

Toros & Taxes

Subsidies in Spain and the EU for Bullfighting and Bull Rearing

**Report by the coalition ERC/Catalunya Sí
Leader; Dr. Alfred Bosch, MP**

January 2013

*La fiesta es ver morir bárbaro y fiero
Contra la condición humana y tierna
Los que no os hacen mal, ni mal os quieren*

The fiesta is watching brave and wild death
Against kind human condition
Of those who never harm or wish you harm

Spanish playwright Lope de Vega (1562-1635)

Siempre me han aburrido y repugnado las corridas de toros.

I have always found bullfighting boring and revolting.

Spanish thinker Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936)

Index

1. Summary
2. Spanish subsidies
3. European subsidies
4. Further considerations
5. Notes

1. Summary

The core of this report allows to conclude that bullfighting is heavily subsidized both by funds from the Spanish administrations and by European funds. Without such backing, this recreational activity would probably be on the brink of financial collapse and unable to subsist.

We reckon that no less than **571€ million** are spent annually by different tiers of Spanish authorities, and no less than **129.6€ million** by the European Union –in this case, basically through Common Agricultural Policy programs.

Both these amounts are minimum sums, derived from conservative assessments. Due to lack of budget transparency, some lines of funding are difficult to track, but we are sure that further research would lead to additional increases and in no case diminish the figures delivered here.

2. Spanish subsidies

The animal-rights trust Fundación Altarriba published in 2007 estimates reflecting Spanish subsidies for bullfighting. They grouped several concepts and modes of assistance from different authorities into one single figure; 564€ million (1). The Grupo Abolicionista de la Tauromaquia offered in 2010 a similar sum of 550€ million (2) and PACMA in 2011 up to 600€ million (3).

These overall estimates did not include considerable subsidies for bull breeding and rearing. They tried to sum up taxpayer revenue allocated to fiestas themselves; direct backing for entertaining, aid to promoters and organizers, massive ticket acquisition, marketing, advertising, public TV rights... Furthermore, all tiers of public administration were allegedly involved in such subsidies; the Spanish Central government, regional autonomous authorities, provinces, town councils, public boards and consortiums...

How were the above mentioned figures reached? Lacking trustworthy data, most assessments focused on the number of fiestas, their average cost, and the proportion of expenses covered by ticket sales or other (scarce) private revenue such as corpse sales or sponsorship. Let us check on available data.

The number of bullfights, bull-runs or similar practices, are easy to reckon, since the Spanish government keeps a reliable count of legal events. The ministry of the Interior offered in 2011 the following information, which gives an overall number of 13.329 events (1.724 major plus 11.605 minor):

TOTAL DE FESTEJOS CELEBRADOS EN ESPAÑA

Mes	Corridos de Rejones con Toros.	Corridos de Toros.	Festejo Mixto.	Festival.	Novilladas con Picadores.	Rejones con Novillos.	Total
Enero		2	2	2	2	6	14
Febrero	1	10	1	8	2	1	23
Marzo	2	32	1	10	10	2	57
Abril	5	34	7	7	17	5	75
Mayo	10	59	20	20	38	11	158
Junio	13	58	22	14	25	7	139
Julio	10	58	20	15	26	14	143
Agosto	31	177	53	67	71	64	463
Septiembre	38	139	53	80	137	71	518
Octubre	15	42	10	20	30	10	127
Noviembre				4			4
Diciembre				3			3
Total	125	611	189	250	358	191	1.724

TOTAL DE FESTEJOS MENORES CELEBRADOS EN ESPAÑA

Mes	Becerrada.	Corrida mixta con rejonos	Festejos Populares	Novilladas sin Picadores.	Parte Seria de Toreo Cómico.	Total
Enero	1			1		5.224
Febrero		1	40	4		45
Marzo		1	35	4	1	41
Abril	2		87	7	1	97
Mayo	16	1	249	23	5	294
Junio	7	1	244	15	4	271
Julio	19	8	464	40	1	532
Agosto	83	11	1.645	126	14	1.879
Septiembre	95	10	1.549	126	10	1.790
Octubre	22	3	251	19	5	300
Noviembre	5		7	3		15
Diciembre	2		1.114	1		1.117
Desconocido			5.222			
Total	252	36	10.907	369	41	11.605

