INTRODUCTION
Family-farm systems are largely dominant in the rural communities of northeastern Portugal. These systems can be organized based on the interrelations and the diversity of its characteristics such as farmer’s age, farm dimension, external incomes, productive orientation, or livestock type and number (1).
A significant number of the regional family-farm systems raise Mirandesa cows, a local cattle breed classified as endangered in 1994. Since 1995 the Mirandesa veil enjoys a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). The carcasses of wearing calves, that aren’t PDO, are currently paid 4 €/kg. The PDO producers receive 5.25€/kg, a 31% higher premium price. Since 1998, a producers group guarantees the sale of all production. In the last decade, the national inflation average was 2.45%; the group achieved a gross margin on the sale price, on average, 1% above inflation. However, despite the commercial success of the PDO, the Mirandesa cow and the farmers numbers continues to decline.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
The study of demographic census of the family-farm systems and cows in the period 1996 - 2008. The case studies of 10 family-farms, representing the diversity of regional family-farm systems (1)(2), during the period 2006-2010. The case studies included: UAA and the prices evolution of the production factors with more impact in the intermediate consumption of the PDO Mirandesa meat production system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
In the past 15 years, despite the success of the PDO Mirandesa, the farm numbers decreased 64%, and the breeding cows numbers decreased 3.7% (Fig. 1).

The most stable systems were more similar to the traditional production mode, with 3-10 cows per farm. On these farms the calf gross margin was, in 1999, 50% higher than in more specialized farms (>10 cows)(3). However, the family-farm systems with more than 10 cows where those that grew the most (Fig. 2,3).

Many intensive farms ended recently its activity, or uncertainty overshadows its future, because the producers don’t have enough land to support larger herds (> 20 cows) to assure the family income.

CONCLUSIONS
Annual forage production will tend to decrease because its intermediate costs are strongly correlated with fuel prices. The future competitiveness of the regional family-farm systems, among other options, depends: 1) on the conversion of oats cultivated areas into permanent pastureland and; 2) better cooperation/integration at family-farm level with the development of common permanent pastureland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY