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SHEEP AND GOAT MILK WHEY: IMPORTANCE FOR SMALL PRODUCERS

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The production of milk from small ruminants in Brazil holds significant economic and social importance and offers competitive advantages over bovine milk due to its superior digestibility and hypoallergenicity. A significant portion of the sheep and goat milk is employed for artisanal production of cheese and other dairy products, allowing the addition of value to small rural products. The breeding of these small ruminants for milk production stands out for requiring a smaller area when compared to the bovine breeding. The artisanal production of cheese generates whey as a co-product, which represents approximately 80% of the milk volume used for cheese making. This whey is commonly used for animal feed or improperly disposed on small properties, due to lack of infrastructure for proper effluent treatment and lack of technical knowledge for reuse. The discarded whey is highly polluting and loses its added value, resulting in financial losses and undesirable environmental impacts. To prevent this scenario, the development of products based on goat and sheep milk whey is a viable alternative to produce new dairy products. Goat and sheep whey are rich sources of high-biological-value proteins with hypoallergenic properties and have significant market potential. Simultaneously, this use is an excellent strategy to increase the income of rural producers and reduce environmental impacts.

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