Regarding the average cost of bullfights, it obviously varies enormously according to size and category, but it would oscillate between 60.000€ for third-class fiestas and ten times that figure for first-rate corridas. Costs include at least six sacrificed bulls (around 5000€ per head), plus bullfighters, assistants, horses, doctors, vets, entrepreneurs, vehicles, marketing costs, maintenance, etc. Star bullfighters like José Tomás can push up their personal bills to as much as 500.000€ per session, whereas common matadors would charge at least around 30.000€ per session.

Keeping the proportion indicated by ministry sources between minor and first-class events, data-crossing would give a sum of 1730€ million as global expenses for bullfighting events per annum in the whole of Spain. Such numbers, considering inflation, are in accordance with the 1500€ million forwarded by bullfighting business sources in 2006 (4).

Even staunch advocates of Bullfighting acknowledge that deficits run high at present. Facilities full to the brim rarely cover two-thirds the cost of the event; according to cattle-breeder sources (5), subsidies must average at least 33% of expenses in order to make fiestas affordable in top categories. Naturally deficits run much higher in smaller towns or minor events, often in the range of 50 to 90%, given the need to cover some fixed costs with smaller resources. Taking an extremely conservative line, and applying the 33% of tax-money support suggested by pro-bullfighting lobbies, the resulting figure here is substantial and fits in with other estimates mentioned above: no less than **571€ million**.

1724 major events	at 600.000€	1034 M€
11605 minor events	at 60.000€	696 M €
Total cost of all (13.329) events		1730 M€
33% subsidy		571 M€

So far, no approximations have been disputed by the Spanish government and no alternative figures have been forwarded. In fact, opacity has been the norm, and only piecemeal information has surfaced in small details, local subsidies and partial budget allocations. Switching authority for Bullfights in 2012 from the Interior Ministry to the Ministry of Culture was, as the Spanish executive openly admitted, a move that pretended among other things to expand financial and legal protection for this activity.

Subsidies for bullfighting are a widespread practice in all tiers of administration. This fact is well known, although data only surface when a particular controversy arises. Regarding expenses which could be included (or increase) the 571€ million above, we can list for instance the following headlines:

- 2006. Building of a new bullring in Xàtiva approved for 5.400.000€. Public money spent will finally reach 12€ million.
- 2006. The regional government of Andalusia grants 6.005.000€ million for renovating the bullring of Cadiz.
- 2006. Plans approved for remodeling the main bullring of Madrid, Las Ventas, with 4.200.000€ from the Region of Madrid. In 2012, a further 3-5€ million are in debate for covering the facility.
- 2007/2011 Spanish public Radio and TV spend 7.148.508€ in bullfighting coverage. An unknown part of this goes to broadcasting rights.
- 2009. The town of Dos Hermanas, close to Seville, quits backing Bullfighting with municipal money. Industry spokesmen insist they will assume costs and proceed with the shows, but finally don't.
- 2010. Activists protest for the Municipality of Bilbao spending 6.050.000€ in Bullfights.
- 2010. Protests for Pontevedra City Council spending 58.000€ in the promotion of Bullfighting.

- 2011. The City Council of Vitoria transfers 350.000€ assigned to school textbooks to coverage of Bullfights.
- 2011. The City Council of Córdoba spends 60.000€ in ticket packages. The province spends 17.000€ on tickets and 244.000€ in hiring the private bullring.
- 2011. The Spanish government creates an award for Bullfighting talents of 30.000€
- 2012. A popular campaign does not succeed in stopping the municipality of Valladolid spending 180.000€ of public money in Corridas.
- 2012. The president of Madrid region, Esperanza Aguirre, readily admits a budget of 2.197.407€ in sponsoring bullfights. Aids of 256.871€ are open to towns of under 20.000 inhabitants.
- 2012. Culture Minister Wert announces more assistance for Bullfights.
- 2012. The town of Corunha (Galicia), giving in to protest, cuts down bullfight subsidies from 128.000 to 85.000€
- 2012. The town of San Sebastian, due to a change of government, cancels the contract with a Bullfighting company

