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Kosovo, Animal Agriculture

## **Agriculture Animals' Health and Conditions in Kosovo**

### **Introduction**

Kosovo is a small country located in Southeastern Europe, respectively in center of Balkan. This country covers an area of 10.908  $km^2$  and has a total population of 1,920,079. Most of Kosovo's population (more than 60%) lives in rural areas and agriculture is considered one of the main businesses in these regions. Among the agriculture activities is livestock, which is spread all over rural regions.

Livestock is a branch of agriculture, which is based on the growth of farming animals, in purpose to obtain goods regarding human nutrition (milk, meat, eggs and honey), fertilizing, raw material (leather, wool), etc.

Kosovo livestock has marked advances regarding breeds, quality and quantity of production, but has reduced the number of animals, besides the poultry that has increased their number by making chicken farms.

Farming animals have their own importance in Kosovo because the population benefits many livestock productions that are important on human nutrition. That's why meat, milk, eggs and honey own their influence on population nutrition. Animals mainly produce these products from a variety of vegetal nutrition which can naturally be used by humans. From domestic animals, population also benefits other products which are used as raw material in industry. We can mention wool, leather, skin, feathers, etc., from which clothes, shoes and other things are processed.

On the other hand, horns, thighs, bones, intestines and blood in further processing can be put up to use in animal food. From what we said, it is clear that the leather industry, textile industry, processing technology, livestock production, etc. are provided to animals.

Population gets from the animals even the manure, which is necessary to maintain soil fertility and its structure. Depending on the type and the category, different amounts of manure are collected within a year. From each healthy cattle population take 15 tons of fertilizers per year, 8 tons from horses and 5-12 tons from birds.

At the same time, the population uses animals' work force and abilities, especially on the hilly and mountainous terrain where the agricultural mechanism is unable to be used.

### **Livestock's selection in disciplines**

Livestock is one of the main branches of agriculture that Kosovo population use to obtain and benefit food (milk, meat, eggs) and raw materials such as leather, wool and fur. Livestock farming is divided into several disciplines or fields, the most important being: cattle breeding, sheep breeding, poultry, goats breeding, horse breeding, then pigs breeding, beekeeping, etc., but the most active disciplines are **cattle breeding** and **poultry**.

### **Cattle breeding**

Cattle breeding is the most important livestock field, whose production takes place for 80-90% of the total Kosovo livestock production.

Cattle is the largest producer of meat and milk for population food in Kosovo. In some parts of the country, which are less developed and with hilly and mountainous terrains, this animal has been exploited and used for jobs, both for agricultural affairs and for the weighing of heavy weights. In addition to the mentioned products, cattle manure is also important, which is used to fertilize and increase the fertility of the soil in the husk, vineyard, orchard, vegetables, etc.

Unlike animals that do not re-feed food (especially poultry and pigs), cattle breeds have the option of processing low volume nutritional foods (hay, grass, silage, secondary products of the processing industry) and convert them into products of high value, such as meat and milk.

In the last 10 years milk production in Kosovo has been decreased. This phenomenon is related

to decreasing the number of dairy cows but maintaining the quantity of milk per cattle. Also the cows are decreasing, along with the fact that the meat production is decreasing, as we are able to obtain fewer calves from a parent, a generation who promises to have larger quantities in the future of meat and dairy products for human food. To regulate the growth of milk and meat production, intent is to increase meat production in dairy cows and vice versa, milk production in cows raised for meat.

Cattle, as a farming animal, has great abilities to acclimatize and adapt, this is why many different cattle breeds are widespread and adapted in Kosovo.

### ***Busha: The autochthonous Kosovar breed.***

It's a peculiar autochthonous breed of Kosovo that is breeding extensively and has modest production features.

Depending on where it is cultivated, Busha is categorized in multiple types, such as: Kosovo's Busha, Albanian Busha, Macedonia, Montenegro, Dalmatia, Bosnia etc..

The classification of Bush is also done in color of the hair:

- Red Busha,
- Black Busha,
- Gray grain Busha

During the various periods of time, Busha has undergone changes both in the exterior and in the manufacturing terms, since the breeding, mainly uncontrolled, has varied, with foreign cattle breeds such as Montafon, Simental, etc. Busha is cultivated in a primitive manner and in difficult housing conditions by being fed with low-quality food. Busha passes the longest period of the year (spring-fall) to mountain pastures without any other supplements of concentrated foods, while winter food consists of straw, loaves, little hay and small amounts of concentrated foods.

