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2 , 4700 ,

Changes in the Composition of Ewe's Milk and the Content of Biologically Active Substances in the Fat Fraction During the Pasture Period

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SUMMARY

The study is addressed to the growing interest in the market for sheep milk and dairy products as a natural source of essential components such as conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), omega-3 and omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids and vaccenic acid, described to be effective substances for the prevention of various human diseases.

This work is focused on the transfer of fatty acids along the food chain "plant-animal production" in endemic mountainous regions.

The study focused on the change in the profile of fatty acids in the feed substrate (meadow vegetation) and the impact on the composition of the raw

ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed reared in the Middle Rhodopes.

The detailed mapping of the pasture areas gives an estimation of the seasonal dynamics in the meadow vegetation contents of the fatty acids, which are a substrate for the next transformation in animal organism into biologically active isomers-conjugated fatty acids. The effect of changes in the content of the available precursors in the vegetation on the profile of mono-and polyunsaturated fatty acids in the ewe's milk is found, which provides additional information for clarifying the mechanism of CLA-synthesis and the content of natural trans fatty acids in raw milk.

Key words: we's milk, fatty acids, CLA substances, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, trans fatty acids

(Fegeros et al., 1995; Kafedjiev and Mihailova, 1998).

(Petrova et al., 1998; Petrova et al., 1999).

: 6-11%,
4-7%, 17-21%
4-6% (Dario et al., 1995; Path, 1995; Simos et al., 1996).

(Angelow, 1998; Petrova et al., 2001).

ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed reared in the Middle Rhodopes.

The detailed mapping of the pasture areas gives an estimation of the seasonal dynamics in the meadow vegetation contents of the fatty acids, which are a substrate for the next transformation in animal organism into biologically active isomers-conjugated fatty acids. The effect of changes in the content of the available precursors in the vegetation on the profile of mono-and polyunsaturated fatty acids in the ewe's milk is found, which provides additional information for clarifying the mechanism of CLA-synthesis and the content of natural trans fatty acids in raw milk.

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INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of ewe's milk and dairy products are determined by a significant number of factors. The composition of ewe's milk depends on the ration, the lactation stage, the season, the breed, the geographic region etc. (Fegeros et al., 1995; Kafedjiev and Mihailova, 1998). As the lactation progresses, the milk fat content of ewe's milk increases compared to cow's milk (Petrova, et al., 1998; Petrova et al., 1999). Breed differences vary widely: lipids 6-11%, protein 4-7%, dry matter 17-21% and lactose 4-6% (Dario et al., 1995; Path, 1995; Simos et al., 1996).

The production of quality ewe's milk with increased content of biologically active components depends to a great extent on the botanical diversity of the pasture vegetation and the vegetation stage of the individual plant species (Angelow, 1998; Petrova et al., 2001).

1000 1200 m	Studies on the composition of natural and cultivated pastures in the Western Rhodopes, located between 1000 and 1200 m above sea level, on granite and gneiss geological formations
4,0),	(3,8-4,0) show narrowing of the botanical diversity of natural grassland. The composition of the natural meadows is represented mainly by
<i>Nardus stricta</i> L.	<i>Nardus stricta</i> L. The cultivated meadows are dominated by <i>Fastuca fallax</i> L., <i>Lolium perenne</i> L. and <i>Poa pratensis</i> L.
<i>Fastuca fallax</i> L., <i>Lolium perenne</i> L. <i>Poa pratensis</i> L.	The floristic composition of meadow phytocoenoses, seasonal climatic changes and altitude affect the fatty acid spectrum of grass associations (Tsvetkova and Angelov, 2010).
(Tsvetkova and Angelov, 2010).	Green fodder used in feeding sheep may contribute to the formation of specific biologically active substances in the fat fraction of milk and the final product as well as influence positively the organoleptic characteristics of the dairy products (Cabiddu et al., 2003a; Pirisi et al., 2004).
(Cabiddu et al., 2003a; Pirisi et al., 2004).	Changes in the fatty acid composition of ewe's milk under the influence of various factors, as well as their importance for human nutrition, are the subject of research by a number of scientists (Angelov et al., 2009; Mihailova and Odjakova, 2006; Tsvetkova and Angelov, 2013). Their importance is strengthened in identifying the quality of dairy products and the relationship with the conditions of their production (Cabiddu et al., 2003b; Mihailova, 2006; Mihailova et al., 2004).
(Tsvetkova and Angelov, 2013; Angelov et al., 2009; Mihailova and Odjakova, 2006).	
(Mihailova, 2006; Mihailova et al., 2004; Cabiddu et al., 2003b).	
	The development of an updated database on the fatty acid spectrum of grass vegetation in mountainous areas with different geological structure, altitude and botanical composition of pastures vegetation, are an important prerequisite for clarifying the transfer of fatty acids along the food chain and the production of

-3 -6,
(18:1trans11)
(LA).

) (

50
(01.05. - 01.06. - 01.07.).

COMBIFOSS-5000.
: (TBC),
(SCC),
(CFU)
BACTOSCAN-FC.

(4 m²),
1100
1500 m.

Bligh & Dyer (1959)
1:2
(FAME)
Shimadzu-2010 (Kioto, Japan)

milk enriched with biologically active and anti carcinogenic substances: essential polyunsaturated acids from the groups -3 and -6, vaccenic acid C18:1trans11 and conjugate linoleic acid (CLA).

The purpose of this study is to characterize the variations in the fatty acid spectrum of plant resources (mountain meadows and pastures) throughout the vegetation and to evaluate changes in macrocomposition, microbiological parameters and the content of biologically active substances in the fat fraction of ewe's milk during the active pasture period.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

General chemical and microbiological analysis of ewe's milk

The study was conducted on raw ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed. Average samples of 50 ewes were collected from May to June (01.05 - 01.06 - 01.07).

The content of the basic physico-chemical indicators milk protein, milk fat, lactose, dry non-fat residue and dry matter was determined by Automatic analyzer COMBIFOSS-5000. Microbiological parameters: total number of bacteria (TBC), somatic cell count (SCC), colony forming units (CFU) are reported on the BACTOSCAN-FC apparatus.

Fatty acid analysis of plant samples

Average samples are collected from standard plots (4 m²) located in the grasslands at 1100 and 1500 m.

The extraction of total lipids in plant samples was performed by Bligh & Dyer (1959) using chloroform and methanol in a 1:2 ratio and subsequent methylation with acetyl chloride.

Fatty acid esters (FAME) were analyzed using a Shimadzu-2010 gas chromatograph (Kioto, Japan) equipped with a

-
(AOC-2010i).

Roese-Gottlieb (AOAC, 2000),
(CH₃ONa, Merck,
Darmstadt)
NaHSO₄·H₂O.
/FAME/
Shimadzu-2010 (Kioto, Japan),
-
(AOC-2010i).

CP7420 (100 m x 0.25 mm
i.d., 0.2 m, Varian Inc., Palo Alto, CA).
make-up
80°C/min, 15 min,
12°C/min
170°C 20
4°C/min
186°C 19
4°C/min 220°C

flame ionization detector and an automatic injection system (AOC-2010i).

