



12 years of grassland board in Uruguay

Cáceres Bentancor, D¹; Pereira Machín, M²

¹Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, Garzón 456, Montevideo, Uruguay. ²Institute Plan Agropecuario, Br. Artigas 3802, Montevideo, Uruguay

Key words: Grassland, livestock, governance, board

Abstract

Pampas are the only biome in Uruguay, occupying about 60% of the territory and are the main forage resource for cattle and sheep production. Despite this, its value, its resilience to climate change and its provision of ecosystem services are generally underestimated. Almost all of these Pampas, and therefore their conservation, depend on the livestock farmers who own them. In this context, the Grassland Board (GB) was created in 2012, a formal environment within the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP) to improve inter-institutional articulation in pampas, promote the development of technological proposals to increase production in a sustainable way and less vulnerable to climate change, and preserve natural resources. Bringing together 19 public, private, research, extension and farmer institutions and organisations, it is chaired by the Institute Plan Agropecuario (IPA) and operates within the MGAP, which provides the technical-administrative secretariat. The creation of the GB and its experience of institutional articulation in the agricultural sector is an innovative experience that is highly valued by Uruguayan agricultural institutions. Technical proposals such as "Options for the Sustainable Intensification of Livestock Production in Uruguay's Natural Landscapes" have been approved, the "National Day of the Pampas " has been proclaimed by Law No. 20.088, and advice has been provided to decision-makers and to the most important national projects on grassland livestock production. Several high-quality products have been produced, such as publications and awareness-raising events, including the prestigious "The Gold Paspalum" awards. Finally, and after 12 years of intermittent action, the GB has achieved greater articulation between institutions, achieving consensual collective projects and messages. A formal and strong channel of dialogue has been established with the executive and legislative branches.

Introduction

Pampas in Uruguay is the only biome, occupies approximately 60% of the territory and is the main nutritional resource for livestock, most of these are in the hands of private producers and therefore their conservation depends on them. Despite this, their value, their resilience to climate change, and their provision of ecosystem services have generally been underestimated (MGCN, 2019).

In this context, in 2012, the Grassland Board (GB) was created as a formal environment within the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP) to improve interinstitutional articulation in rangelands, promote the development of technological proposals to increase production in a sustainable way that is less vulnerable to climate change and conserve natural resources (MGAP, 2012).

Methods

In this article we will develop how these 12 years of operation have been and their importance for livestock and Uruguayan pampas, we base this work on minutes, publications and interviews with delegates.

Results and Discussion

The GB is composed of 19 public and private institutions and organizations, is presided over by the Institute Plan Agropecuario (IPA) and operates under the auspices of the MGAP, which provides the technical-administrative secretary. The creation of this ambit and its experience of institutional articulation in the agricultural sector represent an innovative experience, highly valued by Uruguayan agricultural institutions (Cáceres and Caballero, 2020). This space brings together government institutions such as: MGAP, the Ministry of the Environment and the National Meat Institute; extension institutions such as: IPA and the Uruguayan Wool Secretariat; Research institutions such as: the National Institute of Agricultural Research, the Faculties of Agronomy and Science of the University of the Republic; producers such as: the National Commission for Rural Development, Federated Agricultural Cooperatives, Rural Association of Uruguay, CREA Groups, Rural Federation, Uruguayan Association of Grasslands Farmers, Uruguayan Society of Rational Grazing, Uruguayan Society of Silvopastoralism and Pampeanas Regenerativas Orientales; regional institutions such as: the Alianza del Pastizal and the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture completed their integration.

This integration provides the GB with different points of view and interests, from academia to farmers associations, including the organizations responsible for management and extension. The monthly meeting of representatives of society who directly develop productive activities on pampas with those who generate knowledge and develop technologies, decision makers and articulators, who carry out knowledge transfer, generated an ideal environment for the identification of problems and solutions. The uninterrupted work during 12 years has allowed the consolidation of the area as a recognized and valued space. The good relationship between delegates from different institutions has facilitated the operation and discussion of policies.

Within this framework, the GB has managed to consolidate itself as a space for consultation in livestock farming on the natural environment, advising the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment and other institutions on the main projects on the subject: Family Farmers and Climate Change (2013-2019), Improving the Sustainability of Family Livestock of Family Livestock in Uruguay (2016-2018), Participatory Assessment of Land Degradation and Sustainable Land Management in Grassland and Pastoral Systems (2017-2021); Livestock and Climate project (2019-2023); Grass Management project (2020-2025), to name the main ones. In addition, the GB has shown a great capacity to respond to the different demands posed by the authorities, such as the systematization in less than a month of all the projects related to livestock and campos in Uruguay (MGCN & DGRN, 2020).

In recent years, the GB has set three objectives in its strategic plan:

1. To conserve our country's biome, the Pampas.
2. Improve the economic, environmental and social results of livestock farming on the Pampas.
3. To promote the recognition and valuation by society of the Pampas and its ecosystem services.

With respect to the first objective, the GB managed to put the issue on the agenda, thanks to the exchange with the legislative power it was possible to establish with Law number 20.088 the “National Day of the Uruguayan Pampas” and also has been working on different legislative proposals to improve its conservation (Figure 1), it also provided technical elements for the characterization of grasslands (Stainano and Paruelo, 2017).



