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Organization of extension services. National case studies: Poland

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SUMMARY - The economic transformation in Poland after 1989 caused tremendous [90%] reduction of the sheep population, and paradoxically, a slight increase in the population of goats. The projects on the reconstruction of Polish sheep farming, changing the meat and wool utilization into meat utilization, as well as the work on the development of goat breeding, need to have a modern and efficient system of transferring scientific and technological progress in the case of both kinds of farm animals. The chief institution to realize the transfer of progress is the producers' union, The Polish Sheep Farmers' Union, a nationwide organization financed mainly by the State. Research institutes, agricultural colleges and agricultural guidance centres connected with local authorities are the supporting institutions. In recent years some projects on sheep and goat production were realized by newly established institutions supporting the economic and social transformations in the country in Poland, financed from abroad or by the government. Extension Services in Poland are characterized by small variety of transmission forms, scarce use of modern audio-visual aids, no elaborated system of evaluation of the new solutions' efficiency and their promotion among farmers, as well as no co-ordination between various institutions' activities. Breaking these limitations is one of the most significant factors in overcoming the deep crisis in sheep farming and further development of goat breeding in Poland.

Key words: Sheep, goats, extension services.

RESUME - "Organisation des services de vulgarisations. Etude de cas nationaux : La Pologne". Les transformations économiques en Pologne après l'an 1989 ont été la cause d'un profond déclin (90%) du cheptel ovin et, paradoxalement, d'une croissance du cheptel caprin, mais à un niveau très bas. On réalise les programmes de reprise de l'élevage intérieur des moutons en changeant d'utilisation et en passant de la laine et la viande à la viande, et on entreprend des travaux sur le programme de développement de l'élevage des chèvres. Mais cela exige la création d'un système tout à fait moderne et effectif pour la transmission du progrès scientifique et technique en ce qui concerne les deux espèces d'animaux d'élevage. L'institution centrale qui réalise le transfert du progrès à la pratique, est l'organisation des producteurs : Association Polonaise des Bergers financée principalement par l'Etat. Parmi les institutions qui la soutiennent on compte des instituts scientifiques de recherche de la même branche, des écoles supérieures d'agriculture et centres de conseil agricole, ces dernières dépendant directement de l'administration locale. Dans les dernières années quelques programmes concernant la reproduction des moutons et des chèvres ont été réalisés dans des instituts récemment établis qui soutiennent les transformations économiques et sociales de la campagne polonaise financées par des sources étrangères de vulgarisation ou des sources publiques. Ce qui caractérise les services d'extension en Pologne, c'est une trop faible diversité des formes de transfert, l'utilisation limitée des méthodes modernes de transmission audiovisuelles, le manque de nouvelles solutions et leur promotion parmi les agriculteurs de même que le manque de coordination des activités poursuivies dans cette sphère par des instituts différents. La rupture de ces blocages sera l'un des facteurs essentiels pour surmonter la crise profonde de l'élevage des moutons et pour le développement prospectif de l'élevage des chèvres en Pologne.

Mots-clés : Mouton, chèvre, services de vulgarisation.

General situation: The policy of agricultural development in the country

The political transformation in Poland after 1989 in connection with the introduction of market economy resulted in very deep changes in the agriculture. These had a very bad effect on the situation in sheep farming. The withdrawal of the State subsidies for the wool production and deep decline in the economic situation of the textile industry resulted in significantly worse profitability of the production. The Polish sheep farming, unprepared to effective meat utilization of sheep, reacted with very deep [90%] reduction of the sheep population, from 4.99 million heads in 1986 to 0.52 million in 1996. Paradoxically, at that time the development and rapid increase of the goat population began

(estimated 80-100 thousand at present). Until recently, goats' role in market production had been rather insignificant.

