

E2.4 Iberian summer pasture (vallicar)

Summary

This habitat comprises the highly distinctive tall grass pastures and meadows associated with traditional cattle rearing in the lowlands and foothills of western Iberia where a Mediterranean or sub-Mediterranean climate and the long-established grazing and occasional mowing regimes sustain a striking contingent of regional plants and association with dehesa. Decrease in grazing has allowed invasion of shrubs and trees and other areas have seen conversion to intensively managed grasslands or the spread of settlements. Substantial losses in extent and quality show little or no sign of slowing. Restoration is difficult where traditional management has become impossible or where scrub invasion is advanced.

Synthesis

The habitat is assessed as Near Threatened (NT) based on recent loss in extent (A1). No data on changes in quality are available.

Overall Category & Criteria			
EU 28		EU 28+	
Red List Category	Red List Criteria	Red List Category	Red List Criteria
Near Threatened	A1	Near Threatened	A1

Sub-habitat types that may require further examination

No sub-habitats have been distinguished for further analysis.

Habitat Type

Code and name

E2.4 Iberian summer pasture (vallicar)



Summer pasture in dehesa of *Quercus pyrenaica* at Bañobarez, province of Salamanca, Spain (Photo: Cipriano Valle).



Stipa gigantea dominated grassland in Madrid region, central Spain (Photo: Javier Loidi).

Habitat description

This habitat comprises dense medium to tall grasslands growing in the lowlands and at moderate elevations up to 1500m on siliceous rocks with sandy to clayey oligotrophic soils in the Mediterranean and sub-mediterranean western Iberian Peninsula. The drainage conditions are good to poor and there can be temporary flooding with rapid desiccation afterwards. This is largely a semi-natural habitat type, linked to traditional cattle husbandry management.

The grasslands are dense and dominated by tall perennial grasses (*vallicos*) and annual species such as clovers, which have been traditionally grazed and sometimes mown. Waterlogging in the soil causes dominance of *Agrostis pourretii* and *Agrostis castellana* (alliance *Agrostion castellanae*), while free drainage favours dominance of *Festuca elegans* subsp. *elegans*, *Festuca elegans* subsp. *merinoi* (alliance *Festucion merinoi*) or *Stipa gigantea* (alliance *Agrostio-Stipion giganteae*), depending on the region and environmental conditions.

Indicators of quality:

- Dominance of grasses in a dense, carpet-like sward
- High plant species diversity
- Few or no open spots due to overgrazing or the use of machinery
- Absence of shrubs, particularly brooms, indicating initial stages of succession towards shrubland
- Absence of nitrophilous plants indicating overgrazing and over-fertilizing

Characteristic species:

Vascular plants: *Agrostis castellana*, *Agrostis pourretii* (*Agrostis salmantica*), *Anthoxanthum aristatum*, *Anthoxanthum ovatum*, *Carex chaetophylla*, *Dactylis hispanica* subsp. *lusitanica*, *Gaudinia fragilis*, *Festuca ampla*, *Festuca elegans* subsp. *elegans*, *Festuca elegans* subsp. *merinoi*, *Festuca summilusitana* subsp. *graniticola*, *Holcus setiglumis*, *Malva tournefortiana*, *Molineriella minuta*, *Periballia involucrata*, *Phalacrocarpon oppositifolium*, *Phalacrocarpon hoffmanssegii*, *Rumex angiocarpus*, *Sedum forsterianum*, *Stipa gigantea*, *Vulpia ciliata*, *Vulpia myuros*, *Vulpia bromoides*, and often with *Juncus capitatus* and clovers such as *Trifolium campestre*, *Trifolium cernuum*, *Trifolium retusum*

Classification

This habitat may be equivalent to, or broader than, or narrower than the habitats or ecosystems in the following typologies.

EUNIS:

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EuroVegChecklist:

Agrostion castellanae Rivas Goday ex Rivas-Mart. et al. 1980

Festucion merinoi Rivas-Mart. et Sánchez-Mata in Rivas-Mart. et al. 1986 corr. Rivas-Mart. et Sánchez-Mata in Rivas-Mart. et al. 2002

Agrostio castellanae-Stipion giganteae Rivas Goday ex Rivas-Mart. et Fernández González 1991

Annex 1:

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Emerald:

MAES-2:

Grassland

IUCN:

4.4. Temperate grassland

Does the habitat type present an outstanding example of typical characteristics of one or more biogeographic regions?

Yes

Regions

Mediterranean

Justification

The distribution and species composition of this type is related to the Mediterranean climate and the distinctive regional pastoral tradition.

