

## A new role for goats in the global food chain

Producers in emerging countries want the production systems and genetics that are already available in places like Canada

BY COURTNEY DENARD Ontario Farmer Jan.28, 2014

Elmwood - Ontario's goat industry could play a major role in feeding the world's increasing population if it gets on board with emerging markets. Bob Lang of Rural Routes International recently spoke about the importance of goat production in the global food chain at the 2014 Grey Bruce Farmers Week Goat Day.

Lang said that with 40 per cent more people on planet earth by 2050, communities throughout the world are going to need good quality food and goat meat and dairy products should be a part of that supply. Taking a look at the data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, the number of goats in production on a world scale sat around 771 million head in 2001. By 2011, this number had risen to 924.2 million, an increase of 20 per cent over just one decade.

In 2001, 149 million head were used in global goat milk production producing 13.1 million tonnes of milk. Ten years later, 187 million head were being used, delivering 17 million tonnes of milk to the world market. "Goat milk is preferable over cattle milk in many populations as well as in certain diets such as those with an intolerance to lactose," Lang said.

When it comes to meat, 320 million goats produced 3.8 million tonnes of meat in 2001. By 2011, 430 million goats were producing 5.3 million tonnes of meat.

Further data reveal that 75 per cent of the world's goat population is located outside of North America and the European Union in countries like India, Indonesia and China.

So what do the numbers mean for the local Ontario goat producer? Well, Lang explained that producers in emerging countries want the production systems and genetics that are already available in places like Canada. "This means people are beginning to recognize that goats are very valuable and it's a great opportunity for Canada to supply the world industry," he said. "People will gravitate towards Canada (or wherever else) to get their hands on the latest technology available."

One of the things that goat producers in developing markets are looking for is an animal with the ability to survive and goats are the perfect fit. Lang said that goats are seen as both highly adaptable and highly durable in

terms of what they can stand. Goats will perform in winter- like conditions as well as sub- tropical environments. They adapt very quickly and do very well in a variety of climate changes. (photos, B.Payne, Noli Nolasco)





Goats also offer farmers in developing countries a good return on investment. “Traditionally speaking people have said that goats are a poor man’s dairy cow but that’s not the case. Goats are a viable livestock enterprise for people all over the world,” said Lang. Simply put, landless farmers in the developing world can manage goats a lot easier than other



ruminants. This means there is a pretty clear marketing opportunity to export Canadian genetics throughout the world.

Lang said that with only 80,000 dairy goats in production in Canada, Canadian farmers are going to need to look at other opportunities to find ways to improve their own return on investment. Selling genetics globally is a way of doing this.

Delivering specialized products to emerging markets is another way for Canada's industry to improve profit margins. For example, almost 66 per cent of the world's goat meat supply is currently produced under a specific religious orientation such as Halal or Kosher. Lang said that by 2050, the world would have about 4 billion people with a religious orientation other than Christianity that requires their food to be produced under guidelines like these. He told Ontario farmers not be fearful of this but to look at it as a marketing opportunity instead.