The situation of sheep and goat production system and on market organization

The situation of sheep and goat production in the food market is very specific. Practically, there is no home market of the main sheep product, i.e., slaughter lambs. Nearly all the commercial production of slaughter lambs and post-selection ewes is exported, while the wool, which makes 8-12% of the production value, is processed at home. There is no milk utilization except the highlands (southern Poland), and it is only in recent years that the first attempts of milk utilization have been made in the lowlands. The reason for this situation in the market of sheep products is that mutton is seldom used in traditional Polish cuisine on one hand, and on the other hand the production is scattered all over the country, and the promotion of the products is not sufficient. Practically, there is no goat product market in Poland, either. It is chiefly the producers themselves who sell the scant commercial production of goat milk, so valuable from the point of view of healthy diet.

The existing structure of extension services

Global description of institutions at the national and regional level

Responsibilities, territorial jurisdiction, connections

The breeding and technological progress of the sheep and goat production in Poland is introduced in a few ways (Fig. 1), by a few entitled institutions who have means for this purpose, but their activities are co-ordinated to a small extent. The most important nationwide institution exerting content-related influence on these activities is the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Market (MAFM), which, supported by the Ministry of Finance (MF), distributes within the State budget the means for the activities of the Polish Sheep-Farming Union (PS-FU), which is a self-governing organization of sheep and goat producers. The PS-FU performs its statutory, or resulting from particular projects, activity of Extension Services [ES] for nationwide production - projects on breeding, nationwide training, etc.

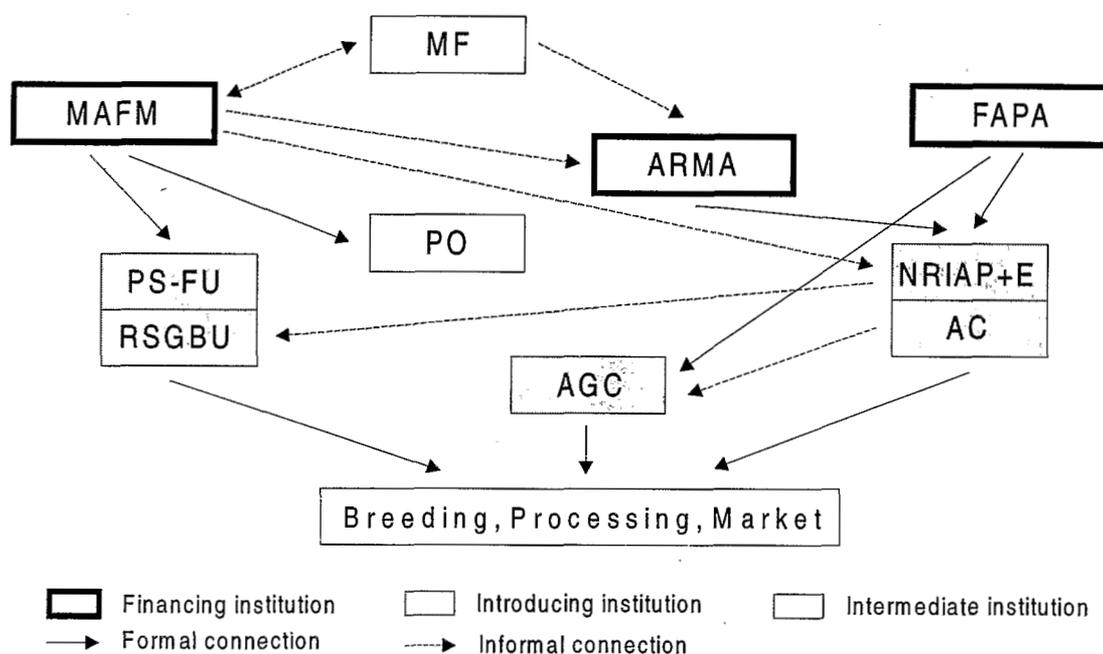


Fig. 1. Scheme of the ES system in Poland.

The PS-FU includes over ten Regional Sheep and Goat Producers' Unions (RSGPU), which concentrate on the implementation of progress in their regions and are entitled to the realization of the regional ES projects.

PS-FU and RSGPU, the most important institutions performing ES for sheep and goat production are informally connected with the Provincial Offices (PO) - local authorities (49 within the country) by the Agricultural Guidance Centres (AGC - one in each province), and with research institutions, which take part in or inspire the activities of the producers' unions in this respect. However, there are no formal dependencies between these institutions, either organizational, or financial.

