

FOREWORD

This is the second issue of statistics on the extent of milk performance recording activity in buffalo, collected and published by the Working Group on Buffalo Recording of ICAR, in order to allow all ICAR member countries to be aware of buffalo milk productivity worldwide.

The difficulty in collecting these information emerged three years ago, when we first tried to ask for them. Despite of these difficulties, we are insisting in this action because our short-term purpose is to promote cooperation among countries, and we believe that this exchange of information is the first milestone in improving international communication, cooperation and standardization of recording activities. Difficulties depend on the fact that most buffalo recording organizations are not accustomed to show their data, and to compare them with the data of other countries. Moreover, we have realised that often the collected data through the recording activity are used only to progeny test AI bulls, therefore they go directly to the data processing system and to the AI stations. In this way, even in the countries where the recording activity has been implemented many years ago, most of the benefits of the activity are lost: on one side, farmers do not receive any advice for managing their herds – no results on productivity, reproduction patterns to help culling and feeding decisions; on the other side, the data do not enter into a regional/national database, that would be the best tool for allowing policy makers to understand production systems and to make national strategies for livestock development.

Therefore, here we are with the second issue of statistics on the "Results of the Milk Recording Activity in Buffaloes". We decided to publish the data, even if some information are partial or unsatisfactory. At least, we have some printed information, and anybody might realise how important is to be aware of the productivity of livestock in other countries. We would like to point out here the most relevant items of this second issue. First of all, it refers the data of three more countries: Turkey, Syria and Brazil. In these countries, the three local organizers of milk performance recording of buffalo belong to the academic world and have regularly participated to ICAR activities during the past years. We are therefore proud to show the data they have collected; on this occasion, we emphasize that scientists can play a very important role in the promotion of animal recording through the organization of the system in a pilot group of herds, and performing milk analyses and data processing using academic facilities.

A second item to be made evident is the change in the animal recording systems in the transition countries. The countries of Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union are facing difficulties in continuing the recording and selection activity that was fully organized and supported by the government: for us, it was not possible to obtain data from Romania; in Azerbaijan less and less animals are recorded and a private Buffalo Breeders' Association was created which is actively promoting buffalo improvement and would be happy to have the opportunity to participate to international programmes; in Bulgaria, the organization of the recording/selection system has moved from the Ministry of Agriculture to a Research Institute, and it is fully paid by private farmers.

The third important item, that was made evident in this new set of statistics, is the increase in numbers of recorded buffaloes in Egypt, Iran and Italy. Moreover, it seems that the system in Egypt is well settled now after a few years of running in: the owners of large herds fully pay for this activity while the small farmers get the system free of charge. Also several output information sheets are now available to the Egyptian farmers who receive advice for managing their herds through results on individual productivity and reproduction patterns of their animals, allowing comparison with other similar farms.

Finally, we have added a new table, showing the extent of artificial insemination, the costs of the recording activity and the provided output to the farmers.

We hope that these data will be commented and discussed. We ask everybody to provide suggestions to allow a better publication in two year time: do please mail suggestions to bianca.moioli@isz.it.

We thank all experts who provided these information and who participate in the activity of the International Committee for Animal Recording.

ICAR Working Group on Buffalo

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