Session 6: Challenges and Developments in recording and sampling for sheep and goats.

S06.O-01

MILK RECORDING IN SHEEP AND GOATS: STATE OF THE ART AND MATERIALS USED FOR RECORDING AND SAMPLING

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According to the ICAR online survey, the number of dairy sheep and goats in official milk recording reached 890,000 ewes and 410,000 does in 2021. Flocks are large (200-500 females). The milking routine is fast (2-3 minutes / female) and organised by batch of 12 to 24 females milked at the same time. A video showing recording and sampling will be presented during the session. Such milking systems often requires 2 or 3 technicians in the milking parlour to achieve recording and sampling activities. Moreover, due to the size of the flocks, sampling is accordingly expensive. Therefore, to stimulate the development of milk recording and overcome these constraints, the ICAR working group on sheep and goats has constantly promoted simplified designs of milk recording, especially of qualitative milk recording, as one of its major objectives. The recommendations are mainly based on AT or AC methods (i.e. recording of only one milking per day for both milk yield and sampling (this simplified design has consequently strongly increased over the last years to exceed 90%), the sampling of a part of the females (mostly the first parity) and only a part of the test-days (3 samples per female in the middle of the lactation are relevant for genetic purpose). However, the impact of qualitative milk recording remains low, especially in countries with large sheep and goat populations.
Devices used for recording and sampling in sheep and goats are reviewed yearly within the ICAR survey. Most of the devices used are still jars approved by ICAR with the exception status of the guidelines, as they were in use before 1995 and were accepted by the ICAR member organisations at this time. This is the case in most of the countries. Some other countries use devices indifferently in sheep and goats without actual data on precision in either of the species. Until now, there are a limited number of meters that have passed the ICAR test, probably due to difficulties to meet the requirements (low quantity of milk per test-day, high contents, and high viscosity of milk in sheep) with regard to the potential market. These agreed milkmeters have been moderately used so far in milk recording operations. For some of them, one reason could be the lack of suitability for sampling. Exchanging the experiences of the different stakeholders may help to stimulate the development and adaptation of milk recording and devices in small ruminants.