Fatty acid analysis of milk samples

The extraction of total lipids in milk was carried out by the Roese-Gottlieb method (AOAC, 2000), using diethyl ether and petroleum ether, followed by methylation with sodium methylate (CH₃ONa, Merck, Darmstadt) and dehydration with NaHSO₄·H₂O.

Fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) were analyzed using a Shimadzu-2010 gas chromatograph (Kioto, Japan) equipped with a flame ionization detector and an automatic injection system (AOC-2010i).

The analysis was performed on a capillary column CP7420 (100 m x 0.25 mm i.d., 0.2 m, Varian Inc., Palo Alto, CA). Hydrogen is used as a carrier gas, and as a make-up gas-nitrogen. Four-step furnace mode is programmed - the initial column temperature is 80°C/min, maintained for 15 minutes, then increased by 12°C/min to 170°C and maintained for 20 minutes, followed by a further 4°C/min increase to 186°C for 19 minutes and up to 220°C with 4°C/min until the process is complete.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics in the composition of grassland

The taxonomic evaluation divides the meadow and pasture grasses into three groups: cereals, legumes and grasses, from other botanical families, which are referred to as "various plants."
- The floristic composition of the natural grassland is determined by the altitude and distinguished by the heterogeneity (Table 1).

In the plant cover of meadows and pastures the cereals of these groups prevail. Their relative share in meadows located at 1,100 meters ranges from 33.77% to 73.68%. The main species are

(1).

1100 m,

33.77% 73.68%.
inermys L.)
 (Festuca fallax Thuil.)
 m
 86.49% 95.12%.
 (Poa pratensis L.)
 (grostis alba L.)

the smooth brome (*Bromus inermys* L.) and the red fescue (*Festuca fallax* Thuil.). The pastures at 1500 m altitude are distinguished by a homogeneous composition in which the cereal species dominate in the range from 86.49 to 95.12%. They are represented by the meadow corngrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) and the bent grass (*grostis alba* L.).

1.

(n₁ = 5; n₂ = 5)

Table 1. Botanical composition of meadows and pastures in the Middle Rhodopes - Kaynadina locality (n₁=5; n₂=5)

Altitude	, m	Cereals	Legumes	Various plants
1100 m	x	46,52	14,48	38,93
	sd	16,39	8,48	12,13
1500 m	x	92.31	1,47	6.22
	sd	3,39	1,35	3,27

pratense L.),
repens L.),
 L.)
 (Trifolium
 (Trifolium
 (Lotus corniculatus
 (Vicia villosa L.)
 5.26% 23.53%
 2.70%
 21.06% 54.29%.
 46.43 cm 59.31 cm
 15.93 22.64 cm

The participation of legumes includes red clover (*Trifolium pratense* L.), white clover (*Trifolium repens* L.), birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus* L.) and hairy vetch (*Vicia villosa* Roth.) and fluctuates between 5.26 and 23.53% in meadows and up to 2.70% in pastures.

The distribution of the various species in grasslands is determined by the peculiarities of the environment and is considerably high. Their participation varies from 21.06 to 54.29%.

The systems of activities for improving of natural grassland contribute to strong growth and good plant development. Measured through the individual slopes, the average height of plants is from 46.43 cm to 59.31 cm in the meadow phytocenoses and from 15.93 to 22.64 cm in pastures. The development of the vegetative mass provides a high intake of essential and biologically active fatty acids during the pasture period, which contribute to the healthy properties of the ewe's milk.

Fat composition studies in grassland establish seasonal changes in the fatty acid profile (Table 2).

(2).

2.

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Table 2. Effect of the season on the fatty acid composition of grassland in the Middle Rhodopes (Kaynadina locality)

Fatty acids groups	Concentration, mol %, 06. May		Concentration, mol %, 04. July		p	%
	x	sd	x	sd		
Saturated fatty acids SFA	22,70	2,93	25,89	6,81	>0,05	114
Monounsaturated fatty acids MUFA	6,83	3,51	12,17	6,16	>0,05	178
C-18:1trans-FA	0,03	0,01	0,06	0,07	>0,05	200
C-18:1cis-FA	6,46	3,52	11,52	5,93	>0,05	178
Polyunsaturated fatty acids PUFA	70,33	0,52	61,88	0,63	<0,001	88
n-3	49,78	4,30	33,83	6,27	>0,05	68
n-6	20,51	3,82	28,05	6,90	>0,05	137
n-6/ n-3	0,42	0,11	0,86	0,36	>0,05	205
Branched fatty acids	0,20	0,06	0,08	0,02	>0,05	40

The seasonal dynamics in the fatty acid composition of the meadow grass is characterized by an increase in the content of saturated and monounsaturated acids and a decrease in the amount of polyunsaturated fatty acids as the vegetation progresses. The saturated fatty acid concentration increases by 14% as a result of the significant increase in the content of long-chain saturated acids – arachidonic (C20:0) and lignoceric acid (C24:0).

Compared to the beginning of the grazing period (May), in July the monounsaturated fatty acid content increased by 78%. The concentration of only two isomers of oleic acid (C18:1cis9 and C18:1cis11) increases high significantly. The content of the major isomer C18:1cis9 reaches values up to 10.88 mol%.

14%
 – (C20:0)
 (C24:0).
 (),
 78%.
 (C18:1cis9 C18:1cis11)
 .
 - C18:1cis9
 10,88 mol %.

e
 - 12%.
 C18:2 cis9,12 (C18:3),
 (CLA)
 .
 37%
 27.83 mol%.
 49,69 mol%
 33,79 mol%
 (3).

In July, the polyunsaturated acid content was significantly lower by 12%. Of particular interest is the dynamics in changes of linoleic C18:2 cis9,12 and alpha-linolenic acid C18: 3, which are the substrate for synthesis of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) with anticancerogenic action in the rumen of ruminants.
 -
 - Over the May-July period, the linoleic acid concentration increased by 37% to reach a maximum of 27.83 mol%. With alpha-linolenic acid, there was a decrease in the concentration from 49.69 mol% in May to 33.79 mol% in July.

Dynamics in the composition of ewe's milk

The physico-chemical characteristics of ewe's milk did not change during the pasture period (Table 3). The milk fat content, milk protein, and lactose are constant during the milking period. In the course of lactation, only the dry matter and the dry non-fat residue are slightly reduced.

3.

Table 3. Physico-chemical characteristics of ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period

Period		Milk fat %	Milk protein %	Lactose %	Dry matter %	Dry non-fat residue %
01.05.	x	7,91	6,66	4,67	19,92	12,46
	sd	0,03	0,01	0,00	0,02	0,01
01.06.	x	7,71	5,96	4,64	19	11,71
	sd	0,10	0,01	0,01	0,08	0,02
01.07.	x	7,81	6,07	4,55	19,12	11,74
	sd	0,12	0,02	0,02	0,09	0,04

4.

Data on the microbiological characteristics of raw ewe's milk are presented in Table 4.

4.

(01.05 - 01.07.)

Table 4. Microbiological characteristics of ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period (01.05 - 01.07.)

Period		Somatic cell count SCC 10 ³	Total bacteria count TBC 10 ³	Colony forming units CFU 10 ³
01.05.	x	346	656	246
	sd	4	49	11
01.06.	x	884	4596	978
	sd	155	141	34
01.07.	x	63	1850	935
	sd	49	919	488

(SCC) 63 000 884 000,

01.06.

