

Prospects, objectives and opinions of livestock farmers in the area of a Pyrenean ski resort*I. Casasús, J.A. Rodríguez-Sánchez and A. Sanz**Centro de Investigación y Tecnología Agroalimentaria del Gobierno de Aragón, Avda. Montañana 930, 50059 Zaragoza, Spain. icasasus@aragon.es*

Tourism plays a major role in socio-economic development of some European mountain areas, where it may provide some synergies but also compete with farming activities for the use of resources such as land or labour. In order to determine the effect of a ski resort on livestock farming systems in its surroundings, a structured interview was conducted with all farmers whose cattle or horse herds grazed during the summer on pastures within a ski station in the Pyrenees (Northern Spain). Information was gathered on their production systems and prospective changes under the current socio-economic circumstances and different potential scenarios, namely total decoupling of EU subsidies, increased income from agri-environmental schemes, reduced income from off-farm work, and increased price of purchased feedstuffs. They were also asked about the relative importance for them of different technical, economic and social objectives, and also their opinions about the future, tourism and environmental issues. The continuity of the farms was ensured on a medium term, but might be low in the long run due to lack of succession. Farms were stable in terms of size and management, and few changes were envisaged in the future in the current conditions. However, if the socio-economic situation changed or different agricultural policies were implemented, farm structure and technical management may be considerably modified. Concerning the relative importance of various objectives, they considered that economic aspects and those related to their family's quality of life were crucial, while technical objectives were less important. They considered that the ski resort had been beneficial for the valley population, and also indirectly for them and their farming activity, mostly because it provided alternatives to diversify their income. In turn, they were aware that the ski resort profited from the ecosystem services provided by livestock grazing in its area.
