



VISION - Nuove pratiche gestionali per l'allevamento intensivo sostenibile

The aim of the project

The main objective of the project is to evaluate the environmental and economic sustainability of a number of innovative management practices on intensive dairy cattle farms. These include, for example, the use of cow-calf nurseries for calf suckling, longer lactation duration, increased longevity with a consequent reduction in the calving rate, the use of semen from beef breeds, separate rearing of calves, access to pasture for heifers and dry cows. A further objective is to identify consumer preferences in terms of new management practices in animal husbandry and the priority scale that guides the purchase choices of sustainable dairy products through the administration of a questionnaire.

The activities

The following activities will be carried out in the course of the project: analysis of consumer perception of sustainable farm management practices; identification of dairy farmers already practising some of the management modalities outlined in the objectives; collection of information and data from these farms; application and monitoring of some of these practices at the two GO farms; in-depth assessments of the economic and environmental sustainability of milk production of these farms to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this practice; dissemination of the results to the scientific world, breeders and the community.

The context

Italian dairy husbandry has been strongly modified which has led to a profound increase in production per head and per company and a maximization of production efficiency parameters. Individual production increased from 4255 kg of milk per lactation in 1970 to 9564 kg in 2021 (AIA Bulletins, 2022). At the same time, there has been a reduction in the duration of lactation (from 334 days in 2010 to 324 days in 2020 (AIA, 2022)) and a reduction in the longevity of the animals (for the Friesian breed, the average number of lactations per cow increased from 2.48 in 2004 to 2.33 in 2020 (AIA, 2022)).

In recent years, the sector has been faced with a number of conflicting challenges: the need to produce large quantities of product to meet the growing domestic demand, especially from processing industries, the fall in consumption of drinking milk, the increasingly pressing consumer demands for more animal and environmental-friendly agricultural and livestock production; the need for sector operators to carry out an economically sustainable activity even in a critical world scenario, pressure on the sector by European and national institutions that intend to direct agricultural and livestock production towards a "sustainable environmental development to mitigate threats to natural and human systems".

This varied situation encourages the search for technical and management solutions that improve the economic and environmental performance of milk production by meeting the multiple needs of the supply chain.