(CFU)

246 000 978 000.

Leitner et al.

:

- SCC<800 000/ml;

- SCC<1500000/ml;

SCC>1500000/ml.

SCC>3500000/ml.

900 000/ml.

96/46 U

953/2004 U, CFU

1500000/ml

The somatic cells count (SCC) varies from 63,000 to 884,000, with the highest values being established at the beginning of June. Data on the total number of microorganisms with a maximum value at 01.06 follow the same pattern. The indices colony forming units (CFU) is within the acceptable range and varies from 246 000 to 978 000.

There are no established norms for the maximum allowable number of somatic cells in raw ewe's milk. Leitner et al. (2008) offer the following categories for the classification of sheep milk: high quality milk – SCC < 800 000/ml; milk of medium quality - SCC < 1 500000/ml; low quality milk - SCC > 1 500000/ml. Milk for human consumption is not allowed for SCC > 3 500000/ml. According to these data, all the ewe's milk series are of high and medium quality, since the number of somatic cells is up to 900 000/ml.

According to the rules laid down by EU Directive 96/46 and EU regulation 953/2004, the CFU indicator should not exceed the value of 1 500 000/ml in raw milk for the production of milk-based products without heat treatment.

The results obtained from the microbiological studies are indicative for the extremely low level of microorganisms

in milk, which would allow its direct use in the production of dairy products such as yogurt, cheese and yellow cheese.

The fatty acid composition of the milk fat in the Rhodope Tsigai breed is presented in Tables 5-8.

5-8.

5.

(g/100g)

Table 5. Content of saturated fatty acids (SFA) in raw ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period May-June (g/100g of fat)

SFA	01.05.		01.06.		01.07.	
	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd
Total content	66,56	0,10	66,81	0,06	65,70	0,29
C-4:0	3,69	0,05	3,71	0,01	4,15	0,16
C-6:0	3,28	0,03	2,78	0,04	2,61	0,09
C-8:0	3,00	0,02	2,27	0,02	1,90	0,05
C-10:0	8,35	0,03	6,31	0,013	5,08	0,09
C-12:0	4,14	0,01	3,18	0,001	2,81	0,04
C-14:0	9,81	0,01	9,46	0,02	9,40	0,03
C-15iso	0,29	0,003	0,42	0,001	0,43	0,00
C-15a iso	0,65	0,005	0,70	0,01	0,70	0,01
C-15:0	1,13	0,00	1,29	0,003	1,48	0,01
C-16:0	21,37	0,03	23,16	0,004	23,79	0,03
C-17iso	0,40	0,00	0,52	0,005	0,50	0,012
C-17a iso	0,50	0,001	0,52	0,002	0,50	0,003
C-17:0	0,70	0,002	0,80	0,002	0,84	0,006
C-18:0	7,95	0,04	10,19	0,05	10,02	0,07
C-20:0	0,20	0,002	0,29	0,001	0,31	0,013
C-22:0	0,14	0,001	0,17	0,01	0,16	0,01
MCT(C-10>C-14)	23,15	0,05	19,74	0,03	18,13	0,17
SCT(C-4>C-8)	10,05	0,10	8,81	0,08	8,68	0,29

(SFA) - 66,56
65,70 g/100g

SCT (C-4>C-8) 10,05 8,68
g/100g

C-6:0 **C-8:0**

MCT (C-10>C-14) -
23,15 18,13 g/100g

C-10:0, **C-12:0**

The total saturated fatty acids content (SFA) in milk varies within very narrow limits-from 66.56 to 65.70 g/100g fat. In the course of lactation, a decrease in the content of short-chain acids **SCT (C-4>C-8)**, mainly of the Caproic **C-6:0** and Caprylic **C-8:0** acids from 10.05 to 8.68 g/100g fat, has been established.

In middle chained acids - **MCT (C-10>C-14)**, the reduction was more pronounced – from 23.15 to 18.13 g/100g fat, as a result of lower concentrations of Capric **C-10:0**, Lauric **C-12:0** and Myristic **C-14:0** acids.

C-14:0 - The reduced content of short-and medium-chain saturated fatty acids is compensated for by the increase in the concentration of Palmitic C-16:0 and Stearic C-18:0 acids and the total content of saturated fatty acids remained relatively constant during lactation.

C-16:0 -

C-18:0 -

(MUFA) - The distribution of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) in milk indicates that their total content is slightly increased from 25.38 to 25.92 g/100g fat at the end of lactation (Table 6).

25,92 g/100g (6). 25,38

6.

(g/100g)

Table 6. Content of monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) in raw ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period May-June (g/100g of fat)

MUFA	01.05.		01.06.		01.07.	
	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd
Total content	25,38	0,11	25,76	0,07	25,92	0,38
C-10:1	0,28	0,001	0,22	0,003	0,23	0,007
C-12:1	0,04	0,001	0,03	0,003	0,03	0,003
C-14:1	0,19	0,001	0,19	0,001	0,22	0,001
C-16:1	0,99	0,001	1,03	0,002	1,14	0,02
C-18:1tr4	0,06	0,005	0,06	0,005	0,07	0,01
C-18:1tr5	0,03	0,004	0,03	0,012	0,06	0,02
C-18:1tr6/7	0,28	0,002	0,19	0,006	0,19	0,03
C-18:1tr9	0,34	0,007	0,29	0,023	0,30	0,03
C-18:1tr10	0,45	0,011	0,31	0,002	0,33	0,03
C-18:1tr11	4,19	0,029	3,14	0,032	2,77	0,004
C-18:1tr12	0,51	0,004	0,37	0,005	0,42	0,03
C-18:1tr13	0,68	0,015	0,47	0,004	0,61	0,05
C-18:1tr15	0,42	0,010	0,41	0,099	0,39	0,03
C-18:1tr16	0,70	0,010	0,55	0,022	0,59	0,06
C-18:1Trans-FA	7,63	0,02	5,82	0,05	5,72	0,13
C-18:1cis9	15,10	0,145	17,50	0,095	17,61	0,45
C-18:1cis11	0,48	0,008	0,49	0,032	0,50	0,02
C-18:1cis12	0,21	0,019	0,15	0,025	0,15	0,03
C-18:1cis13	0,22	0,001	0,15	0,030	0,14	0,06
C-18:1cis15	0,20	0,009	0,12	0,022	0,12	0,02
C-20:1n9	0,04	0,002	0,04	0,000	0,04	0,01
C-20:1n9	0,04	0,002	0,04	0,000	0,04	0,01

MUFA -
cis- trans-
(18:1).