Busha has very low body weight, which ranges between 150-300 kg, while bulls have body mass average up to 450 kg. It is characterized by low milk production, as the quantity and quality of

milk is insufficient. On average it gives 1,000 liters of milk during lactation, and under better conditions up to 2,000 liters, with about 4% fat.

**Cattles' records in Kosovo for the last 10 years:**

- **Calves under 6 months.....68.176 units**
- **Heifers and bulls 6 months -2 years.....62.099 units**
- **Dairy cows.....189.706 units**
- **Bulls.....1.368 units**
  
- **Total: 321.349 units**

**Sheep breeding**

With the increase in the population of Kosovo, there is a growing demand regarding food providing. Sheep breeding, as one of the primary producers and a source of food for Kosovo population has an important role both in this developing country. The sheep is a very useful kind of farming animal, because it provides precious products for human food and clothing. Meat and milk are very important products and content high nutrients for man. Also wool, leather and fur are used for human clothing. Wool produced from sheep is the main product used as raw material in the textile industry.

Sheep milk is also a very important product for nutrition of population, especially in mountainous hills, where other types of animal are unable to adapt and fit climate and terrain conditions. Kosovo population, besides cultivating sheep and using milk as a pure product, also produce various by-products such as cheese, yogurt, butter, etc.

Because of the suitable climate and terrain conditions to cultivate and raise sheep, this country has their own several native breeds, such as: The white Dukagjini Sheep, Kosovar Sheep and Sharri Sheep.

***The white Dukagjini Sheep*** – This breed is often raised and cultivated in Dukagjini region, from where she even was named. It has a completely white color, short tail and short head. Females are hornless and males have strong and big horns. It produces 2-2.5 kg leather and it's supposed that this sheep includes 3-4% of the total number of sheep in Kosovo.

***Kosovar Sheep*** – It is a breed with a long tail, a relatively long and narrow head. The females are hornless and males have strong and pigmented and pigmented horns. Their ears are horizontal and slightly released. It is a medium sized sheep, with a height of max. 74 cm. This sheep is covered with long wool and the average production is 1.5-2 kg wool.

***The Sharri Sheep*** – This breed's origin are Sharri Mountains, from where it even was named. It takes place with 50% of the total number of sheep in Kosovo. The average height is 57 cm and the average weight is 30-35 kg. It produces 0.9-2 kg wool and 96 liters of milk in lactation for 199 days.

***Sheep's records in Kosovo for the last 10 years:***

- Lambs.....18.519 units
- Sheep for milk/wool/meat production.....108.184 units
- Males for breeding.....12.479 units
- Total: 139.182 units

## **The traditional Sharri Cheese**

Sharr cheese is a traditional cheese located in Sharr Mountains of Kosovo, from where it was named. It is made of cow or sheep milk and is usually added in salads or pies. This cheese's characteristics are the saltiness, and the fact that, that it is produced in any time of the day or year.

The tradition of producing Šar cheese has been passed on to generations for centuries. Traditionally, Šar cheese was produced on sheep milk. Another reason why sheep milk was usually used was because cows were not able to climb the highland and reach the favorite grass and herbs which give Šar cheese its main characteristics. It is known that the main herb which impacts the aroma and taste of Šar cheese is dill, which is very common in the highlands over 1,100 m (3,600 ft) altitude. After the people of the Šar region had begun to use cow milk for the cheese, they started to collect the dill herb for its use as an external ingredient during the production process, with the aim to preserve the original characteristics of the cheese. Centuries ago, the number of sheep in the region was up to 100,000. Unfortunately, today this number has fallen to 5,000. The Šar cheese is different because the region is naturally rich in unique herbs and aromatic plants which results in a much richer, better-tasting milk. Even though the cheese is popular in its solid form, there is also a soft version of it. Either solid or soft, the cheese was handmade for decades on old wooden huts or in the homes of village's population. Lately however, companies have launched industrial production lines of this product.

**Production** – According to centuries-old recipes, Sharri cheese is mostly made from sheep and cow milk, and it is the kind of milk which determines the cheese's fat content. The production process evolved from a traditional to a more modern way of production during the years.

