

Inputs into the Badia livestock production system

Introduction

This paper was prepared for presentation at the Badia Research and Development Programme workshop on 'Population and livestock related studies in the eastern Badia of Jordan' at the Higher Council for Science and Technology in Amman, on the 22nd September 1996. The paper outlines the findings of a 12 month study of contemporary livestock management amongst Badia livestock owners with a particular emphasis upon quantifying inputs into the production system. In order to keep the presentation brief, the author has in the discussion section focused upon the two essential inputs, feeds and water, and mentions other management inputs only with relation to the provision of these.

Methods

The research was conducted with a sample group of 23 livestock managers, selected from a group of 105 managers sampled in an earlier survey, (Campbell and Roe 1995). At the time of selection, all 23 herd managers were based within the 11,210 sq km extent of the study area, but during the course of the year extensive migrations included movements of up to 100 kilometres beyond the both eastern and western boundaries of the JBRDP area.

The principal research tool was a questionnaire to which responses were collected monthly from the 23 herd managers. The questionnaire investigated changing herd numbers and structure, itemising births, deaths and sales from the herd. In addition to the flock inventory, the questionnaire explored supplementary feed purchases, grazing strategy, access to water, herd movements, labour and transport costs and animal health. In total, some 250 questionnaire responses were collected during the year. The incomplete data set reflects some of the frustrations of working in the Badia environment. By the end of the 1995-1996 survey season, 2 of the owners had sold their herds and thus dropped out of the study. Other gaps in the data owe to ongoing logistical problems throughout the year.

In addition to structured questions, the researcher relied heavily on regular discussions and informal interviews with herd managers (both from within and outside the sample group), in order to understand why particular decisions had been taken.

Results

The average production cost/sheep/year during this period was 48.49 JD. A breakdown of this expenditure is presented in Figure 1.

Expenditure on various the inputs throughout the year was not uniform; the major trends are illustrated in Figure 2.