From MUFA the richest is the spectrum of cis-and trans-isomers of oleic acid (c 18:1). The cis-isomers of 18:1

18:1 g/100g	16,21	18,52	increase from 16.21 to 18.52 g/100g fat. The increase is mainly due to an increase of C18:1cis9 isomer of relevance in human nutrition from 15,10 to 17,61 g/100g fat.
18:1cis9 g/100g	15,10	17,61	
	trans-	-	Interest in science is the content of trans-fatty acids in milk samples during the lactation period. The concentration of the 10 isomers tested decreases from May to July from 7.63 to 5.72 G/100 g of fat. All trans-isomers with the exception of Vaccenic acid C-18:1t11 are considered to be "undesirable" because of their different degree of carcinogenicity.
	10		
	7,63	5,72 g/ 100 g	
	trans-		
-18:1t11	"	",	
			Vaccenic acid has a functional role in human nutrition, as it is a substrate for the synthesis of conjugated linoleic acids in the mammary gland under the action of the enzyme 9-desaturase. Its contents are reliably reduced from 4.19 to 2.77 g/100g fat.
	9-		
4,19	2,77 g/100g		
(PUFA)			
	8,02 g/100g		
	7,43 g/100g		
		8,39 g/100g	
	C-18:2cis9,12	C-18:2trans9,12	
(0,17-0,14 g/100g)		The isomers of linoleic acid C-18:2cis9,12 and C-18:2trans 9,12 increase or remain unchanged during lactation. The concentration of -linoleic acid is low (0,17-0,14 g/100g fat).
	1,40	1,86 g/100g	
		(7).	The -linoleic acid content is relatively constant and increases from 1.40 to 1.86 g/100g fat at the end of lactation (Table 7).

7.

- (g/100g

Table 7. Content of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) in raw ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period May-June (g/100g of fat)

PUFA	01.05.		01.06.		01.07.	
	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd
Total content	8,05	0,01	7,43	0,01	8,39	0,08
C-18:2tr9,12	0,74	0,030	0,67	0,018	0,72	0,009
C-18:2cis9;12	1,58	0,003	1,60	0,012	1,98	0,006
C-18:3cis6,9,12()	0,17	0,004	0,15	0,001	0,14	0,016
C-18:3cis9,12,15()	1,40	0,032	1,42	0,001	1,86	0,016
C-18:4 c6,9,12,15	0,04	0,001	0,04	0,001	0,04	0,002
CLA	3,55	0,02	3,02	0,002	3,10	0,10
CLA-Z	0,02	0,005	0,03	0,002	0,03	0,004
CLA 9c,11t/8t,10c	2,82	0,065	2,40	0,001	2,32	0,007
CLA 11c,13t	0,03	0,008	0,03	0,001	-	-
CLA 10t,12c/11c,13t	0,02	0,008	0,01	0,002	-	-
CLA-11t,13c	0,15	0,009	0,12	0,003	0,19	0,039
CLAc9c11	0,12	0,002	0,10	0,006	0,18	0,058
CLA-cc	0,01	0,004	0,01	0,003	0,03	-
CLA-Y	0,05	0,001	0,04	0,002	0,04	0,000
CLAt11t13	0,08	0,004	0,08	0,004	0,09	0,010
CLAt9t11	0,28	0,041	0,20	0,003	0,24	0,009
C-20:4n6	0,14	0,009	0,14	0,005	0,14	0,002
C-20:5n3	0,11	0,006	0,12	0,000	0,13	0,026
C-22:5n3	0,18	0,008	0,18	0,015	0,15	0,027
C-22:6n3	0,07	0,006	0,07	0,001	0,10	0,002

7).
3,55 3,10 g/100g
cis11.
9c,11t/8t,10c
cis9, trans11-
2,82 2,32 g/100g
-3 -6
(CLA)
-

The concentration of the conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) isomers in the sampled milk demonstrates the influence of the season, respectively the quality of the meadow grass (table 7). Their total content decreases from 3.55 to 3.10 g/100g fat. As a functional nutrient component for the prevention of colon and stomach cancer, it is only the cis9, trans11- and trans9, cis11-configurations. The concentration of CLA 9c, 11t/8t,10c was lowered during lactation from 2.82 to 2.32 g/100g fat.

The unsaturated long-chain fatty acids from the omega-3 and omega-6 groups occupy an important place in human nutrition as they have functional significance in the treatment of coronary and cardiovascular diseases.

8.
 (-3 -6)
 - (g/100g)

Table 8. Content of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (-3 -6) in raw ewe's milk of the Rhodope Tsigai breed during the pasture period May-June (g / 100g of fat)

-3 -6	01.05.		01.07.		01.05.	
	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd
n-3	1,81	0,01	1,83	0,01	2,30	0,02
n-6	3,46	0,03	3,18	0,03	3,66	0,01
n-6 / n-3	1,91	0,02	1,74	0,02	1,59	0,02

g/100g
 -6
 3,66 g/100g
 -6 -3
 5.
 n-6 / n-3
 1,91 1,59,

Sheep milk is poor in omega-3 fatty acids. Their concentration increases from May to July from 1.81 to 2.30 g/100g fat. The omega-6 fatty acid content is from 3.46 to 3.66 g/100g fat. The balance between omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids is an important factor in reducing the risk of coronary heart disease. Raw materials and food are considered healthy if the ratio -6/ -3 is less than 5. The established ratio between the two groups of fatty acids ranged from 1.91 to 1.59, which is an indication that the milk tested has a low risk factor for human health.

CONCLUSIONS

14% 78%,
 12%.
 cis9,12,
 (CLA)
 37%
 27.83 mol%.

The study on the fatty acid composition of the grass associations in the region of the Middle Rhodopes shows that the concentration of the main groups of fatty acids changes as the vegetation progresses. The quantity of saturated and monounsaturated fatty acids increased by 14% and 78%, respectively, and the polyunsaturated content decreased by 12%. For the period May-July, the concentration of the linoleic acid C18:2 Cis9,12 , which is a substrate for the synthesis of conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) with anticarcinogenic effect in the rumen of ruminants, increases by 37% and reaches its maximum of 27.83 mol%.
 In -linoleic acid with the same functional

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Dermatoglyphics Characteristics of the Structure of Nasolabial Plate of Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Breed

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SUMMARY

The dermatoglyphic images of the nasolabial plate of male individuals of Aberdeen-Angus meat breed were analyzed. They are bred in farms located in the Northern Central geographic region of Bulgaria. A characteristic of dermatoglyphic types was made. The morphometric parameters were studied, such as dermal folds, ellipses, ridges, shafts, ovals, grains, furrow positioning, as well as the colour of the nasolabial plate - shades and depigmentation. The combinations of the elements examined form phenotypic complexes (images of different combinations of phenes) of the nasolabial plate. The loose structure predominated over the consistent. Both asymmetric and symmetric individuals were observed. The most common papillary formations were wrinkles with irregular polygons and ellipses. Dermatological type of 'Combo' was not found as a result of the selections of many years. The most common type of dermatoglyph is 'Tree-branch' with 45,6%. Animals with that dermatological type showed the best growth results.

45,6%.

- The elements of the structure of the nasolabial plate of Aberdeen-Angus cattle give us grounds to assume that these can be used in the passportization and identification of different individuals within the breed and as a marker in the selection.

Key words: phenes, folds, dermatoglyph, shafts, polygons, stripes

INTRODUCTION

- The valuable qualities of Aberdeen-Angus breed have contributed to its worldwide distribution - high growth rate, small, compact body size, easy calving, relatively high slaughter yield, good taste and culinary qualities of meat, as well as extremely flexible, acclimatization abilities (Todorov, 2001; Randelina et al., 2002; Campos et al., 2014; Shichkin, 2015; Tousova et al., 2015).