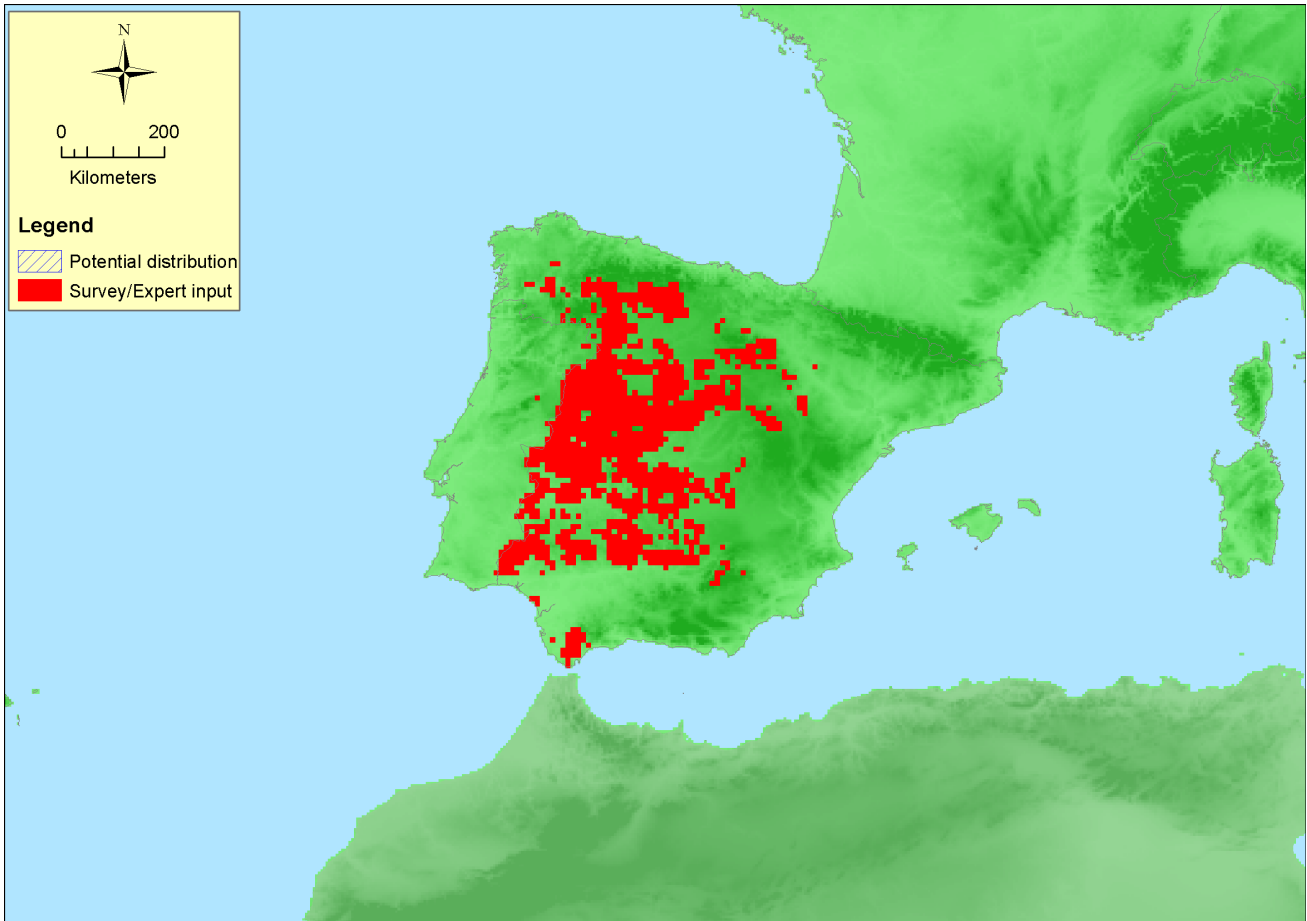
Geographic occurrence and trends

EU 28	Present or Presence Uncertain	Current area of habitat	Recent trend in quantity (last 50 yrs)	Recent trend in quality (last 50 yrs)
<i>Portugal</i>	Portugal mainland: Present	66 Km ²	Decreasing	Unknown
<i>Spain</i>	Spain mainland: Present	2739 Km ²	Decreasing	Decreasing

Extent of Occurrence, Area of Occupancy and habitat area

	Extent of Occurrence (EOO)	Area of Occupancy (AOO)	Current estimated Total Area	Comment
<i>EU 28</i>	346750 Km ²	1301	2805 Km ²	98% of this habitat is in Spain
<i>EU 28+</i>	346750 Km ²	1301	2805 Km ²	

Distribution map



The map is complete for Spain but with data gaps in Portugal. Sources: EVA, NAT.

