



Innovation for Sustainable  
Sheep and Goat  
Production in Europe

## iSAGE Final Conference Conclusions



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## Final project conference

The final conference of the project was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February in Brussels. The presentations from the conference are available on the project website at

<https://www.isage.eu/final-conference/>





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## Main conclusions from the presentations

### *Trends in the European Sheep and Goat sector- Production and Consumption - challenges to the sector*

*Georgios Arsenos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)*

- The main problem of the sector is low income despite heavy reliance on subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Re-direction of subsidies under CAP towards public goods (GHG, Biodiversity, animal welfare and rural livelihoods) need also to ensure profitability of the sector to enable 'green' policies to be implemented
- There is poor uptake of innovations mainly as result of disconnection with profit and relative education
- Age structure and lack of new entrants is a major threat for the future
- Sheep and goat systems have shown remarkable resilience and adaptability over Millenia

### *Recommendations for improving the sustainability of the Sheep and Goat sector: iSAGE tool box for making decisions on farm*

*Marion Johnson (Organic Research Centre, UK)*

- Any approaches to sustainability must be holistic, considering social wellbeing, economic resilience, environmental integrity and governance
- Before decisions are made on the sustainability or otherwise of an enterprise, or part of an enterprise **the assessment being used**, and questions being asked must be understood
- The holistic sustainability of sheep and goat farms across Europe varies with climate zone and type of enterprise and varies within typologies
- The iSAGE toolbox – [Sageguard.net](https://www.sageguard.net) - allows farmers (1) to undertake a simple and quick sustainability assessment of their farm (Signposts to sustainability (2) to find information as to how to make changes to their business (Sageguard). An offline resource is also available Sageguard cards.





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*Consumer acceptance and willingness-to-pay of sheep/goat products: Recommendations for marketing & segmentation with cross-country examples*

*Raffaele Zanoli, (UNIVPM, Italy)*

- Boost knowledge and innovation systems (advisory, knowledge clubs, etc.)
- Facilitate supply chain collaboration (cooperatives or so) to allow investments in processing and marketing innovations
- Become antifragile through S.I.M.B.A.
  - Segmentation
  - Innovation
  - (More) Marketing
  - Branding
  - Appearance

*Enhancing Capacity in the Sector: Web-based learning*

*Cledwyn Thomas (EAAP)*

Face to face training reaches only a limited audience. iSAGE has produced web based material for wider dissemination to improve capacity

Material covers the 5 main topic areas addressed by the project.

- Environment and Sustainability
- Impact of climate change
- Role of genetics/genomics to overcome challenges
- Participatory research and innovation adoption
- Assessing consumer needs and new product development





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21 presentations are freely accessible through <https://www.isage.eu/interactive-e-learning-presentations/>

## *Impacts of climate change, potential adaptations and assessment of the role of small ruminants on mitigating climate change*

*Agustin del Prado (BC3, Spain)*

- Impacts on small ruminant systems can be severe in some areas in Europe
- Climate policies should include tailored adaptation strategies
- European sheep and goats have not caused additional warming to the atmosphere in the last decades from direct GHG emissions.
- Any strategy towards climate neutrality should consider separating methane from long-lived GHG emissions and account for SOC
- GHG reductions at farm level can provide great climate benefits in comparison with meat from other species

## *Optimal breeding strategies to enhance sustainability and profitability; recommendations and guidelines for the European sheep and goat farming sector.*

*Georgios Banos (SRUC, UK)*

- Selective breeding is one of the means to address current and future challenges
- Failing to consider animal resilience is suboptimal
- Breed for most suitable animals for each environment
- New tools, new knowledge are best achieved from multi actor collaboration
- Industry/stakeholder uptake achieved through supporting decision-making

## *Future challenges and innovative solutions for the sheep and goat sector: Strategies for re-designing small ruminant farming systems in Europe.*

*Alexandros Theodoridis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)*





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- The future of the sheep and goat sector lies on the adoption of best practices, new technologies and innovations which will improve its resilience and sustainability and mitigate dependence on public support and direct payment schemes.
- Feeding, breeding and reproduction practices, web applications and gadgets and product marketing strategies are render farmers to utilize efficiently available resources.
- Research/extension service programs aiming at overcoming the socioeconomic and structural constrains that prevent farmers' acceptance and uptake of innovations at farm level will have greater impact on innovation uptake than investing in the development of new innovations.
- Extensive and semi-extensive farming systems appear to face the socio-economic constrains more than intensive systems
- Innovation strategies should be adjusted to countries, regions and farming systems specific features.
- Balanced relationships between value chain actors and a strong vertical value chain integration in inter-branch organizations will facilitate the adoption of innovative practices in products development and marketing.
- Need for investigating the optimal feeding strategy in sheep and goat farms
- IT technologies will be fundamental in the professionalization of the sector in the future and their efficient adoption requires modern, large size farms with skilled workers and high investments on machinery and buildings.
- Farmers' training is the key to improve sector's sustainability and working towards this direction is essential.
- Participatory farmer-group training programs have a high potential to develop a more knowledgeable and competent farming workforce.



# Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe

*Round Table Discussion and Conclusions - Policy implications and future implementation*

*Chair: Cledwyn Thomas (EAAP)*

The main conclusions were

- Poor uptake of innovation in the sector due to demographics. Need to encourage new entrants to overcome
- Sector has heavy reliance on subsidy and CAP is changing towards public goods (environment, welfare, rural livelihoods). The sector needs to meet this challenge but these changes cannot be implemented without enhancing the profitability of the sector
- New calculations/ metrics indicated that the sector has little or no impact on global warming. This message needs to be conveyed to policy makers.
- The sector is behind the game line in developing and accessing new markets.. To counteract this required more collaboration and better signals within the chain (€)
- Declining consumption is a major issue and a particular problem with young consumers. New product development, consumer education and improved marketing is required to overcome

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