

Portuguese Society of Pastures and Forages

J.M. Potes, E.V. Lourenço and T. Carita

Estação Nacional de Melhoramento de Plantas, P.O. Box 6, Elvas, Portugal, Email: jmirapotes@hotmail.com

Keywords: pastures, forages, conservation, animal production

Introduction The Portuguese Society of Pastures and Forages (SPPF) was born from a course on pastures and forages held in the National Plant Breeding Station of Elvas (where the headquarters of SPPF are located) in 1979. It was organised by the head of the Pastures and Forages Department, David Gomes Crespo, who was the first and founder member. According to Abreu *et al.* (1999), the structure established was that of a Scientific Society and was considered by the Government as a Service of Public Interest. It gathered inspiration from the British Grassland Society, the Association Française pour la Production Fourragère, the Sociedad Española para el Estudio de los Pastos and the European Grassland Federation. Presently it has 1450 members including research workers, technicians, farmers and students (number not included). The number of members was initially 100 and now there are 450 active members.

Activity The SPPF activity falls mainly into the organisation of two annual meetings in spring and autumn. Spring meetings are held usually over three to five days with the vote of the General Assembly determining the location and topic, usually following the proposal from a group of members from a specific region of the country at the previous annual meeting. There have until 2004 been 25 Spring meetings. They have covered all the country with meeting been held twice at some places. Autumn meetings are usually held for one day, and concentrate on a specific topic. Because of that, they almost always have taken place at the Estação Nacional de Melhoramento de Plantas. Up to now, 26 Autumn meetings have been held.

The programme of Spring meetings comprises thematic sessions with the presentation of conferences, oral and poster presentations, and discussions. There are also visits to enterprises with activity related to the topics of the meeting and round tables coordinated by farmers. The conclusions are presented to the members of the government and regional authorities present in the closing session. The programme also includes the meeting of the General Assembly and the annual dinner of the Society. Every two years there are elections for the leader bodies of the SPPF. In the Autumn meetings, there is a presentation of the topic by one or more experts. When the session takes place in an auditorium it is followed by a discussion or a field visit.

Public service The most important public service of the SPPF is the publication of the periodical -Revista Pastagens e Forragens. Twenty two volumes have been published, usually one volume by year as a scientific publication. According to the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), which sponsors the periodical, it is one of the ten most used national periodicals in the domain of agricultural sciences. The SPPF also has another series of publication - Boletim da SPPF- for technical papers with more irregular periodicity.

Occasionally the SPPF has conducted studies or promoted the organisation of working groups upon institutional demands.

Plans for future We plan to pursue the actions developed up to know and to make a greater effort in technology transfer from the research centres to the farmers. We intend to produce more Technical Bulletins for technology description and promotion and to organise meetings directly with farmers. Also a more interventionist role will be taken as a professional association to support policymakers at the national level. Finally a more campaigning role will be taken with different grassland societies through the European Grassland Federation to promote the interests of grassland science.

References

Abreu, J. M. & N. Farinha (1999). Os vinte Anos da SPPF. *Revista Pastagens e Forragens*, 20, III – VII.