“APPLICATION OF THE TESSA METHODOLOGY IN A PILOT PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND AGENTS OF CHANGE IN THE PAMPA GRASSLANDS. DESCRIPTION OF THE METHOD AND LESSONS LEARNED”

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INTRODUCTION

The Toolkit for Site-Based Assessment (Landscape) of Ecosystem Services (TESSA) is intended to be an accessible guide for low-cost methods to assess the benefits that people receive from nature at particular sites in order to generate information that can be used to influence decision-making (Pehl et al 2015). However, TESSA does not have defined protocols for grasslands ecosystems. This article focuses on the description and discussion of the lessons learned in the participatory workshops that include engaging with policy and decision-making actors.

METHODS AND STUDY SITE

The work consisted of identifying 1) the area occupied by each coverage or use, 2) the threats and agents of change, 3) the ecosystem services and 4) a detailed description of the most important services in the area. The methodology was applied in the grassland ecosystems in the countries of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay (Schossler et al 2016). A total of 54 livestock farmers, 56 researchers and more than 22 institutions were involved with this study.

RESULTS

As a result we have the perception of various actors involved with the topic of interest in the four countries, as well as the potential changes and trends presented by the change agents that most affect the ecosystem.

DISCUSSION

The explanations and introductory material during the beginning of the workshop are fundamental and decisive for the quality of the results of the workshop. The total study area (200,000m2) proposed by TESSA is adequate and the homogeneity and productive capacity of the study area must be taken into account in case there are two very different areas within the area the realities of the producers would affect the results. The discussion of the alternate state is complex, and the driver of the methodology needs to be prepared to suggest fixed alternate states chosen by the group of people.

As an advance in the methodology, the use of the alternate state map at the beginning of the process, as suggested by the method, was excluded. The change was positive, and the alternate state came to be the natural environment under which the impacts of the main threats were pointed out in the process.

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