

Coordination of small ruminants research for development in Africa

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Summary

There is a need for much more effective coordination and closer linkages between institutions involved in SR research and production as well as a need to strengthen the exchange of information between countries and institutions engaged in the development of SR production. Consequently a workshop on the coordination of small ruminants research for development in Africa was organised in October 1986 in Montpellier, France.

The participants exchanged views in working groups based on all the ecological zones and on four main disciplines i.e. health, reproduction and breeding, feeds and feeding, socio-economics. Network possibilities have also been discussed.

Résumé

Il est nécessaire d'avoir des liens étroits et d'établir une coordination réelle entre les institutions concernées par la recherche et la production de petits ruminants. Les échanges d'informations techniques et scientifiques doivent aussi être renforcés. C'est dans cet état d'esprit que s'est tenu à Montpellier, France, en octobre 1986 un séminaire sur les petits ruminants en Afrique.

Les participants ont examiné les problèmes pour toutes les zones écologiques d'Afrique et dans les quatre secteurs de la santé, de la reproduction et de l'élevage, de l'alimentation et des aliments, et des aspects socio-économiques. Le groupe a également discuté l'intérêt de réseaux.

At present African national research organizations provide very limited funding for the research of small ruminants (S.R.). In Niger, for example, where goats account for 15% of ruminant biomass, only 2% of the professional staff of the Ministry of Livestock Development work on goats. In Zimbabwe less than 3% of all livestock and pasture research projects relate to sheep and none to goats; and in the western region of Nigeria only 6% of research projects are concerned with sheep. A large proportion of the information obtained from small ruminant studies has not been published, much has not yet been analysed and above all, much is still lacking.

Furthermore, there is a need for much more effective coordination and closer linkages between institutions involved in SR research and production as well as a need to strengthen the exchange of information between countries and institutions engaged in the development of SR production.

Consequently a workshop on the coordination of small ruminants research for development in Africa was organized in October 1986 in Montpellier, France with the assistance of the following institutions: European Community (EC, DG XII); German Federal Ministry for Economical Cooperation (BMZ); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) (GTZ); l'Institut d'Elevage et de Médecine Vétérinaire des Pays Tropicaux, France (IEMVT); Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Netherlands, and the Technical Centre for Agricultural Cooperation (CTA).

Introductory lectures were given on "Major Constraints for Development and Research Priorities for Small Ruminants" respectively in North Africa, in Highlands and densely populated areas, in Arid and semi-arid regions, and in Humid and sub-humid areas. Other papers were dealing with "Research Priorities, Coordination of Activities and Transfer of Information" as visualized by the Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Land ACSAD, the International Livestock Center for Africa ILCA/CIPEA, the Organization of African Unity OUA/IBAR, the Food and Agriculture Organization FAO,...

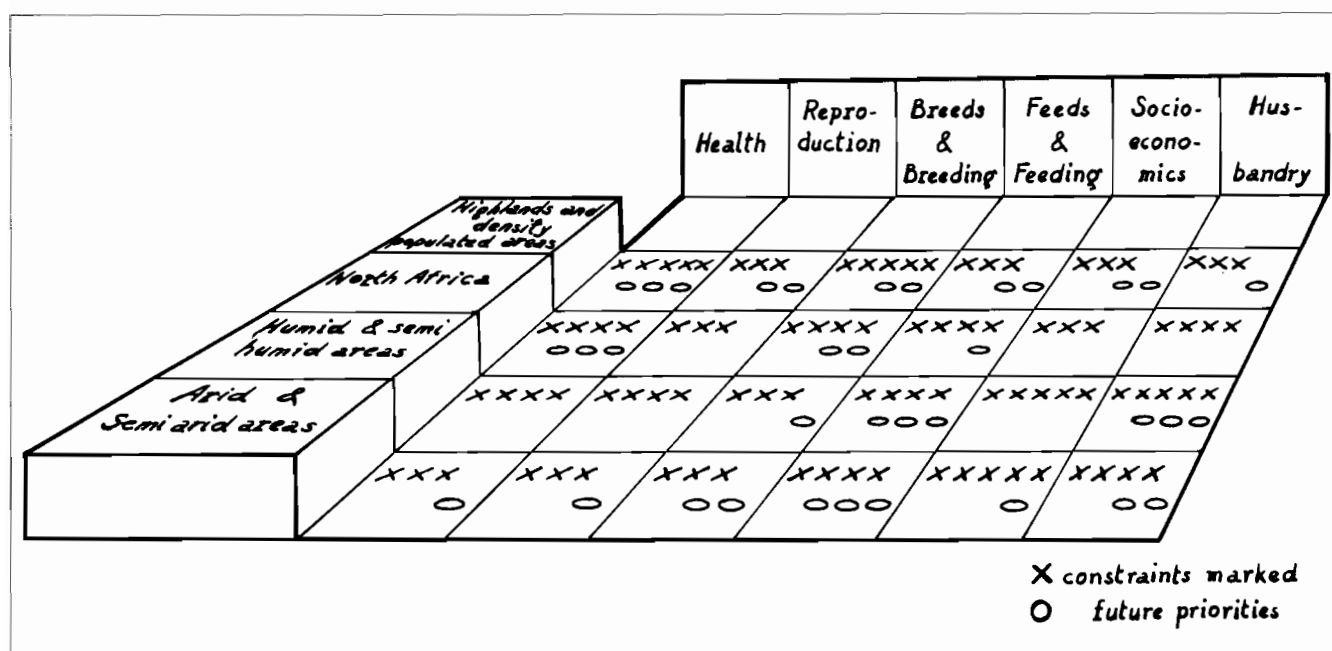
Two communications dealt respectively with the economical and the sociological role of SR in agricultural communities and land use systems.

