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in

Rubino R. (ed.), Morand-Fehr P. (ed.).
Production systems and product quality in sheep and goats

Zaragoza : CIHEAM

Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 46

2001

pages 225-229

Article available on line / Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse :

<http://om.ciheam.org/article.php?IDPDF=1600141>

To cite this article / Pour citer cet article

Amato A., Di Gennaro P., Amato D. **First results of the observatory in Basilicata: Trend of sheep and goat milk, cheese and meat prices and hygienic-sanitary situation of the farms (PRD 54-97)**. In : Rubino R. (ed.), Morand-Fehr P. (ed.). *Production systems and product quality in sheep and goats* . Zaragoza : CIHEAM, 2001. p. 225-229 (Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 46)



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First results of the observatory in Basilicata: Trend of sheep and goat milk, cheese and meat prices and hygienic-sanitary situation of the farms (PRD 54/97)

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SUMMARY – In Basilicata a survey has been carried out on the trend of the prices of sheep and goat products and on the situation of the farms with regards to the hygienic and sanitary rules. The enquiry showed that meat price decreased during the last three years as well as wool price, whereas cheese price has increased slightly. Farm milk processing takes place mainly in the inlands of the mountains. In the hills, milk is sold to cheese dairies principally out of the region. None of the farms examined was in possession of the sanitary authorization pursuant to the PRD 54/97 (application of the directive EU 92/46).

Key words: Sheep and goat production, trend of the prices, application of PRD 54/97.

RESUME – "Premiers résultats de l'observatoire de Basilicata : Tendances des prix du lait, fromage et viande d'ovins et caprins et situation hygiénico-sanitaire des fermes (PRD 54/37)". Une enquête a été réalisée dans la région de Basilicata afin de connaître l'évolution des prix des produits ovins et caprins dans les quatre dernières années et la situation des exploitations vis à vis des normes sanitaires. L'analyse des informations recueillies concernant les prix de la viande comme de la laine, dans les dernières trois années, montre une faible diminution ; au contraire pour les fromages l'enquête met en évidence une faible augmentation. En général on observe une transformation fermière pour les exploitations localisées dans les zones montagneuses de la région ; par contre pour les zones de colline on assiste à la vente à des établissements qui sont localisés, dans la plupart des cas, dans d'autres région du sud de l'Italie. Aujourd'hui aucune des exploitations de l'échantillonnage, ne dispose du permis sanitaire face aux dispositions du DPR 54/97 (application au niveau national de la directive EU 92/46).

Mots-clés : Produits ovins et caprins, évolution des prix, application du DPR 54/97.

Introduction

The Basilicata is a region where sheep and goat extensive breeding is largely used mainly in the mountains. Human presence in these territories is still strong and is fundamental for keeping the balances with the natural environment. The productions obtained from this activity are not sold through any form of association, so they are more easily susceptible of market prices fluctuations.

The necessity of knowing the real situation of the markets of ovine and goat products in Basilicata derived from the awareness that this field is of vital importance in many areas of the region and that such knowledge may direct regional policies to its development.

For this reason an observatory of the prices was organized by the Advisory Service in order to survey the trend of these products prices during the years and directly from the ovine and goat producers. Furthermore, it allows the knowledge of the real situation of the Basilicata farms as regards the application of the President of Republic Decree (PRD) 54/97 (application of the directive EU 92/46).

Materials and methods

A questionnaire was organized and used filled in by the regional zootechnical advisors, assigned to the Agenzia Lucana di Sviluppo e di Innovazione in Agricoltura (ALSIA – Advisory Service of Basilicata), during the visits to the farms for the survey of the data. These were about the producers,

the farm structural characteristics, the sanitary situation of the animals, milk, cheese, meat and wool market of sheep and mixed sheep-goats farms and, at last, their situation about the application of hygienic-sanitary regulations for milk and cheese production.

Results and discussion

General data

The farms involved in the survey are 45, the 82% belonging to the province of Potenza. They represent the 0.4% of the sheep farms considered in the 1990 Census of the Italian Statistic Service (ISTAT) and are representative of the productive reality in Basilicata. Nearly the 50% of the total farms is part of the production territory of the Pecorino di Filiano, a cheese for which the Protective Designation Origin has been requested. The 70% of the farms is situated at an altitude of more than 600 m above sea-level. The system of Value-Added Tax (VAT) is special for 49% of the farms (their profit is between 5 and 40 millions per year), of exemption for the 9% and ordinary for the 42%. The 98% of the farm management is of the owner.

