

Eastern Alpine and Dinaric Society for Vegetation Ecology

37th Meeting

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Book of Abstracts



Tulipa kosovarica

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Poster presentations



Tulipa kosovarica

Proposal of buffering action towards increasing drought stress effects on farm productivity in Central Italy Apennine

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The increasing drought stress linked to climate change affects herbage features, carrying capacity and animal welfare, representing a threat to biodiversity conservation and livestock rearing. CLIMAPP is a project focused on the evaluation of different farming production (milk, wool, meat) and organization (shepherding, forage chains, flock composition) scenarios adopting an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, which tackles the conservation, socio-economic and cultural components of the decisional context. The project aim is to achieve a sustainable management of grassland productive ecosystems. In particular, concerning milk and cheese quality and production, a multidisciplinary team followed groups of sheep, reared in pastures with different drought stress intensities starting from the maximum pasture flowering (early July) until the maximum pasture dryness (early September); during the experimental period sheep were divided in two diet groups, one group grazed only in the pasture, while the other one was supplemented with 600 g/day/head of cereals. Researchers evaluated rumen (as epithelium keratinization degree) and mammary glands (as morphology and immunolocalization of Apelin and its receptor), animal Body Condition Score (BCS), forage composition, milk and cheese production and composition. Anatomical data showed modification of the rumen keratinization and of the Apelin/receptor presence between the sampling times, but not between different diet groups. BCS showed modification between both the sampling times and the two diet groups. Modifications were also observed in milk production, as well as in forage, milk and cheese chemical composition. In addition, the quality and peculiar features of cheese were evaluated by means of a sensory panel. A consumer test associated with an experimental auction was used to evaluate consumer preference and willingness-to-pay. Data integration gave interesting information, suggesting a possible strategy to be adopted by farmers to differentiate and certificate products obtained by a conservative management of natural grasslands, which may also allow to enhance farm economic performance.

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