Concerning subsidies which clearly cannot be included in the 571 € million above, being intended not for the *Fiesta* itself, but for stockbreeders and could therefore be added to the sums delivered by the EU through CAP (detailed in the next chapter):

- 2010. The ministry of Environment supports the preservation of Fighting-bull habitats with 600.000€
- 2011. The ministry of Agriculture hands over 209.979€ to UCTL and 230.000€ to the rest of Fighting-bull breeders for assisting in pure-blood rearing (6)

3. European subsidies

Rearing fighting Bulls is no longer business, according to stockbreeders themselves and academics. Official sources state: "major revenues derive from bull sales and subsidies from the CAP... we can say that economic returns for Fighting-bulls are negative"(7).

How much European money is allotted to bullfighting? As far as we know, the main source of revenue is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) assistance program of the European Union. All in all, Spain consumes close to 13.5% of the CAP. Although subsidies have been in slight decline, in 2010 it still cashed a substantial sum; 5.160€million, as can be seen in the following graph:

(INDICATIVE FIGURES)
Direct aids to the producers (R. 1782/2003 and R. 73/2009) - Financial year 2010
All direct payments
Amount (in thousand EUR) paid to beneficiaries receiving aid within the indicated range

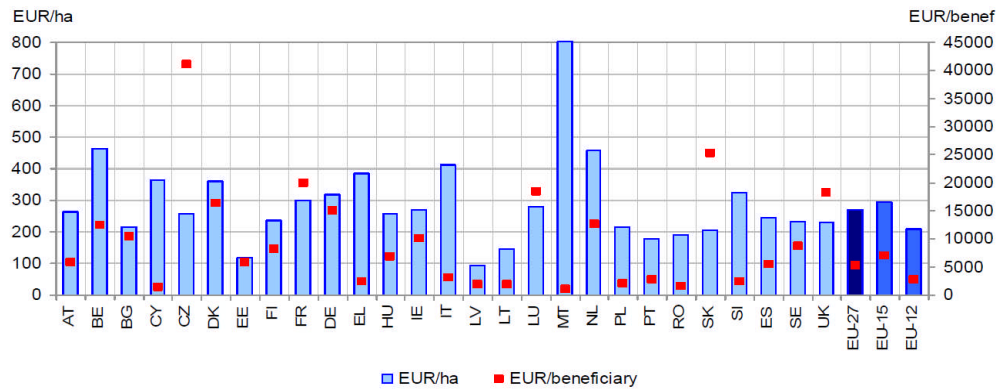
Strat. (€ * 1000)	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT
< 0 €	-5	-43		-155	-145		-370	-121	-310	-130	-1.358			-1
≥ 0 and < 500 €	591	10.764	1.135	1.562	12.089	1.601	68.097	62.986	7.003	1.192	137.654	5.302	9.651	26.756
≥ 500 and < 1 250 €	2.545	9.914	3.838	6.154	32.667	3.412	149.101	144.762	24.592	7.540	233.194	4.644	14.226	31.415
≥ 1 250 and < 2 000 €	3.593	6.496	4.561	7.943	37.466	2.495	140.931	143.108	29.758	14.253	177.892	2.588	7.068	16.676
≥ 2 000 and < 5 000 €	19.046	17.338	16.087	32.712	188.647	5.627	474.661	497.087	133.445	101.549	518.940	5.880	12.048	34.082
≥ 5 000 and < 10 000 €	44.203	18.050	20.801	54.210	397.178	5.813	621.731	666.722	343.044	227.697	562.361	4.431	9.038	26.126
≥ 10 000 and < 20 000 €	122.025	22.201	26.723	91.247	805.209	7.732	540.273	973.125	1.033.033	357.759	596.738	3.992	8.810	25.299
≥ 20 000 and < 50 000 €	251.632	46.306	47.388	236.458	1.618.974	12.715	378.728	1.378.251	3.333.703	398.463	714.974	3.151	11.978	27.289
≥ 50 000 and < 100 000 €	105.817	56.915	55.710	291.647	754.350	10.887	64.244	627.682	2.325.537	123.379	459.347	1.189	9.447	17.413
≥ 100 000 and < 150 000 €	16.698	32.521	57.385	121.078	256.858	5.932	4.808	238.159	528.544	24.209	199.861	333	2.654	9.120
≥ 150 000 and < 200 000 €	5.811	20.304	51.494	47.227	168.468	2.087	1.163	129.651	137.105	7.885	107.468		1.644	6.865
≥ 200 000 and < 250 000 €	1.980	11.289	49.965	25.288	151.215	651		72.876	50.231	2.270	62.912	217	657	3.822
≥ 250 000 and < 300 000 €	829	5.184	39.736	15.185	138.113	1.653	287	53.799	16.450	1.344	51.965		1.132	3.290
≥ 300 000 and < 500 000 €	665	6.734	102.315	18.805	373.197	1.080		83.442	25.036	1.511	74.440	802	1.803	6.961
≥ 500 000 €	541	8.587	86.339	7.041	511.782			88.712	93.046		238.359	640	839	1.612
Total	575.971	272.560	563.477	956.402	5.446.068	61.685	2.443.654	5.160.241	8.080.217	1.268.911	4.134.747	33.169	90.995	236.725

