

## Edinburgh campus status

SRUC Edinburgh campus is closed on Thursday 25 August. Check the following page on Thursday evening for updates: [King's Buildings campus status page. \(http://www.sruc.ac.uk/kb\)](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/kb).



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A team of researchers from Scotland's Rural College is contributing to iSAGE, a new multi-million pound EU-funded research project aiming to future proof our sheep and goat farming industry.

The iSAGE project has been awarded nearly £6 million (€7 million) by the EU's Horizon 2020 fund. It will assess the key factors which could impact the sector over the coming decades, such as climate change, and consumer preferences. It will then develop tools to help sheep and goat producers adapt to and thrive through the predicted changes.



SRUC and its UK project partners - AHDB, the National Sheep Association and the Organic Research Centre - are part of a consortium involving 28 partners from France, Finland, Spain, Italy, and Turkey, coordinated by the School of Veterinary Medicine, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. The focus for the SRUC team will be on creating practical breeding goals and tools for the sheep and goat sector in both Britain and across Europe.

SRUC's Professor Georgios Banos explains: "We want to ensure the sustainability of the sector in the long term. The only way to do that is to look at what the future could bring and help farmers prepare and adapt to those conditions."

"The project will look at how our climate and pastures might change, how consumer and farmer attitudes and preferences could develop and then design programmes which will ensure we can breed animals best suited to those conditions."

It is predicted that in Scotland and the UK the climate could be milder and wetter compared to Mediterranean countries which could see hotter and drier conditions. Another key difference is that here sheep are mainly bred for meat and wool, while in southern Europe sheep milk and cheese is far more popular.

Georgios says: "Different countries and environments require different types of animals. If, for example, we do have more wet weather in the UK, we could see more parasites on our pastures which means grazing animals will need to have stronger resistance to diseases they carry. Elsewhere however, if animals are living in hot, dry conditions, they will need to be bred to cope with heat stress."

"Of course, we need to map consumer tastes and how they may change," he comments. "If the trend for leaner meat continues, that will need to be incorporated, but we will also have to consider the nutritional value of the product, considering for example the appropriate fatty acid composition"

The first year of the project will be in two distinct phases. The first will assess the current position in terms of the sheep and goat farming sector across Europe, while the second phase will focus on mapping the potential changes in terms of weather, pastures, and the markets.

The team will then move on to analysing data from over 2.5 million animals to identify the specific traits required for the ideal future sheep and goat breeds.

The project will run until 2020, when the researchers hope to be able to provide farmers across the UK and Europe with the genetic information needed to create sheep and goats best suited for the future.

More articles in the [news archive \(http://www.sruc.ac.uk/news/archive\)](http://www.sruc.ac.uk/news/archive).