Structural characteristics

The mean age of the owners is 44 years; the 42% of them is below 40 years old. The farm management is quite always with family workers; only the 18% of the farms have hired labour (of which _ comes from non-EU countries).

Farmland is for the 52% of the farms on property and for the 48% on lease. The mean farm area is of 108 hectares, the 30% of which are sown areas, the 55% pastures and the 8% hay meadows; moreover the 30% of the farms uses drift pastures for grazing. These data show the great importance of pastures in the local sheep and goat farms as well as grazing cows (of the Podolica breed) run extensively. The breeding system is for the 96% based on grazing with night-housing while for the 4% on housing with the use of pasture too. In the 56% of the farms there is the sheep of the Gentile breed or its cross-breeds, in the 16% of the Merinos, in the 22% of the Comisana, in the 6% of the Sarda. The 11% of the breeders have entered sheep into the Herd Book. Among the 13 farms with sheep of dairy breed only, the 85% is located in the hills, that are mainly in the province of Matera, meaning that the environmental conditions are in favour of this kind of breeding. The mean number of head of cattle per farm is 170. The 66% of the farms has also goats (the mean head of cattle/farm is 43) half of which consists of local breed. The 44% of the farm uses drinking water while the remaining spring or well water. This situation makes the issue of the sanitary authorization for cheese production more difficult.

Milk production

Generally in the 80% of the sample the whole production of milk is made in cheese directly in the farm, while in the 9% a part of it is used for cheese production and the rest sold. The 11% (of which the 80% is in the hills) sells the whole production of milk to regional (45%) and extra-regional (55%) dairies, showing the low presence and interest in ewe's milk processing of private local cheese factories. The mean quantity of milk daily processed ranges from a minimum of 42 litres to a maximum of 96 litres, within the limits of 12 and 300 litres. The processing in mountain farms is mainly during the period between Easter (after lamb selling) and late summer when grazing grasses reduce. Moreover cheese is made also for almost 20 days during the period between Christmas and January. Instead, in the hills cheese production is between Christmas and April-May. Milk production during the whole year is only possible for the 9% of the sample and it is the case of the farms with dairy breeds only and where the 75% of the animals are registered with the hard book. Milking is manual in the 84% of the farms and in the 62% of the sample milk is refrigerated. For almost the 50% of the farms surveyed milk quality control is not systematic: in the 65% of the cases it's made by the Breeders' Provincial Association, in the 31% by the extension service.

Milk price

As it is shown in Table 1, ewe's milk during 1999 was sold meanly at 1282 £, ranging between 1000 and 1400 £/l and in the previous years between 1100 and 1300 £/l. Goat's milk is meanly sold at 875 £/l with the limits of 850 and 880 £/l. Ewe's milk price increased during the last three years, although the number of selling milk farms surveyed is not sufficient for a more general analysis.

Table 1. Sheep and goat milk medium price in the last four years in Basilicata

Milk	1999		1998		1997		1996	
	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg
Sheep	1,282	0.66	1,236	0.64	1,200	0.62	1,100	0.57
Goat	875	0.45						

Cheese prices

The trend of the prices (Table 2) is a reflection of the productive potential of the considered area. The higher the presence of farm producers, the lower is the market price. For almost all the types of cheeses considered the price increased during the last years; considering the ripened pecorino its price is on average 16,200 £/kg. The highest prices were found in the inlands of the mountains, the lowest in those areas where there are many farms with more than 100 sheep bred. Generally the cheese is sold to local inhabitants (84% of the sample); in the 16% of the farms it is sold also to traders. Only the 4% of the sample is in possession of the sanitary authorization as requested by the PRD 327/80 (Table 3) and only the 9% of it has made the request for adapting the farm to the PRD 54/97. The 56% of the farmers declared that only if obliged he would ask for sanitary authorization. The extension services, together with the Local Sanitary Farms, the Region and the other authorities involved should work very hard in order to convince these farms to produce properly, especially the mountain ones located at the mountainous areas that have very limited amounts of cheese, not more than 40 q/yr. But above all they should have to press the European Commission to adapt the application of the European Regulations to the real structural and traditional characteristic of the territory.

