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The situation of extension services in Sardinia

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SUMMARY - The model of advisory service given by the Regional Breeders Association of Sardinia (ARAS) is based on qualified technicians, agronomists and vets who work directly on the farm; they keep also strict contact with the ARAS Milk Analysis Laboratory. They have the target of improving the quality of the products, milk in particular. They collaborate with the Research department to ensure continuity in the breeding reality in Sardinia.

Key words: Advisory service, milk quality.

RESUME - "Situation des services de développement en Sardaigne". Le modèle d'assistance technique fourni par l'Association Régionale des Eleveurs de Sardaigne, prévoit l'emploi de techniciens qualifiés, de zootechniciens et de vétérinaires, lesquels opèrent directement en campagne, maintenant en même temps un contact étroit avec le Laboratoire ARAS d'Analyse du Lait qui a pour objectif d'obtenir une amélioration qualitative de la production zootechnique et en particulier du lait. Les collaborations continues avec les organismes de recherche assurent la continuité entre la réalité zootechnique insulaire et le monde de la recherche lui-même.

Mots-clés : Assistance technique, qualité du lait.

Introduction

The Regional Breeders Association, ARAS, is a legal corporation recognized by DPRS No. 19, 9th March 1982, since this date ARAS manages the national plan against low fertility and perinatal mortality in Sardinia livestock farms.

This plan, founded by Sardinian Regional government with the purpose of increasing livestock productions, at beginning had a staff of 24 agronomists only for agrarian assistance, but gradually this plan became a global assistance service including vet assistance and pig sector, the purpose now is to assist more breeders and better efficiency of livestock production in our island.

Advisory service scheme

Present staff consist of 233 technicians whose 8 co-ordinators (Table 1); a main feature of this advisory service is a constant collaboration between veterinary surgeons and agronomists, in fact they work together to give a better quality support (Table 2).

Technicians use also personal computer with feeding software (Razio Best for cattle, Assis-T for sheep) as well as three software created by ARAS: PERSEO for demographic, structural, economical and yield data; SANITARY PROGRAM and PQLV2 for milk quality and computing payment based on milk quality.

Technician's tasks are the following: (i) carry on technical consultancy in their operative zone at associated or single breeders, through periodic visit in farm; (ii) develop fertilization plans, fodder plants plans, and practical feeding plans; (iii) give instructions about genetic improvement, according to Provincial Breeders Association; (iv) develop modern technicians as artificial insemination, cervical or intrauterine, in dairy ewes; (v) do test pregnancy using ultra sound scanners (No. 12); (vi) do medical herd examination and preventive treatment according to AA.SS.LL. (National Sanitary Service); (vii) take samples for disease and parasites to send for diagnosis to the Istituto Zooprofilattico; and (viii) collaborate to AA. SS. LL. about general sanitary measures.

Table 1. Present staff

Province	Type technicians	No. technicians for sector			Total
		Cattle	Sheep-goat	Pig	
Cagliari	Agronomists	4	21	0	25
	Vets	2	23	1	26
Nuoro	Agronomists	3	31	1	35
	Vets	3	31	0	34
Oristano	Agronomists	3	9	0	12
	Vets	2	9	1	12
Sassari	Agronomists	6	34	1	41
	Vets	4	36	0	40
Total		27	194	4	225

Table 2. Number of farms included in the advisory service scheme

Sector	Number	Cagliari	Nuoro	Oristano	Sassari	Total regional
Cattle	Farms	62	130	80	132	404
	Heads	4,375	6,308	9,749	9,073	29,505
Sheep-goat	Farms	1,115	2,723	703	2,340	6,881
	Heads	291,255	571,243	159,944	610,623	1,633,065
Pig	Farms	37	27	22	13	99
	Heads	4,205	2,658	1,970	1,570	10,403

Reliable milk quality, to protect consumer health is the first target of this assistance plan, according to National and Community laws.

ARAS is active by its technicians and the Regional Milk Analysis Laboratory in all phases of the production process: from farm to cheese factory, to achieve the best quality.

Technicians explain breeders about analysis results and they look for solving feeding, hygienic or sanitary problems which compromise milk quality.

Since 1984 the Milk Quality Plan have started with the purpose of quality payment in cow, sheep and goat milk; quality payment in cow milk is now solid reality and, thank to the collaboration between technicians and laboratory we have 10 cheese co-operative factories which actually pay sheep milk on the basis of its quality and 18 which are starting to use the same approach.

Also ARAS, have promoted collaboration with Research Departments to solve practical quality problems like high bacterial and somatic cells count. We are still far to excellent results, but ARAS job has appreciable decreasing bacterial count, although Sardinia farms have a structural gap only now partially solved by Sardinian Regional Government.

Regional milk analysis laboratory

In July 1997 ARAS laboratory was accredited at SINAL (National System Accredity Laboratory) in accordance with rule UNI-CEI EN 45001 and rules UNI EM ISO series 9000. Laboratory is an important part of the advisory service and a basic reference for Agronomists and Vets. Regional

Laboratory analyses milk for Provincial Breeders Association according to the genealogic book rules; it is available to collaborate with cheese factories, Research Departments and the local University to carry on experimental programs.

In 1996/97 the regional laboratory analysed milk samples coming from 60 cheese factories (coop or private) to determine those parameters: fat, protein, lactose, bacterial count, somatic cells, pH, inhibitors, cryscopi, urea.

In 1995/96, for genealogic book, the ARAS Laboratory analysed 28,609 milk sheep samples, 196,487 milk cow samples, 4,857 milk buffalo samples and 452 milk goat samples. In the same year analysed, for Quality Milk Plan 26,427 milk cow samples, 98,153 milk sheep samples. 3,966 milk goat samples and 47 milk buffalo samples.

Conclusions

This advisory service have obtained good results, however there is work to do to realize better efficiency of livestock productions to protect consumer health.