But how much of that is directed to Fighting-bull breeders? Some years ago, aid was given at a fixed quantity per head, but at present a flat amount per hectare is allotted. Since Pillar I Direct Aids to private farmers are not made public, due to current privacy rules, we cannot get exact figures for each and every bull farmer concerned. We estimate by dividing Pillar I Direct Aids per hectare, and then multiplying by the amount of hectares devoted to fighting-bulls.

Spanish land eligible for European funds amounted to 21.5ha million in 2010. Practically all eligible land ends up actually receiving grants, so we will do as the EU authorities do; work with eligible land. We safely assume that pastures for fighting bulls, being wholly eligible for CAP backing, will obtain a similar proportion of subsidies to any other farms in Spain.

The average subsidy for Spain that the EU uses in its own statistics is of 5.160€ million divided by 21.5ha million, that is 240€ per hectare. European Commission evidence for year 2008 shows such a figure, as can be observed in the following graph, checking the column for Spain ES (8):

Figure 5: Average direct payments per beneficiary and per hectare in each Member State



The amount of hectares dedicated to Fighting-bull pastures exceeds 540.000ha, according to the stockbreeding unions and to press reports (9) (10). This constitutes an enormous extension of land, but we must bear in mind that here we are not dealing with ordinary cattle; fighting bulls must be reared freely in their natural habitat, thus requiring open tracts and extensive conditions. When we apply the average EU subsidy to these grounds (540.000 x 240€), we obtain the final sum of **129.6€million**.

EU subsidy	240 € per hectare
Total hectares	540.000
TOTAL	129.600.000 €

This must be considered a minimum assessment, drawn from conservative estimates and working on official figures provided by the EU and by the stockbreeders themselves. It should be stressed that figures provided relate to CAP subsidies through Pillar I Direct payments (the vast majority), but exclude other Pillar I subsidies and aids through Pillar II (Rural Development), which are individual for each farmer and cannot be tracked.

We list a few random examples of EU funding for activities relating to bullfighting, and not included in the 129.6€ million mentioned above;

- 2009, 200 of the 1200 members of UCTL (one of the fighting-bull breeders in Spain) received close to 26€million from the EU in compensation for losses in agricultural exploitation.
- 2010 In Pozoblanco, 180.287€ from the Leader+ program were used by the local authority to create an audiovisual tour of the town's bullring.
- 2010 In Benamejí 25.975€ from the Rural Development Program (Proder) were spent on the local authority's bullring.

- 2011 The bullring in Bélmez, was renovated with the help of 300.000€ in European funding from Proder Andalusia.
- 2011, the local authority in Fuente del Maestre announced that its bullring would be renovated using Proder funding to the tune of 143.252€.

