

Current View of the Buffalo Industry

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It is common in buffalo industry that exist a separation between scientists, breeders and government; as a consequence it is very easy to make mistakes for lack of knowledge, for the appreciation of that the buffalo is a black cow, and for the lack of inclusion of buffalo in politics, the organizers of the X World Buffalo Congress, thinking in eliminate these distance decided to organize as part of the scientific program the "Practitioner Forum" a space devoted to discuss the problems of buffalo industry around the world to allow all the participants to interact in the academic field, in this session participate scientists and farmers of different parts of the world: Italy (F. Infascelli), Argentina (M. Zava), Bangladesh (Q. Huque), Brasil (O. Bernardes), United States (T. Olson), Colombia (J. Berdugo), Nepal (Dr. Paudel) and Dr. Hayashi(from Japan but works in Nepal). Dr. Zava and Dr. Berdugo decided to share with scientific community the main aspects of the session as a form to show the real problems of the industry.

The meeting was held in the Lagoon Room of the Hilton Phuket Arcadia Resort (May 7th, 2013) with participants from America, Asia y Europa. The main objective was to share experiences and problems of buffalo industry in their countries, try to find convergence and divergence points to give ideas to the breeders, researchers and government about the needs and the possible solution to the buffalo industry. The session was opened by F. Infascelli speaking about one new opportunity for Italian breeders, meat production. Certainly is a new activity that appear as an answer to many problems related with the males in highly specialized milking production units, because before they slaughter them, it was not easy to solve for breeders the public health problems related to disposition of animals, the strong position of animal and environment defenders. As a consequence rules

change and Italian breeders start to see the buffalo meat with good eyes and start to develop a market for the meat. Buffalo males are held in intensive systems feed by total mixed ration that fill all the requirement of the animals. The main problem of the meat is commercialization and they decided to inform the customers about the benefits of buffalo meat especially for the health of the people. It is important that the origin of that information is not buffalo producers must be from nutritionist or people from other disciplines. Here appears commercialization as one of the main problems of activity. Dr. Huque inform that in Bangladesh the production of meat and milk is still beginning, only few people milk buffaloes to sell, he talk that the animals live in a river delta, and show big interest in feeding systems specially those based on sugar cane residues. Dr. Olson from US, talk that due to the small size of buffalo farms they sell the meat in local markets, some in the meat stores, other in restaurants and small supermarkets. There are some milk projects in California. The main bottle neck of US is animal stock, it is not possible to buy animals, due to sanitary regulations. Here appears another problem the problems in getting superior genetics to improve production, specially live animals.

Dr. Benardes from Brazil, that it is the most buffalo populated country of America, inform that during 2012, 700.000 heads were slaughtered, most of them are not commercialized as buffalo, surely as cattle, he remembered that in central areas of Brazil, as in Italy, the most important product is the milk, with a big and growing cheese industry. Most production systems are based on grass. Some people supplement the animals with crop byproducts. Brazil has two important different systems: one almost equatorial, in the north part of the country; and the south part of the country, that is the region in which more developments have been done, specially milk productions. The big difference between the two regions is the effect of season over the animals. In the north region of Brazil more buffalo production is extensive to produce meat. Dr. Zava, from

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Argentina form that the main activity in his country is meat production in an extensive system; only few farmers produce milk in spite of having an ancestral culture of milk production with cattle. He mention about the superiority of buffalo for production in tropic and subtropic areas of the north compared to cattle, some farmers are starting to growth animals in feed lots with encouraging results. Dr. Berdugo, says that in Colombia meat is a byproduct of milk industry, but it serves to much to use wet and moody areas in which cattle can't produce. He also mentions that they have big problems with the sanitary status of the animals, not for the health of the animals itself, because of the disease eradication programs produce confounding results, mistaken politics of the government and doubts of the results are the common features that make a bad image of the buffalo meat industry. Also derived of their rusticity in buffalo has special finds in their carcass and viscera that allow inspectors to discard the meat. In Nepal they have three productive regions: valleys in

high mountains in the north, mountain in the center and plains in the south part of the country, most people have buffaloes only to home or local consumption they have *Bubalus bubalis* and *B. carabaensis* they are trying to improve using Nilli Ravi and Murrah Breeds, imported from India and Pakistan, say Dr. Hayashi. He also mention the problem of health of the animals specially parasites that are very common in farms in with they have buffalo. As a general conclusion all the participants agree with the fact the the main problem we have in buffalo industry is commercialization of the products, especially in the countries in which mozzarella cheese are not the main product derived from buffalo, meat is an alternative to improve income of farmers and we need to study in deep the problems of health and sanitary status of the animals, the development of specific systems from buffalo, and the application of the knowledge produced in scientific and technology institutes to buffalo industry.

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