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Basic and incentive payments for goat and sheep milk in relation to quality

Abstract

Dairy sheep and dairy goat breeding in Europe is most common around the Mediterranean basin, particularly in France, Greece, Italy and Spain. Over recent years the tendency has been a slight reduction in the number of animals bred, while at the same time there has been a general increase in the volume of milk produced. The milk of sheep and goats is mainly reserved for cheese making and therefore a quality evaluation of the milk is of fundamental importance. If, on the one hand, the achievement of a certain level of quality is of interest for the cheese making industry, which has to deal with the ever-increasing demands of the consumer, it is also of interest to the milk producers, who can increase their earnings by pursuing high quality. The quality of the milk for cheese making depends essentially on its physical and chemical composition and on hygienic and sanitary factors (bacterial count, somatic cells count, etc.). The price of sheep and goat milk is generally higher than that of cow milk, even though in certain areas of production it is not specifically exploited, being blended with cow milk for the production of mixed cheeses. Differentiated pricing in relation to quality is becoming ever more widespread also for sheep and goat milk. This is mainly based on the construction of a grid on which various parameters are taken into consideration in order to establish bonuses and penalties, which are then applied to the base price of the milk. This paper summarises some previous works on this subject and integrates them with the new scenarios, while at the same time discussing how to improve the quality and subsequently the valorisation of these milks.

Keywords: Sheep industry; Goat industry; Milk quality; Quality control; Payment system