The AGC perform ES to cover the needs of their provinces. Only a few of them are more deeply involved in sheep and goat production, as this depends on the intensity of this kind of production in the region.

Also research institutions are involved in ES, especially the National Research Institute of Animal Production (NRIAP) and Agricultural Colleges (AC). The NRIAP, as a research institution of the MAFM, has the statutory obligation of supporting the ES activities both nationwide and in particular regions by its Experimental Stations (ES) - 12 situated quite evenly all over the country.

In recent years, after the political transformation, two newly created organizations are extremely active in the performance of ES:

(i) The Agency of the Reconstruction and Modernization of Agriculture [ARMA], a government institution carrying out the policy of the State concerning country and agriculture, dealing among others with the improvement of the production quality and efficiency.

(ii) The Foundation of Assistance for Agriculture [FAPA], supporting the restructuring of the economy (including agriculture) of the East and Central European countries.

Both the institutions finance or support the projects of modernization and restructuring the sheep and goat production proposed by the units mentioned above, interested in the ES projects for these branches, after the acceptance of the proper authorities (the MAFM and PO). Although they are actually independent, they support the activities consistent with the government policy by subscribing to the opinion of government institutions and local authorities.

Legal status and sources of the financial support

- The PS-FU and included in it RSGBU are self - governing organizations of producers maintained by State budget subsidies, fees for the services performed to producers and business activity (chiefly arranging the export of sheep).
- The NRIAP and its ES are government institutions subject to the MAFM, subsidized from the State budget for their research work and running productive activity (ES).
- The AGC are government institutions subject to provincial authorities (PO), financed by the State budget through the PO.
- The ARMA is a State institution supported chiefly by State budget subsidies.
- The FAPA is a public institution financed from the PHARE project, whose means come from the European Union countries.

The role of State; producers' associations, research and economic institutions of the production chain

The State and its budget is the basic source of financing the transfer of scientific and technological progress in the breeding and production of sheep and goats. The government supervises the arrangement and realization of ES projects.

The PS-FU elaborates ES projects with the help of research institutes and carries them out using financial means from the State subsidies and its own business activity.

Research institutions (NRIAP and AC) initiate and contribute to the elaboration, realization and evaluation of the ES performed both by the PS-FU and the AGC.

Banks which service agriculture grant credits with different levels of preferences to finance particular production goals connected with carrying out ES projects.

Types of services

- Unspecialized: the AGC, FAPA, ARMA, AC (the whole of the farm management)
- Specialized: the NRIAP + ES (animal breeding and production)
- Per species: the PS-FU (sheep and goats)
- Per discipline: none

Specific kinds of organizations

As the present scale of sheep farming and goat breeding in Poland is rather small, there are no organizations which could implement progress with respect to the problems concerning these kinds of farm animals. There are also no ES organizations to deal with a particular problem concerning animal breeding, which could cover various kinds of animals, including sheep and goats.

Critical analysis of organizations

The most popular form of transferring new solutions to sheep farming and goat breeding in Poland is professional training in the form of traditional lectures and conferences organized by the PS-FU and its regional agencies (RSGBU), the AGC and other institutions, i.e., NRIAP and AC. Recently, more modern methods of transferring progress into practice have gained more significance, e.g., exhibitions connected with the promotion of new offers, additional State subsidies for the contribution to projects implementing desired solutions in animal breeding (e.g., taking part in the project of the improvement of the prolificacy of local sheep), and granting preferential credits in order to finance productive activities with the use of new or modern technological solutions. However, we still deal with a small variety of the forms of transferring progress, scarce use of modern audio-visual aids and lack of working methods of evaluating the economic efficiency of the introduced solutions and their efficient promotion among farmers. The co-ordination between the activities performed by various institutions within ES is also rather poor, which makes them much less efficient.

Present and future development, suggestions

Efficient functioning of the ES in Poland is an important part of the activities undertaken in order to stop the decline of and to restructure Polish sheep farming, as well as to determine the right direction of the development of goat breeding. Therefore it is necessary to create a more modern and, first of all, better co-ordinated system of ES concerning the introduction of new breeding, technological and economic solutions.