On farm organic dairy sheep and goat breeding in Germany

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Introduction

Dairy sheep and dairy goat keeping is a niche activity in Germany. Because dairy breeds of small ruminants are selected under intensive keeping conditions, breeding under the restrictions of organic farming is necessary to get adopted and high yielding flocks.
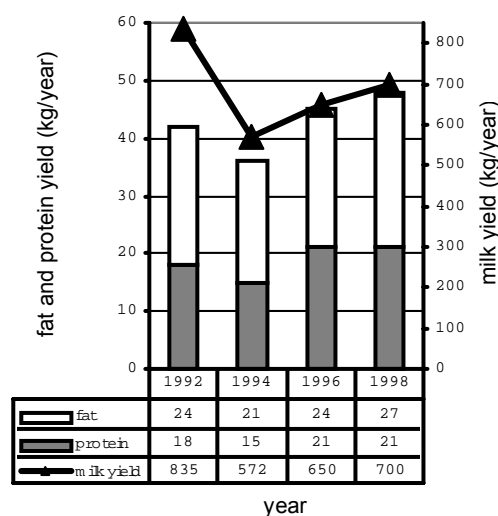
Materials and methods

An analysis of the development of milk parameters and breeding strategy success was carried out on a full-time organic dairy goat farm (organic since 1982) in the middle of Germany from 1992 to 1998. The farm keeps about 30-35 dairy goats (Brown German Alpine) and about 30-35 dairy sheep (East-Frisian dairy sheep). All feedstuff was produced on farm, the animal were kept on pasture from May to November. Roughage was 70% of the diet. The breeding and feeding is focused on increasing the total fat and protein yield per lactation (cheese production) on the basis of independent milk control results.

Results and discussion

Milk, fat and protein yield of organic dairy sheep (n = 30 - 35; 1992 - 1998)

	1992	1994	1996	1998
fat	25	22	22	25
protein	19	19	22	22
milk yield	385	388	371	410
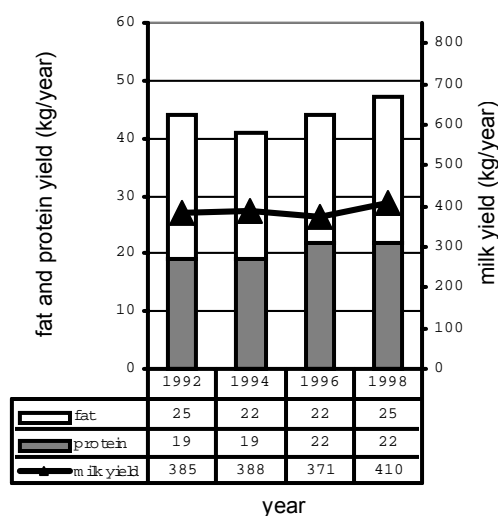
Milk, fat and protein yield of organic dairy goats (n = 30 - 35; 1992 - 1998)

	1992	1994	1996	1998
fat	24	21	24	27
protein	18	15	21	21
milk yield	835	572	650	700

Conclusions

In the period from 1992 to 1998 the fat and protein yield of both flocks could be increased. A specific breeding strategy had an important contribution to the increase but the environmental impacts on animal productivity is enormous (e.g. the very wet summer season 1994). A wrong decision in breeding bucks (dairy sheep in 1992-1994) had an negative effect on the productivity.

References

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