To support breeding of small ruminants in the Maghreb

There are some three million small and medium-sized farms in the Maghreb countries. This figure is high and they face an uncertain future in arid areas that are predominantly dedicated to breeding small ruminants.

OBJECTIVE
The project aims to help small and medium-sized farms obtain access to new technologies and improve their competitiveness.

Agro-pastoral farms are very vulnerable because they are rarely eligible for grants while suffering from uncertain climate conditions and variations in market prices. The first objective for the project, financed by FEMISE, was to analyze their difficulties. With this information, it was possible to assess the support measures that will help the farmers have access to new technologies, in order to improve their competitiveness in the market.

Political situation and priorities for future actions
To achieve this, it is essential that all the elements involved are studied: government policies, institutional constraints, land rights, etc. Other aspects to be reviewed include local and regional market constraints (Mediterranean regional agreements, Morocco-USA free trade agreements) and also international constraints (globalization, WTO).

A number of priorities emerge: maintaining food safety policies; taking into account sustainability of systems previously considered marginal (extensive systems in agro-pastoral areas, mountain farming); the need to encourage investment in difficult areas by highlighting loans and insurance.

Cultural and social hurdles
It is also necessary to understand the obstacles and hurdles that prevent the use of new technologies: technical choices, local market constraints, but also the cultural and social environment.

Encouraging collaboration between producers can lead to progress (collective investments and work organization) but the risks inherent in liberal markets and in farmers’ changing their traditional methods must also be taken into account. Quite apart from business aspects and satisfaction for the farmers, standards and social and cultural values can also limit their desire to take advantage of innovations and new commercial opportunities.