



How is grazing perceived by stakeholders of the dairy goat chain in Western France?

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A picture of goat milk production in France and Western France

Few dairy factories and collection facilities: on farm processing ↗

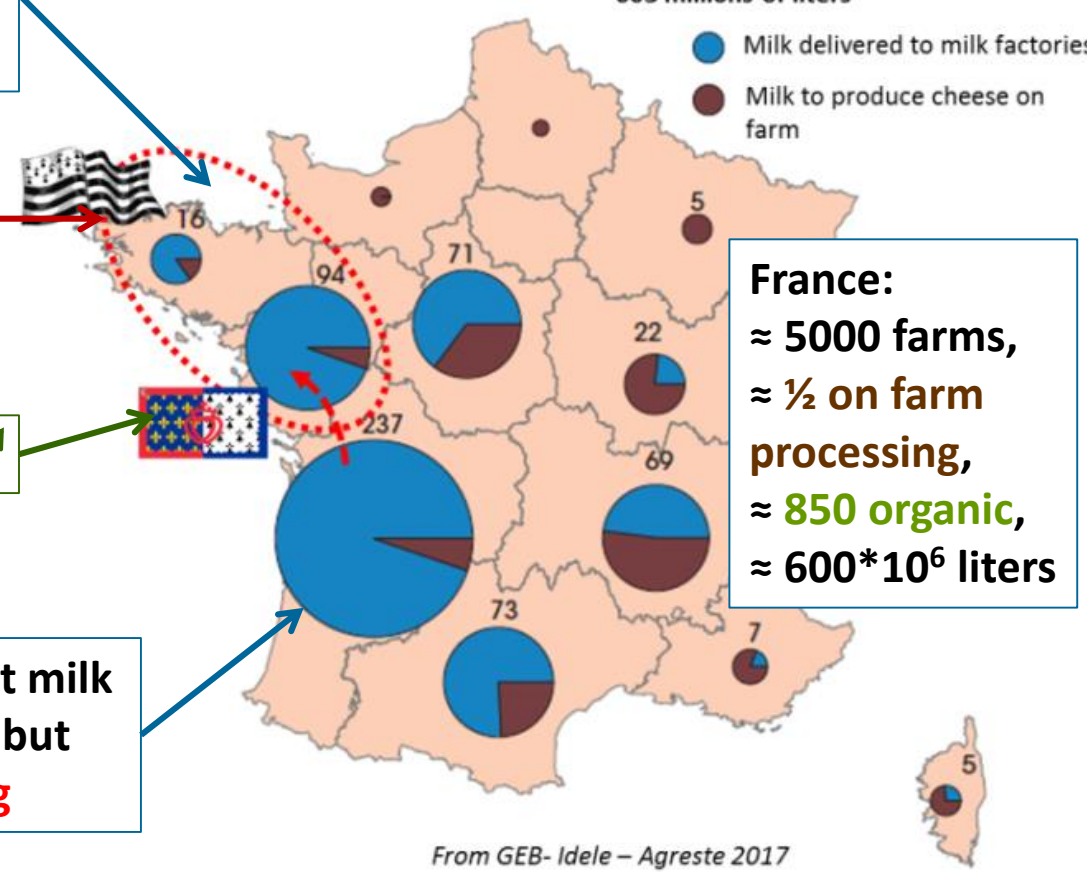
A positive dynamic, Smaller and “younger” production, Lack of organic milk

Competition with crops ↗

Leader of goat milk production but declining

Total milk production in France : 603 millions of liters

- Milk delivered to milk factories
- Milk to produce cheese on farm



France:
≈ 5000 farms,
≈ ½ on farm processing,
≈ 850 organic,
≈ 600*10⁶ liters

From GEB- Idele – Agreste 2017

Goat farming uses very little grass

90 % of goats do **not pasture**

Only 16% of farm relies on **fresh grass**

Brocard et al., 2016

Very diversified feeding systems in goat farms

A **low average self-sufficiency rate** compared to dairy cow systems :

55% against 88%

Bossis et al., 2014

Concentrates represent 46 % of goat diet

Brocard et al., 2016

Increasing demands from **consumers** for cheese & milk products based on grass (with goats outside)

Grass: one of the leeway to improve farm sustainability

How farmers and stakeholders perceive grass/grazing in the dairy goat farms and industry?



