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Methods of investigating natural resources of grassland

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In order to improve conditions of production it can be very interesting to benefit from the wealth of people's knowledge .Local population who has lived and worked for generations in a natural environment has learned a lot and gained many observations about plants and animals (wild and domesticated) .They know particularly well the natural resources and how they can be used in the best way for their herds .

During the last decades within the frame of the international program Man and Biosphere (MAB) of UNESCO ,many interesting and fruitful operations have been developed in various part of the world ,using ethnobotanical investigations in order to better appreciate local potentialities in a perspective of sustainable development .

A multidisciplinary ethnobiological research with the collaboration of herdsmen could bring precious data about economic potential of local natural resources ,sustainable management and conservation of valuable genetic resources (Prance ,1991 ,210) .

A team for such a study should include ethnobiologist(s) and zootechnician(s) at least .Besides the classical ethnobiological surveys on relationships that the various components of local populations maintain with plants and animals ,a special interest should be put on their conception of management of the environment .

This paper will focus on the methods and results of an original multidisciplinary research which was developed during several years by a team of researchers working in close relationship with local herdsmen in the region of Aubrac in France (Anon .1970-1982) .Besides the academic interest of the data collected on many fields ,probably the most salient achievement was indubitably the revival of the local pastoral economy through a better understanding of natural conditions and a genetic amelioration of the local breed whose meat has become now one of the most appreciated among the beeves in France .

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