

## Role of Hellenic Range and Pasture Society in technology interaction and policy evolution

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**Description** The Hellenic Range and Pasture Society (HRPS) was founded in 1992 and is a non-profit scientific association. It is composed of 74 members with a common interest in the study, management, and rational use of rangelands and related ecosystems (e.g. pasturelands). The objectives for which the corporation was established are: a) to develop an understanding of rangeland ecosystems and of the principles applicable to the management of rangeland resources (soil, plants, water, and animals), b) to assist all who work with rangelands and pasturelands to keep abreast of new findings and techniques in the science and art of rangeland and pasture management, c) to create a public appreciation of the economic and social benefits to be obtained from the rangeland environment, and d) to promote professional development of its members.

**Activities** Over the past twelve years, ten scientific events have been organised by the HRPS with a goal of developing among its members a sense of identity with the profession, to make positive and imaginative contributions to the field of rangeland resources management, and to provide information and guidance to the general public in this area. These events involved five meetings, four national congresses and one international congress, which dealt with the following themes: *Meetings*, 1) The role of rangelands in rural development, 2) Range science and alternative land uses, 3) Relation among livestock, wildfires, and environment, 4) The natural environment of Mygdonia area, 5) Strategy for rational management of rangeland resources; *National Congresses*, 1) Sustained utilisation of rangelands and pasturelands, 2) Range science at the threshold of the 21st Century, 3) Range science and development of mountainous regions, 4) Rangelands of lowland and semi-mountainous areas: means of rural development; *International Congress*, 1) Woody plants in Europe. The above activities established the HRPS in the national scientific society and with many rangeland users. It is acknowledged that the HRPS's activities help them to realise that rangelands produce a wide variety of goods and services desired by society, including wildlife habitat, livestock forage, water, mineral resources, wood products, wild land recreation, open space, and natural beauty. This increases the appreciation that the proper use and management of rangeland is vitally important to people everywhere. Also, members of HRPS, by participating at relevant TV programmes or by being interviewed by newspapers or radio stations, have promoted to their best the activities of the HRPS and informed public opinion in parallel.

**Plans for future initiatives** Doubtless the 12-year presence of HRPS has influenced the scientific society. However, we appear to play a minor role, if any, in the development of policies that affect rangelands. In fact, government and land management agencies in Greece lack policies directed specifically towards the conservation and management of rangeland resources or the well-being of pastoral populations that depend on them. Policy-making that affects rangelands, is driven largely by non-technical factors, because politics and perceived short-term economic and social needs prevail over science and resource management. The lack of policies that address rangeland conservation and management is an indication of the relatively low priority of resource management for many rangeland inhabitants and users, and consequently for their political representatives. We argue that the links between science, policy and management must be strengthened, through adaptive management, participatory research, and clear and proactive communication by rangeland professionals. We also believe that rangeland professionals and its scientific society can no longer afford to view policy-making as outside our domain of expertise and appropriate involvement. To be effective in the policy arena, our society and its members must also improve their communication skills. We have to share our knowledge and concerns with policy-makers, and to do so we must develop expertise in communicating ecological complexity in simplified terms. Our job will be made easier if we involve the public more directly in our science, through participatory research and adaptive management. Such collaborative learning efforts may have the added benefit of increasing the scientific literacy of the public, so that people better appreciate the underlying complexities and uncertainties associated with rangeland science and management. Finally, we must take a more active role in influencing policies that directly and indirectly affect rangelands. At the same time, however, we have to apply the basic principles of our science that we have painstakingly built over the past decades. These principles, when applied, can make a difference in natural resource conditions and people profitability.