A survey of the dairy goat chain stakeholders

Toward a representative
diversity

Making of appointments



June-September 2017

20 « master 2 » students



Semi-quantitative survey

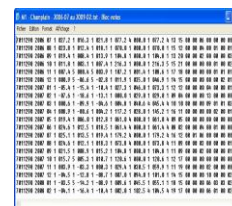
Data collection



October 2017

19 farms,
21 chain stakeholders (7 food supply, 5
advisers/extension , 4 Milk factories, 2 banks, 2
administrations, 1 educational),
3 cheese retailers and 24 consumers

Data processing



Synthetic SWOT analysis,
Crossing interviews

A high diversity of interviewed farms

➤ High diversity of interviewed farms

- **Size** : 25 to 1000 dairy goats
- **Milk** delivered to milk factories, milk to produce cheese on farm, combination of two systems
- **Milking** once or twice a day
- **Main feeding systems**: Maize silage & concentrates; hay & concentrates, fresh grass (fresh cut or grazing => 6 farms)

- Feeding system are well adapted to **farmers' choices** and **plot plan**, but can be changed from one year to another



Perceptions on grazing in goat system: some shared views (1)

❖ *To all the stakeholders, grazing in dairy goat system enables:*

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- Boosting a positive and preserved picture of goat milk chain among **consumers**
 - Enhancing **feed self sufficiency**
 - Being less sensitive to **volatility** of agricultural commodities

❖ ... *but leads to some issues:*

- 
- **Parasitism** control
 - **Fencing** of pastured plots especially for **large herds**
 - Grass growth depends on **weather** conditions implying **milk production variations**

Perceptions on grazing in goat system: some shared views (2)

- ❖ To (almost) all the stakeholders, **grass** in dairy goat system enables **better organoleptic qualities** of cheese



- ❖ To all the stakeholders, **grazing management** requires high technical **skills**, both for farmers and advisors



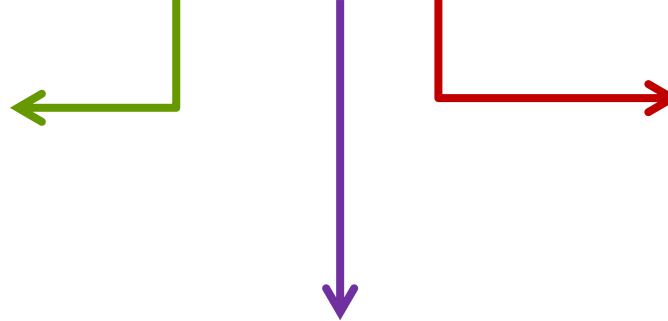
Training courses in goat farming and cheese making

Divergent views (1): is goat suitable for grazing?

YES

Farmers,
Some advisers,
stakeholders of civil
society:

Economic, environmental
and social sustainability
Can easily be adapted
Better **welfare**



Consumers:
Cannot imagine
another feeding
system than grazing



NO

Farmers, some vets,
some advisers:

“Gatherer” animal
Cannot naturally protect
from parasitism
Don’t want to graze if rain,
sunburn on the udder (lack
of **welfare**)



Facing the main goat milk chain challenges

- Maintaining goat farms in **future** and ensuring successions of farms between farmers (ageing population of goat farmers)
- **Increasing milk** production (mostly in **organic** milk)
- Aligning **consumers'** perceptions of goat farming with reality



Grazing: not a concern for stakeholders

Divergent views (2): facing the chain challenges

Ensuring successions of farms ?

Applicants for installation



- ❖ Want small herds (<100 goats)
- ❖ Want to limit loans
- ❖ Want to process and direct selling



Grazing (or not)



? Too risky



Bank support

Dairy companies



- ❖ Want large herds (>250 goats)
- ❖ Want to limit variability of milk supply
- ❖ Want to collect larger amount (more goats and more milk/goat)



Limited grazing (hay + concentrate or conserved forage preferred)



+++

In conclusion

- ❖ Reluctances of the **economic sector** is all the more important as goat farming is traditional in the area (*as in Jacquot et al., 2017*)
- ❖ Grazing is **not a concern** for the stakeholders

- ❖ Grazing management **skills** need to be updated (or initiated) both for farmers and advisers (and by researchers).
- ❖ Way to better control **parasitism** needs to go forward
- ❖ Relationships between **welfare and grazing** need to be investigated
- ❖ How to reconcile increasing **herd size** and grazing?

- ❖ **Grazing** is not the only solution to use **grass**. Need to find a middle lane to follow between producers', dairy companies' and consumer's interests

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Students



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