- The main purpose of selection in meat-cattle stockbreeding is to produce high-yield animals adapted for use with the latest technologies and market requirements (Zhebrovsky et al., 1983; Arzhankova, 2002; Sirotina, 2012).

- According to Bychkov (1990), the relief of the outer surface of the nasolabial plate of cattle is represented by a system of macroscopic ridges (rolls and folds) and polygonal fields separated by furrows, with flowing glands located at the center of these furrows.

- The progressive evolution of the nasolabial plate in *Bos taurus* species has led the way in the development of the ridge layer and nerve endings. The dermatoglyph is a complex and characteristic formation of folds of different shapes and sizes (Trofimenko and Vininchuk, 1987).

- The nasolabial plate in ruminants, in particular in cattle, reflects both physiological and morphological,

(Todorov, 2001; Randelina et al., 2002; Campos et al., 2014; Shichkin, 2015; Tousova et al., 2015).

(Zhebrovsky et al., 1983; Arzhankova, 2002; Sirotina, 2012).
Bychkov (1990)

()

Bos taurus

(Trofimenko and Vininchuk, 1987).

(Arzhankova, 2002; Mishra et al., 2006; Lozovaya and Arzhankova, 2010; Baranov and Sirotina, 2011; Sirotina, 2012; Malofeev and Lipovik, 2012; Lipovik, 2013; Kalinin, 2014; Machakhtyrova et al., 2017).

1991).

1987).

(Gowen, 1918; Vladimirov, 1970; Tanchev et al., 2012).

- 14,6%,
- 6,6%,
4,3%, - 1,6 % . . . -

(Trofimenko and Vininchuk, 1987).

morphometric, identification and selection parameters and is of particular interest to many authors (Arzhankova, 2002; Mishra et al., 2006; Lozovaya and Arzhankova, 2010; Baranov and Sirotina, 2011; Sirotina, 2012; Malofeev and Lipovik, 2012; Lipovik, 2013; Kalinin, 2014; Machakhtyrova et al., 2017).

The historical experience of the interdisciplinary trend of breeding phenetics has been put as a basis of the methods for evaluation of phenes of the farm animals. Many known breeds of cattle vividly confirm the effectiveness of the selection of phenes and their phenocomplexes. Among the mvarious phenes, that are encountered and observed in cattle, the dermatoglyph of the nasolabial plate is particularly important (Trofimenko 1987, 1991).

The following breed phenes of the dermatoglyph in cattles can be included: the linear dimensions of the vertical furrows, the discreteness of the pigmentation, the variants of the elliptical and linear shafts (rolls) and variants of 'Ray' type (Trofimenko and Vininchuk, 1987).

The pigmented nasolabial plate in most cases dominates the unpigmented one. The same applies to the pigmented tongue and the pigmented hair-coat covering (Gowen, 1918; Vladimirov, 1970; Tanchev et al., 2012).

The symmetry and asymmetry of the dermatoglyph has breed specificity. The highest symmetry of the image was observed in Simmental cattle breed - 14.6%, followed by Black and White cattle - 6.6%, Aberdeen-Angus - 4.3%, Kianina - 1.6%, etc. The least developed are the vertical furrows of the representatives of Aberdeen-Angus, Kianina, Charollais, Montbéliarde and Ayrshire breeds (Trofimenko and Vininchuk, 1987).

The purpose of the present study is to give quantitative and qualitative dermatoglyphic characteristics of the

- structure and pigmentation of the nasolabial plate of male animals of Aberdeen-Angus cattle breed in the North Central region of Bulgaria and to
- determine the frequency of manifestation of the various dermatotypes by looking for the relationship with growth and development indicators.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The survey was conducted at the farm of RIMSA-Troyan and two other private farms in the region of Troyan municipality, in the North Central region during the period of 2018-2019. The town of Troyan is located at 42°41' latitude and 23°19' longitude. The climate is temperate continental. Animals spend 210 days on pastures.

46 male calves born in Bulgaria were studied. They were descendants of Aberdeen-Angus cows introduced about 30 years ago. The age of the animals studied was determined by zootechnical records in breeding records and books. Control weights were also made: at birth, at 8, 12 and 18 months.

The photos of the dermatoglyph of the nasolabial plate were taken with Canon 18 x 10 MP camera at 25-45 cm distance from the object, after which the collected database was processed by a computer using Microsoft Excel, Paint and Microsoft Word 2010. The collected information was stored on backup media.

Dermatoglyphs were studied according to the methodology of Trofimenko (1991), which is based on the distribution of skin shafts (rolls) and folds and skin furrows on the surface of the nasolabial plate, by the deductive method of photo analysis.

The colour (colouration) of the nasolabial plate, skin furrows, shape and position of skin shafts (folds) and grains were examined. Anatomical, morphological, morphometric and

2018-2019
42° 41'

23° 19'

210

46

30

8,12 18

Canon 18 x 10 M
25-45 cm

Microsoft Excel, Paint Microsoft Word
2010.

Trofimenko (1991),

()

(

)

()

Anatomica Veterinaria.

- Nomina

Statistika-2000

(Sirotina and Baranov, 2010).

82%

38

18 %

8

14,98%

" (

(89,44%).

photographic methods were applied.

The terms used are in accordance with the International Veterinary Nomenclature - Nomina Anatomica Veterinaria.

The data were processed using the methods of variational statistics using the Statistika-2000 program and presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The colouration of the nasolabial plate is specific for each cattle breed (Sirotina and Baranov, 2010). The colour of the nasolabial plate in the test animals of Aberdeen-Angus breed is a deep black with different shades and, more rarely, gray to gray-ash. There is a halo (circle) around the nasolabial plate of relief, black, covering hairs. Black colour with different shades was observed in 82% of the animals tested or 38 animals, while the remaining 18% or 8 animals had a grey and brown ash colour on the nasolabial plate. Depigmentation was not observed in any of the animals tested.

The frequency of occurrence of different morphological features of the dermatoglyphic structure of the nasolabial plate of calves of Aberdeen-Angus breed is presented in Table 1.

The calves under study were characterized by the predominance of loose structure of dermatoglyph - 85.02%, whereas only 14.98% of the images had consistent structure. A great part of the direction of furrows of the nasolabial plate in the tested breed is in the "equal degree" (the papillary lines are directed to a conditional bisectrix of the angle concluded between the tip of the nasolabial plate and the central axial symmetry of the dermatoglyph). The slight bent of the furrows was predominant (89.44%) in the construction of the dermatoglyph of Aberdeen-Angus breed. The position of the folds in the tested breed was symmetrical (95.53%) in

(95,53%).
 (91,68%),
 (76,54%) (94,35%),
 (51,49%),
 (28,75%)
 (7,71%).

most cases.

The ellipses (91.68%), polygons (94.35%), short stripes (76.54%) were predominant in the dermatoglyphic construction of Aberdeen-Angus meat breed, whereas less common were the long stripes (51.49%), the rollers with stretches (28.75%) and bee boxes (7.71%).

1.

