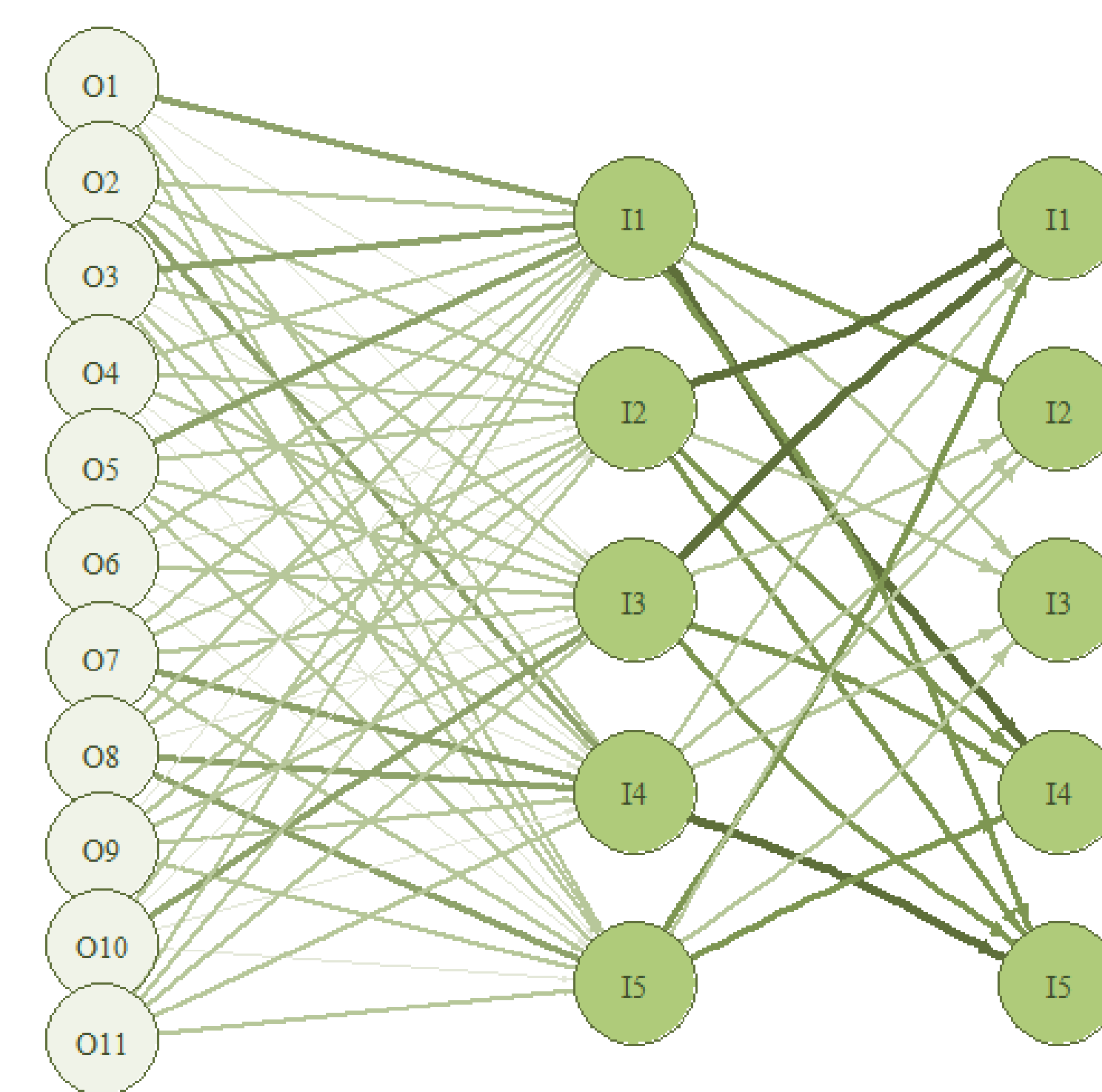
## Results

Based on the stakeholders' perception, Figure 1 shows:

- The interventions seeking to **promote grazing and reinforce advisory services and training** are those with the highest positive impact on the economic and social sustainability of the SRFM.
- Interventions tailored to **foster generational renewal and support investments** are also as those with the highest impact on the SRFS sustainability.
- On contrary the interventions tailored to improve **livestock quality and organic farming** are those with the lowest positive impact on the economic and social sustainability of the SRFS. These concerns suggest a lack of alignment between the requirement
- s of organic farming schemes and the practical realities faced by producers, which may limit its acceptance within the sector.

Selected objectives and interventions	
Rent support ( Basic income support, Coupled payments)	O1
Investment support (6841, 6842,6871)	O2
Vulnerable Areas (6613)	O3
Livestock quality (6505.1 , 6504)	O4
Grazing support (Eco-regimes 6501.3 , 7165)	O5
Organic farming (6503)	O6
Training and advisory services (7202)	O7
Generational renewal (6961,7169)	O8
Innovation support (7161)	O9
Quality regimes (7131)	O10
Production groups (7132)	O11
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Agrarian rent (7191)	I1
Productivity	I2
Added value to production	I3
Young farm managers	I4
Rural areas employment	I5

*\*The numbers listed next to each objective indicate the specific Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) interventions that contribute to achieving that objective.\**



● Objective  
● Indicator  
— Objective-indicator link  
— Indicator interrelation

Table 1. Selection of CAP interventions and sustainability indicators

Figure 1 . Direct and indirect impacts of CAP interventions on sustainability indicators

## Conclusions

- Farmers and other stakeholders perceive that there **is a room to adapt the CAP interventions to the needs of the SRFS and improve the impact of the CAP on its sustainability.**
- In the future CAP programming (2028-2034), **social and environmental interventions such as grazing support, advisory services, generational renewal and investments should be prioritized to fostering the sustainability of the SRFS.**
- Policy recommendations should be **co-designed with farmers and other relevant stakeholders** in the SRFS to ensure that their knowledge and experience will shape future policies.