



Chickens and wild asparagus in olive orchards

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Traditional olive groves are suffering from severe abandonment. The combination of olive, rustic chicken and wild asparagus (*Asparagus acutifolius*) can be an opportunity to increase farmer's income and to contrast the abandonment.

This complex system promotes positive economic and environmental synergies among the components: poultry benefits from the natural grass, trees benefit from the fertilization provided by chicken. Hence, the management costs, in terms of reducing the weed control, limiting the need to fertilize and to provide chemical inputs, are reduced. Wild asparagus is a perennial plant that can be cultivated long the olive tree rows at a distance of 30 - 30 cm. 30.000-40.000 plants/ha can produce about 1.5 tons/ha of asparagus. Chickens, on the other hand, must be slow-growing with a strong grazing attitude so it is important to use adapted breeds like the variety "Collo Nudo". Each chicken needs a grazing area of about 10 m² and the shelters must be mobile in order to always guarantee fresh and green fodder for the animals. The shelter can contain up to 16 chicken/m², for a weight of 30 kg/m².



Figure 1. Silvopastoral system with chickens in olive orchard in Umbria, Italy



Figure 2. A complex system promotes positive economic results thanks to lower management costs and greater variability of production

Further information

http://sito.entecra.it/portale/public/documenti/manuale_olivo_asparago_pollo.pdf

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