Restoring value to grasslands

Key messages

- Grassland based livestock systems provide a large range of outcomes (economic, environment, social and cultural) that are undervalued by society.

- Three case studies from this action network (AN2) data base demonstrate the importance of adding value from grassland based livestock systems from the field to the consumer:
  1. Enhancing grassland quality for animal feed (Brazil)
  2. Empowering family farms to increase value and profit from native grasslands and stay on the land (Uruguay)
  3. Delivering consistent seasonal milk supply to develop a value chain to add value to grassland derived milk (Senegal)

Livestock-based solutions

- Managed well in dairy systems, alternative tropical forages can produce high biomass, providing good animal nutrition and milk production parameters, replace concentrates without negative effects on animal performance and enteric methane production of the farm cattle system

- Technical solutions must fit with the farm system and the farmer social, environmental, economic and cultural goals

- There are no recipes, only principles of management that will vary according to context

- A shift to facilitating change on farm rather than only providing technical knowledge is required from extension personnel

- The collection and the sustainable intensification of dairy production in pastoral areas relies on the settlement of a dairy herd in the dry season, for each supplier farm.

- Sedentarisation and sustainable intensification of the dairy herd are only possible by complementation (forage and concentrates).

- By enabling the main dairy herd to maintain its transhumance it lightens the environmental load on the wider landscape

Results and evidence

- Observations of the successful implementation of Tithonia diversifolria on dairy farms in different countries (e.g. Colombia – Fundación Cipav and Mexico - Fundación Produce) and production systems (dairy, beef and farm scales).

- Farmers in UFFIP have developed farm business plans aligned with their family goals and natural resource. They have put in place actions, Animal health checks, pasture productivity monitoring; feed utilisation and feed budgets; biodiversity monitoring, matching calving dates to pasture production.

- In the Laiterie du Berger (Senegal) collection area, milk production has doubled in 10 years, since 2006. The dairy plans to double again its collection in the next ten years. This translates into an increase in earnings among farmers: milk now accounts for 25% of their total incomes.

Multiplier effects

- All cases required research, extension and agribusiness to work together.

- Time to build up trust and confidence is required and finding a common outcome is critical; communicating well expectations and continuously checking these is important.

- Without the multistakeholder aspect non of these cases would have been successful there was a co-dependence required to achieve the outcomes.

Contacts:

Brazil case: Rogerio M. Mauricio – rogeriomauricio@ufsj.edu.br
Uruguay case: Liz.wedderburn@agresearch.co.nz
Senegal case: alexandre.ickowicz@cirad.fr; Arona Diaw – a.diaaw@lدب.sn

International Licence. May 2017