

Role of the Grassland Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina in grassland agriculture

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Introduction The biggest part of Bosnia and Herzegovina is covered with hilly and mountainous terrain, which, from the agricultural perspective, determines the manner of soil usage. Of all agricultural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 55.49% are covered by grassland with that figure increasing to 79.14% in mountainous regions. Therefore, grassland agriculture and its cousin livestock production are the most significant part of the Bosnian economy. In the current situation natural grasslands are largely neglected and give a low yield of forage of low quality. Many areas are completely abandoned and have been gradually overgrown with weeds and bushes. Yet a special trait and advantage of Bosnian grasslands is the diversity of plant types and it is important that this is maintained. In that sense, all organisations which could contribute to the development of grassland farming and livestock production, as well as to the development of rural areas in general are of great importance, because of the significant contribution that they could play in the overall sustainable development of our country. One of the organisations which could and should play an important role in achieving more rapid development of this sector is a grassland society.

The Grassland Society The Grassland Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded in 2001, but because of the political instability in our country, the society, even with all the effort invested, was not officially registered until June 2004, so its activities have been very modest. We were mostly working on how to find a way to register the Society and to start some activities at the state level. The society currently counts 52 members: ca. 10% are farmers, 60% agronomists and 30% are scientists and researchers. During the meeting in Lucerne in 2004, our Grassland Society became a full member of the European Grassland Federation.

Future activities Our Grassland Society works on improving the communication network between agricultural specialists, farmers, environmentalists, and all others whose interest lies in improving grassland utilisation and its role in preserving the environment and tourism. One of the main goals of the society is to achieve professional management of production, conservation and utilisation of forage. In that sense, the society will organise professional and scientific seminars, symposiums and lectures about how to manage grasslands and the production, preservation and utilisation of forage. It is also our intention to organise discussion sessions about legal issues concerning grasslands and agriculture, environment and ecology when that is necessary.

Further significant aims of the association are: promoting scientific studies on proper grassland management resulting in the improvement of forage yield and forage quality, while at the same time maintaining grassland biodiversity and a healthy environment; introducing and expanding organic production; researching the relationship between grassland management and ecology, and finding the optimal way to conserve and utilise forage in animal production.

The Grassland Society plans to start publishing scientific and professional publications and to stimulate publication of professional innovations within these regular publications.

Conclusion The activities of the Grassland Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina should contribute to sustainable livestock farming, rural development and the overall economic situation in our country.