, %

Table 1. Frequency of occurrence of different morphological features of the dermatoglyphic structure in calves of Aberdeen-Angus breed, in %

Phene complexes	/Breed
	Aberdeen-angus
/Type of structure, %	
/Loose	85,02
/Consistent	14,98
/Direction of furrows %	
/Equal degree	51,93
/From the top at a high degree	27,54
/To the periphery	20,53
/Curve of furrows, %	
/Highly curved, %	10,56
/Slightly curved, %	89,44
/Position of folds, %	
/Assymetrical	4,47
/Symmetrical	95,53
()/Shape of shafts (rolls), %	
/Long stripes	51,49
/Short stripes	76,54
/Ellipses	91,68
/Polygons	94,35
/Bee boxes	7,71
/rollers with stretches	28,85

“ - ” (45,6%),
 “ ” (21,7%).
 : “ ” (17,5 %)
 “ ” (15,25%).
 ” - ”

A high incidence of dermatological type 'Tree-twig' (45.6%) was found, followed by dermatotype 'Class' (21.7%) in Aberdeen-Angus calves. The other two dermatological type show similar values and the following presentation: 'Crown' dermatological type (17.5%) and 'Grain' (15.25%).

'Tree-twig' dermatological type is characterized by a well-defined vertical

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Integration of Beekeeping Farms through Associations and Cooperatives

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SUMMARY

- The aim is to explore the possibilities for integrating beekeeping farms, as integrators, and the ensuing results. When farms are integrators, they have greater capacity to create high value-added products, better product and market diversification positions, and greater control over the production processes of manufactured products.
- Since individual farms, including beekeeping farms, are smaller and less competitive and less profitable than the non-agricultural farms, they can play the role of integrators of large associations after integration through association and/or cooperation. Associations, as forms of horizontal and vertical integration, have a significant impact on the business environment – intermediaries, competitors, the legislative base and others.
- They provide market and other information as well as access to new

markets and segments through coordinated joint market actions between their members, which is a form of joint marketing. The cooperative allows the implementation of activities that the independent beekeeping farm cannot perform- maintaining high and constant quantities and quality, creating well-equipped and specialized processing and marketing centres, creating bee products and other products with high added value and high profit, access to promising markets. The cooperative is one of the means for overcoming the technological and marketing backwardness of the Bulgarian beekeeping farms.

Key words: apiculture / beekeeping farms, integrators, high value-added products, competitiveness, profitability

INTRODUCTION

For a number of objective reasons, in most of the cases, the role of integrators in the agricultural sector is played mainly by non-agricultural enterprises and the state (Lyubenov, 2018). Nevertheless, beekeeping farms must seek opportunities to take on the role of integrators because they have different goals and interests than the abovementioned integrators, since their main disadvantage is that they turn agricultural farms mainly into simple suppliers of raw materials. In the cases when farms act as integrators, they have greater opportunities to create high value-added products, better product and market diversification positions, and greater control over the production processes.

Therefore, the purpose is to explore the possibilities for integrating beekeeping farms, in their quality as integrators, and ultimately - to explore the ensuing results.

(Lyubenov, 2018).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

- Data from branch organizations,
- legislation and specialized bibliographic sources, as well as the long-term research of the author in the domain of agro-marketing are used as the information base for this study (Lyubenov, 2016). The research methods used include the complex combination of induction, deduction, grouping, comparison, analysis, synthesis, abstraction, concretization, analogy, modelling, formalization, and observation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Since individual farms, including the beekeeping farms, are smaller, less competitive and less profitable than the non-agricultural farms, they can play the role of integrators for forming large associations, mainly after horizontal integration through association and/or cooperation.

Associations as integrators in the Beekeeping sector

- Branch organizations such as professional associations and beekeepers' communities play an important role in organizing workshops and seminars on national, international and sectoral issues; the appeal of by-laws and regulations contrary to the interests of the industry; performing registration and control functions; financing of beekeepers; the adoption of quality standards for bee products; obtaining up-to-date market information; market provision of products in the required quantity and quality; direct contact with consumers; providing online presence; facilitating access to foreign markets; the creation of an innovative environment; achieving higher sales prices, profits, etc.

- The various forms of association, such as chambers, federations,

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associations, unions and others, may be registered as associations under the Non-Profit Legal Entities Act (NPLE). For example, following changes in the Livestock Act in 2010, the National Dairy Board and the Egg, Poultry and Rabbit Meat Board were registered as associations under the NPLE.

Although some of the associations under this law contain in their name the word 'cluster', which can also be registered under the Law on Non-profit Organizations, they may not actually be such, even though they bring together representatives of different branches.

The associations of the branch organizations can carry out coordinated joint actions of their members on the market, which in reality is also a form of joint marketing. Grain production, as one of the most subsidized sectors in Bulgaria, has the largest number of nationally represented associations, which uphold its interests, mainly for more subsidies.

To some extent, Producer Organizations (POs) and Producer Groups (PGs) also function as agricultural associations. They must comply with the requirements of Regulation 12 of 5 May 2015 in order to receive financial support under the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU 2014-2020.

The regulation requires that they be registered as a sole trader, a trade company or a cooperative, including their associations and inter-branch organizations, i.e. associations.

The POs include at least six members, and the PGs- at least four members of registered farmers under the Farmers Support Act. In order to be subsidized the POs have to sell on the market at least BGN 50,000 worth of production, and the PGs- at least BGN 25,000.

The various cooperative unions are also a form of farmers' associations, but the Law on Cooperatives explicitly treats them as cooperatives - Art. 54. (3). A minimum of seven able bodied individuals are required to set up a cooperative. The clusters are also a form of association of farmers and non-agricultural producers, and most of the various European Programmes require a minimum of seven members. They can be registered under the Law on Obligations and Contracts, under the Commercial Law and under the Law on Non-profit Organizations. Therefore, farmers' and non-agricultural associations can be registered on a different regulatory basis, in accordance with the objectives and opportunities for management and control, reduction of tax burden, use of subsidies and other criteria.

The Union of Poultry Breeders in Bulgaria (UPBB) can be given as a bad example of an association that carried out joint pricing actions on the markets for poultry meat and eggs in contravention of Art. 9, (1) of the Competition Act. Large and integrated companies involved in the production, processing and marketing of poultry meat and eggs are involved in the UPBB. At the initiative of the UPBB and its members, a Product Board for eggs, poultry and rabbit meat was established. Following an appeal within the statutory deadline in 2010 the Supreme Administrative Court confirmed the existence of cartels not only in the domain of eggs and chicken, but also in sectors such as milk, oil, and bread. Although European and national state policies stimulate the association in the agro-sector, there are still no positive examples of nationally represented associations of Bulgarian beekeepers and other farms that carry out joint actions on national and international markets.

The associations create prerequisites for realizing joint marketing,

clustering and other forms of collaboration. They have the ability to recommend, align and coordinate industry policies and strategies with the national agricultural policy. The main part of the associations and branch organizations in the domestic beekeeping are not well developed, established and nationally represented. Beekeeping farms, being smaller and less competitive than the suppliers, processors and traders positioned upstream and downstream from them, must come together in order to survive and prosper. Therefore, beekeepers in today's globalized world and markets must act less individualistically and increasingly in the form of a professional community in which each of them can earn trust, influence and protection.

