

## Small Ruminant Production Systems and Actual Circumstances for Small and Disadvantaged Farmers

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Small ruminant farmers are located in marginal areas where the existing agroecosystems make it hard to incorporate new technologies. For extensive production systems, small ruminant farmers to obtain enough production prefer to increase the number of animals per flock rather than increase the yield of meat or milk per head through innovation and intensification. Innovation incorporates, in most cases, initial investment and more labor use that discourage farmers besides the fact that small ruminant products experience price markets uncertainty and excessive milk-meat processing regulations. On the other hand, conventional small ruminant production systems generally degrade natural resources, reduce biodiversity, and increase negative environmental impacts, such as water contamination and soil erosion. The overgrazing of pasture and subsequent soil erosion contributes to limited regional agricultural development.

However, farmers can adopt several strategies to mitigate these noxious effects. Strategic supplementation with annual forages can mitigate these adverse effects and decrease overgrazing and improper pasture management. In countries where Industrial Hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) is being authorized, hemp for animal feeding provides a promise supplemental alternative.

In developing countries, there is a lack of public policies for the conservation of endemic breeds. Also, it has been an extremely high introduction of exotic breeds. Therefore, an initiative to balance the genetic erosion will result in better adaptable native breeds to the environmental conditions and farmer management. Strategies for community-based animal selection, animal health,

and strategic nutritional improvement may significantly impact the most unfavorable agroecosystems.

However, post-production - consumption and value-added products educational programs are needed, with the development and companion of public policies oriented to improve the commercialization chain, access to credits, risk management, and insurances.

Farmers' organization and participatory research, cooperative extension, public policies design and innovation are required to have appropriated system approach with certain sustainable success.

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