



## Press release #4

### **EuroSheep visits Greece!**

EuroSheep is an EU-funded thematic network to encourage knowledge exchange between European sheep sector stakeholders on 2 main topics: nutrition and health management, based on the industry's current needs.

The fourth EuroSheep Transnational WorkShop took place from 22<sup>nd</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 in Thessaloniki, Greece. A total of 75 participants attended from the 8 partner countries namely Ireland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Turkey and UK.

The aim of the 4<sup>th</sup> TNWS was to present tips & tricks from each country, corresponding to the main needs and challenges for the management of health and nutrition of dairy and meat sheep identified during the first step of the project. Tips and tricks are practises, developed by farmers for farmers, which can easily be implemented on sheep farms to improve flock profitability and/or labour efficiency.

The EuroSheep Transnational Workshop began with two presentations on the Greek sheep sector, by Dr Dimitrios Tsiokos (Research institute of Animal Science- ELGO Dimitra) and Mrs Antonia Papadaki (Hellenic Milk Organization – ELGO Dimitra). Key elements on the evolution of sheep holdings and population figures, the diversity of production systems and breeds with different levels of production and adaptations to specific environments, which produce a range of high quality dairy products (PDO cheeses, other dairy products) and lamb meat were presented. The importance of sheep farming in mountainous and semi-mountainous areas of Greece was also stressed. Over 710,000 tonnes of sheep milk are produced annually, with feta cheese being the main product of dairy sheep flock. Sheep meat is popular in Greece with over 3 million sheep being slaughtered annually and approximately 400,000 European sheep imported for slaughter, to satisfy national needs.

A discussion followed, leading to the opportunity for the members of each delegation to watch video presentations of the tips and tricks from each of the other countries and to discuss with the representatives from the group that proposed the specific practice. Each network facilitator presented their 'tips and tricks' to the delegates from the 7 other countries. There was strong interest from participants in this process, which helped interaction and communication between delegations. Delegates then had the opportunity to discuss and vote for their favourite from the workshop. Three countries voted the footbath tips developed by Ireland as their favourite, while the ewe restrainer (Ireland) and metallic rack system for sheep hurdles (France) were also popular. Table 1 shows the top 3 selections from each country and all 'tips and tricks' will be available to view on the EuroSheep website shortly.

Table 1. Tips and tricks selected by each country and the country that presented them

Rank	Country							
	France	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Spain	Turkey	UK
1	Creep grazing gate (Ireland)	Ewe restrainer (Ireland)	Ewe restrainer (Ireland)	Electric blanket for lambs (Turkey)	Footbath tips (Ireland)	Metallic rack system for sheep hurdles (France)	Footbath tips (Ireland)	Footbath tips (Ireland)
2	Solar powered water pump (Ireland)	Hygiene of artificial rearing machine (Spain)	Prevention of diseases through management newborn lambs (Spain)	Metallic Rack system for sheep hurdles (France)	Is the shed well ventilated? (Spain)	Sheep Skate (France)	Inoculation of Sulla's seed with Rhizobium sullae (Italy)	Portable water trough (Ireland)
3	Teach the sheep respecting the electric fence (Spain)	Sheep Skate (France)	Time saving and efficient post-dipping practice (Italy)	Use of a probe-hygrometer equipped with a plate for measuring the forage moisture content in the windrow (Italy)	Prevention of diseases through proper management of newborn lambs (Spain)	Visual appraisal of sheep faeces to identify unbalanced diets (Italy)	Record and review self-evaluation checklist for daily milking parlour maintenance inspection (Greece)	Solar powered water pump (Ireland)

The first day meeting came to an end with a presentation of the Operational Group LESPER (North Aegean) by Dr. F. Samartzi (Veterinary research Institute, ELGO DIMITRA), on the establishment of a Lesvos rams' semen collection facility, for Lesvos sheep breeders. The Lesvos sheep breed has high milk production ( $223 \pm 70$  kg in  $163 \pm 34$  days average milk yield), given that it is well adapted to the poor pasture and the hot and dry climate of their native island, representing a sustainable sheep breeding activity in Lesvos and a good choice for areas of similar harsh environmental conditions.

This was followed by a presentation of the GALAELASS Cooperative of Ellassona by the Managing Director, Mr. A. Gougoulas. The cooperative was established 10 years ago and has 175 breeders that produce 8,500 tonnes of goat and sheep milk and a turnover that exceeds €12,000,000. The price of their members' milk and lambs is negotiated through the cooperative, and feed and milk replacer is purchased in bulk, ensuring the best possible price for their members. The second day of the Eurosheep Transnational Workshop consisted of technical visits to Livadi and Dolihi Ellassonas. The first technical visit was to Livadi village at an altitude of 1200m in the foothills of Mount Olympus that has a long tradition of sheep and goat farming. There the Voskos Livestock Cooperative welcomed the EUROSHEEP team and the President of the Cooperative, Mr. A. Antoniou presented the goals of the

Cooperative and provided information on sheep farming in the area. A presentation of the Cooperative's cheeses and a cheese tasting at the Voskos Dairy House followed.



*Chios breed ewes and lambs in Dolihi Farm*

In the afternoon, a visit to the Chios breed sheep farm of Mr. K. Gogos, president of the Chios sheep breed association, in Dolihi took place. The farm breeds 500 Chios ewes averaging 350 kg of milk annually. The breed is semi-fat tailed and native to the Greek island of Chios, while milk is supplied to a local dairy house. Regarding feeding practices, adult ewes are offered 1.5kg of concentrate, 1.7kg of corn silage and 0.7kg of alfalfa hay daily, distributed manually in feeders. The farm is self-sufficient in harvested forage (cultivating 10ha of alfalfa hay and 3ha of corn for silage). Barley, wheat, soyabean meal, bran and vitamin and mineral premix are purchased. Communal rangelands or other natural grasslands are not used, but 12ha of rented irrigated pastures of ryegrass and alfalfa are utilized for grazing. The participants also had the opportunity to be informed and discuss the genetic improvement program applied on the farm with the Head of the Center for Animal Genetic Resources, Mr. A. Hondos.

The practical and technical solutions gathered from all partner countries covering various aspects of nutrition and health management of dairy and meat sheep farms have been translated into the languages of partner countries and are accessible through the Eurosheep network website ([www.eurosheep.network](http://www.eurosheep.network)).

Currently, the acceptance of the proposed solutions by farmers is being evaluated. These results will be discussed at the next Transnational Workshop, which will be held in Turkey the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2022.



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