

# Editorial

*A thematic issue on livestock farming in the Mediterranean in a mainly tropicalist journal may come as a surprise. However, it is easy to notice that the journal has published lately more articles on animal farming in North Africa or even the Middle East. Furthermore, CIRAD\*'s geographical partnership strategy has led to a growing interest in this area because of social and economic complementarities that prevail between Europe and the Southern part of the Mediterranean. Finally, in the face of today's challenges of economic globalization, emergence of climatic and epidemiological risks, acceleration of migration, and need to supply an increasingly urbanized human population with animal protein, livestock farming in all its forms and dimensions plays a vital role in food security and in maintaining rural populations. All the more reasons for a thematic issue on this region of the world to take its full place in the journal.*

*This issue comprises eleven articles and approaches problematics of Mediterranean livestock farming from different angles, from resources to animal production sectors, and from livestock farming systems to animal health. It is no secret that Maghreb is facing increased pressure on pastoral resources in an area affected by increased aridity. A first article (Bechchari et al.) analyzes the current situation in Eastern Morocco and shows some regression of good-productivity facies to the benefit of formations with lesser interest to livestock, which leads herders to apply adaptation strategies described in the article, e.g. swapping animal breeds and increasing the use of food supplements. Incidentally, resource degradation can force livestock to feed on species that may be less palatable and potentially toxic (Mohammedi et al.). These intoxications, specific to the region or not, are caused by plants that are now clearly identified.*

*Livestock systems in Northern Africa have been undergoing major changes in the past decades. However, it is undoubtedly in the dairy sector that these changes are most striking, whether in i) Egypt in suburban areas (Daburon et al.), where family farms contribute to supplying Cairo megalopolis, ii) Morocco (Srairi et al.), where the challenge to improve livestock and economic performances of family farms in Gharb area is analyzed with a focus on the cost price of a liter of milk, or iii) Algeria (Mouhous et al.), where the adaptation strategies of family farms in mountainous areas are highlighted, in particular their ability to secure endowments. Specialization (milk or meat) may be a way to comply with market constraints and opportunities related to ongoing subsidies. However, another possibility is for small family farms to expand farming activities in more favorable environments, as in the Nile delta in Egypt (Osman et al.), using the multifunctional role of animals in mixed crop-livestock systems, although the two activities are traditionally run separately rather than in combination in these areas.*

*Most studies on farming in the Mediterranean focus on cattle – especially dairy –, and sheep, largely dominant in the area. Yet, the Southern part of the Mediterranean is characterized by the lesser nonetheless crucial presence of camel breeding in the most arid parts. This sector, comparatively little studied, is reviewed in this issue with a focus on the current state of knowledge on the subject and on development prospects (Faye et al.). If speculation on camel milk has undergone recent but significant development, it is mainly the meat sector that shapes today's camel breeding. We focus here on a key aspect concerning camel meat, especially in Algeria (Benaïssa et al.), i.e. its quality, both physicochemical during meat ageing, and bacteriological, showing conditions of slaughter and marketing for this product widely consumed in rural desert areas.*

*It is common to end an issue with veterinarian aspects. As animal diseases are a constraint of livestock, it may not be desirable to give them the first place. In the Mediterranean and elsewhere, animal health is a limiting factor largely emphasized in the literature and by livestock actors. Among animal diseases, this issue focuses on blood parasitic diseases in bovine, whose debilitating effect is well known. One article stresses their quantitative importance based on a prevalence survey of bovine hemoparasitic diseases conducted in four regions of Morocco (Rahali and al.). Another article reviews how one of these diseases, i.e. theileriosis, disseminates in Tunisia (Gharbi et al.).*

*This issue shows the diversity of questions and constraints on farming in a geographical area marked by some variability of its ecosystems, from the fertile areas of the Nile delta to the gates of Sahara, and the more or less arid mountains that shape the entire region.*

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\* <http://www.cirad.fr/en>

*Translated from the French by M.-C. Maraval*