
The role of breeder organizations and the state in animal identification and registration in Albania

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Introduction

Livestock in Albania has an important place in the overall agriculture output. During 1999 animal production realised 49 percent of the agricultural output.

The fact that animal production has an important place in gross agricultural output is related not only to the appropriate conditions or the inherit traditions but also to the increased needs and requests for more animal production especially the typical Albanian ones. During the privatisation of the agricultural system 490 000 small family farms were created of which 320 000 (or 82 percent) of them are breeding livestock animals.

The average size of the land is 1.4 ha/farm. It varies from 3-4 ha/farm in low areas to 0.5 ha/farm in mountain areas.

Table 1. Number of animals (in '000 heads).

Description	Years			
	1996	1997	1998	1999
Cattle	806	771	705	720
Cows	483	432	423	432
Sheep/goats	3 232	3 006	2 923	3 061
Sheep	1 982	1 858	1 872	1 941
Milk sheep	1 453	1 372	1 395	1 435
Goat	1 250	1 148	1 051	1 120
Milk goats	895	840	764	796
Pigs	98	79	83	81
Sow	12	10	9	9
Equidae	226	226	221	215
Poultry	4 108	4 566	4 862	5 023
Beehives	54	57	57	67

Recent years have been characterised by the number of animals stabilised and the inclination to the increasing of the yield through the high potential animal breeding in some species.

It is necessary to say that the lack of infrastructure of the collection and production processing systems, the lack of information related to markets and prices and the lack of the agricultural credit bank, etc., are some of the factors that obstruct animal production progress.

The private family farms have a limited number of animals and they mainly produce to fulfil their family needs. Independently of the limited number of animals, the extension of the production for markets is observed. The favourable situation is influenced by a number of factors, namely:

- the need for milk and its by-products supply to families;
- the low cost of fodder production especially in extensive conditions;
- the particular characteristics of milk production as a continuous source of income.

The extension of animal production is realised by the increase in the number of specialised farms. There are about 705 farms breeding five to ten cows and about 578 farms breeding over 100 sheep and goats.

Table 2. Differentiation and development of the production of farms.

	Cows for milk			Cattle for meat		Sheep and goats	
	< 5	6-10	11-50	>50	11-50	100-200	>200
Year 1998	340 230	381	39	87	1	1 099	152
Year 1999	383 711	640	65	165	1	1 482	347
Difference	43 481	259	29	78		383	195

As we can see, milk production is at a high level. It fulfils the requests of the market while egg and meat production is still at low levels.

Milk per capita is 196 kg, 21 kg meat (slaughter weight) and 121 eggs per capita from local production.

The animal production development rhythm is reported in table 3.

Cows produce 84 percent of the total milk production, sheep and goats produce 16 percent. Milk consumption is 250 kg per capita of the population (FAO, 1998).

Cattle produce 55 percent of total meat production, sheep and goats produce 31 percent and pig and poultry produce 14 percent. Meat consumption is 30 kg per capita of the population.

Table 3. Livestock production (in '000 tons).

Description	Years			
	1996	1997	1998	1999
Milk	1 043.7	849.6	861	907
Eggs (in mill)	314.0	337.0	397	414
Sheep wool	3.2	2.9	3	3
Meat (live weight)	105.4	104.3	106	111

There are many associations carrying out tasks and coordinating activities in the livestock sector. They are: the Association of Cattle Breeding, Association of the Inseminators of Albania, Dairy Businessmen Association, "Begatia" DDP-FARM-CO Association, ELBA-NOR working in the Elbasani district, Farmers' Association of Jersey Cattle Breed in the Shkodra District, Farmers' Association of the Taranteze Cattle Breed in the Korea districts, etc.

Associations were created as a new need. They provide specialised advice, information and services, coordinate activities in relation to: the other associations, research and experimentation institutes, public authorities and the meat and dairy industry. They solve problems related to livestock producers, trade tasks, etc.

For example, the Association of Farmers of the Taranteze Cattle Breed in the Korea District is active and well-organized.

- It has a General Assembly of farmers breeding Taranteze pure breed and its crossing.
- The Association Steering Committee is composed of five farmers (the President of the Association, Vice-President, the Secretary, an accountant and another member with no specific function).
- The Association operates based on its statute and internal regulations.
- The preservation of the breeding and productive indexes and the increase in the number of pure-bred animals and their crosses.
- The organization of milk control, artificial insemination and the structures of the herd book and its own herd book. The Association of the Farmers of the Taranteze Cattle Breed created the first herd book in Lithuania.

Livestock breeder associations

Association tasks

The reproductive animals with their own individual data, offspring testing and production data, etc. are registered in the herd book. Based on these data, breeding values are estimated and consist of:

- the testing of their offspring for the traits related to: yield, reproduction, calving, management, etc.;
- the calculation of breeding values;
- the determination of the animal breeding objectives:
 - extension of this breed at district level and in some other mountain districts;
 - protection of the economic interests of farmers breeding this breed;
 - organization of the selling and purchasing market of the animals and their importation;
 - realisation of the technical assistance based on results of milk analyses, feeding of animals, breeding systems in mountain areas, etc.; and
 - it realises milk production and quality contracts of more than 150 cows.

