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THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL OLIVE GROVES IN THE CONSERVATION AND VALORIZATION OF BIODIVERSITY

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The millenary culture of the olive grove represents a high economic, social and environmental importance throughout the Mediterranean basin, with particular emphasis on the Iberian southwest territories. However, especially in the last decade, areas with intensive and super intensive olive production have increased significantly in Alentejo, replacing areas of traditional olive, agriculture and even grazing. Nevertheless, in Serra de Ficalho it is still possible to observe and compare the different types of olive grove exploitation and their impact on biodiversity. This territory is marked by its high biodiversity, presenting about 500 upper plants (Pinto-Gomes, 1995). Thus, in order to evaluate the impact of different types of olive grove management on local plant diversity, ten floristic inventories were performed by management type (traditional olive grove with mechanical control of spontaneous vegetation, traditional olive grove with herbicide application and intensive olive grove with interlining). These inventories were carried out in plots of 1x1 meters and randomly selected. In view of the different scenarios, the traditional dryland olive grove with mechanical control of vegetation presented more favorable results for the conservation of biodiversity, where plants with a higher conservation value are highlighted, such as endemic rare plants with legal protection status. On the other hand, olive groves subjected to herbicide application, especially in the interlining of olive groves in an intensive production mode, showed a drastic decrease in the number of plants, as well as the appearance of some nitrophilous plants.

Literature cited

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