



## Use of Small Ruminants for Vegetation Control

Small family farms can take advantage by adding goat meat production or by potentially lowering their production costs in situations where the animals can replace machinery and chemicals

### Who cares and why?

Eco-friendly solution: In the last 15 years much of the agricultural sciences research has focused on the development of low environmental impact practices and products. Among these practices we find Silvopastoral Systems (SPS) and practices that follow similar designs. In controlling vegetation, the use of small ruminants has several advantages:

- Increased soil fertility and preservation
- Biodiversity conservation
- Atmospheric carbon sequestration
- Mitigation of greenhouse effect gases
- Increased quality forage and animal production

### What has the project done so far?

Three trials were conducted at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The sites selected for the trials varied in size, type of vegetation, vegetation density, and terrain conditions. For each site, one or more groups of animals were introduced and kept on site for several days. Observations were made and recorded as to what they ate, how much of the vegetation was removed, and general animal health and appearance. Collaborations with local farmers and business owners were used to evaluate typical conditions where this method of vegetation control is preferred over traditional methods and to assess typical operational costs and challenges presented in the field.

### Results can be seen in the Photos:



**Sheep and Goats at Work.**

**Impacts: Still to be determined in separate studies**



### What research is needed?

- Multi-species grazing/browsing
- Use of GPS technology to learn about goat/sheep preference and plant availability
- Animal performance studies
- Changes in soil characteristics due to animal waste and tramping.

### Want to know more?

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