

Conversion of sheep production to organic farming

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OBJECTIVES

Go in depth into the sheep production organic farming, understand the conversion process and know the most important difficulties for producers.

CONVERSION PERIOD

- Time taken for a whole farm to comply with the **organic standards** and achieve the organic certification.
- Need of **investment** to adapt to the organic legislation, but lower production rates in crops and livestock.
- Sanitary management of the animals based on **prevention**, minimizing the chemically-synthesized allopathic drugs.
- No hormones allowed in **reproduction**. Management with male effect, flushing and photoperiod control.

MOST USUAL PATHOLOGIES AND CONTROL RESOURCES

Parasite infections	See Diagram 1.
Mastitis	Phytotherapy and hygienic procedures in milking.
Enterotoxaemia	Avoid sudden changes in feed. Limited access to frozen pastures.
Postnatal diarrhea	Day-long with the ewe, promoting regular lactation. Low density farmyard groups with similar age range. Regular disinfection and excrement removal of the pens.

1. MAS LA CAPALLERA - CAMPRODON

Head	440	Land	55 own ha
Vending	Direct sale, abattoir agreement		
Motive of conversion	Subventions		
Difficulties	Mastitis and lamb diarrhea. They control it with individual supervision the first week of life.		

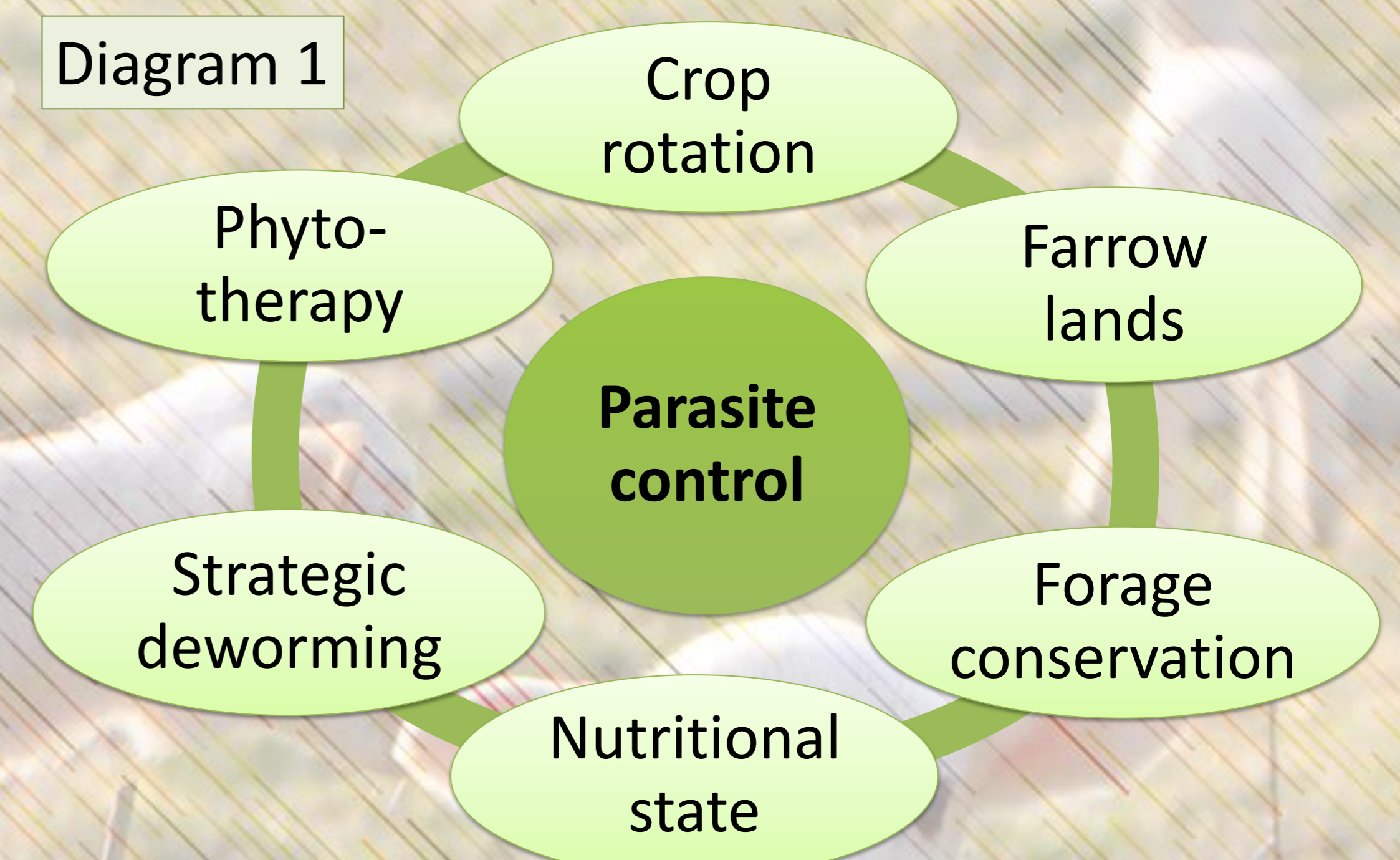
2. MAS L'EIXIDA - SANT FELIU DE PALLEROLS

Head	300	Land (total/own)	33/5 ha
Vending	Direct sale		
Motive of conversion	Subventions		
Difficulties	Lack of own land		

3. CAN TERRADES - SANT CELONI

Head	600	Land (total/own)	1000/250 ha
Vending	Direct sale		
Motive of conversion	Differentiation and subventions		
Difficulties	Foot-rot and parasites. Prevention with cooper sulfate footbath, pasture management and pen disinfection.		

