



Coping with citizen demands : a field study of suckling processes in dairy herds

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A very strong demand from citizens, catalysed by abolitionist associations

Paris : in the subway



Her Mother's Day
dream

Watch **her baby** grow

But that won't happen

See Ventura *et al.*, 2013

To leave the calves with their mother (or a nurse cow):

Is it possible?

Is it relevant?



To leave the calves with their mother (or a nurse cow):

It's already done in the field:

- ❖ For organic farming:
- ❖ As well as for others



« calves to be fed with natural / entire milk, ideally from their mother, for at least 3 months »



Identify, via a survey:

Who are these farmers?

What are their main **motivations**?

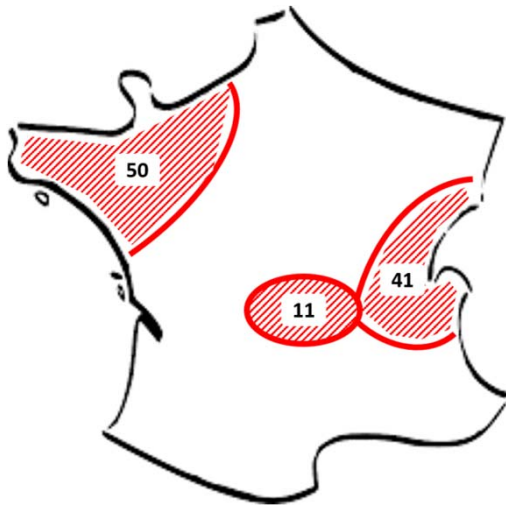
What are their main **practices**?

What are the **impacts** felt?

Investigation process

Farms involved (102/155)

Selection by network



Towards a representative
diversity of systems

Data collection



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Data processing


A screenshot of a data processing software interface. It shows a table with multiple columns and rows of data, likely representing the results of the data collection process.

Descriptive statistics

Results: **Who** are these farm(er)s?

A wide **diversity** of systems

Farmers	Min-Max	Median value
 (y)	19-65	48
 FTWU	0.5-8.5	2

Farms	Min-Max	Median value
(ha)	11-500	88.5
 number	8-210	60



56%

Plain and mountain, Farm product
Housing, Milking facilities,
Calving season ...

Results: What are their main motivations?



Of the calves : mainly diarrhea and growth (52)



Saving time (41)

Simplification of the work (47)

Reduced penibility (for calf feed,32)



Milk vs milk replacers prices, recovery of milk not marketed... (37)

And also: organic, natural, animal welfare, recommendation, attractiveness , places available in the barn, willingness to keep older cows ...

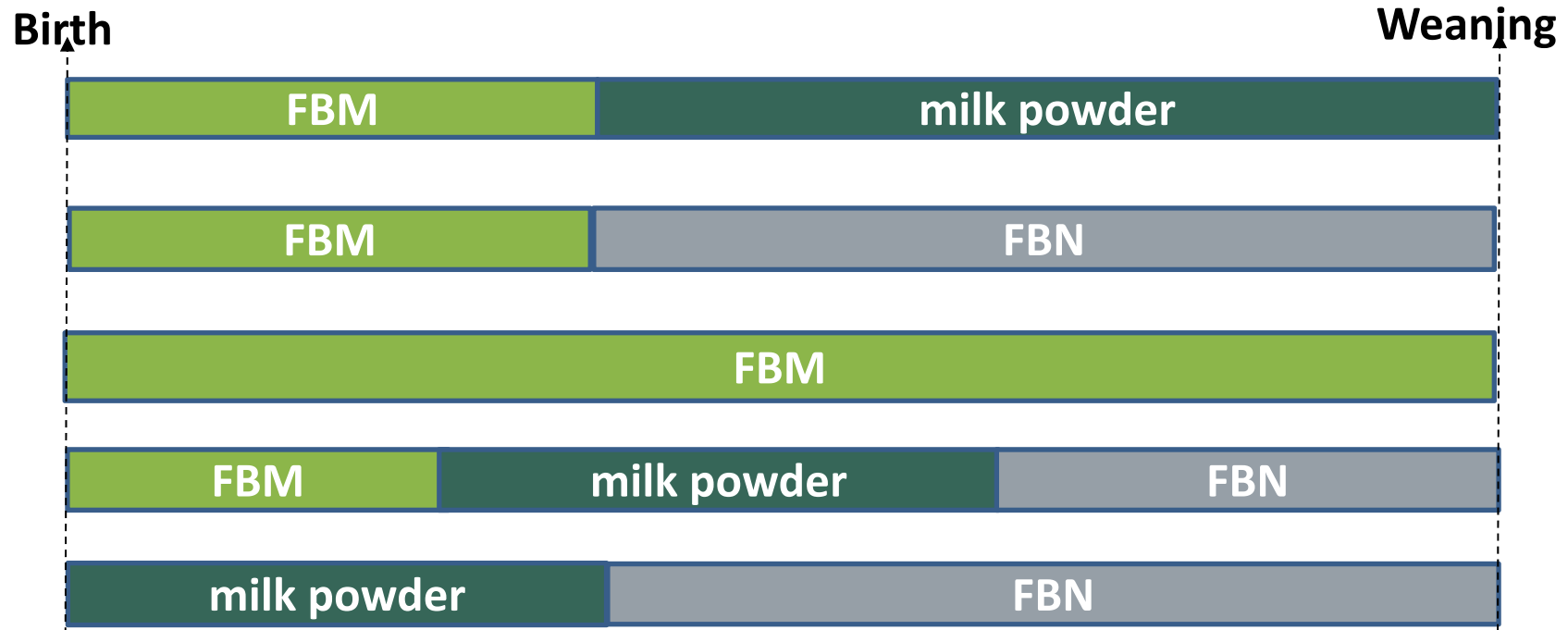
Results: What are their main practices?

A wide diversity of practices

Fed by Mother (FBM); n = 59

Fed by Nurse (FBN) ; n = 13

FBN / FBM ; n = 30



Results: What are their main practices?

A wide diversity of practices

Duration	From 7 to 180 d
Access for suckling	From 2*30'/d (mainly before milking) to full time
♀♂ selling/renewal	From equivalent to 19d for selling and 180d for ♀ renewal
Nursing	From 1 to 6 calves/cow. Average 2.3 calves/cow
Separation	From entire separation to keeping calf and mother in the same building

Results: What are the **impacts felt?**



Less
diarrheas
and mastitis
frequency



Calves:
better
growth
Cows ?
Some
difficulties
when milking



Limited or
no impact
on milk
production



Some handling
problems with
heifers

Cows and calves
cry at weaning
(2.5d)

Some troubles
with nurse

Improved working comfort

In conclusion: to leave the calves with their mother (or a nurse cow), it's **possible**

In our survey:

- ❖ A positive effect on **calves health**
- ❖ Positive effect on **average body gain**
- ❖ Improving **working conditions**
- ❖ No negative effects on cow reproductive performance either for heifers than cows
- ❖ Increasing **stress intensity at weaning**, especially when age of calf is increasing
- ❖ Heifers more **fearful**

But no information from farmers who have stopped this practice

In conclusion: to leave the calves with their mother (or a nurse cow), it's **possible**



DIVERSITY of breed, equipment, suckling systems, milking systems...

OF PRACTICES



DIFFERENT motivations, with respect of production systems, localisation ...

Numerous **POSSIBILITIES** for each farm



CONVICED AND MOTIVATED farmers, ready to share their experience

ADVISERS are missing !!!

To leave the calves with their mother (or a nurse cow):

Is it possible?

Is it relevant?



Many thanks to:

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Students



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