Associations (branch organizations) play a decisive role in the more successful development and implementation of sectoral (branch) strategies. The National Beekeeping Sector is characterized by many small and defragmented branch organizations, which is why there is no leading association to develop their sectoral strategy. Due to the fact that there is no such nationally represented branch organization that aligns and coordinates the strategies between the micro-level, i.e. beekeeping farms, and the macro-level - the national economy, there are many conflicts between the goals of the national agricultural policy and the goals of the beekeeping farms, as well as conflicts in the instruments used for their realization - subsidies and other financial tools.

This causes waste of the limited resources at national and sectoral level, and limits the access to markets, and as a result the Bulgarian beekeeping cannot realize its potential.

Having a nationally represented beekeeping association, recognized as a

leader in the national beekeeping sector, will play a key role in upholding its interests and achieving better prices for the bee products produced.

It will ensure better protection of the interests of individual beekeeping farms compared to individual negotiation with intermediaries, wholesalers and retailers. For example, the Union of Beekeepers' Organizations in Serbia annually organizes a tender for the merchants who bid, and only the highest bidder has the right to buy bee honey from Serbian beekeepers (Panchev et al., 2014). This shows that the nationally represented branch organization provides access to better markets. The lack of a branch organization, i.e. a leading association that unites all beekeepers, is a serious problem for the Bulgarian beekeeping sector.

The history of the development of the associations in the Bulgarian beekeeping shows that when they were well developed, it developed well. The first beekeeping association in Bulgaria was established in 1896 and its main purpose is the transition to bee breeding technology in collapsible hives. On 19 August 1899 the first national beekeeping organization was established. In 1910, the first Slavic beekeepers' gathering was held in Sofia and Apislavia, a union of beekeeping organizations from Slavic countries, was created. After that, the First and the Second World War stopped this development and there was a shock for the whole beekeeping sector in Bulgaria. From the mid-1960s till the late 1980s, beekeeping in Bulgaria was in a serious progress. The Bulgarian Beekeeping Union brings together 50,000 beekeepers organized in more than 1,600 beekeeping associations (Panchev et al., 2014). Bulgaria reaches sixth place in the world for honey production.

At the end of 1989 the economic

2014).

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(Panchev et al., 2014).

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 (Panchev et al., 2014).
 1945

model in Bulgaria began to change, as well as the divide in the national beekeeping union. In the 1990s, the "offspring" of beekeeping unions in Bulgaria became widespread, and there are 4-5 or more beekeeping organizations, who claim to be national.

The period of decline of Bulgarian beekeeping has begun. Even after Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007, the process of separation continues as several beekeeping organizations claim national status, but in reality today there is no such an established leader. The lack of a unified representation of the sector impairs communication with the state as it has no one to turn to. Bulgarian beekeepers are forced to survive individually – they cannot be actively involved in the national legislative processes, they cannot protect themselves against bee poisoning by pesticides, they cannot influence national prices, they are not represented on European level, and their access to international markets is difficult.

Agricultural cooperatives in the Beekeeping sector

The first beekeeping cooperatives have been established in Bulgaria in 1915, headed by the "Nectar - Sofia" cooperative (Panchev et al., 2014). Its function was to be a major mediator in the trade and export of honey and wax. It had its own workshop for the production of wax bases, beekeeping equipment and beehives, as well as its own administrative building in the centre of Sofia. For three decades, until 1945, this cooperative was a well-functioning and influential economic structure.

History shows that precisely the creation of market-oriented cooperatives, of marketing type, initiated the economic and organizational development of beekeeping in Bulgaria.

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2016

"Bulgarian Organic Foods" 4 500 (www.capital.bg, 20.05.2016).

France Miel, id

Sithon, Suebee.

After 1945, the large beekeeping farms in Bulgaria were concentrated mainly in the Labour Cooperative Agricultural Farms (LCAF), and in the Agrarian and Industrial Complexes (AIC), and later, in the 1950s, the Central Cooperative Union (CCU) was established. In the 1980s, in Bulgaria there were about 770,000 bee hives producing about 15,000 tons of honey per year, 300-400 tons of wax, 4 tons of royal jelly, 8 tons of bee pollen, 3 tons of propolis, 10 kg of bee venom, 120,000 queen bees (Panchev et al., 2014). At that time these results positioned Bulgarian beekeeping among the world leaders. It has been supported by serious research activities and has been taught at several universities and specialized technical high schools. State policy has stimulated its sustainable development.

After the change of the economic model in 1989, a period of decline of Bulgarian beekeeping occurred, and in the mid-1990s the number of bee families decreased more than twice in a relatively short period of about 5-6 years. In Bulgaria, beekeeping did not even form production cooperatives, although they were some of the most common ones in the other sectors of Bulgarian agriculture. Only as late as 2016, "Bulgarian Organic Foods"- a cooperative of six organic producers was established with 4,500 bee hives (www.capital.bg, 20.05.2016). History shows that some of the largest and most successful beekeeping organizations globally are cooperatives - the French "France Miel", the Greek "Sithon", the Canadian "Bee Maid" and the American "Suebee".

The history of the aforementioned cooperatives begins with the integration of the beekeeping farms in order to purchase inventory and equipment for the production and packaging of bee products. Some of the cooperatives also produce their own wax bases, beehives,

equipment, etc. The larger volumes of bee products allows the development of many new bee products and other products - pollen, propolis, creamy honey, ginger or cinnamon honey, honey drinks and sauces, cosmetic products, tourist services, etc. Subsequently, a brand is being created, which leads to the recognition of the bee products of the cooperative, resulting in a steady increase in demand. Ultimately, cooperatives increase their influence on the market, achieve higher prices and make higher profits.

Self-sufficient beekeeping farms produce relatively limited apiculture products when it comes to their quantity, quality and product variety. They have a relatively low degree of mechanization of production processes and labour productivity, and respectively- high prime cost. They have difficulties in storing bee products, transporting them and finding buyers and markets.

They do not have the resources to develop innovative bee products. They lack the investment to refine and build their own brand.

These factors force the individual beekeeping farms to accept low prices offered by traders who possess transport and infrastructure for portioning and packaging honey and other bee products.

The predominantly small- and medium-sized nature of Bulgarian beekeeping farms severely restricts their access to foreign markets because they are unable to sustainably offer large and homogeneous batches of bee products. The weakness of the Bulgarian beekeeping is that it mainly produces raw materials with low added value for the national organizational markets - mainly honey and comparatively less frequently- bee products. Therefore, most of the exports are realized by traders of barrels

, who act as collection points for
- consolidating lots of different bee
products.

- The inability of the national beekeeping
- sector to sell the end consumer product
carries the added value far down the
supply chain - trader, importer, processor,
distributor and retailer abroad.

- The well-organized cooperative
- offers opportunities for quality
improvement through the introduction of
quality management systems, as well as
the transition from conventional to organic
beekeeping. It ensures exchange of
experience and conducts trainings for the
development of new bee products, and
other products and services. It also
distributes to new markets through an
active communication policy. The
- established cooperatives have stronger
positions on the national and international
organizational and consumer markets, as
a result of which they sell their products at
higher prices and lower volatility of prices.
Many co-operatives also pay their
members' insurance and pay a constant
monthly income. An individual beekeeping
farm cannot cope with all this by itself
because this requires significant
investment and competence.