Table 2. Some sheep and goat cheeses medium price in the last four years in Basilicata

Cheese	1999		1998		1997		1996	
	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg
Toma	10,526	5.44	10,385	5.36	9,818	5.07	9,889	5.11
Formaggio fresco	12,646	6.53	12,559	6.49	12,321	6.36	11,875	6.13
Formaggio stagionato	16,236	8.39	15,982	8.25	15,750	8.13	14,972	7.73
Ricotta	7,058	3.65	7,143	3.69	6,889	3.56	6,607	3.41
Ricotta salata	10,615	5.48	11,250	5.81	11,286	5.83	9,000	4.65
Cacioricotta	12,375	6.39	12,000	6.20	12,000	6.20	11,000	5.68

Meat price

On the opposite of milk and cheese, sheep and goat meat prices (Table 4) have decreased during the last three years. The lamb, sold meanly at 12.2 kg of live weight, achieved prices next to 7200 £/kg, with limits of 6000 and 8500 £/kg. The kid also (sold at meanly 10.3 kg of live weight) has decreased getting the price of 8250 £/kg. Generally the lowest prices are in the hills where there are mainly dairy breeds. The 65% of the farms sold their animals to local and regional structures, while the remaining 35% to the neighbouring regions of the Campania and Puglia.

Table 3. Hygienic and sanitary situation of the farms in Basilicata

	No.	%
DPR 54/97 (directive EU 92/46)	4	9
DPR 327/80	2	4
Without authorization	39	87

Table 4. Sheep and goat meat medium price in the last four years in Basilicata

Meat	MLW [†] (kg)	1999		1998		1997		1996
		Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg
Sheep	12.2	7,193	3.71	7,421	3.83	7,503	3.87	7,154
Goat	10.3	8,250	4.26	8,885	4.59	9,074	4.69	8,782

[†]MLW: Medium live weight

As regards the culled animals, the medium price was of 44,000 £ for sheep and about 55,000 £ for goats. Animals for herd replacement were sold at 192,000 £/head of sheep and 162,000 £/head of goat.

Wool price

The situation of wool prices (Table 5) is similar to that of meat. The price was extremely low, even in front of a fine wool of good quality (one third of the surveyed farms). Wool had the same destination of meat: the 65% was sold to local traders (a various number with the consequent low concentration of the product) and the remaining 35% to extra-regional ones. The shearing of wool is manual in the 70% of the farms and mechanical in the 30%.

Table 5. Wool medium price in the last four years in Basilicata

	1999		1998		1997		1996	
	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg	Lire/kg	Euro/kg
Wool	379	0.20	564	0.29	608	0.31	566	0.29

Conclusions

From the analysis of the sample of sheep and goat farms surveyed in Basilicata emerged that:

(i) Sheep breeding is fairly wide-spread throughout the territory, with the presence of dual purpose breeds, milk and meat, in the mountains and dairy breeds in the hills; in the mountains milk production is generally processed in the farm, while in the hills milk is sold to cheese dairies.

(ii) More than half of the milk is sold to extra-regional factories. Farm processing, even if concerns in the great majority of the sample surveyed, takes place in rooms without the necessary sanitary authorizations pursuant neither to PRD 327/80 nor to PRD 54/97.

(iii) Milk quality control is not carried out systematically and mainly depends on public structures.

(iv) Drinking water is present in almost half of the farms surveyed; unfortunately it still represents a great obstacle for the issuing of the authorization for farm dairy.

(v) As regards the trend of the prices, in the last three years those of the cheese have increased moderately but constantly even if sold to local private citizens; sheep and goat meat prices have shown an opposite trend; meat is generally sold to local traders. This negative trend is surely due to the lack of an adequate supply for such a product, obtained from grazing animals and so characterized by an estimated optimum nutritional quality.

In conclusion, sheep and goat raising in Basilicata is characterized by considerable structural and organization limits but offers products of a very interesting quality for present-day markets, considering that the whole production is carried out in extensive pastures respecting the animal welfare.