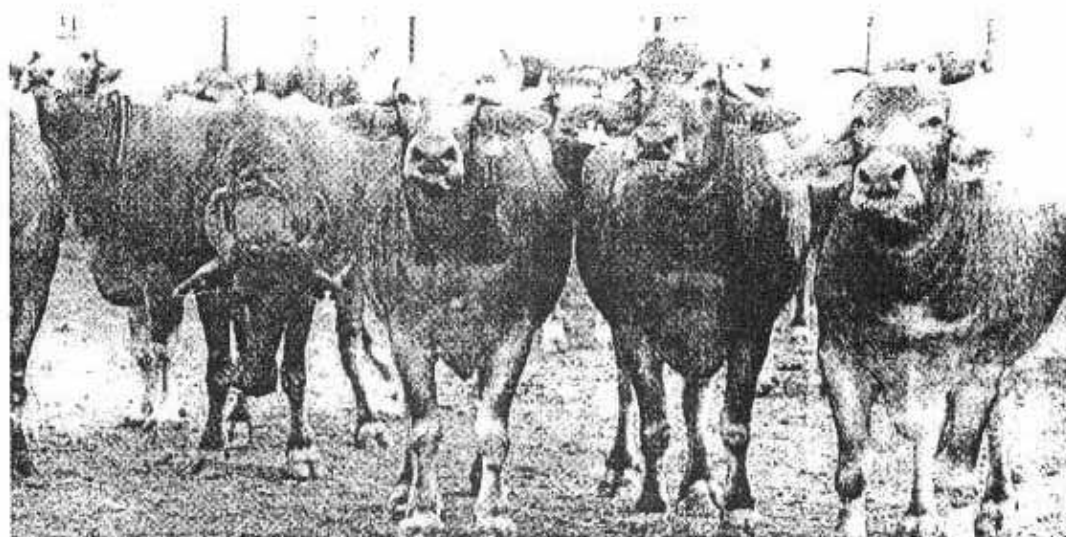


Buffal Newsletter

EUROPE - NEAR EAST
1993 - 2003



FAO/RNE- Regional Office for the Near East
11 Al Eslah Al Zerai St., Dokki
P. O. Box 100 - PC 12311,
Tel : 00 20 2 3316000
Fax: 00 20 2 7495981

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INTRODUCTION

Buffaloes represent an alternative domesticated ruminant for use in agriculture in the third millennium. There are about 130 to 150 million domesticated buffaloes which are widely distributed throughout the world and they exist as two main types, namely river and swamp buffalo. River buffaloes are large and noted for their milk production but they are also used as draught animals; they are found mainly in parts of Europe, the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent, the Caribbean, South America, North America and Canada. Swamp buffaloes are smaller; they are poor milk producers and are used almost entirely for draught. They are found mainly in China, South East Asia and the south-west Pacific region.

The bulk of the buffalo population of the world is owned by small-scale farmers who are principally engaged in crop production and to whom the keeping of 1 or 2 buffaloes is a backyard enterprise linked to their need to maintain these animals for a supplementary income from milk and/or as draught animals for cultivation and transport usage.

The water buffalo should be considered as an animal of the future with invaluable characteristics as a work animal and with a greater, unrealized potential as a source of milk, meat, leather and other by-products.

However until recently, both development and improvement of buffalo breeds remained neglected. Now a world-wide interest has developed in this species, not only as a source of animal protein for human consumption, but also because of the growing interest in the diversification of products of animal origin and the manufacture of typical regional products as well as a variety of renewed uses of these animals. Furthermore, the strong image linking the buffalo with nature and the environment's ecological equilibrium, particularly in some of the world's more marginal lands, shows this species as one of the most viable alternatives of intensive cattle husbandry systems which are coming more and more under accusation in an environment-conscious society

I would like to thank the Istituto Sperimentale per la Zootecnica-Italy for their continuous support. The 19 issues of the Newsletter collected in this volume which covers a decade is evidence of the importance that this institute placed on the water buffalo. It goes without saying that the fingerprint of Dr. Bianca Moioli is all over these Newsletters and without her dedication we would never have had this volume.

*Talib Ali Elam, B.V.Sc., Ph.D
Regional Animal Production and Health Office
Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations -FAO Regional Office for the Near East -RNE
P.O. Box 2223 Dokki, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (+ +20 2)3316000 Ext. 2814 - Direct: 3316137
Fax: (+ +20 2)7495981 - 3373419
Internet: <http://www.fao.org>
AHCNENA : <http://www.ahcnena.net>
E-mail: talib.ali@fao.org*

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