This happened because of two major reasons, which are:

- Prevention of diseases – Pasteurization process
- Industrial production of complementary ingredients

Total production of Sharri cheese is about 25 tons per year which is mainly produced in the region of Drgash from sheep and cow milk. Main characteristics related to Sharri cheese is availability during all year, quality, saltiness and equal presentation in all regions of Kosovo. While mostly produced in private households, the past decade has seen the rise of industrial Sharri cheese manufacturers. The majority of these entrepreneurs operate in and around Prizren, such as „ABI Industry”, a fruit and vegetable processing company which also produces Sharri cheese and makes it even more popular.

## **Poultry**

Poultry is a very important branch of livestock because the population benefits from it high quality food products such as eggs and meat for a very short time. Poultry are also characterized by other economic features: they have high and rapid reproduction, which helps on their numerical growth; are omnivorous animals, as they use any kind of food; for their cultivation they need relatively limited shelter space, and by getting fast in reproduction and having intensive trade the poultry return the investments made for them within a short time. But, poultry can easily bring to great losses because birds represent the most sensitive type of domestic animals to inadequate conditions of cultivation and housing.

Organized and contemporary production e poultry in Kosovo started quite late. First poultry farm for egg production was established in 1970 on Agricultural Cooperative in city of Lipjan. With the intensification of the number of population in Kosovo and improving living standards, there was a need for faster development even in poultry. During the 80s, poultry in Kosovo has had a more advanced development. However, as a result of the difficult situation regarding social and economic development in 1990-1998, most manufacturing capacities did not perform their function. During wartime (1998-1999) even those few production capacities which until then have been in function, were wholly or partly damaged and the production of eggs and poultry meat has been discontinued in general. As for chicken production, they had the station of incubators, egg production farms, chicken meat production farms, slaughterhouses as well the animal feed factories for production of quality concentrated food for different categories of birds.

***Poultry's records in Kosovo for the last 10 years:***

- Chickens..... 2.058.756 units
- Other birds.....219.373 units

**Total: 2.278.129.**

**Livestock's difficult conditions - The problem that has not yet been resolved**

Despite the nice and comfortable environment to improve Kosovo's livestock, this branch of agriculture is still struggling on low production and difficult conditions to maintain the farming animals. Livestock in Kosovo has been always primitive, especially after the 1998-1999 war. Before this period, livestock in Kosovo somehow managed to produce enough productions for its population nutrition and also for export on other countries, but after this period, livestock was almost collapsed to zero and since then it's improving in really slow steps.

The main factors that affect livestock's slow improvement are: **lack of government support, farmers' complains and low prices of livestock productions.**

**Lack of government support, farmers' complains and low prices of livestock productions**

Doing all the work with no extra incomes and no financial support from government and ministry of agriculture, make the farmers non-motivated and hopeless to improve their cattle/poultry/sheep farms for further productions and export.

Farmers' complains increase every day and more because of non-support from government and impossibility to sell and export their livestock products on higher prices. This uncomfortable situation caused many frequent protests in front of agriculture and government institutions, and



even made many farmers quit this line of work and emigrate outside Kosovo in developed countries of Western Europe.

Agriculture Ministry keeps promising subsidies and other supports regarding animals' health, nutrition and maintaining, contemporary and modern mechanical equipment for easier work, opportunities to ensure employment for those who live in poverty and are unemployed, etc., but these promises are being considered worthless by the Kosovo population and that's why they are trying to be oriented in other fields and not in livestock or any other agricultural branch.

On the other side, primitive and inadequate conditions to provide the animals a normal maintaining cause several diseases that lead to health harming and reduction on their livestock products.

### **What should we do to upgrade livestock's conditions in Kosovo?**

As explained above, Kosovo has a great and comfortable relief to develop livestock, and even to easily adapt and acclimatize other foreign breeds. All that his developing country needs is more support from the government, ministry of agriculture and other institutes that regard agriculture and livestock.

Kosovo population is well-known for hardworking all around the world, so all they need is more motivation, willpower and more wish to increase this important branch of agriculture and lead their country towards development and success.

Population of Kosovo (especially rural) have already started being aware that livestock can issue the unemployment crisis to a really nice level, so most of the population are activating their fields and turning them to qualitative and fertile soils to produce many different productions to feed the animals. On the other side, poultry is increasing significantly by building and making contemporary and modern chicken farms to produce qualitative meat and eggs for nutrition of population and even exporting it on the other countries.

Yet, these upgrades and developments are rare and they need to be spread all over the country.

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