Diagram 1

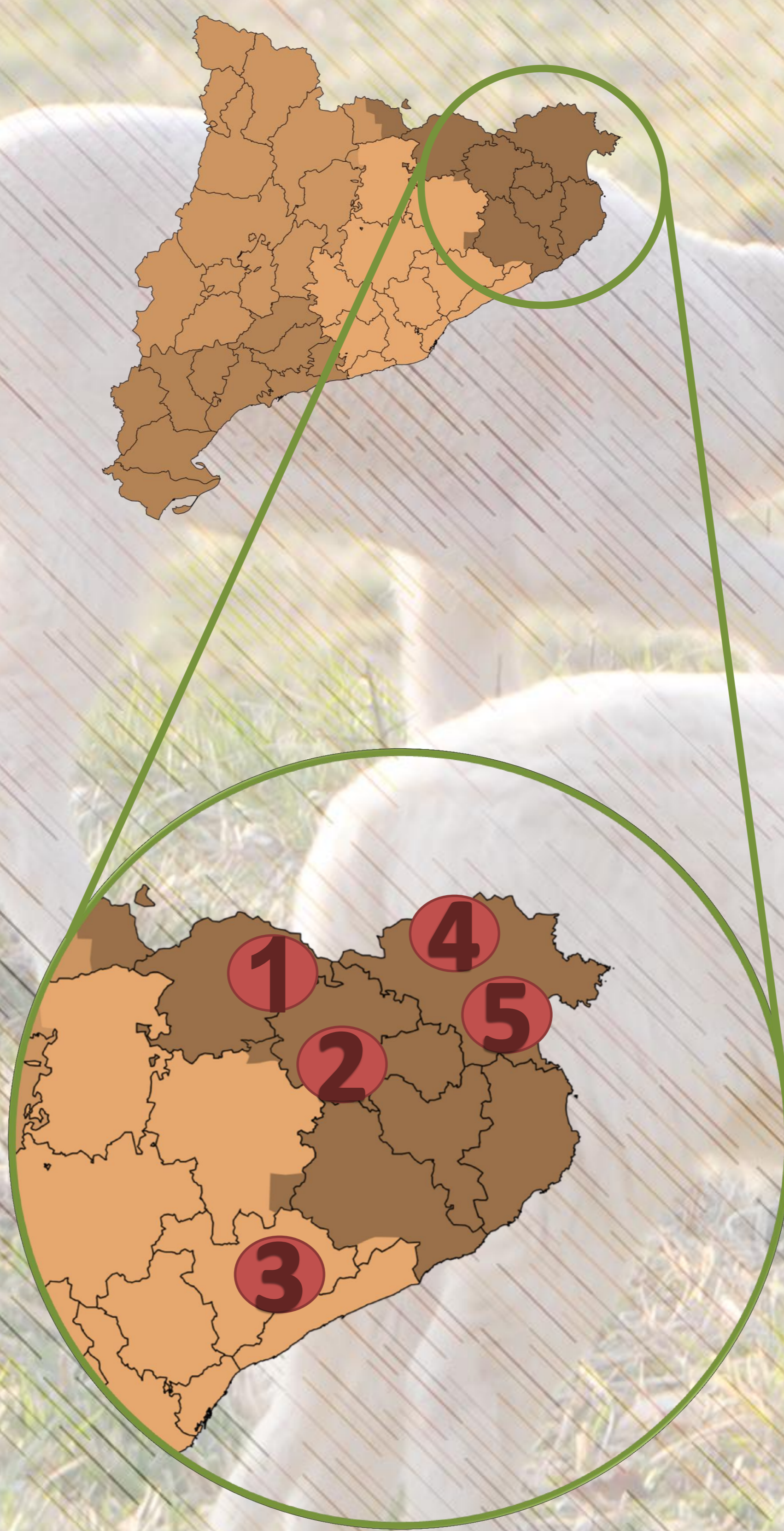


4. CAN PUIGERNISCLE - AGULLANA

Head	300	Land	300 own ha
Vending	Direct sale		
Motive of conversion	Sustainability Sale channel guaranteed		
Difficulties	Lamb diarrhea. They fight it with phytotherapy and management.		

5. MAS MARCÈ - SIURANA

Head	1500	Land (total/own)	325/85 ha
Vending	Direct sale, own shops, superstores		
Motive of conversion	More sustainability of the organic farming and produce healthy products		
Difficulties	Administrative formalities		



CONCLUSIONS

Concerning commercialization

- Producers must be able to have enough income. Generally, they make distribution and sales by their own to avoid intermediaries.

Concerning legal bases and public administration controlling

- Legal framework and inspections are demanding to assure the consumers' confidence in eco-label. It implies more administrative work to farmers but offers a recognized differentiation in the market.

Concerning production

- The organic farming favor the rational and sustainable use of the land and resources, helping the rural development.
- Land property is a fundamental point because rent implies long-term insecurity.

Concerning health

- Prevention based practices in sanitary management improves the global health of the flocks.
- Reduction in allopathic drugs and chemicals benefit environment and the population, mostly in the case of antibiotic resistances.
- Veterinarians and farmers need new knowledge and changes in the conventional way of work.

Concerning conversion

- Motivation of the farmers in conversion sometimes is only economic, to have access to subventions. Others however, have more ideological concept of organic farming as a way to refuse conventional production and benefit the animals, the environment and the consumers.