

Session 6: Challenges and Developments in recording and sampling for sheep and goats.

S06.O-03

CERTIFICATION OF MILK METERS FOR SMALL RUMINANTS: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

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Commercial offer of milk meters certified by ICAR for small ruminants is very low (7 certified models) compared to that available for dairy cows (112 certified models), even though there is a demand from farmers. This really limits the possibilities of monitoring the technical performances of animals, as well as the use of these tools for official milk recording. This difference is due to several reasons. First, the dairy market for small ruminants is more limited and therefore less attractive for manufacturers of milk meters. Then, sheep and goat farms often have more animals than dairy cow farms and therefore require more milking stations, and more milk meters to monitor the entire herd. Finally, the milking process of small ruminants presents significant constraints (heterogeneity of the udders, with high mammary compliance, causing more milking incidents such as air inlets, low quantity of milk and low ejection rate, high pulsation frequency, high butterfat content, frequent formation of foam especially in ewes, etc.) which make it difficult to develop technologies capable of achieving the precision objectives set by ICAR. Furthermore, the organization of the milk performance recording on the field is often more complicated for small ruminants due to the configuration of the milking facilities (mostly high line for sheep), the number of animals to be sampled, the speed of milking and to the low quantity of milk available. This therefore adds additional difficulties for the design of systems capable of facilitating sampling at a high frequency. This presentation therefore proposes to present an inventory of the situation, the existing technical limits, but also the prospects that exist to promote the development of new tools that meet the needs of farmers and of performance control organizations.