- The cooperative is an
organizational form of business that offers
wide opportunities. Such a structure of
working can afford types of activities that
- a stand-alone beekeeping farm cannot -
specialized production, maintaining
constant quantities and quality, marketing
planning, reaching distant and promising
markets, maintaining sales and experts'
teams, setting up well-equipped and
specialized centres for the extraction,
processing and packaging of bee
products.

- Based on the integration and
- diversification various beekeeping and
other products are created with higher

(Lyubenov, 2016):

(Commercial Law, 2018).

added value and profit. The cooperative is a means of overcoming the technological and the market/marketing backwardness of many Bulgarian beekeeping farms.

In the marketing cooperatives, beekeeping farms join forces for more successful sales of all or part of their production. Achieving this goal requires the accomplishment of certain marketing functions by the cooperatives such as the collection and storage of bee products, sorting, packaging, branding, etc.

According to the degree to which marketing cooperatives perform such functions, they are of three main types (Lyubenov, 2016):

- cooperatives that only act as agents for the sale of bee and other products to their members;

- cooperatives that not only collect, accumulate and sort, but also carry out primary processing of bee products and other products;

- cooperatives that have processing facilities, warehouses, vehicles, a retail network, etc. They are stand-alone business units created by beekeeping and other farms and very often develop into powerful production and marketing units that have a strong influence on the market for certain beekeeping and other products.

Seven capable individuals are needed to set up a cooperative. The cooperative is a legal entity with variable capital and a variable number of members, who have limited responsibility according to the amount of their contributions. Cooperatives are exempt from taxes and fees related to their establishment, termination, liquidation and dividend tax (Commercial Law, 2018).

The cooperative organization has both advantages and disadvantages. There are conflicts of goals due to the diverse structure and interests of the members of

the cooperative. In the case of weaknesses in production and quality, it is difficult to penalize a specific member of the cooperative, and his exclusion from the cooperative bears risks. However, a number of agricultural cooperatives are effective management structures and offer high quality bee products and other products on the market.

The marketing cooperatives have the following advantages:

- they significantly increase the market power of individual agricultural farms - beekeeping and other farms, which is more valid for more complex marketing cooperatives;

- they enable the achievement of a certain production and marketing efficiency, reduction of prime cost and marketing costs per unit, realization of economies of scale;

- expand the opportunities to enhance specialization, concentration and diversification, as well as the implementation of various quality improvement initiatives.

The main disadvantages of marketing cooperatives are:

- the typical democratism and the principle "one person-one vote" in the cooperative movement blur the power of cooperative institutions. The cooperative management is too often forced to protect the conflicting interests of its members;

- in beekeeping and in agriculture in general, it is more difficult to control the quantity and quality of production. Collecting products from multiple suppliers makes it difficult to implement quality control programmes. Although they have a contract with the cooperative, individual members breach the contract and impede market activity when the current market conditions provide better opportunities for individual product sales;

- beekeepers and farmers generally find it more difficult to agree to a good

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enough salary to attract the best specialists in the management of the cooperative, which is why their cooperatives tend to have weaker management and marketing.

In Bulgaria, co-operation is currently mainly based on production, in the form of agricultural production cooperatives. Marketing cooperatives of agricultural farms are very rare in Bulgarian agriculture, including in the beekeeping sector, where we have established only one cooperative, which was established in 2016, and still continues to function mainly as a production cooperative (Capital, 7-13 December 2018).

Bulgarian agriculture still lacks established marketing cooperatives at the farm level. At the national level, the Central Cooperative Union (CCU) acts as a marketing cooperative. Cooperative organizations within the CCU system (trade, industry, agriculture and forestry, buying, tourism) have significant material resources that provide them with a real presence in every Bulgarian settlement.

The Central Cooperative Union was established in 1947. Today, it unites and protects the interests of 119,630 cooperative members, united in 690 cooperatives, and members of 29 cooperative unions (https://www.cks.bg, 2018). It supports the organizational and financial economic development and conducts business activities in their common interest. Its main activity is in the sphere of trade (Stefanov, 2007), which continues to generate over 60% of its revenues. The CCU also has registered established brands. The CCU cooperative system of cooperative members, cooperatives, cooperative unions and trading companies represents a solid proper market, as well as a significant partner throughout Bulgaria, with positions to negotiate delivery terms.

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- The Central Cooperative Union (CCU) is registered under the Cooperatives Act and according to it is a cooperative which unites all cooperatives in its structures. It carries out joint market actions through a common investment, financial and marketing policy.

- It manufactures, buys, processes and brands agricultural and non-agricultural products, offers tourist, insurance and other services. In its role as a marketing cooperative it provides centralized deliveries and sells most of its products through its own sales structure - its own cooperative sales network, hotels, restaurants, etc. It carries out coordinated joint market actions between all cooperatives in the CCU system, which is a cooperative form of joint marketing.

- Despite the great benefits of the cooperatives, we found that they are almost non-existent in Bulgarian beekeeping. The processes of cooperation in Bulgaria are difficult and the reasons for this are both subjective and objective. Bulgarian beekeepers, including other farmers, have poor cooperative culture which mainly manifests itself in a lack of willingness and readiness to join forces. The branch organizations and unions are also underdeveloped, and there is no beekeeping association that is nationally represented. The low level of cooperation in the Beekeeping sector is also due to problems of national and agricultural character. Although state agricultural policy promotes integration by providing various financial and other incentives, it has contradictory and instable regulations and policies that limit it in some respects.

CONCLUSIONS

- As a result of the conducted research on the integration of beekeeping farms through associations and

cooperatives, conclusions can be drawn in two main directions:

Firstly, on beekeeping associations as integrators in the Beekeeping Sector:

- • the lack of a beekeeping association established as a leader in the national beekeeping sector impedes its uniform policy. The strategies and policies in the sector are not well aligned and coordinated with European and national agricultural policies. This causes conflicts of goals and waste of scarce resources at national and sectoral levels, and the access to large markets is limited.

- • associations of farmers and non-agricultural producers integrated with them can be registered on the basis of different regulatory framework, according to the business goals and opportunities for managing, representation, control and reduction of the tax burden, financing and subsidizing, dominating or maintaining a certain market share and other criteria.

- • associations, as forms of horizontal and vertical integration, have a significant impact on the business environment - intermediaries, competitors, legislative base, etc. They provide marketing and other information, as well as access to new markets and segments, through coordinated joint market actions among their members, which is a form of joint marketing.

Secondly, on the cooperation between Bulgarian beekeeping farms:

- • the establishment of cooperatives with market orientation marks the beginning of the economic and organizational development of Bulgarian beekeeping. History shows that when there were strong cooperatives in Bulgarian beekeeping, it developed well. The cooperative is one of the means for overcoming the technological and marketing backwardness of beekeeping farms.
- • the cooperative allows to carry out

- activities that the stand-alone beekeeping farm cannot carry out - maintaining high and constant quantities and quality,
- setting up well-equipped and specialized processing and marketing centres,
- creating bee and other high value-added products and profit, access to prospective markets.
- cooperation in the Bulgarian agriculture is carried out mainly on a production basis. There are no established marketing cooperatives at the farm level, even in the simplest organizational forms, also applicable to beekeeping. At national level, only one marketing type cooperative (CCU) operates in the most complex organizational form.

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