Organic farming:
An opportunity for dairy farmers in mountain area?

Implementation of development actions, taking into account barriers and motivations of farmers and dairy products field stakeholders

Delphine NEUMEISTER*
Elsa DELANOUE*
Simon FOURDIN*
Anne-Charlotte DOCKES*
* French Livestock Institute, F-75595 Paris

August 28th 2012
The « Organic mountain » project

- A research and development project
  - Financed by the French Ministry of Agriculture
  - Managed by the French Livestock Institute
  - 3-year long (2010-2012)

- A multi-stakeholders project:
  - Mountains: Alps, Jura, Massif Central, Pyrénées
  - Contribution of 8 agricultural development agencies

www.idele.fr
Three main goals, for one stake

To facilitate and to support the development of organic farming

To contribute to the preservation of dairy farming in mountain by promoting high added-value projects

To answer the market demand

Targeting and backing farms for which the conversion is relevant
A critical context for dairy farming in mountain

- **A tensed economic context**
  - Near end of milk quotas
  - Drop of milk price
  - Questions about new-coming CAP

- **Structural constraints partly compensated**
  - Old and small housing, high slopes, distance to dairies, no cereals in UAL,...
  - Some specific supplies for mountain and organic farming
  - Political support: National goal of 20% of organic farming before 2020 (3.5% in 2011)

→ **Need of specific support to farms of mountain areas, especially to help them to take place in the market of organic milk production**
Preliminary Studies:

Analyzing local contexts and field strategies to identify barriers and motivations towards organic farming

264 semi-structured interviews

→ With 163 farmers (25 of them are organic)
→ With 101 advisors
Barriers and motivations towards organic farming development

Intensity

Fodder self sufficiency
Proximity of systems
Sanitary safety
Reduction of dairy yield
Technical complexity

Feeding expenses
Economic gain
Meeting a demand

Ethical issues
Personal motivation
Fear of weeds
Inability of feeding the planet

Technical
Economic
Social

www.idele.fr
Specific local context influence on conversion to organic farming

**Potential competition or synergy with other quality schemes**
- The cons: Better remunerative milk price, loyalty to the historical cooperative
- The pros: habits of dealing with strict requirements, diversification of products

**Existence of a remunerative local dairies’s project**
- The cons: farmers dependence to these projects
- The pros: group dynamic, specific premium
Synthesis of actions implemented on field:

Collecting feedbacks from stakeholders and farmers

→ To sum up actions that have been done, and assess their impact

→ To provide tools and ideas to develop organic farming in regions with similar issues
Basic action plan

1. One-day training courses
   - Organic Farming principles, few technical aspects, project presentation

2. Diagnosis before conversion
   - Economic assessment of impacts caused by a conversion on the farm

3. Other training courses
   - Discussions between farmers and local coordinators on different ways to manage the system
Success Keys: how to manage a development project?

- To involve farmers in the project building, as early as possible
- To organize focus groups
- To involve both organic and conventional farmers
- To rely on leader farmers
- To create a strong synergy among stakeholders
- To give time to farmers
- To propose a clear and long-term dairies project
Conclusion: Should we encourage the development of organic dairy farming in mountain?

Mountain context is a barrier:
- Climate and slopes: strong impact on forage self-sufficiency
- Competition with other quality schemes

But a high potential exists:
- Small extensive farms with systems close to organic farming
- Need for these farms to diversify their production in order to be prepared to the near-end of milk quotas
- Existence of a market for organic dairy products (organic milk sales: +6% between 2010 and 2011)
Thank you for your attention