

iSAGE Training
3rd-4th December 2019 – York, United Kingdom

Case study: Next Generation Ambassador Programme, UK

Stefano Orsini, Lindsay Whistance

The Organic Research Centre (ORC)



Innovation for Sustainable
Sheep and Goat
Production in Europe



THE ORGANIC
RESEARCH
CENTRE

ELM FARM

The NG Ambassador Programme

- The NG Ambassador Programme is a training programme organised every year since 2014 by the National Sheep Association (NSA) in the UK
- Targeted to young sheep farmers across the UK – 12 successful applicants



NG Ambassador Programme 2018

The NG Ambassador Programme

- Two overarching objectives
 - Develop **competent young farmers who stay in the industry ...**
 - And who then **become ambassadors** for sheep industry and active members of their regional NSA Committee

“Being an NSA NG Ambassador is about strengthening the sheep sector as a whole. Ambassadors are encouraged to share their experiences. This may be joining an NSA regional committee, speaking at farmer meetings, taking on a role within the farming community or getting involved in organising an event” (NSA)



The NG Ambassador Programme

- Throughout the year, there are five intensive delivery sessions each lasting 2-3 days with a mix of lectures, practical sessions, farm walks and site visits
- Themes covered: grassland management, performance recording, health planning, financial management, lamb marketing options and specifications



The case study design

Study questions:

- Has the programme achieved its main goals?
- What can be improved?

Methods used:

- Two focus groups with 2017 and 2018 participants
- Interviews + online survey with ambassadors from previous years
- Interview with the Chief Executive and with the Operations Director at NSA

What has worked...

- More confident in approaching others and asking for land and help, including animal management
- Better knowledge of the industry and the market
- Direct contact with the NSA
- Seeing how others do things, questioning your own methods
- Start for peer-to-peer exchange in the future



What has worked...

“Maybe it [what I learnt from the programme] is more about how you see things. Sheep farming is not only about sheep, it is also about farm management, finances, try to make a balance between external and farm resources”

“We’re responsible for passing it on to friends”

“If you understand that nutrition and grassland management go hand in hand, you are probably going to improve the diets, which is important to prevent disease and improve productivity”



What do young sheep farmers consider priority areas for the sector?

Priority area	Mode 2018	Mode 2017
Access to land	1	1
Increasing productivity	2	2
Improving genetics	2	4
Marketing and communication	2	5
Access the relevant data	3	5
Training	5	3
...
...
Environment and wildlife	12	12
Boosting the wool sector	13	13

What has worked less well...

“It would be good to see smaller, mixed farms of more relevance to us. I don’t want to farm 1,500-2,000 sheep”

“There is a lot of focus on new technology... This [traditional farming] is how we’ve been farming for so long and it has worked well so we need to promote it”

“There is very little exchange between groups [of different years]”



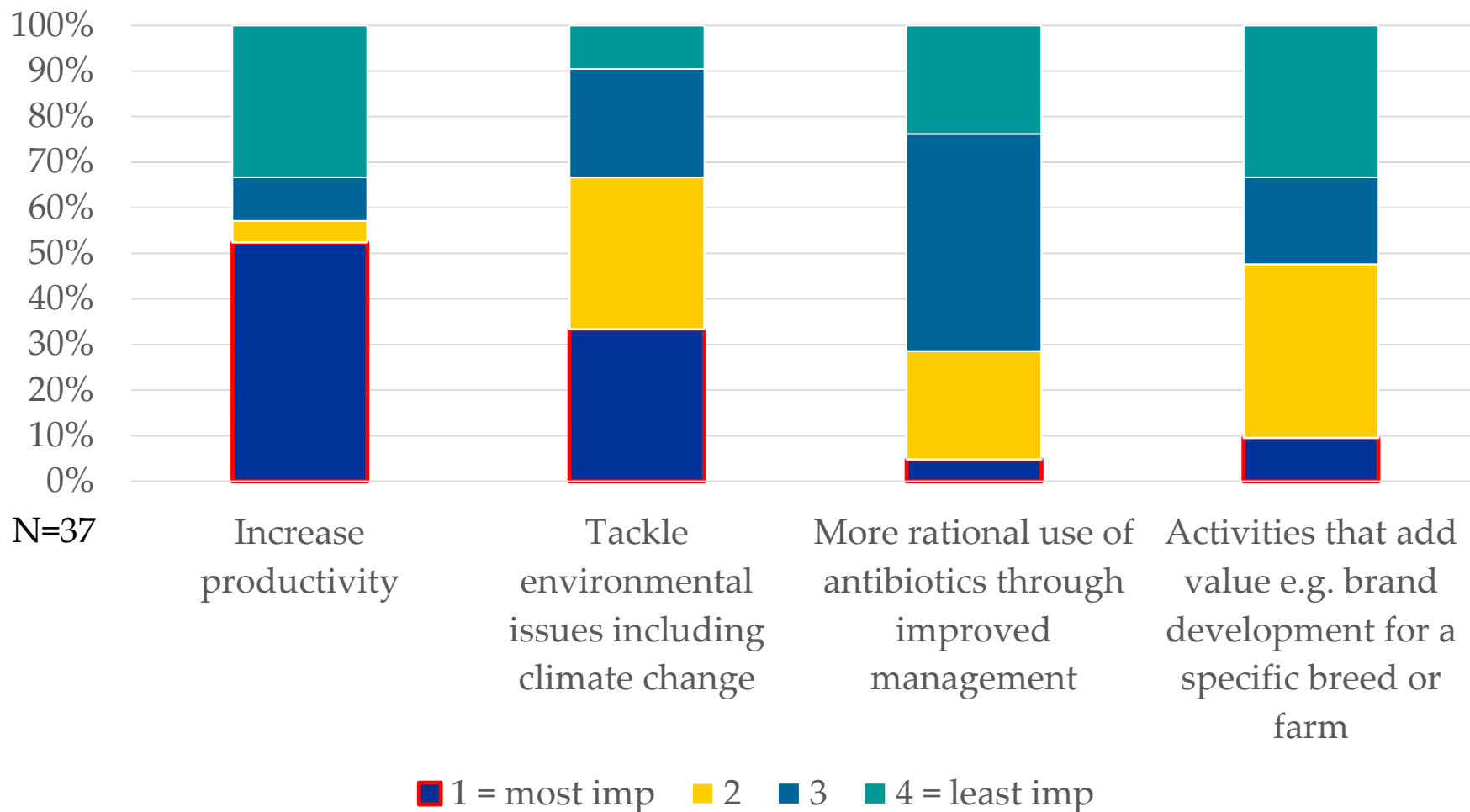
What has worked less well... also in our approach

- Initial plan: doing telephone interviews with ambassadors from previous years, BUT they were not responding...



- Fall-back option: doing a quick online survey

What do young sheep farmers consider priority areas for the sector?



Engagement with the industry out of their own sheep farming enterprise

- 27 out of 58 participants are currently members of their NSA Regional Committees, 2 chairs and 3 vice-chairs
- 10 are potential committee members if pushed
- More than half engage in various NSA initiatives



Thank you!



iSAGE Training
13th- 14th January 2020 – Thessaloniki, Greece

