What is the place of the feed self-sufficiency in the French PDO specifications?

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Introduction
In France, 45 PDO cheeses are produced with cow (28 cheeses), goat (14) or sheep milk (3). The feed self-sufficiency (FSS) is one of the major aspects of the expression of this “terroir” in the French PDO farming system and also defined by EU legislation (1151/2012, article 5). The objective of the study was to analyse how FSS is specified in herd feeding practices.

Method
The specifications of the 45 French PDO cheeses were collected from the INAO website (www.inao.gouv.fr) in March 2016. They have been studied by the authors and analysed according a graphic methodology (Bertin, 1977) to highlight the main criteria and their levels related to FSS. Results are presented and discussed hereafter.

Results

A large diversity of criteria to define herd feeding practices in French PDO cheese specifications
Criteria recorded could be based on a direct measure on the home-grown production of any feed or could also be defined in order to promote practices combined to the valorisation of local resources and promote indirectly FSS.

Nine main FSS strategies in the French PDO cheese productions are observed.

Three main trends could be identified in these nine different FSS strategies:
• Recorded criteria mostly promote the FSS at PDO area level (more than at the farm level)
• Forages are mainly produced in the PDO area.
• Farming intensive practices are limited through stringent thresholds.

Conclusion
PDO livestock systems are under constraints, with some limits in fodder productivity and the necessity to maintain natural resources and biodiversity. PDO specifications have to create a coherent framework to find a balance between a set of services and a goal of production.

The “French Terroirs Cheeses Network” (www.rmtfromagesdeterroirs.com/) proposes European-wide exchanges on this subject, which can be set up through the European Innovative Partnership (www.eip-agri.eu/)