4. Further considerations

Facts and figures about bullfighting are hard to obtain because the administrations and private agents concerned are unwilling to deliver them. If they were interested, they would not have any difficulty in pinpointing expenses and summing them up in the respective balances. All kinds of critical organizations, including political parties, animal-rights activists, environmentalists and others have requested transparency over and over again. Given the lack of data, these groups have been forced to make their own reckoning.

In 2010, the Budget Commission of the European Parliament, following a proposal by the Greens/European Free Alliance, voted in favor of excluding Fighting-bull breeders from CAP subsidies. This motion was later defeated in the plenary, due to joint pressure from Spanish conservatives and Spanish socialists. The request for information about what amount of European money was channeled to such activities was not endorsed either.

One might wonder why Spanish governments of all signs are so keen on supporting the *Fiesta* and at the same time concealing such backing. Answers are no doubt complex, but they have to do with the fact that no economic, environmental, moral, cultural, popular or traditional reasons can be sustained to explain such a huge expenditure. If bullfighting were left alone, it would go broke; and both opponents and champions argue that without assistance, as a business it has no future.

Environmentalists have long disputed the benefits of bull-breeding (11). According to them, Fighting-bulls are neither an endangered species, nor are the rearing grounds considered of particular natural value, nor do they help to preserve other animals and vegetation. Experts clarify that such arguments are actually more or less sophisticated fabrications for cashing in more assistance.

As to cultural reasons, it must be stated that all polls show a sharply receding approval for bullfighting in Spain. In 2006, up to 72% of respondents showed no interest in bullfights, opposed to 20% showing a little interest and 7.4 a lot of interest; refusal went up to 85% in the case of young people, and only 18% of all interviewed believed that some kind of financial backing should be given to the industry. (12)

Why, then, do institutions insist in subsidizing bullfights? The main driving-force is political. We must bear in mind that, as soon as General Francisco Franco proclaimed and promoted this particular form of entertainment to the category of *Fiesta Nacional*, it became a staunch symbol and component of Spanish Nationalism. Prior to that, it was more of a

Mediterranean tradition as could be found in France or Portugal, and perhaps if the military dictatorship had not converted it into a political icon, Spanish bullfighting would have evolved along the lines of such events among its neighbors.

That is why it is so hard to obtain transparency; the ruling Spanish elites and officials at European, Spanish and local levels, are certainly aware that devoting taxpayer money to bullfights is a political and nationalistic venture. But admitting so much openly is risky, especially if we consider the shallow acceptance of *Toros*, its shaky economic background and the irrelevant benefits it entails to the environment. Last but not least, Spanish politicians are keenly conscious of the moral fragility of the show itself; torturing and slaughtering animals in public does not seem to fit in with 21st century sensibilities.

5. Notes

- (1) <http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/276608/0/fiestas/taurinas/millones/>
- (2) <http://grupoabolicionistadelatauromaquia.blogspot.com.es/p/subvenciones-espanolas-y-europeas.html>
- (3) <http://www.pacma.es/app/webroot/files/INFORME%20-INVETIGACION-oscurantismo-sbvenciones-publicas-tauromaquia-Andalucia.pdf>
- (4) http://www.ganaderoslidia.com/webroot/economia_toros.htm
- (5) http://www.ganaderoslidia.com/webroot/economia_toro.htm
- (6) <http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2012/03//22/pdfs/BOE-A-2012-3989.pdf> ;
more subsidies are listed in <http://www.yotampoco.org/textos.php?id=3>
- (7) http://www.ganaderoslidia.com/webroot/economia_toro.htm
- (8) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/perspec/cap-2020/impact-assessment/annex3a-d_en.pdf
- (9) <http://www.elmundo.es/mundodinero/2009/12/30/economia/1262196991.html>
- (10) http://www.ganaderoslidia.com/webroot/mesa_toro.html
- (11) [http://faada.org/userfiles/file/Contraargumentos_medioambientales_tauromaquia_2\(1\).pdf](http://faada.org/userfiles/file/Contraargumentos_medioambientales_tauromaquia_2(1).pdf)
- (12) <http://www.asanda.org/documentos/tauromaquia/encuestas-sobre-corridas-de-toros/10.2006>