

Organic beef production based on dairy breed bull calves

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Background

Dairy production is important in organic livestock production in Europe and organic milk now has a market share of 10-20 % in some European countries. However, the market share of organic beef production, primarily based on dairy cattle, is much smaller, i.e. 2.9% in Denmark. Organic dairy bull calves could be a resource for organic beef production, but the majority of bull calves are sold for fattening on conventional farms because organic rearing of bull calves is not considered as profitable as organic milk production. This situation is presently experienced in several European countries and may in a longer perspective limit the options for development of the organic beef market. Selling bull calves may also be considered a serious ethical problem for organic farming which is supposed to represent a holistic approach to production.

Objective

The aim of the project was to describe and develop production systems of organic beef based on bull calves from organic dairy farms. The project included analysis of constraining factors and possibilities by means of questionnaires, feeding experiments on ryegrass /white clover pastures concerning performance in calves following turn-out, the effect of season and winter feeding level and breed on herbage intake in steers grazing ryegrass/clover pastures, the modelling of production strategies in organic steer production and the description and analysis of organic steer production based on recordings on organic farms with emphasis on fattening steers.

Progress - 2003

The Ph.D. project was finished in June 2003.

The summary is enclosed.

Plans - 2004

Publications

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