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Poljoprivreda/Agriculture

ISSN: 1848-8080 (Online)

ISSN: 1330-7142 (Print)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18047/poljo.21.1.sup.1>



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SUPPORTS FOR LOCAL BREEDS IN THE EUROPEAN REGION – AN OVERVIEW

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Scientific review

SUMMARY

This study analysed the incentives for conservation of local breeds in 35 European countries, with the particular reference to the situation in Slovenia. In order to collect all necessary data in different countries, detailed questionnaire was developed and sent out to National coordinators for Animal Genetic Resources in the European Region. Data were edited and analysed using MS Excel program where basic descriptive statistics was performed to show differences among countries in incentive payments. Incentives for local breeds in Slovenia were paid from the Agri-environmental payments. The amount of payment for one livestock unit was 89.38 € per year. Subsidies for adult cattle and horses of local breeds were therefore 89.38 € per animal, while for pigs there were 44.69 € per animal and for sheep and goats 13.41 € per animal. Comparing data from different countries, the highest subsidies were received for cattle ranging from 45 € to 520 € for bulls. From all 35 countries, 16 countries have subsidies for horses. Despite two breeds of sheep and one breed of goat in Slovenia highly endangered, the level of subsidies for sheep and goats for local breeds included in the environmental payments were equal i.e., 13.41 € per animal. Compared to 21 countries reported the financial support for sheep, only two countries had lower support than in Slovenia. The EC Regulations can explain differences in payments where the Member States are free when determining the payments level. Another reason could be since out of 35 countries, eleven are not EU members. National coordinators from all countries agreed that financial support per head is very important tool for breed conservation and such a practice should be continued. However, the current level of support does not compensate loss of income due to lower productivity.

Key-words: local breeds, subsidies, incentives, conservation

INTRODUCTION

Direct payments are intended for farmers rearing a specific breed at extinction risk. Indirect payments encourage less intensive agriculture production that is more respectful to the environment and preserve agricultural biodiversity. Financial incentives are therefore provided for the local breed in order to compensate their lower productivity compared to highly productive ones (Environmental Performance..., 2008). In 1992 the European Union started with the financial support to the agriculture having benefits for the environment. Each Member State implemented their policies for agricultural development within the Rural Development Plan (RDP). RDPs provide direct and indirect incentives for the agrobiodiversity conservation. Today, incentive payments are provided by the Commission Regulation

(EC) No 807/2014 for local breeds, being in loss danger and are genetically adapted to one or more traditional production systems or environments in the country (Commission..., 2015). The general view is that incentives are not contributed to the conservation of local breeds in a long term. Keeping local breeds is unprofitable for many farmers and the main reason is the difference in the profitability among local and highly productive breeds. Incentives are not high enough to maintain the current population of breeds at risk and farmers are not stimulated to switch from higher yielding breeds to less productive local breeds (Signorello and Pappalardo, 2003). Local breeds have economic values as well as

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social, cultural and environmental. They have ability to help sustain rural livelihoods, especially for peoples in remote areas (FAO, 2013). When countries are considered the level of supports all the values should be taken into account. The aim of this study was to analyse the incentives for conservation of local breeds in 35 countries members of the European Regional Focal Point (ERFP), with the particular reference to the situation in Slovenia.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was carried out in 35 countries members of the ERFP for Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR): Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYR Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

In order to collect all necessary data on the level of subsidies in different countries, detailed questionnaire was developed. After revision of the questionnaire, involving stakeholders in the final stage, the questionnaire was sent out to all National coordinators for Animal Genetic Resources (AnGR) in the European Region by email. Data were collected individually and three workshops were organized for the final comments for all stakeholders included in the survey. Additional information on the questionnaire methodology was in detail presented elsewhere (Subsibreed, 2014). However, the questionnaire included thirteen chapters. Result of only one question, representing the level of subsidies included in this study. Data were edited and analysed using MS Excel program where basic descriptive statistics was performed to show differences among countries in incentive payments. The questionnaire involved different topics about legal arrangements in the field of AnGR, country programmes, definition of breed and level of endangerment, national budget allocated for the conservation of AnGR, methodologies for calculating subsidies and proposals for the improvement. In this study we discussed just one part of the questionnaire connected with the level of subsidies with the special emphasis on Slovenia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although 35 countries were included in the project, only countries reporting level of subsidies for specific species or breeds are shown in Figures 1 to 4. Subsidies for species and breeds differed among countries evidently. A detailed list of payments for each country and level of subsidies is available upon request from the authors. No financial support for the specific species or breed was reported by three countries included in the project. Three countries reported that higher level

of subsidies was allocated to the highly endangered breeds.

