



Press release #5

EUROSHEEP exchanges end-user assessments and cost-benefit analyses of the most successful Best Practices.

The thematic network EuroSheep continues the dynamic knowledge exchange between European sheep sector stakeholders that was initiated by SheepNet. The knowledge and expertise exchanges in EuroSheep focus on 2 main topics: nutrition and health management, based on the industry's current needs.

EuroSheep, which is funded by the EU H2020, started in January 2020 and will last for 42 months. Eight countries are involved, namely Ireland, United Kingdom, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Greece and Turkey, representing 80% of sheep production in Europe.

Eurosheep recently held its 5th Transnational Workshop, from the 23rd to 24th November 2022 in Bursa, Turkey. Up to 70 farmers, advisers and researchers from the 8 EuroSheep countries joined in.

Bursa is a large city in northwest Turkey, lying in the foothills of roughly 2,500 m-high Mount Uludağ near the Sea of Marmara. Its main territory's interest lies with many sheep breeding farms as well as dairy and meat products.

The workshop had a full program and mainly focused on discussions relating to the EuroSheep identified best practices that could answer farmers' needs. Cost-benefit analyses of the most successful best practices and corresponding end-user assessments realised in countries adopting them were discussed by all participants.

The workshop started with the presentation of the Turkish sheep sector, which is one of the main agricultural sectors in Turkey. Sheep farming is found in all regions of Turkey with a national breeding stock of more than 45,000,000 heads with 380,000 tons of sheep meat produced in 2021, mainly from local breeds. Turkey's annual sheep milk production is 1.2 million tonnes. More than 90% of sheep's milk production is used to make cheeses, most of them are craft products. Some have a Geographical Indication (e.g., Ezine White cheese, Dicle tulum Cheese). The workshop's participants had also the chance to taste a selection of the most appreciated sheep cheeses.

After the main presentations, interactive work between the countries' delegations was carried out, with discussions on cost-benefits analyses and end-user assessments of some the proposed best practices implemented in the different countries. A total of 12 best practices were discussed, allowing for lively interactions and exchanges of ideas between the participants.

The 2nd day of the workshop was dedicated to field visits. The first visit was a dairy- intensive farm of 500 adult ewes and 250 replacement lambs with a complete indoor system. The farmers used the improved exotic Lacaune breed with a total lactation period of 210 days and an average lactation milk yield of 380 lt. The milk is delivered to a cheese factory in Bursa. The distribution of feed is also completely automatic, and, although they produced essential amounts of alfalfa hay, they were not self-sufficient, as the sheep diet includes alfalfa hay, concentrate + toxin binder. All concentrate feed is purchased, including vitamins and minerals. No specific health problems were highlighted. The farmers follow well-defined vaccination and parasite control programs The 2nd farm visit was meat-oriented with an intensive system. The stock was of 700 adult ewes and 250 replacement lambs. The main breeds were Karacabey Merino and Ile de France. The average live weight at slaughter was 50-52 kg. The mating age was on average 12 months old . The average productivity was 1.8 lamb/ewe with a lamb mortality of 3.66%. No specific health problems were highlighted. The farmers follow well-defined vaccination and parasite control programs. These two visits sparked many questions amongst the participants and allowed for many exchanges.

The participants also visited the TAGEM Sheep Breeding Research Institute of Bandirma. The Turkish researchers at the Institute presented their most updated studies in the fields of breeding and genetics. The participants could also appreciate the breeding flocks of the most important Turkish breeds of sheep with a special emphasize for the Karacabey Merino breed that is the result of the cross-breeding, started in 1934, of the German Meat Merinos with the local breed Kivircik (Curly). Finally, the last visit was of a Kangal Shepherd dogs breeder, which was unusual for most of the participants and brought many questions. In that farm both Anatolian Shepherd dogs and Kangal Shepherd dogs were bred and sold to many countries of the world.

Eurosheep will hold its final seminar in France on 3-4 May 2023.

The planned events are open to all countries, so do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to take part or be informed.

Eurosheep will continue to work on identifying and filling the gaps in knowledge for management of sheep nutrition and health.

All Eurosheep best practices are available in all the languages of the project on www.eurosheep.network.



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