



Goat Industry Profile

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Goats have been utilized as a domesticated animal for centuries. Their uses range from fiber production to milk and dairy products and meat production. Worldwide estimates put goats at nearly 460 million head. Goat associations in the U.S. estimate in this country there are two million goats raised for fiber production, one million are used for milk and cheese production and another million are being raised for meat consumption.

The market demand for goat meat in the United States is approximately 25 million pounds. Domestic consumption is centered in areas with significant Hispanic, Muslims, and various Caribbean and Asian markets where goat meat is a traditional staple. Goat meat (Chevon) is rarely seen in mainstream grocery stores because of limited, highly variable and inconsistent supplies as well as a limited marketing base of consumers. Most of the recent growth in the goat industry has occurred in Texas near high market demand areas. Recent USDA data shows that nearly 40 percent or 1.5 million goats for all purposes are located in Texas. To meet this demand, nearly half of the consumed meat products are imported from Australia and New Zealand.

Current trends in domestic production growth are predicted to continue. This growth is a result of producers becoming better at meeting the needs of the ethnic markets that have specific seasonal expectation for their goat meat and dairy products. Meat quality of goats has improved dramatically since the 1990s when the first true meat goat, the South African Boer, was imported into the United States. However, the introduction of this true meat breed has elevated one of the industry's biggest problems. Co-mingling of meat type goats with dairy and fiber type goats has created difficulties in managing the processing and marketing of the resulting highly variable meat carcasses.

Dairy goat milk and goat cheese continue to see slow steady growth trends as consumers are becoming aware of the higher protein and lower cholesterol levels found in the products. Goat milk is also gaining favor with consumers who have milk allergies. Currently U.S. production of goat milk and cheese is approximately 24 tons and 600 tons respectively.

The major dairy goat breeds include alpine, lamancha, nubian, oberhasli, saanen, toggenburg. All of these breeds are capable of producing more than 2,000 pounds of milk per year. Even with

one million estimated dairy goats producing fluid milk and cheese the United States imports more than 50 percent of the dairy goat cheese products consumed, most of that coming from France.

Some of the major obstacles for continued growth in the industry are the ability of the industry to provide consumers with a consistent quality and supply of product. It will be imperative for the industry to develop an effective marketing strategy to strengthen existing market share in specialty food shops and/or lower prices to move it from specialty food shelves to mainstream grocery shelves.