In accordance with the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1974/2006 for the period from 2007 to 2014, incentives for local breeds in Slovenia were paid from the Agri-environmental payments (Commision..., 2015). The payments are allocated to the local breeds, genetically adapted to one or more traditional production systems or environments which are in danger of being lost. The highest amount of payment from agri-environmental measures for local breeds in that period have been defined for one livestock unit in the amount 89.38 € per year. Subsidies for adult cattle and horses of local breeds were 89.38 € per animal, while for pigs 44.69 € per animal and for sheep and goats 13.41 € per animal (Program..., 2007). One Livestock Unit (LU) refers to 500 kg of live weight.

Comparing data from different countries, the highest subsidies are intended for the keeping of the cattle. Within 35 reported countries the level of subsidies ranged from 45 € to 520 € for bulls. Only Macedonia and Montenegro, non EU members reported lower payments for local breeds compared to Slovenia. The highest payment for the cattle breed was reported by Croatia, Austria for the bulls and Greece. Hungary, Poland and Ukraine reported that payments were made only for cows, while Austria and Finland reported different level of subsidies between genders (Figure 1).

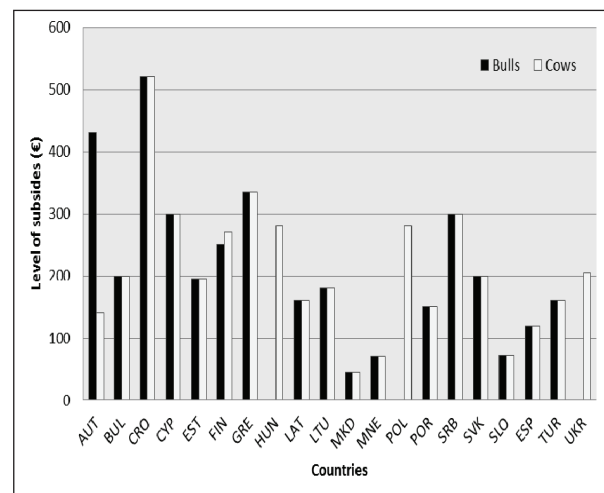


Figure 1. Level of financial support for cattle

Payments for local breeds of horses in Slovenia was 89.38 € per adult animal in the period from 2007 to 2014. From all 35 countries included in the project, only 16 countries reported supports for horses. Compared to supports in Slovenia subsidies for horses in all the reported countries were higher. Finland, Hungary and Poland allocated supports only to mares. In other countries, there were no differences between genders in the level of subsidies. The highest support for mares was reported from Austria in the amount of 430 € and the lowest in Slovenia in the amount of 72 € (Figure 2).

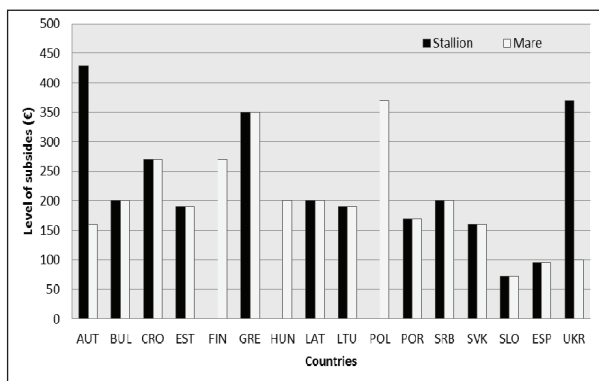


Figure 2. Level of financial support for horses

Despite two breeds of sheep and one breed of goat in Slovenia being highly endangered (Register..., 2014), the level of subsidies for sheep and goats for local breeds included in the environmental payments are equal i.e., 13.41 € per animal. Compared to 21 countries reported the financial support for sheep, only two countries had lower support than in Slovenia.

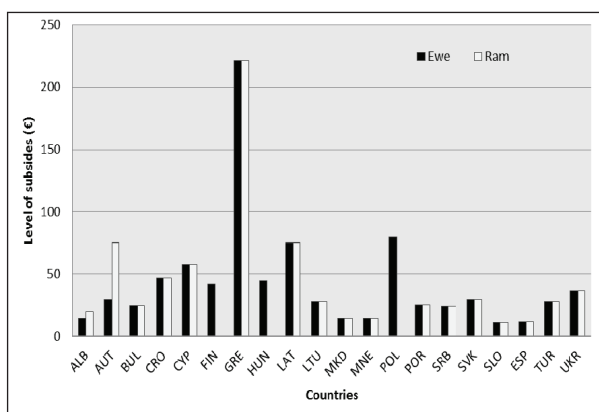


Figure 3. Level of financial support for sheep

When the amount of support is concerned, the Greece stands out with the highest level of support in the amount of 221 €. Poland, Latvia and Austria have the next highest support, Austria for rams, Poland for ewes and Latvia for both, ewes and rams. Slovenia, Spain, Macedonia and Montenegro have the lowest level of support for the sheep (Figure 3).

