

TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT

TUNISIA – An ambitious program of sheep genetic improvement

On the initiative of the group of agricultural development of sheep breeders from the North (GDA-EBN) members, and with SFOAP support, the livestock and pasture office and the laboratory of animal and food genetic resources of INAT, an ambitious program has been developed to set up mechanisms for the selection and improvement of the “Black of Thibar” sheep breed. The Black of Thibar having so far limited performance, the idea is to improve the breed to make it a meat breed and in the end to improve the breeders’ incomes.



Since end of 2016, the selection objectives based on the selection core group of farmers have been defined and prioritized (1/ growth (average daily gain), 2/ prolificacy, 3/ lamb viability, 4/ meat quality, etc.). One component of the program is the center for rams selection and breeding (initiated in 2014 at the level of the group but linked, in the future, to the basis of the selection program of the office). The rams go through several stages for the selection, under the supervision of a veterinarian: entry into quarantine (2 months), stimulation of spermatogenesis and selection of performant rams. The genetic improvement of the Black of Thibar remains intrinsically linked to the herding practices. The group thus provides in addition to this selection program, advice and supervision on flocks management (feeding, prophylaxis, etc.), thanks in particular to the use of Sigeo (information and sheep flocks’ management system - see letter 3).

ALGERIA – Climate change and conservation agriculture

In line with the trainings and demonstrations organized on the supplemental irrigation of cereals (see letter 3), demonstration activities in connection with conservation agriculture and direct seeding were organized in Setif Wilaya, in March 2017.

In order to raise farmers' awareness on the critical situation of agriculture in regions marked by the scarcity of water and soil resources and by the accentuation of the phenomena of aridity and erosion, the animator of these sessions highlighted the limits in the sustainability of the agriculture constituted nowadays by conventional practices in the cereals cultivation. Loss in productivity and fertility, increased production costs, etc. are key indicators that farmers can directly observe.



After this awareness raising, farmers were able to test and use several seed drills, available at the institute, on the demonstration plots of the technical institute for field crops. The tests made it possible to observe and confirm the particularities of the different existing seed drills explained at the beginning of the training, and thus to better understand under what local conditions each of them can be used (soil type, depth, slope, humidity, species to be seed, etc.).

The evaluation of the sessions confirmed some awareness among farmers to the benefits of conservation agriculture and capacity and know-how building in how to choose and use direct seed drills.

MOROCCO – A beekeeping nursery to improve and diversify the production

The quality of honey, the number of times honey is harvested and the diversification of hive products are factors that determine the regularity of the beekeepers income. Al Amal Union of beekeeping cooperatives in Taza, aware of these needs for improvement, of the rugged competition on the national market and of the dependence of honey production on climate change, decided to set up a beekeeping nursery.



This nursery should thus make it possible to (i) diversify the hive products through the collection of pollen, royal jelly and the rearing of queens, (ii) serve as an apiary school (support for technical training and visits), (iv) create jobs for women and young people and (v) facilitate the dissemination of beekeeping good practices at the provincial and national levels.

Within the framework of SFOAP, Fert supported the union in the acquisition of 100 hives with established colonies and the establishment of the nursery. A technical committee, set up in 2016 within the union, is in charge, with the support of the technician of the union, of the management of the hives and their follow-up. A traceability system was initiated in June 2017 through the development of monitoring sheets. In the first year, the union aims to sell the products of the nursery (honeys, pollen, etc.) for nearly € 11,000 € which will cover its expenses, including human resources, etc.

EGYPT – Sundried tomatoes in Sohag

Production of tomatoes in Egypt is difficult due to the fluctuation in prices and its seasonal production. At certain times, the cost inherent to the harvest is higher than the incomes from the sales of the production. This also causes higher production losses. Thanks to SFOAP support, Beet Khalaf association has decided to install a sun drying facility in the Beet Khalaf area, Gerga, Sohag, and to produce sundried tomatoes when the prices for fresh tomatoes fall. As a result of the processing of tomatoes, farmers expect: (i) to use production during the high production season and thus to tackle the main marketing challenges; (ii) to penetrate new markets by meeting EU and Italy importers' demands and (iii) to add value to their production and sales.



The sun drying facility is now established. So far, the price of fresh tomatoes was so high that processing was not relevant. However, Beet Khalaf association plans to start sun drying at the next high production season, winter 2017/2018. In this perspective, negotiations with exporters have been initiated as well.

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AGENDA



- ⇒ **Beginning of August**, training on the management of a beekeeping station (Tizi Ouzou, Algeria)
- ⇒ **August 12-15**, exchange visit between Rich apple producers and Taza beekeepers (Morocco)
- ⇒ **Septembre 15th**, initiation of young people to beekeeping and cooperatives life (Taza, Morocco)
- ⇒ **October**, IFAD supervision mission

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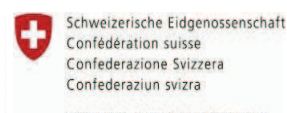
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