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Rabbit production and breeding in Turkey

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SUMMARY - The rabbit production in modern and commercial sense in Turkey is recent and has not developed compared to the other animal husbandry branches. Between the years 1970-1975, it was rather conducted as a household business; however a rapid development has especially been seen in Marmara and West Anatolian regions as mid-capacity commercial establishments. Today this branch of animal husbandry seems to have come to a halt. No reason has been seen not to develop this animal husbandry branch with some incentives and measures.

Key words: Rabbit, production, breeding, Turkey.

RESUME - "La production et l'élevage du lapin en Turquie". La production du lapin dans le sens moderne et commercial est un sujet nouveau et n'est pas encore développé par rapport à d'autres secteurs d'élevage en Turquie. Bien qu'il ait montré un développement rapide surtout comme exploitation familiale et comme exploitation commerciale à capacité moyenne dans les régions de Marmara et d'Anatolie Occidentale entre les années 1970 et 1975, aujourd'hui ce secteur d'élevage montre un ralentissement. Il n'y a aucune raison, en prenant certaines précautions et en appliquant certains encouragements, pour ne pas développer ce secteur d'élevage.

Mots-clés: Lapin, production, élevage, Turquie.

Introduction

The rabbit production in modern and commercial sense in Turkey, is just new and has not developed compared to the other animal husbandry branches.

The very first regular rabbit production studies in Turkey started at Ankara Poultry Research Institute with the imported New Zealand White breed from the U.S.A. in 1963. Later, various institutions belonging to the Ministry of Forestry and Rural Affairs started to form selective herds in the various parts of the country. These institutions made demonstration studies in the regions where they were and the rabbit production was only conducted in the state institution up to 1970 (ANONYMOUS, 1989).

However, between 1970-1975 with the parallel development in the world, a rapid development in our country has also started. During this period a significant rapid development was seen in our rabbit production with the exotic breeds and convenient production techniques. These developments were not improved in recent years, and because of various reasons they came to a halt (ANONYMOUS, 1989).

On the other hand, the deficit of available animal protein (animal protein consumption per person per day is barely 20 g) could cause a positive change

towards rabbit meat consumption, besides the chances to sell the rabbit skin at higher prices compared to the European countries, with an increase of requests for information and animal material, the export possibilities of rabbit meat and other factors show that the future of rabbit production is likely to be brilliant in Turkey.

The situation of rabbit production in Turkey

As the National Statistics (State Statistical Institute) do not provide information about rabbit production, we are not able to give an exact number of rabbits.

However, the number of rabbits available in Turkey is rather low, and it is known that the production is mostly concentrated in Marmara and West Anatolian Regions (ANONYMOUS, 1989; KOÇAK and SÖNMEZ, 1975). The most common rabbit production breed in Turkey is the exotic New Zealand White originated and produced widely from exotic breeds. In addition to these, Californian and Chinchilla breeds, crossbreds of various exotic breeds and native breeds are also seen.

The production is mainly a small household business (ANONYMOUS, 1989). It is possible to say that in

Turkey there are no big rabbit production firms except some medium size ones.

The production is conducted in simple rabbit houses as there are not enough feeders, drinkers, cages and convenient equipment.

Some universities' departments related to the subject and institutions belonging to the Ministry of Forestry and Rural Affairs are trying to produce some rabbits and are carrying out some studies although they are not significant (TESTIK *et al.*, 1989).

The important points

The most important points of the rabbit husbandry problems in Turkey can be detailed as follows:

- a) Breeders have difficulties to find good quality animal material,
- b) Insufficient technique and practical knowledge of breeders,
- c) People are not used to eating rabbit meat,
- d) Modern production techniques are not applied,
- e) The rabbit production and side industry are not established and there are other difficulties such as providing cages, feeders, drinkers and other equipments,
- f) Insufficient advertisement and marketing problems,

g) Insufficient integration and organization,

h) Insufficient incentive supporting measures and scientific knowledge in rabbit production.

Result

The rabbit production has not developed in Turkey yet. However, when the animal protein deficiency and exports are considered, the rabbit production development is expected to be improved in the future. The enlightening of breeders on this subject, the implementation of incentive measures and supporting and finding markets will increase the interest for rabbit production. I think that the rabbit production in Turkey will increase markedly if the necessary importance is given to the subject.

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