

The Spanish View

Discriminating EU subsidies responsible for sheep recession

A suckler cow receives a 500,96€ premium, a sheep receives 27.50€ in less favoured areas and 20.50€ in the rest. If a ewe is equivalent to 0.15 cows, it means 1 cow is equivalent to 6.7 ewes. 6.7 ewes receive 192.50€ versus 500.96€ for a cow. Why?

The sheep and cattle are both ruminants, subsequently they are competing for the rent of grass farms, and, as the cattle farmers get more subsidies they can pay more, get the best grass farms and the best grass areas. The same happens with the farm workers, they can work less and earn more money working with cattle.

There are no social, economic or technical reasons that justify any difference between sheep and cow subsidies if not in favour of sheep. This is an EU error, a huge error, a plain error, causing Spain a loss of 658,000 ewes with premium during the last year and 475,000 the year before, however the number of suckler cows is increasing. When the sheep farmer sells his sheep under these negative circumstances, supposing he can find a willing buyer, he would get paid only half the value and not the EU rights,



Timisoara and as Chairman of the Timisoara shepherds group has quite an influence on the direction of the sheep industry within the country. When he visited England in 2007 he saw the real benefits of the mule ewe and was determined to try and recreate the system back home in Romania. "Our sheep need to improve to compete in Europe" he said. "The emphasis on sheep breeding in Romania for many years has been for milk production as opposed to meat" This is now changing, and demand is growing in

they have no value.

The strong Spanish sheep industry is falling apart as the EU is not applying the subsidies between ruminants correctly. It is imperative that they maintain a correlation. Why this discrimination of the sheep?

At this stage a decoupling, without correcting this error, increasing the subsidies in justice with suckler cows, will lead to a still more serious reduction of the Spanish sheep industry. The decoupling under the current circumstances is cheap for the EU, but it's not fair.

The situation in Europe is the same. Since 1992, when this European discrimination of the sheep started, Europe-15 has lost 17 million sheep until 2007. Why does the European Parliament and COPA-COGECA accept this?

Indirect help

The recent CAP check continues with this essential error. The indirect help apparently goes to the sheep farmers. But not to all sheep farmers. The farmer welcomes that, but after he has received a subsidy in correlation with cows. This indirect help goes to pay political accomplices, creating questionable programs with a more than dubious "real effect" such as ecology, breed under disappearance threat, origin denomination, etc. A real kick for the politicians as it increases bureaucracy and so they feel important. It's cheaper to pay accomplices than justice. But obviously, it won't reduce the sheep disappearance. The farmer can never feel secure about his future when he has to wait every year for indirect

nearby European states, with buyers coming from Greece, Italy, France and Turkey and taking the lambs straight off the farm at around 12 weeks old for between 1.6-1.75 euro/kg up to around 2euro/kg for the lucrative Easter market.

The ideal scenario is to retain the Tikana breed for its milkiness and the Leicester for its prolificness and then cross the resulting mule gimmer with the Hampshire, Texel or Suffolk sires to produce the commercial lambs, much like the system in the UK. There is

help. Farmers are hard working and responsible workers, not beggars.

This strong discrimination, during such a long period and with such grave consequences, is a major scandal with 25 countries involved. The European sheep history must not forget this period, a rich but not a very intelligent period. It's sad to see how hardworking sheep farmers are deceived by the EU.

The only solution I can offer is a sheep premium in correlation with cows. In equity it should be 74.77 € but in justice it should be 20% higher, as the sheep need more work to handle and under harder conditions. This means a premium of 89.72€ per sheep. Then we can start talking about a decoupling.

Please, let me finish with this prophetic transcription: "Since ewes receive no incentive payment for such extensification, while beef cows would receive an increased premium, it is possible that ewes may be pushed off pastures by beef cows. This is despite the fact that beef is in surplus, while lamb is not". Maybe you don't remember this sentence, but it belongs to NSA: "Our CAP in their hands". *Sheep Farmer*, October 1991, Page 26.

Congratulations to NSA who already foresaw this in 1991, while the European Parliament and COPA-COGECA still can't see it even though all indicators are flashing red warning lights. "There is no man as blind as the man who doesn't want to see", says a Spanish proverb. □

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a lot of work to be done and many hurdles to clear before the vision becomes a reality, but with food on the international agenda and the fertile grounds of Romania, it is possible that the 6 million strong sheep flock of Romani could be on the very edge of a true Blue Revolution. □

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