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As almost 60% of the agricultural area of the Alpine republic are grassland, cattle farming and dairy farming constitute the most important lines of production of agriculture. All in all about 111,000 farms keep about 2.3 million bovine animals.

Milk and animal production are the main sources of income for mountain farmers. Beef production meets 135 percent of the domestic demand.

The small-scaled structure of animal husbandry on average only 20 heads of cattle are kept per farms well as the high share of grassland and mountain grazing guarantee a high-quality beef production of international standing. The observance of rigid provisions for the protection of animal health is another feature of Austrian animal production. These provisions stipulate a kind of animal husbandry which is adapted to the needs of the respective animal species and the individual animal.

An important criterion is "quality instead of quantity." The natural condition of production and the farm-based structure of land ownership are decisive for the fact that extensive livestock farming plays a very important role in Austria. The production structures are manageable, most farmers still know their cows by their names.

In Austria mainly multi-purpose breeds - dairy and beef cattle - are bred. The breed **Simmental** plays a prominent role, almost 86% of the cattle farmers keep **Simmental** with a stock of about 1.9 million head.

Cattle breeding is regulated by strict animal protection laws and is organized by breeders' associations. Apart from the improvement of the dairy performance and the meat performance, quality features such as fertility and longevity are also taken into consideration within the framework of breeding programs.

The natural production conditions - with its exemplary legal provisions Austria has been a pioneer in the field of organic farming within the EU - guarantee a good image of domestic organic farming within t

Total milk production in Austria amounts to 3.2 million tons, 2.3 million of which are delivered by about 74,000 milk suppliers to dairies and cheese dairies. The number of dairy cows is about 700,000 head, the number of suckler cows and nurse cows is about 212,000 head.

In the EU accession treaty Austria was conceded a total national quota of 2,752,000 tons of milk. Furthermore, there are also additional measures for cattle farmers such as a considerable expansion of direct payments in mountainous and less-favored areas, subsidies within the framework of the agri-environmental program and a suckler cow premium.

The direct marketing quota of 367,000 tons (D-quota) within the national guaranteed overall quantity, negotiated in Brussels, makes direct marketing of fresh milk for kindergartens, schools, hospitals and old people's homes more interesting for farmers than before.