

Editorial

Animal product quality in the Indian Ocean: Investigating product promotion and consumer protection

Food and nutrition security, regional economic development, health and food safety, and consumer protection... These challenges are crucial to the future of the people of the Indian Ocean Southwestern islands – Reunion, Mauritius (and Rodrigues), Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles – as well as of all the countries of the South. Animal products, e.g. meat, milk, fish and honey, help create wealth and cover part of the food needs in these islands, although they traditionally come from small farms and processing units.

QualiREG is a scientific and technical network dedicated to improving food safety and developing quality food products in the countries of the Indian Ocean. It brings together more than 60 organizations from the Indian Ocean and Southern Africa. These partner organizations are research institutes, or diagnostic and control laboratories, as well as universities, private operators, and regional and international organizations. Since 2009, QualiREG has been working at rallying the scientific and economic worlds around the common goals of surveillance, research, innovation, transfer, and training, with the support of the Regional Council of Reunion, Europe, and the French Government. Training, market analyses, epidemiological surveys, food monitoring, research and development, information dissemination, nutritional analyses, sensory profiles, good-practices guides, and development of innovative processing methods are all actions and results impelled by QualiREG to benefit agrifood chains and institutions of the Indian Ocean.

This thematic issue of the Journal of Tropical Livestock Science focuses on animal products made and consumed in the Indian Ocean islands. It compiles the proceedings of the last three sessions of QualiREG Scientific Days, which took place in 2012 and 2013 in the Reunion Island, and in 2014 in Madagascar. The Scientific Days enable researchers to present their results to peers as well as to the economic operators of the agrifood chains in the region. This review highlights findings of researchers who, through their work, strive to control related health hazards, explore production development, or revisit traditional processing methods to improve product preservation or market value.

This issue assembles 21 scientific contributions related to animal products. We believe that the presented results outscored the network scope and thus deserved broader dissemination. The communications were initially presented as abstracts during the Scientific Days. In this issue, the authors have enriched their contents by developing and illustrating the results. Moreover, some have been published later on as full articles in scientific journals and their references have been added to the respective texts.

The articles were grouped into three sections. The first one assembles five studies relating to the processing and preservation of meat and fish products. These products often come from traditional supply chains to which, however, high stakes are attached and relate to technological innovation with the aim of developing local agro-industries.

The second section, consisting of ten articles, shows how food safety issues remain a priority for the future of animal production. These results are original in their description of the difficult sanitary situation of the Indian Ocean islands. They clearly show that research efforts will have to be stepped up to control the often-neglected food-transmitted tropical zoonoses. The emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in animal products, and the high prevalence of meat contaminated with drug residues, antibiotics or synthetic

hormones, should alert the entire scientific community, as well as economic operators and politicians to propose a long-term strategy common to all the islands.

Finally, the third section presents six studies on the characterization and development of animal products. Like honey, these products are linked to specific lands and unique know-hows and have original organoleptic characteristics that could be protected and recognized by a designation of origin.

We are pleased to present you this special issue which shows, if still need be, that product quality remains a federating and exciting theme for agricultural research, and a development lever for the agrifood chains in Southern countries.

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