Livestock cultural and territorial vitality services are key to unlock the agroecological transition

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Little research has been dedicated to the cultural and territorial vitality services provided by livestock farming to society. These services also are largely ignored in discussions regarding the transition of livestock farming towards agroecology. This article aims to show why these services must be taken into account to favour the agroecological transition of livestock farming. We examined the nature and interrelationships of cultural services (relating to gastronomy, landscape, etc.) and territorial vitality services (relating to employment generated, tourism, social bonds, etc.). To do so, we drew from the perceptions of local actors on two contrasted French territories: Aubrac and Pays de Rennes. Livestock farming is prominent in both territories, but the orientations of their livestock farming differ. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted on each territory. Our work revealed the diversity of the cultural and territorial vitality services provided by livestock farming, and their importance for local actors. These services could act as obstacles to an agroecological transition. For example, jobs linked to livestock farming in Pays de Rennes and the vitality of tourism in Aubrac tend to reinforce the already existing livestock farming. However, the desire of actors to provide or to benefit from cultural and territorial vitality services also could act as a lever to reconfigure agri-food systems, and consequently livestock farming systems. Our results indicated that to better take these services into account, the framework within which agroecological transition is considered, both scientifically and politically, needs to be adjusted. Our study demonstrates the need to develop further interdisciplinary approaches to include social services and thus consider the food system and territorial scale.