Fig. 1. Meeting at the National Parliament between Legislators, authorities and delegates of the GB.

Regarding the second objective, technical proposals such as “A New Paradigm of Intensification for the Campos of Southern South America to Increase Economic and Environmental” (Jaurena, et al. 2021) were agreed upon (Figure 2), and the creation of the Livestock Farming Observatory on Natural Grasslands, which seeks to generate a public good that improves the management of the country's natural resources, facilitating the contribution of information generated and its access and interpretation by actors responsible for their management and administration, ensuring the continuity of the products already generated from the Science and Technique system (MGCN, 2021).

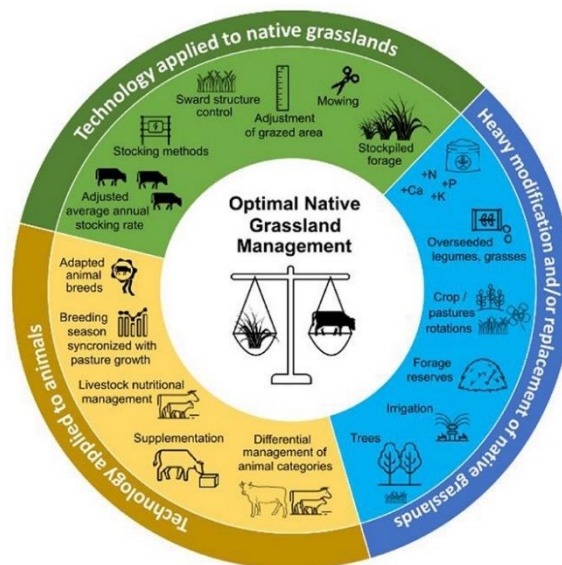


Fig. 2. A new model for livestock sustainable intensification that describes the role of technology applied to livestock management (orange), to modified or replaced native grasslands (blue), and to native grasslands (green) to achieve optimal native grassland management (Jaurena, et al. 2021).

The third objective seeks to promote the recognition of rangelands by the Uruguayan Society, in this sense, several high-quality products have been produced, such as publications, courses for producers and technicians, a traveling photographic exhibition and awareness-raising events such as the recognized “The Gold Paspalum” acknowledgments (Figure 3), which seek to highlight those who have contributed significantly to livestock farming in the Uruguayan Pampas.



Fig. 3. Presentation of “The Gold Paspalum” acknowledgments 2020 (left) and 2024 (right).

Additionally, the GB has achieved a real knowledge and articulation among its member institutions and organizations, materializing this in different extension, research and education projects, executed jointly (MGCN & DGRN, 2020). Furthermore, common messages have been generated, such as “the need for farms to work with higher pasture height”, a simple premise that implies an improvement in the productivity and sustainability of Uruguayan cattle ranches.

Conclusions

In its first 12 years, the GB has consolidated and positioned itself as a relevant actor of consultation on rangeland and livestock issues in Uruguay. In addition to making concrete products, the GB goal has always been to “make things happen” regardless of which organization or institution

Acknowledgements

To all the delegates of the organizations and institutions that have been part of this area and whose work has consolidated and strengthened submits it.

References

- Cáceres, D; Caballero, N. 2020. Ocho años de la Mesa de Ganadería sobre Campo Natural, recuperación del proceso vivido y capitalización de la experiencia. MGCN. MGAP. IICA. Available at <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/comunicacion/publicaciones/ocho-anos-mesa-ganaderia-sobre-campo-natural-recuperacion-proceso-vivido> . Accessed 27/11/2024.
- Jaurena M, Durante M, Devincenzi T, Savian JV, Bendersky D, Moojen FG, Pereira M, Soca P, Quadros FLF, Pizzio R, Nabinger C, Carvalho PCF and Lattanzi, F. 2021. Native Grasslands at the Core: A New Paradigm of Intensification for the Campos of Southern South America to Increase Economic and Environmental Sustainability. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 5:547834. doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.547834
- MGAP. 2012. Resolución ministerial 5 de junio 2012. *Diario Oficial Uruguay N° 28.487 - junio 11 de 2012.*
- MGCN. 2019. Lineamientos para el plan estratégico de ganadería sobre campo natural. Available at <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/comunicacion/publicaciones/lineamientos-para-plan-estrategico-ganaderia-sobre-campo-natural-mgcn> Accessed 27/11/2024.
- MGCN & DGRN. 2020. Presentación de proyectos en Ganadería sobre Campo Natural de las instituciones miembro de la Mesa de Ganadería sobre Campo Natural. Available at: https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/sites/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/files/documentos/noticias/Proyectos%20Campo%20Natural_MGCN.pdf Accessed 27/11/2024.
- MGCN. 2021. Observatorio de la Mesa de Ganadería sobre Campo Natural. Available at: <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-ganaderia-agricultura-pesca/comunicacion/publicaciones/observatorio-mesa-ganaderia-sobre-campo-natural> . Accessed 27/11/2024.
- Stainano, L; Paruelo, J. 2017. Zonificación agroecológica de la región Centro-Sur, Uruguay. Available at: <https://descargas.mgap.gub.uy/DGRN/Comunicaciones/Zonificaci%3%b3n%20agroecol%3%b3gica%20de%20la%20regi%3%b3n%20Centro-Sur,%20Uruguay,%20LART%202017.pdf> . Accessed 27/11/2024.