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# Animal identification and performance recording in Azerbaijan

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## Introduction

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Azerbaijan is situated at the intersection of Europe and Asia. It has a surface area of 86.4 thousand km<sup>2</sup> and a population of eight million. The country gained independence in 1991. Before that, it was a part of the Soviet Union.

Cattle breeding in the Republic of Azerbaijan has always been the most important area of the economy.

At the end of the 1920s during the stabilisation of the social economy, cattle belonging to peasants were taken from them and given to kolkhoz and sovkhoz. After the collapse of the USSR kolkhoz and sovkhoz began to be replaced by the private sector.

Only a small portion of animals, one percent of cattle and 0.8 percent of sheep and goats remain as State property, while the rest have been privatised. Since the reform the number of animals has increased.

*Table 1. Trends and recent changes in the total number of farm animals in Azerbaijan (in thousands heads).*

Category	Years					
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Cattle	1 681.7	1 779.9	1 843.5	1 896.5	1 909.8	1 938.7
Including Buffaloes	291.9	298.0	302.0	293.3	288.8	280.0
Total number of dairy cows	619.6	644.6	691.8	727.4	760.0	780.0
Sheep and goats	4 644.4	4 922.0	5 257.0	5 411.2	5 551.9	5 617.5
Pigs	30.4	23.4	21.0	23.4	26.1	21.0
Poultry	13.3	13.5	12.4	12.5	12.4	12.6

*Table 2. Trends and recent changes in milk and meat production in Azerbaijan.*

Category	Unit	Years					
		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Milk	Thuds ton	826.5	843.3	881.2	923.8	949.5	991.0
Meat	Thuds ton	135.0	150.8	158.8	168.3	179.3	187.5
(live weight)							
Wool	Thuds ton	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.9	10.3	11.0
Eggs	Mill	455.0	477.0	491.6	507.2	509.0	525.8

1 ton = 1 000 kg

During this period the production of meat, milk and wool increased (Table 2).

The total value of animal products has reached 405 milliard manats (1 US\$ = 4 400 manats) and 46.1 percent of it is at the expense of cattle breeding. In 1983 this index was 30 percent. There is a retail trade of meat in cities, villages and streets which confirms this factor. In the better years of Soviet rule, the free retail trade of meat was considered to be rare. Now there is no problem in this field, but we have many other problems

### **Number of cows being milk recorded**

We only have registration programme data on dairy cows, but data on milk recording are not available.

The farming structure in Azerbaijan consists of 33 thousand peasant/farmer housekeepings. Experience showed that keeping a small number of animals is not efficient. Therefore, in recent years, the establishment of housing has begun and herd sizes have increased.

### **Breeder associations**

There are no breeder associations in Azerbaijan.

### **Who is providing support services to animal breeders?**

A governmental institution and private organizations provide support services to animal breeders.

### **A governmental institution**

The Central Board of Animals, Selection and Pasture of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Republic, Scientific Production Amalgamate of Azerbaijan, provide advisory services for animals to animal breeders. Different private organizations and international projects give credit to animal breeders.

The full official name of the organization in charge of milk recording in Azerbaijan is the Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, the legal status of the recording organization is that of a governmental service. Every month farmers and 25 State pedigree organizations fill out forms on cow and buffalo milk production, meat production, number of animals and beef cattle and report to the Regional Statistical offices. The Regional Statistical offices report to the Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan. After which, reports are issued and published monthly and yearly.

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### **Organization of animal and/or milk recording**

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The system of funding for recording services is totally paid by the State and the State support is increasing.

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### *Trends and recent changes in the system of payments*

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Before 1991 the State farms (kolkhoz and sovkhoz) were collected; from 1991 to date, the data of the 25 State pedigree farms and new farmer farms have been collected. Trends and recent changes are:

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### *Trends and recent changes in the organization of animal and milk recording*

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- decreased number of report indexes;
- many owners do not want to register in order to hide their income;
- all previous laboratories and meat-milk factories stopped their activity after the reform. Due to this reason, the analysis of fat and protein content and bacteriological analysis in Azerbaijan were not carried out. In exceptional cases all analysis are provided by veterinary laboratories (paid by the owners).

Animal production in Azerbaijan is split into two areas, namely breeding and non-breeding, which are developed in different ways. Whilst the breeding area has relatively well developed recording and therefore, also identification and registration infrastructure, the non-breeding area, which includes most private animal owners, has a very low degree of organization. However, this situation is likely to improve as there are substantial structural changes expected, speeding up the organizational activities in the whole of animal production.

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### **Animal identification and registration**

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For a small country such as Azerbaijan with significant agriculture resources, the most appropriate way of preparing the sector for EU accession is to develop an agricultural system which is competitive on the open market. For such a system, both size and structure, needs to be quite different from the system that existed during the Soviet era. It is essential, therefore, that the policy responds to rural social problems and demands more support from the agricultural sector in order that it takes an appropriate form, namely, focusing on efficiency and competitiveness enhancement and not policies that delay unavoidable changes or maintain or increase distortions.

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**Methods of  
identification**

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The identification and registration systems are used only at State pedigree organizations. Since 1994 due to the financial situation, only old eartags have been applied.