

Schimatari, Greece, 2010

Working group 2

Saturday afternoon

(12-06-2010)

Question (by participant): Is there an over-estimation of the value/ cost for buying animals which belong to rare breeds?

Answer: There is an over-estimation of the value of animals which have a certificate of improvement. Such an increase is considered to be justified, and so is an over-estimated value of animals which belong to rare breeds. However, the selling-buying procedure should take place through the local Breeder Unions, so that they are supervised and their outcome is re-assured.

It was also clarified that the rare animals can not be sold, unless they have obtained license from the Centers of Genetic Improvement of Animals (C.G.I.A.)

Moving/ Transfer of animals

Question: Is it beneficial/ preferable for the sheep herds to be transferred to different grazing places?

Answer: There is no legal frame, neither for transferring herds, nor for their productivity. Usually the herds are transferred to various locations because of productivity reasons, or grazing reasons, or higher profit options (ie increased profit in the local market).

However, animals which are included at the “Alexandros Baltazis” monitoring program are not allowed to be transferred elsewhere. The rare breeds, when funded, ought to be transferred to certain places, after the C.G.I.A.s have been informed prior to any transfer. It is crucial to avoid the overgrazing or the accumulation of animals, which can lead to poor feeding or to a disease break-out.

Question: What is the procedure of transfer in case the one and only herd of a rare breed develops a disease?

Answer: There is no legal frame, but it is our knowledge by experience so far that these animals are resistant to local diseases. Usually the risk of developing a disease is increased after they are transferred to another place.

A clarification was asked about the terms *breed* and *strain*. It was said that, for example, the new herd that Mr Dimos presented earlier on, will be called *population* at the beginning, and it has to be studied and examined by experts before it is characterized as a breed or strain or whatever else. The external characteristics or the productivity alone are not sufficient criteria for the characterization/ separation of a new breed.

Moreover, nowadays the DNA test is available, however in Greece there have been carried out DNA studies for 3 sheep breeds only (Chios, Lesvos, Argos) because there is lack of financial funding. For instance, the DNA test for 100 animals has a total cost higher than €6,000.

Motivations for the local breeds

Advantages of the local breeds:

- Excellent adaptation to the environment and to the changes of the environment
- Resistance to diseases
- Ability to survive with little food

- They produce certificated products of location and also there are further options in future to identify even more products of certificated location.
- Small cost/ expenses of breeding

Disadvantages of the local breeds:

- Usually they have lower productivity, compared to foreign breeds, although this is not always true, since this is subject to marketing and promotion. Because of this, the breeders tend to import improved animals, they usually get better results in terms of productivity at the first offspring generation, but this improvement is not following the next mixed generations. Also, there is increased risk of diseases.

Question: Are you aware of any highly-milk-producing local cow breed in Greece?

Answer: In bibliography, there are reports in the year 1930 about a local cow breed living at the banks of Strymonas river, Macedonia, and in Corfu island, which could produce very high amounts of milk. Perhaps that was a disappeared cow breed.

Funding

It was made clear that a funding does not last for ever. Usually it has duration of 3-5 years and can be addressed to support various products, such as milk or meat. A funding is necessary for the breeders so that they are assisted on their work and keep breeding their herds. For instance, it was mentioned that the Kalarytiko sheep breed has the best quality meat products of all other greek sheep breeds, however, it is sold at the same or even lower value compared to other ones. Marketing and advertisement support is needed for the local breeds.

Animal import

It remains a problem but it can not be stopped. The breeders tend to import foreign breeds, therefore mixing and spoiling the homogeneity of their herds, and sometimes they don't even get the quality or the amount of the products they expected. The lack of certificated animals in Greece 20 years ago was used as an excuse for importing foreign animals.

Note: there is the information that, there are 200 cows of the Sykia breed which will be led to slaughtering soon, if not already. The Sykia breed is a rare cow breed, but not a certificated one. If it is granted with funding, then the procedure of slaughtering could be stopped. This is an example of cases where Amaltheia should act. But in which way? Also the Stations could interfere and offer a solution, but the Stations face up with severe financial problems.

Inter-EU commerce

It should be examined the possibility of exporting local greek breeds to EU countries. SAVE Foundation makes efforts to establish specific labels of certification for rare breeds' products. Those labels will be valid all over European Union and they will be authorized to overcome the lack of similar activities on national lever.

It was also said that, although some rare breeds live under conditions of biological grazing and breeding, they have not been labeled as "biological" because their owners are not able to cover the cost for getting such an identification for their herds.

**Sunday morning
(13-06-2010)**

Breeding systems

Conventional, Biological
Expanding, Intensive

There are 4 systems of breeding, or better to say that actually there are 2 axis: on the first one there is Conventional breeding at the one edge vs. Biological breeding at the other edge, whereas on the second axis there is Expanding vs. Intensive Breeding at the two edged.

The majority of breeding units in Greece are **conventional**. There are only very few units verified as biological ones.

The **biological** breeding is characterized by certain criteria that have to be met, for example, the animals have to be bred with biological food, with no additional substances, in controlled settings, which will be clear of poisons or fertilizing substances in the ground, there must be no administration of antibiotics for precaution reasons. However, the biological breeding does not support the local breeds, since they do not exclude any breed or herd which can be fed strictly under the guidelines of a biological breeding.

Question: What do you think about those rare breeds which live isolated in small islands and by definition are bred under biological conditions, but they have not been certificated or verified as biological?

Answer: The owners of those breeds usually can not afford to cover the cost of getting a certification of biological breeding for their herds, although they are indeed bred that way. Moreover, the grazing environment is not the only criterion for the biological breeding. It has to be assured that the breeders do not use any additional nutritional substances or that they do not make use of antibiotics, etc. the truth is that there is a legal gap for the Greek rare breeds.

Suggestion: We suggest that, the state authorities, ie. ministry of agriculture, should cover the financial cost for granting a rare breed/ herd as a biological breeding unit, in case they fulfill the criteria, and that would represent a movement of support for those breeding units, which will increase the income for the breeders and will make the rare breed products known to the market.

On the **intensive** breeding system the breeder makes maximum use of all available means (equipment, food supplements, etc) in order to increase his production, whereas on the **expanding** breeding system the breeder is relied on lower use of available means, and use of other ones, such as larger grazing fields, etc.

Question: How can you be aware of the kind of animals you have in your herd? For example whether they came by breed mixture or whether you have enough animals with many typical characteristics of a specific breed?

Answer: Here is an example: By law, the disappeared breeds are eligible to funding. However, there is great lack of knowledge regarding the disappeared breeds. So, how can someone reject or approve the statement of a breeder who claims that he has a small herd of a disappeared breed and applies for funding? However, the DNA test can be used even on products of disappeared breeds, such as a woolen blanket or coat of 100 years old or more.

How can someone distinguish between different breeds? There must be very good knowledge of the phenotypic characteristics of a breed, there must be adequate experience by the scientists/experts, and also today there should be increased use of the DNA examination.

It is necessary to set priorities on the objective needs of the agro-biodiversity. First priority is the rescue of the rare breeds which have a very small number of animals, and also to continue investigating for any other rare breeds still unknown in Greece. Also, regarding the rare breeds, there should be developed an adequate number of new herds in different locations, in order to maximize the possibilities of rescuing and increasing the number of the rare animals.