The results of milk control that include analysis of fat and protein content, as well as somatic cell counts are carried out at the UPRA Taranteze-France laboratories (the Zootechnician Research Institute, ZRI, at the quality food control laboratory, carry out analyses for all animal breeds throughout the country). This information is automatically transferred to the associations with all needed conclusions and the right orientations to give technical advice related to feeding, feed control that includes feed planning and feed budgeting.

Qualified advisers create positive technical and economic results. They supply general information of high interest to farmers in order to help themselves and others at all times. They contribute to the increase in general knowledge of the livestock producers. The registration data are used both in the interest of farmers and dairy plants for example, fat and protein content, food consumption, weight gain or other milk data are handled in the interests of the dairy plant and the farmers themselves.

These data are very important to the processing and marketing associations that give information to the development and quality of production. They are valid for the production cost of the product. Based on these costs they decide the prices of the sales (higher sales or higher prices).

The Association handles the interests of the producers in relation to the food industry and prepares the expenditure balance.

- The Association has imported a number of breed animals.
- It organizes some special open days where farmers can exchange their experience for breeding of the animals and feeding, etc.

- It organizes meetings and animal shows or other materials at regional levels or prepares booklets, photographs, programmes on radio or television.
- There is a technical group which supports the Association. It is composed of SBI (Institute of Sheep and Goats) and DBU (Agriculture and Food Department) specialists of the Korea district.

Contacts with research and experimental institutes are considered to be of great importance for the future of the Association. The services provided are continuously improved by incorporating the new knowledge and new technologies. So, it inspires the scientific researchers to undertake projects in the interest of associations. Therefore, the scientific researchers are elected directly by their boards.

A number of EU directives and regulations have been adopted to handle livestock production. Some EU directives and regulations are produced according to our conditions. For example, identification and registration of the animals, breeding stocks and pure-bred reproducers in livestock, the control of the animals and their production, artificial insemination, artificial insemination centres, functioning of the pure-bred herd book, requests of the quality of milk, control of mixed feed, feeding additives and intensive production systems, etc.

The Association adopts its systems to the existing requirements of the authorities. It can therefore, handle in the same way the identification system, registration of the animals, herd book keeping, etc., or through a positive dialogue with the authorities, request possible changes.

Authorities on the other hand, reply in time with concrete solutions which have a positive effect on the livestock producers. In this way, correct relations between associations, research institutes and public authorities are created.

- The Association is responsible and creates all the conditions of animal eartagging and insemination of the animals but they are weak. They have no funds and therefore, the State firstly carries out the identification of the farms and the animals in conformity to the ECC 92/102 Directive.

Actually there are about 409 artificial insemination private points. The inseminators keep the following data:

- breed, animal identification;
- all inseminations;
- date of the last insemination;
- data on biological material;
- calving.

Contact with authorities

Animal identification is made through the use of plastic eartags. Identification and registration systems are based on EU directions and zootechnic service and veterinary and statistic programmes.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MOAF) is in charge of organising and controlling the implementation of the farms and animal identification and registration.

It is MOAF that designs the range of identification of animals and extension of registration in conformity with the funds of the State budget, local authority funds, farmers' participation and other programmes.

The farmers and breed associations, etc., are responsible for the implementation of the identification and registration programmes.

MOAF defines:

- identification code;
- rules and procedures of identification and registration.

The eartagging system is composed of the first two letters of Albania (AL) and nine digits. The number of the district, birth year and the rank of the birth are involved in this official nine-digit eartag.

- e.g. AL 01 - district number;
- 99 - birth year;
- 00001 - individual number.

No later than five days after a calf is born, it is registered in the Association herd book. It is identified no later than 30 days after birth.

- The Association has to preserve the biological material and handle it through all the members of the associations and the other farmers in the area where the spreading of this breed is foreseen;
- it sets up contacts with consumers, informs them on the importance of developing the livestock sector as it is closely linked to feed production, especially to quality and tradition;
- the Association is engaged in the qualification of farmers in the research and experimental institutes and abroad (at ZRI, there are 210 inseminators and other specialists in the framework of the Italian project "Integrate Animal Husbandry" and 15 farmers and inseminators in France, French project);
- a number of articles in local and central organisations of the press are published;
- farmer associations have imported about 190 cows of the Holstein breed and 80 of the Taranteze breed and distributed them in some districts throughout the country. The same can be said for imported semen. Approximately 150 580 doses of semen have been distributed, 30 containers are setting up new AI points, etc.

These associations hope to improve milk and meat production in order to increase farmer incomes.

The farmers pay their membership fee and will soon pay for:

- concrete services, advice, information, evaluation of breeding stock;
- production fees, etc.

The State supplies a number of projects and has supplied and are continuously supplying the activities and the functioning of most of the associations which gradually take into hand the application of breeding programmes, identification of animals, collection of the production data and herd book keeping, etc.

As we can see, technical and financial support is requested and this should be recognised.

Financing
