



**Association
'Concejo de la Mesta'**

Secretariat of the 2003
Convention for the
Safeguarding of the Intangible
Cultural Heritage

Recu CLT / CIH / ITH

Le **29 MAI 2019**

N° *0529*

Cantabria, 8 May 2019

Dear Mr Curtis:

I am writing you in support of Spain's candidacy for the declaration of Transhumance as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Our Association, called 'Concejo de la Mesta', was founded in September 1992 within the framework of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, whose Article 8(j) urges all signatory countries to promote traditional cultures for their centuries-long contribution to maintaining the current wealth of ecosystems. We adopted the name of the old Brotherhood of Shepherds founded in 1273 by King Alfonso X, known as the Wise King, to guarantee the free movement of livestock farmers through the kingdoms of Castile-Leon.

Since then, we have been working together with transhumant herders in Spain to support their millenary culture, currently under serious threat, and contribute to the recovery of the extraordinary National Network of Livestock Trails: 125 000 km. of natural corridors between 20 and 75 m in width that are still conserved today and cover a total surface area of 420 000 hectares connecting all regions of the Iberian Peninsula. This network guarantees the mobility of our transhumant herders and hence the sustainable use of complementary natural resources at different times of the year, so important in these times of climate change, accelerated loss of biodiversity and rising feed and energy prices.

Unlike in other Mediterranean Basin countries, except perhaps Turkey, transhumance remains a widespread cultural practice in most regions of Spain, with snow-capped mountains during the winter at altitudes above 1 500 m. In Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country, for example, the movement of livestock between the summits of the Cantabrian Mountains and the coastal prairies is common. In Navarre, north of Aragon and Catalonia between the peaks of the Pyrenees and the banks of the Ebro River, where the so-called "Facería Agreements" dating to the 14th century between Spain and France for the joint use of the Pyrenean pastures between the two countries remain in force, we have the renowned "Tributo de las Tres Vacas" (three cow levy) between the Roncal and Baretous Valleys, which is renewed every 13th of July at the site called Piedra de San Martín on the border between the two countries.



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Since then, Spain has adopted numerous legal provisions that include transhumance and extensive grazing as fundamental activities for sustainable development, adaptation to climate change and the conservation of biodiversity, and also to control erosion and forest fires. In 2011, the drafting of the White Paper on Transhumance was concluded and practically all of Spain's Autonomous Communities have enacted laws or decrees on the conservation of livestock trails. Extremadura even provides financial support of €4 per day for each livestock unit for farmers who engage in transhumance on foot. Spain has spent upwards of €15 million through agreements with Autonomous Communities and 17 provinces during these years for the demarcation and signalling of livestock trails.

Bearing witness to the growing popular interest in transhumance and pastoral culture in Spain, all regions organise festivals and academic meetings generally coinciding with the arrival or departure of livestock to or from their destination, not to mention the international impact of the Transhumance Festival in Madrid which our organisation has sponsored every Autumn since 1994. In recent years there have been countless books, articles and radio, television and audio-visual interviews on transhumance in Spain, and more than 14 Transhumance Museums have been created in the different regions. The Autonomous Communities have also made a noteworthy effort to demarcate and mark livestock trails.

For all of these reasons, as we prepare to celebrate the VIII Centenary of the founding of the Zaragoza "Casa de Ganaderos" (Herder's House) created by King Jaime I of Aragon to guarantee free and universal grazing throughout Aragon, and the Centennial of the publication of the great work 'La Mesta' by Julius Klein, published in Washington DC in April 1919, compiling more than eight centuries of history, culture and the economic, social and environmental importance of transhumance in Spain, **we hereby express the full support of our association, the Concejo de la Mesta, for the incorporation of Spain to the candidacy of transhumance as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, together with Austria, Italy and Greece. We would also like to join forces with Spain's Ministry of Culture in its efforts to achieve this, calling on the authorities to recognise the outstanding heritage of transhumance in Spain and to not overlook it or postpone it to a future enlargement of this candidacy.**

Sincerely,

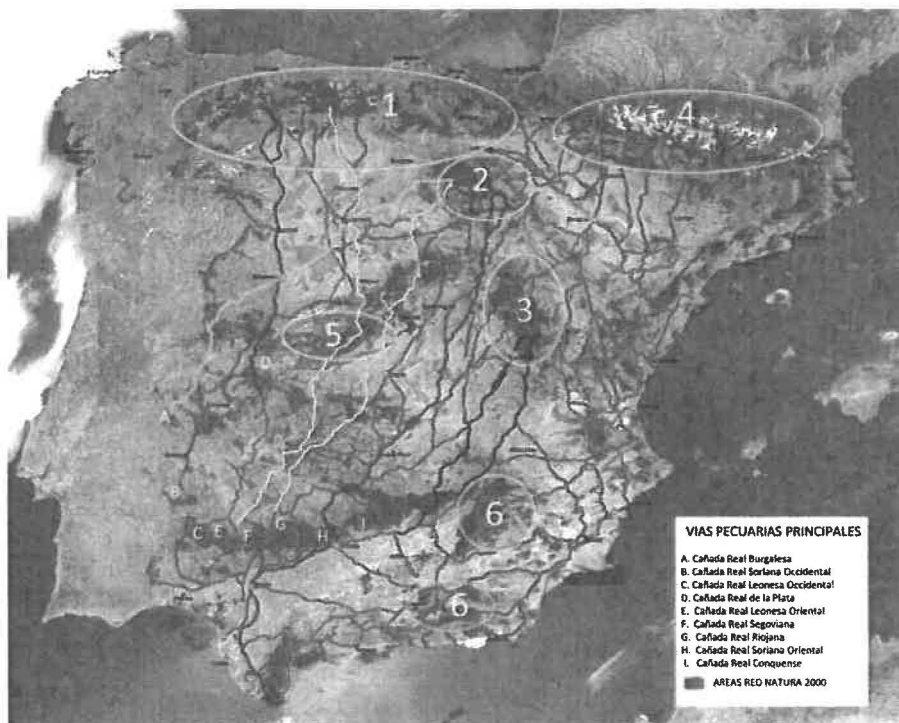
Signed: Jesús Garzón
President
Association 'Concejo de la Mesta'



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Transhumance Annals:

- nº 0: Vías Pecuarias en España
- nº 1: Sierra de Gredos
- nº 2: Valle de Alcudia
- nº 3: Montaña de León
- nº 4: Alto Macizo Ibérico
- nº 5: La Serena
- nº 6: Pirineo Aragonés
- nº 7: Sierra Morena Oriental
- nº 8: Albarracín-Cuenca-Molina
- nº 9: Los Pedroches
- nº 10: Alcaraz, Cazorla y Segura
- nº 11: Sanabria
- nº 12: Sierra Nevada
- nº 13: Pirineo Catalán
- nº 14: Gúdar – Maestrazgo
- nº 15: Extremadura
- nº 16: Campos de Calatrava – Montiel
- nº 17: Pernía – Páramos – Alto Campoo
- nº 18: Bárdenas Reales
- nº 19: Mediterranean
- nº 20: Pirineo Navarro
- nº 21: Segovia – Ávila – Salamanca
- nº 22: Bajo Guadalquivir
- nº 23: Sierras Penibéticas
- nº 24: Andía – Urbasa y Encía



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