The participants exchanged views in working groups based on the four ecological zones (see above) and on four main disciplines i.e. health, reproduction and breeding, feeds and feeding, socio-economics.

The conclusions and recommendations of the workshop can be summarized as follows

a) In the field of Health

Although the relative importance of sheep versus goats varies from zone to zone, both species deserve research but it is admitted that knowledges on goats are scarcer than on sheep. The three first priorities for research out of seven listed are helminthiasis, large syndromes (respiratory diseases,



Graph. 1 gives an illustration on how the participants coming from African countries saw the existing constraints and the future priorities according to each ecological zone.

abortion/mastitis, skin and foot problems) and arthropods-born-diseases (cowdriosis, trypanosomiasis and other protozootic diseases,...) together with some infectious diseases.

b) In the field of Reproduction and Breeding

The need to evaluate the populations of African breeds has been stressed, with utmost importance given to biological and economic productivity and efficacy rather than to production. The best animals should be tested and selected both on stations and in the field. No exotic breed should be used by the producers before being tested, cross-breeding should be avoided when feasible, and "exotic" breeds should be looked for also out of Europe and North-America. Artificial insemination should be limited to selection or multiplication stations. The optimal levels of reproduction management should be determined according to the different ecological zones.

c) In the field of Feeds and Feeding

A feed resource inventory should be made for the rangelands, the crop-based systems and the agro-industrial by-products with due consideration to nutritive value, productivity and availability. Improved knowledge and standardized methods on nutrients requirements are needed, as on mixed forage species grazing and on browse.

d) In the field of Socio-Economics

The SR specialists stressed the need for close collaboration with sociologists, socio-economists and economists, and declared that the socio-economic investigations have to be conducted on a continuing basis in research and development projects particularly during the planning phase. The macro-economic framework (pricing policy, marketing, control of dumping prices,...) must be assessed in order that research may be directed towards attainable objectives, and the micro-economic situation studied through the farming system analysis. The whole process of extension deserves due sociological consideration, the importance of feedback between breeders and research workers is emphasized, and the need to encourage training in livestock economics and sociology is stressed.

Finally, and on the special request of the organizing committee, the panel examined carefully the pros, cons, ways and means of networks. It has been concluded that there is a huge demand for more information on what is or has been achieved, pinpointing the fact that many participants do not make use of the existing informative networks (ILCA, ACSAD, OUA/IBAR, CTA/SQR). It has also been accepted that there is no need for new network(s) but that the coverage of the existing ones should be expanded in topics and in areas. More discussions took place on networks dealing with research, although better coordination between research programmes and donors is unanimously asked for. The

specialists involved in research would welcome standardization of methodology, protocols and presentations of results.

The workshop has also given the opportunity for direct contacts between the participants representing Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and United-Kingdom as well as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire and the delegates of several institutions (see above).

Supplementary information are attainable by
 — European Community, DG XII; 200 rue de la Loi, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.
 — C.T.A.; Postbus 380, NL-6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands
 — G.T.Z.; Postfach 5180, D-6236 Eschborn 1, F.R. Germany
 — I.E.M.V.T.; 10, rue Pierre Curie, F-94700 Maisons Alfort, France.

Main sources: documents produced during the Workshop.

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