



# Experiences from France

## *Ruminants, Pigs, Equids*

**Coralie DANCHIN, Institut de l'Elevage**  
**[coralie.Danchin@idele.fr](mailto:coralie.Danchin@idele.fr)**



# Main reasons of endangerment (1960s -1970s)

**Not adapted to the production system / global market**

**Less productive**

**Size matters (*i.e. more difficult to set up a selection program with a limited number of animals*)**

**Breeds unknown by authorities / not well defined**

**Sanitary issues (for instance brucellosis eradication)**



# Specificities of the small ruminants

## In sheep:

**Overall the sheep production in France is in strong decline (13 millions sheep in 1980, 7 millions in 2017)**

## In goat:

**Few reliable historical information on the local breeds**

**One of the specie where selection started the latest**

**Local breeds are more “populations” (i.e. not standardized, at least on color pattern)**





**ERFP in situ WG**

# Conservation of the French local breeds: an « old » story

First conservation programs set up in the 1970s

National funding to technical institutes to start conservation programs (*pig, cattle and equids for start*)

Mostly a **genetic** approach

Very pragmatic

- **Cattle + pig**
  - ✓ in field research of all the remaining animals and farmers;
  - ✓ set up of pedigree recording books;
  - ✓ breeding advises (simple pedigree analysis);
  - ✓ when funding exists, *ex situ* conservation
- **Horses + donkeys: national stud farms**

# Which organizations?

## Minister of Agriculture

- Funding of conservation program (++)
- Funding of farmers subsidies (--)

## Technical Institutes

- Set up of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation programs (++)
- New development: valorization (-)

## Breeders associations:

- Breeds promotion (++)
- Collective valorization (-)

## Regional « conservatoires »

## Research institutions (INRA, agronomy schools...)

# Who are the rare breeds' farmers?

At the beginning of the conservation programs

**“Last of the Mohicans”**

--

Or **Ark farms**

Traditional farming / « Amateurs » breeders

Few animals, limited productivity / economic valorization

Main farming objective : standard

# Who are the rare breeds' farmers?

- **Collective organizations** -

Farm museum, regional and local parks

No economic goals

Main farming objective: patrimonial protection + grazing abilities

- **Low input farming system and/or high level of products valorization** ++

Grazing (small ruminants: shepherd) + quality/local products

Low production of the breeds but:

- High level of valorization and/or
- Cost effectiveness of the breed





# **Some breeds are still in danger**

**(Very) low productivity – limited use (*cattle horse donkey*)**

**Regions with long winter (*dairy breeds*)**

**No possibility of dry products valorization (*pig breeds*)**

**Breeds with strong specificities not adapted to the global market (*meat sheep breeds, pig breeds*)**

**Competition with the main regional production system**

**Absence of collective work among farmers/ strong conflicts between farmers**



# Transforming weaknesses in strengths... when possible

(Very) low productivity => *hardiness*

Regions with long winter => *local valorization*

No possibility of dry products valorization => *use of by products*

Breeds with strong specificities not adapted to the global market => *local valorization*

Competition with the main regional production system  
=> *development in other regions*

Absence of collective set up / strong conflicts within farmers => *most difficult to overcome !*

# The end of the national stud farms = the end of the draft horses and donkeys ?



# Elements for a success story

- 1. Passionate farmers**
- 2. Existence of a collective work**
- 3. Acknowledgment of the breed (local, national)**  
⇒ means (funding, labor)
- 4. Breed's quality (« hardiness », production)**
- 5. Specific product(s) valorization**



# Key point

**Do farmers believe in their breed ?  
Are they willing to fight for its survival ?**