How much of the current distribution of the habitat type lies within the EU 28?

100%

Trends in quantity

No data are available for long-term historical trend but losses have been seen in both countries, of half the extent in Portugal, over the past 50 years. Future losses can be expected.

- Average current trend in quantity (extent)

EU 28: Decreasing

EU 28+: Decreasing

- Does the habitat type have a small natural range following regression?

Yes

Justification

The substantially reduction in extent in Portugal probably reduces the overall range.

- Does the habitat have a small natural range by reason of its intrinsically restricted area?

Yes

Justification

The range of this habitat is strictly limited by the combination of the regional climate, distinctive terrain and soils and traditional pastoral agriculture.

Trends in quality

At present, there is a decline in both biotic and abiotic quality of this habitat in Spain but the severity and extent of past recent change is unknown and no future trend is indicated.

- Average current trend in quality

EU 28: Decreasing
EU 28+: Decreasing

Pressures and threats

Conservation of this type is inseparably linked to the maintenance of the traditional, extensive cattle grazing. A decrease of grazing pressure triggers succession, with appearance of brooms and other shrubs so the abandonment of this style of management means that the habitat is unlikely to survive, being replaced by scrub and woodland. In other cases, losses come from conversion to intensively-managed grassland or arable land or the spread of human settlements.

List of pressures and threats

Agriculture

- Modification of cultivation practices
 - Crop change
- Grazing
 - Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing

Urbanisation, residential and commercial development

- Urbanised areas, human habitation

Pollution

- Air pollution, air-borne pollutants
 - Nitrogen-input

Conservation and management

No details can be found.

List of conservation and management needs

Measures related to agriculture and open habitats

- Maintaining grasslands and other open habitats

Conservation status

No conservation status has been reported.

When severely damaged, does the habitat retain the capacity to recover its typical character and functionality?

The recovery capacity of this habitat is diverse depending on the hydrological regime, being more difficult in the moister versions than in the drier ones. In any case, if soil has been damaged, the recovery is almost impossible until the soil is reestablished to some extent. The pastoral regime has to be maintained in any case.

Effort required

20 years	50+ years	200+ years
Through intervention	Naturally	Naturally

Red List Assessment

Criterion A: Reduction in quantity

Criterion A	A1	A2a	A2b	A3
EU 28	-26 %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	-26 %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

The average loss in extent in recent historic time gives a category of Near Threatened, though the much smaller proportion of the habitat in Portugal has suffered losses twice this high.

Criterion B: Restricted geographic distribution

Criterion B	B1			B2			B3		
	EOO	a	b	c	AOO	a		b	c
EU 28	>50000 Km ²	Yes	Yes	unknown	>50	Yes	Yes	unknown	unknown
EU 28+	>50000 Km ²	Yes	Yes	unknown	>50	Yes	Yes	unknown	unknown

There is a continuing loss of abiotic and biotic quality (B1aii) and continuing threats (B1aiii), but EOO, AOO and number of locations are much higher than the thresholds for criteria B.

Criterion C and D: Reduction in abiotic and/or biotic quality

Criteria C/D	C/D1		C/D2		C/D3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

Criterion C	C1		C2		C3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %	unknown %

Criterion D	D1		D2		D3	
	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity	Extent affected	Relative severity
EU 28	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%
EU 28+	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%	unknown %	unknown%

No quantitative data are available.

Criterion E: Quantitative analysis to evaluate risk of habitat collapse

Criterion E	Probability of collapse
EU 28	unknown
EU 28+	unknown

There is no quantitative analysis available that estimates the probability of collapse of this habitat type.

Overall assessment "Balance sheet" for EU 28 and EU 28+

	A1	A2a	A2b	A3	B1	B2	B3	C/D1	C/D2	C/D3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E
EU28	NT	DD	DD	DD	LC	LC	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD
EU28+	NT	DD	DD	DD	LC	LC	LC	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD	DD

Overall Category & Criteria			
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Near Threatened	A1	Near Threatened	A1

Confidence in the assessment

Low (mainly based on uncertain or indirect information, inferred and suspected data values, and/or limited expert knowledge)

Assessors

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Contributors

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Reviewers

J. Loidi & D. Paternoster

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Date of review

03/03/2016

References

Rivas-Martínez, S. et al. 2011. Mapa de series, geoseries y geopermaseries de vegetación de España [Memoria del mapa de vegetación potencial de España]. Parte II. *Itinera Geobotanica* 18 (1& 2): 5-800.

Rivas Goday, S. & Rivas-Martínez, S. 1963. *Estudio y clasificación de los pastizales españoles*. Publicaciones del Ministerio de Agricultura. Madrid. 269 pp.