

## **Reconnecting virtuous and sustainable animal husbandry practices with the setting up of localized food systems for Mediterranean pastoralism: Exploring the challenges of raising the skills of livestock farmers for pastoral territories in Corsica**

Strongly rooted in most mountain territories, pastoralism is a set of activities that make up many local societies in the Mediterranean. In Corsica, by relying mainly on its cultural and historical realities, regional policies have highlighted the revival of pastoralism as one of the priorities for the development of rural areas in the interior.

Within the framework of partnership approaches to support the implementation of strategies in favour of pastoralism, today's pastoral practices, the functioning of systems, their performance and their dynamics have been analysed. It is observed that, whatever the species concerned (sheep, goats, pigs, cattle), the vast majority of farms almost always have some pastoral components that are more or less marked. However, it is also observed that herd performance is generally very low with poorly controlled management. The different livestock sectors therefore have few comparative advantages here and are not competitive in relation to other livestock regions for the island's food supply in a globalized system.

Carried by the fame of the traditional products resulting from the Corsican breeding, in the various territories of the island, many stockbreeders invested primarily and with a certain success in workshops of transformation and farm marketing, thus developing forms of short circuits for the local and tourist customers. As a coherent response to their lack of competitiveness vis-à-vis the dominant production models, they have thus constituted the outline of a localized food system dedicated to products from pastoralism, which should reinforce its sustainability.

While the reputation of Corsican pastoralist products is based on traditional practices, a strong identity and specificity, most of these producers have largely abandoned the activity of breeding and the valorisation of pastoral resources. The reference to pastoralism has been progressively reduced to an image and a staging often unrelated to tangible productive realities. Pastoral knowledge has been neglected and often forgotten, with drifts in production conditions that impact the real quality of the products on offer.

In a context of strong incentives and permanent support of local public policies in favour of localised food systems, we show that the dynamics observed can only be sustainable if the support policies succeed in reconnecting processing activities with coherent production practices that meet the needs of agro-ecological transition. The implementation of labels whose specifications take into account sustainable production systems is a lever to reinforce the development of these rural territories. However, it will also be necessary to develop reference systems to propose new stabilized technical models for the development of local resources; major investments in training and support services will also have to be made in the long term to improve the capacity of farmers to regain control of their territories.

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