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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

How Agro-Ecological Transition Could Sustain Goat Keeping in Nomadic Systems of Iran

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Abstract

Pastoralism is a type of animal production characterised by the use of spontaneous food resources. Since 50 years, the dominant paradigm of agriculture has been based on specialisation and intensification of production systems by maximising the issue of production factors including higher yields, higher inputs, higher dependence on food industry. Its positive effect is increased food safety and its negative effect is environmental impacts and decreasing number of farmers. Five principles of agroecology for livestock are as follows: (i) the integrated management of animal health, (ii) the reduction of inputs by using ecological processes, (iii) the reduction of pollutions by controlling the biological cycles, (iv) the use of diversity in production systems to increase their resilience and (v) the preservation of biodiversity (pastures, landscapes, and local populations) by adapting practices. To define agroecological characteristics for goat keeping in Iran the following items should be considered and developed: animal nutrition, sustainable pasture management, crops and forage practices, disease prevention, breeds and reproduction, animal welfare, food safety and hygiene, marketing and management, conditions of social and economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and societal contribution. The productivity of Iranian goats is low, with a national average estimated at 150 kg of milk and 20 kg of meat per goat per year. The Iranian goat sector is dominated by extensive herds dedicated to the production of goats for meat and milk, which have very seasonal sales concentrated mainly during the feast of sacrifice and Ramadan. The production of goat milk is undergoing an important development, especially in the centre of the country, and is allowing for a significant improvement in the profitability of goat operations.

Keywords: Agro-ecological transition, goat keeping, nomads