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“Development on the margin”

The Economics of Sheep Farming in Marginal Areas of Jordan and the Palestinian Territories

RAID AL BAQAIN, ANNE VALLE ZÁRATE

University of Hohenheim, Dept. of Animal Production in the Tropics and Subtropics, Germany

Abstract

The marginal areas in the Middle East region face harsh ecological conditions causing poor pastures and short grazing periods. Bedouin communities, living in these areas, practice livestock farming as major source of income for living. Sheep farmers were also confronted with high production cost due to increases in feed prices. The study aims to compare the economic performance of sheep farming in Jordan and the Palestinian Territories (PA) under these circumstances. Farm and market surveys were conducted for the season 2007/2008. Eighty three sheep keepers from Jordan (n=44) and the PA (n=39) were interviewed. Net Benefit (NB) from sheep farming was calculated for both regions. Non parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to test the significant differences (at 5 % level). Sheep comprised more than 97 % and 71 % of the total flock size for Jordan and the PA respectively. Sheep flocks in Jordan were with 331 head significantly larger than in the PA (159 head) at $p = 0.001$. Net Benefit values including value of non-marketed production revealed that only sheep keepers in the PA generated positive values with 8.7 JOD and 862.7 JOD per ewe and per flock respectively compared to negative values in Jordan (1 Jordan Dinar ≈ 0.98 €). Only values of NB per ewe differed significantly ($p < 0.0001$) between Jordan and the PA. The proximity of sheep farmers in the PA to the Negev and other sheep markets in Israel facilitate the process of procuring improved sheep breeds along with practicing fattening, as a step towards the intensification of production. Also the higher meat prices were fundamental reasons for better economic results in the PA.

Keywords: Jordan, marginal areas, net benefit, palestinian territories, sheep farming