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# The role of the State and breeder associations in animal identification and animal recording in Poland

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Milk and beef production play a very important role in Polish agriculture but the number of cows dropped dramatically in the early 1990s due to liquidation and bankruptcy of big State farms, both due to social and financial reasons. About 95 percent of cows are kept on private farms. Only 11.1 percent of cows are milk recorded (MR). A huge number of herds maintaining cows and the herd structure hamper the increase of milk recording. At present, a governmental organization, the Central Animal Breeding Office (CABO), is responsible for milk and animal recording, herd book-keeping, insemination, breeding data processing and breeding value estimation. The role of the cattle breeder associations is however, growing year by year and in the near future, they should be responsible for most of the activities connected with breeding, which means, for the breeding programme itself, herd book keeping and animal recording.

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## Summary

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Milk and beef production play a very important role in Polish agriculture. Table 1 presents the changes in production during the last years

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## Introduction

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*Table 1. Beef and milk production.*

| Specification                  | 1990   | 1995   | 1998   |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Beef production (in thous. t)  | 793    | 373    | 420    |
| Veal production (in thous. t)  | 63     | 46     | 53     |
| Milk production (in million l) | 15 371 | 11 303 | 12 229 |

During the last years the number of cattle and cows kept on farms has decreased (Table 2) but the average annual quantity of milk per cow has increased, especially in herds that are milk recorded (Table 3). The number of cows dropped dramatically in Poland in the early 1990s due to liquidation and bankruptcy of the big State farms due both to social and

financial reasons. Additionally, small private farms have also ceased cattle production due to small milk production profitability. The following tables describe this situation and the tendencies.

About 95 percent of cows are kept on private farms. Only 11.1 percent are being milk recorded (MR). The total structure of farms depends on the number of animals being milk recorded (see table 4). Private farmers own about 83 percent of the agricultural land. The distribution of private farms across different farm sizes is presented in table 5.

*Table 2. Cattle population (in thousands heads).*

| Specification           | 1990   | 1995  | 1999  |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Cattle in total         | 10 049 | 7 306 | 6 555 |
| of which cows           | 4 919  | 3 579 | 3 418 |
| Cattle on private farms | 8 320  | 6 742 | 6 150 |
| of which cows           | 4 362  | 3 378 | 3 257 |

*Table 3. Average production per cow.*

| Specification                          | 1990  | 1995  | 1998  | 1999  |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Cow population<br>(in thousands heads) | 4 919 | 3 579 | 3 542 | 3 418 |
| Average milk yield                     | 3 151 | 3 136 | 3 491 |       |
| Cows under MR<br>(in thousands heads)  | 620.0 | 342.0 | 380.6 | 379.1 |
| Milk kg                                | 4 131 | 4 287 | 4 862 | 5 027 |
| Fat kg                                 | 167   | 173   | 200   | 207   |
| Fat %                                  | 4.04  | 4.03  | 4.12  | 4.12  |
| Protein kg                             | -     | 140   | 160   | 165   |
| Protein %                              | -     | 3.26  | 3.29  | 3.28  |

*Table 4. Herd structure.*

| Number of cows   | In total | Under MR |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Less than 5 cows | 58.6     | 6.7      |
| 5-9              | 23.5     | 36.1     |
| 10-19            | 13.9     | 41.9     |
| 20-49            | 2.8      | 8.2      |
| 50 cows and more | 1.2      | 7.1      |

Table 5. Private farms.

| Specification                         | 1990  | 1995  | 1998  |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Farms (in thousands)                  | 2 138 | 2 048 | 1 989 |
| in percent of agricultural land area: |       |       |       |
| 1.01-1.99 ha                          | 17.7  | 20.9  | 22.6  |
| 2.00-9.99 ha                          | 64.9  | 61.7  | 60.3  |
| 10.00-14.99 ha                        | 11.3  | 10.7  | 10.2  |
| 15.00 ha and more                     | 6.1   | 6.7   | 6.9   |
| Average total farm area in ha         | 7.1   | 7.6   | 7.7   |

The large number of herd keeping cows and the herd structure makes it difficult to increase the milk recording. We expect that the increasing demand requirements for milk quality, which the Polish regulations and the dairy plants have started to exercise, will hardly be met on small farms. Most of these farms will stop milk production although some of them could produce special regional products like 'oscypek' in the mountain region. The above-mentioned requirements will also force the farmers to inspect their cows more closely and to enrol the milk recording. We can already observe such a situation in regions where the dairy plants are well-established, have very strict requirements but also pay adequate prices for good quality milk.

At present, the Central Animal Breeding Office (CABO), through its branches (six Regional Animal Breeding Offices with Milk Laboratories and four Regional Insemination Stations), is responsible for milk and animal recording, herd book keeping, insemination, breeding data processing and breeding value estimation. It controls issues related to breeding dairy and beef cattle, pigs, poultry, fur animals and bees. CABO is a governmental institution that is 50 percent self-financed. According to the new Breeding Law, CABO will give away some of its tasks, in the near future. Regional Insemination Stations will first be restructured and then privatised and breeder associations will be responsible for herd book keeping and animal recording.

CABO has represented Polish breeding in ICAR and Interbull since 1994, when Poland joined these organizations.

Our reference milk laboratory (CLOM), which prepares standards for other laboratories in our laboratory network, is a member of CECALIAT. At least four times a year CLOM participates in the interlaboratory proficiency study with good results. A few years ago CLOM received the accreditation of the Comité Français d'Accreditation for reference milk testing methods. On the basis of this laboratory we are building the network of seven

## Organization of animal and milk recording

accredited laboratories and we expect the accreditation of all of them to be completed by June 2001.