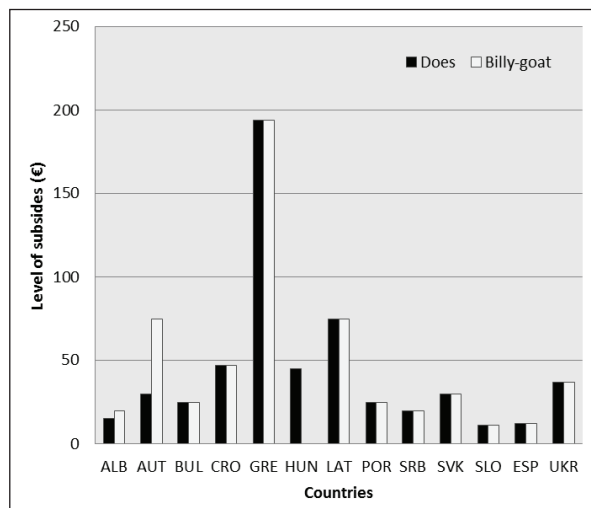


Figure 4. Level of financial support for goats

The levels of subsidies for goats were similar among the countries. However, only 13 countries reported that financial support was allocated to the particular breeds of goats. Slovenia and Spain fall in the category with the lowest level of support. Exceptions are Greece, Latvia and Austria which have the highest level of support. Greece stands out with the highest level of support in the amount of 194 € (Figure 4).

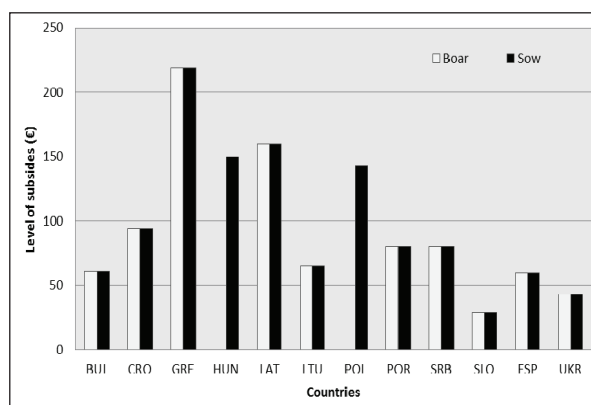


Figure 5. Level of financial support for pigs

The level of subsidies for pigs was again highest in Greece in the amount of 219 € and the next Latvia with 160 €. Slovenia again falls in the category with the lowest level of support. Hungary and Poland support only sows (Figure 5).

CONCLUSION

The countries included in this project report a diverse level of supports intended for the local breeds. The big differences in the level of support can be explained by the EC Regulations 1257/99 and 445/2002 where the Member States are free while determining the level of payments. The maximum level of payment is set on the 200 € per Livestock Unit (LU). These amounts

may be increased in the exceptional cases, member countries need to justify the higher level in the rural development programmes. Example of the successful countries, reaching the higher amount than 200 €/LU are Croatia, Austria and Greece. Another reason for the different supports is that eleven countries included in the project are not members of the EU. Despite that, few non EU countries like Serbia, Ukraine and Montenegro have the supports for local breeds included in their national programmes. In Slovenia, eleven local breeds are supported by the incentives. From 2003 when incentives started the critical population size of few breeds slightly increased. Experience shows that the population size of five local breeds in Slovenia remained stable in last few years while the population size of one breed decreased. The populations of another six breeds slightly increased. Comparing and looking at other countries data we can conclude, that even with the financial support, population size in some countries decreased or remain stable, taking long-term sustainability of such payments under the consideration. Nevertheless, without subsidies local breeds in some countries could be lost very quickly. National coordinators from all the included countries agreed that financial support per head is very important tool for breed conservation and such a practice should be continued. However, the current level of support does not compensate the loss of income resulting from the lower productivity of local breeds. For the long-term sustainable conservation of AnGR, some other ways of funding are proposed such as support to the national AnGR programmes, promoting and awareness raising, financing of the gene bank and marketing products of local breeds. In general, financial support should be intended to contribute to the long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency of specific local breed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors would like to thank all National coordinators who contributed to the research with filling the questionnaire, collaborate in the workshops and discussed to improve country data.

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(Received on 23 April 2015; accepted on 6 July 2015)