



Modernization of pig production: The rationalization of pig herd management and its limits

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Various designs for a production unit of 35 sows with extension possibilities Consequences on labour, investments and profit earning capacity

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The authors give a survey of a study made to analyse different production models for a herd size of 35 sows.

Three types of piggeries were suggested:

- little expensive buildings, but requiring much labour
- more expensive buildings requiring less labour
- technically excellent buildings with moderate operating costs.

Two management systems were the following:

- 3 batches of 12 sows (interval of 49 d);
- 7 batches of 5 sows (interval of 27 d).

and two methods used in the farrowing houses: either with or without post-weaning transfer of the piglets.

Results were the following:

- The system without post weaning transfer slightly increased the production costs.
- Normal labour payment in connection with « ready-for-use » buildings required a productivity of 18-21 bacon pigs per sow and per year.
- Ploughing back of profits by participation of the farmer in the construction of buildings led to the same income as with « ready-for-use » buildings but with 1-1.5 bacon pigs less per sow and per year.
- Use of straw litter reduced the investments by about 30 p. 100, but increased labour requirements.

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A survey of the results obtained after ten years of national assistance in the modernization of pig production shows that:

- the development of large herds is very low;
- the number of small herds although decreasing fastly is still large,
- a restricted number of farmers mostly combining pig and cattle production are developing intensive management systems. Most of these farmers belong to producers co-operations.

This development of the production has been achieved according to a dominant « technico-economic » model, characterized by expensive investments and purchase of livestock feedstuffs based on cereals and soybean.

Owing to a fast improvement of the herd performance, French pig production has reached the same level as that of the other E.E.C. countries. However, the prolonged maintenance of M.C.M. has led to a marked degradation in France of the ratio: price of pigs, price of livestock feeds and hence to a reduction of the national production potential.

The inflation and economic crisis have deeply changed the production conditions emphasizing the economic fragility of the most intensive production units which require a very large capital.

A great number of studies show that a more « economical » pig production is interesting for the farmers, as a supplementary production. The present economic situation requires a diversification of production systems and changes in the agricultural policy leading to allocation of state subsidies to other farms than the most modern ones.

II. — GENETICS

Pig production in Corsica. An activity deserving interest?

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Marginal zones do not only represent relics of the past. They result from a decrease in the biological potential. Thus in Castagniccia (Corsica) the pig which the last century belonged to the complex autarchic system has become the only user of a chesnut grove losing gradually its fertility. Formerly kept in pens, the pig is nowadays subjected to an extensive badly controlled management. In the present socio-economic situation it may be asked whether there is any place for extensive pig management? This question suggests other ones: is there place for non specialized management systems?

Is it possible or desirable to consider and promote research adapted to a large range of users? Which should be the trends of this research? We have no precise answer yet, but the problem should be considered if we want to reduce the process of impoverishment leading to an increase in the extent of marginal zones.

Some data on the Corsican pig breed

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In extensive pig production, the productivity should not be the main concern of the farmer. However, this is not incompatible with an assessment of the potentialities of the animals used. This is the case for Corsican pigs. According to observations made in small herds at C.N.R.Z. (National Centre for Animal Husbandry Research), the litter size of this breed is 5.4 piglets and the mean weight 1 kg. The litter size at weaning (60 days) was 3.7 piglets with a mean