



Homestead Goat Notes – Can We Produce More Goats in Union County

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The USA was a net exporter of goat meat before 1990. Export of this product stopped because of an increase in demand within the county. Consequently the US became a goat meat importing country. For example, the USA imported approximately 750,000 goat carcasses in 2006. More than ninety (90) percent of this import came from Australia. Although the US Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Services reported approximately 2.7 million meat goats on farms in 2007, American producers were unable to meet the local demand for goat meat. The increase in demand for meat goat is driven by a growing ethnic population with preference for goat meat. They are mainly Hispanics, Asian and people from the Middle East.

What does this mean for goat producers or potential goat producers in Union County? The demand for goat meat is projected to remain strong because the ethnic population is expected to grow especially the Hispanics. This is a good opportunity for farms with goats, but it is important that producers minimize their production cost without adversely affecting production efficiencies so as to compete with the imported frozen product. One of the advantages producers have is consumers prefer fresh goat meat instead of the frozen product. Additionally producers need to understand the market so as to add value to the goat they produced. Please see below a list of initiative that can add value to the meat produced on your farm:

1. Consider producing and selling goats when their meat consumptions increase e.g. during Easter and Ramadan (Muslim holiday).
2. Use handling and harvesting procedures e.g. Muslims prefer Halal and Jews prefer kosher techniques.
3. Organic raised goats and/or goats produced under an on-farm food safety program.
4. Direct marketing by arranging to have animals slaughtered, cut, wrapped and delivered in accordance with consumers' request or preference.
5. Build a list of clients who return to purchase you goat or goat meat based on customers' satisfaction and loyalty.

Goat production presents a good opportunity for farms to target the markets mentioned above and to diversify their farm products through adding value. Do not forget to keep an eye on your production cost, as they determine your bottom line. If you need help in learning how to calculate your production costs and bottom line, Union County Extension Agent can help you set up an Excel spreadsheet on your computer, and show you how to use it. Please call 386-496-4264.