

HERITAGE SHEEP

France, Greece, Netherlands, Slovenia, UK

Amsterdam meeting 2008



WP2: Development and evaluation of strategies for in situ conservation

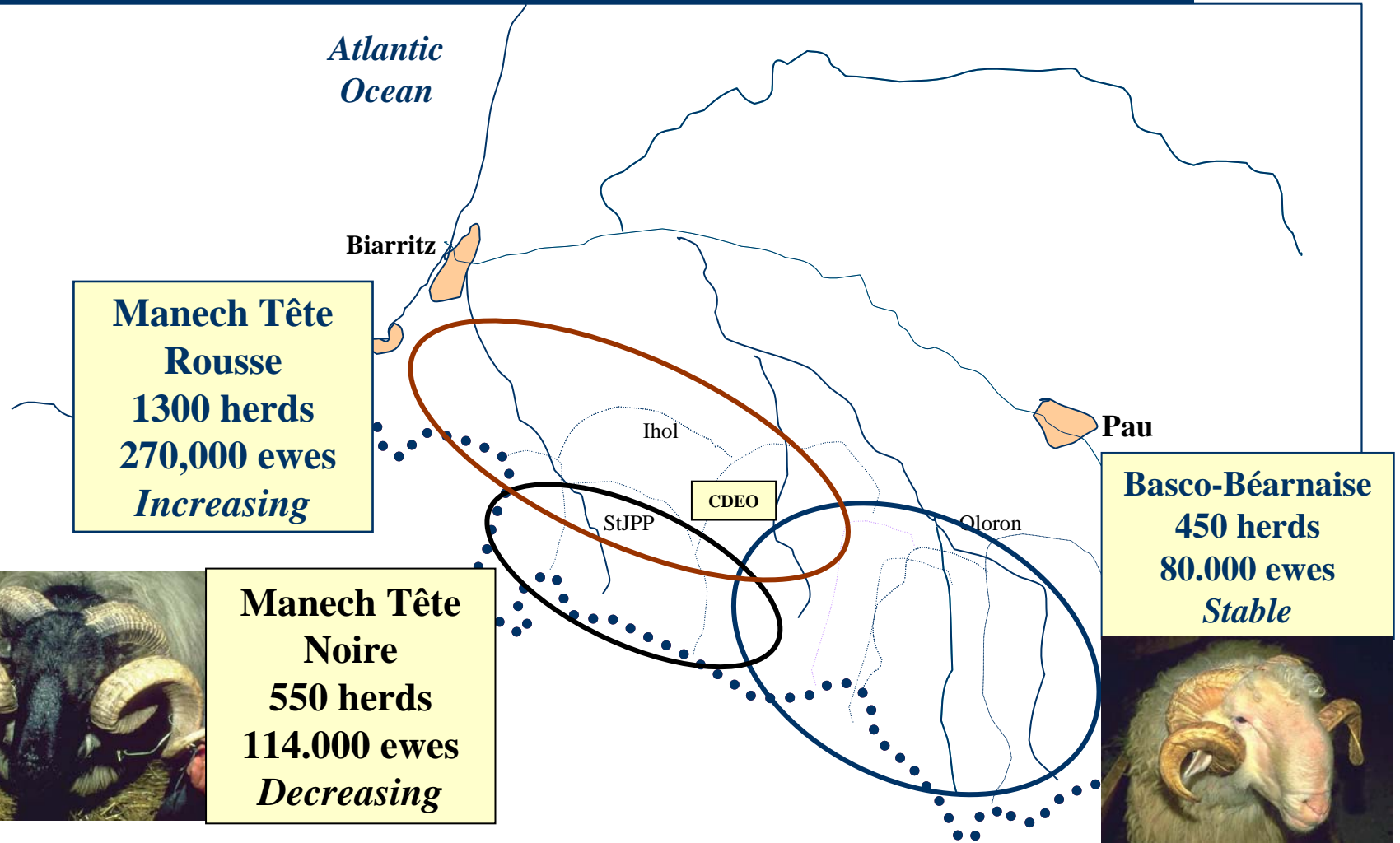
Study of three French Pyrenean dairy sheep breeds



The French genetic context

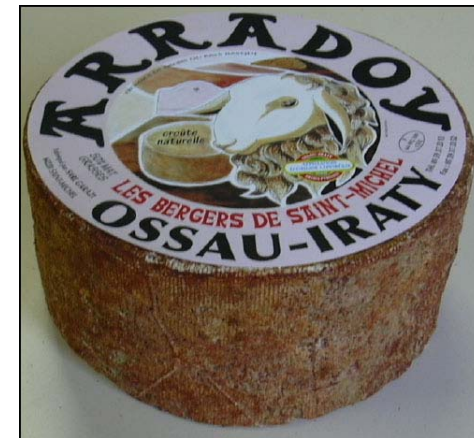
- For each breed: an UPRa now called OS (Selection Organism), organism with a collective management of all decision-makers of the breed, with personnel to realise projects (selection objectives, herd-book...).
- Progeny testing done by regional organisms (for milk or beef): wherever they are, breeders can have reasonable prices, difference with the real price is taken in charge by the organism thanks to State's subsidies. But with the new Agricultural Law, the continuity of this advantage is not sure...
- AI centres for ovine breeds work most of the time in close collaboration with OS . Breeders can have reasonable prices too.

Geographical distribution, numbers and trends of the 3 breeds



A very structured dairy industry committed to the local breeds defense

- Production has more than doubled between 1985 and 2005 (production estimated at 54 million litres in 2005). Deliveries=85%, farm transformation=15%.
- AOC Ossau Iraty (Protected designation of origin) acknowledged in 1981. The 3 local breeds are the only one allowed for this cheese.
A mixed success: only 32% of this type of cheese is sold as AOC.
- Development by the industry of a collective management tool: the interprofession, created in 1986. Involving: producers, cooperatives and transformers.



A meat industry less structured and less developed

- A milk-lamb industry (“agneau de lait”) was also developed in Pyrénées-Atlantiques: ~400,000 lambs/year
- Important seasonality and near dependence with Spain (80% of the market).
- Collective mark: « Label Rouge Agneau de Lait des Pyrénées », not acknowledged yet at European level (10% of lambs sold)



Genetic selection

- An organised selection scheme, creation of the AI Centre and “UPRA des Races Ovines Laitières des Pyrénées” in 1975.
- Selection criteria: breed standard, genetic variability, scrapie resistance, quantity and quality of milk.
- Currently, 140 MTR, 40 BB and 30 MTN rams are progeny tested =>nb too small in BB and MTN to have an efficient selection scheme.
- Reticence of breeders to use AI and importance of breed standard in BB and especially MTN. MTN may enter more in a strategy of breed conservation.

Conclusion:

Favorable points for local breeds

- A dynamic dairy industry in this region.
- A very good collective management, especially with the interprofession.
- AOC Ossau Iraty: maintenance of local breeds and limitation of other breeds.
- The existing genetic selection scheme.



Different evolution for the 3 breeds

- MTR: tendency to increase production, then very dependent of dairy industry in Pyrénées-Atlantiques, principal breed affected in case of crisis.
- BB and MTN: more a strategy of conservation, less attached and less dependent to the industry, breeders very demanding on the standard of the breed.
Could threaten selection scheme particularly for MTN.



Thank you for your attention !!