Every milk sample is evaluated for fat and protein content and number of somatic cell count (SCC).

The number of State subsidies for animal production, including cow milk recording, decreases annually and farmers have to pay bigger fees for this service. It has caused changes in the methods of cow evaluation. Until the end of 1996 cows were evaluated using only the A4 method. In 1997 we also started evaluation with the A8 and AT4 methods because they are less expensive than the previous one. At the end of 1999 51.3 percent of cows were recorded with the A4 method, 15.1 percent with AT4 and 33.6 percent with A8.

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## **Animal identification and registration**

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The system for identification and registration of breeding cattle has existed in Poland for more than 20 years. Every cow being milk recorded receives a unique lifetime number, which is used in milk recording, herd books and insemination. Plastic eartags are used for identification. All the herds involved in the milk recording have their unique numbers, too. Even when a farmer has decided to stop cow evaluation, this herd number is still attached to the herd. All the information about animal and herd numbers is kept in one central database.

According to the new Veterinary Law, veterinarians are responsible for the national system of cattle identification and registration (I&R), but executive regulations are still missing. We hope that the new I&R system will fit the breeding reality (for example the number should be unique for at least three cow generations) and we will be able to introduce it as well. We will have to keep an additional identification system for cattle breeding.

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## **Breeder associations**

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In Poland, we have different kinds of breeder associations depending on species and types of use. The farmers in Poland keep mostly dairy and dual purpose cattle. Beef cattle are kept in small beef herds thus, one national association suffices the beef cattle breeders (National Association of Beef Cattle Breeders).

Breeders of dairy and dual purpose cattle have 18 regional associations which are federated in one national Polish Federation of Cattle Breeders.

The role of cattle breeder associations is growing year by year. At present the breeders have their representatives in different advisory bodies to governmental organizations. It means that they of course, have some influence on the breeding programmes but they have no influence on managing it and very little influence on financing the organization of a programme. The idea is that the breeders will be responsible for the

breeding itself. In the future, maybe even in the very near future, they should be responsible for most of the activities connected with breeding, which means for the breeding programme itself, herd book keeping and animal recording. This process may however, prove to be very slow because for some 40 years they have relied on decisions taken for them.

The large number of farms in Poland and their structure have resulted in only a small proportion of the dairy farms and cows being milk recorded. The project of the dairy sector restructurisation, which predicts that milk is produced in only the bigger herds, to more easily meet the milk quality requirements, together with the subjection of milk price to SCC, should stimulate the increase of the milk recording spread. This phenomenon has already been observed in the areas of powerful dairy plants, which pay a good price for good quality milk.

For more than forty years the Governmental authorities of Poland have decided the breeding regulations, thus, causing farmer organizations to loose the need to take decisions for themselves. They would, however, like to take responsibility for breeding but they need some support in preparing the regulations for milk recording and running the breeding programme, etc., to do it correctly. In our opinion ICAR and other independent international bodies could help them. ICAR could, for example, help them in the recommendations on how to update the identification system, milk recording, lactation extension, etc. We are also waiting for the promised regulations required in order to receive the ICAR Special Stamp.

#### **Role de l'Etat et des organisations d'éleveurs dans l'identification et le controle de la production animale en Pologne.**

La production de lait et de viande bovine joue un role important dans l'agriculture polonaise quoique l'effectif de vaches aie violemment diminue dans les annees quatre-vingt dix a cause de la liquidation et la faillite de grands etablissement agricoles d'etat provoques par des facteurs sociales et economiques. Environ 95 pour cent des vaches sont exploites dans les fermes privees. Seulement 11.1 pour cent sont sous controle de la production laitiere. Le grand nombre de troupeaux de vaches ainsi que la structure de cheptel rendent difficile l'elargissement du controle de la production laitiere. Actuellement, un organisme gouvernemental - Station Centrale de l'Elevage d'Animaux (SCEA) est responsable du controle de la production animale, des inscriptions aux livres genealogiques, de l'insemination, de la transformation des donnees et de l'estimation de la valeur genetique. Cependant le role des associations d'éleveurs des bovins accroit d'une annee a l'autre et dans un proche avenir elles seront responsables de la majorite des activites liees a l'élevage c'est-a-dire du programme d'élevage lui-meme, des inscriptions aux livres genealogiques et du controle de production animale.

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## **Conclusion**

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## **Résumé français**

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**Zusammen-  
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**Die Bedeutung der staatlichen und Tierzuchtorganisationen in die Tieridentifizierung und Tierdatensammlung in Polen**

Milch und Fleischproduktionen spielen in der polnischen Landwirtschaft eine sehr wichtige Rolle. Die Kuhanzahl hat sehr stark abgen. im Zusammenhang mit der Auflösung vieler staatlichen landwirtschaftlichen Betrieben. Ungefähr 95% des Kuhe bestandes gehört zu privaten Betrieben. Nur 11.1 % davon stehen unter Milchleistung. Die große Herdenanzahl und die Herdenstruktur erschweren die Zuchtarbeit. Zur Zeit die staatliche Organisation, d.k. die Zentrale Zuchtstation ist für Milch und Datensammlung, Besammung, Zuchtdatien, Herdbücher, Zuchtwertschätzung und Dateverarbeitung verantwortlich. Die Rolle der Zuchtorganisationen, die für verschiedene Angelegenheiten verantwortlich werden wird immer größer. Damit wird allem die Führung des Zuchtprogramms, Herdbücher, Leistungsdaten gedacht.