

Task force development to provide education and leadership to the meat goat industry

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Keywords: meat goats, leadership, education

Introduction Chevon is the most frequently consumed meat in the world. Meat goat production is increasing because of the economic value of goats as efficient converters of low-quality forages into quality meat, milk, and hide products for specialty markets of health conscious, ethnic, and faith based consumers. Estimates of national marketing indicate that U.S. meat goat production is nearly 500,000 head less than demand. Where resources are limited, meat goats can be raised efficiently and profitably on small farms, so the country could become self-sufficient in meat goats.

Engaging resources Meat goats, as an enterprise, did not have supporting infrastructure such as a commodity based organisation, university sponsored education and research, or well known marketing channels. To address these needs, a task force was formed and directed by personnel of The Ohio State University Extension and consists of producers, multi-disciplinary faculty, ethnic and faith based community leaders, other state universities and colleges, allied industry, and other interested persons. The mission of the *Ohio Meat Goat Industry Task Force* is to enhance the production and marketing of meat goats through education and practical experience. The objectives of the *Ohio Meat Goat Industry Task Force* are to: 1) identify and access emerging ethnic markets having a preference for goat meat in their diet, 2) develop producer networks, alliances and/or cooperatives to meet the demands of emerging markets, and 3) provide leadership for education and research.

Education Extension members of the task force have developed the *Ohio Meat Goat Production and Budgeting Fact Sheet* as a guide for establishing this value added enterprise. Agents have designed and conducted regional workshops, seminars, and on-farm tours to transfer knowledge to 1200 participants. Education, production, and marketing topics are discussed in the *Buckeye Meat Goat Newsletter*. The website <http://south.osu.edu/cle/news.htm> has been developed to enhance the exchange of production and marketing information.

Building leadership capacity Leadership development has been a primary objective of the Ohio Meat Goat Task Force. Producer members have been instrumental in the formation of the *Buckeye Meat Goat Association*. This group has developed by-laws and articles of incorporation to promote and market commercial meat goat in Ohio. Three producer-driven marketing networks have been established. Recent group marketing efforts have increased average revenue by \$10.00/100kg and reduced marketing cost by \$3.00/head. Task force members are developing leadership among emerging ethnic and faith-based consumers as a social approach to building infrastructure of the meat goat industry for market development of fresh chevon. This foundation infrastructure will create value-added opportunities for refugees in our urban centres and small farms in Ohio. Additionally, economic development in the creation of agricultural jobs will do much for community development in the rural/urban interface.

Developing an industry The task force has received \$63,000 in Research and Extension grants to conduct on going feasibility studies of ethnic markets, Ohio's processing infrastructure, and development of farmer/consumer cooperatives. On-farm meat goat research encompasses breed comparisons, forage utilisation, and developing benchmark data. Progress continues in the ability to market a fresh and safe product directly to emerging ethnic and faith-based consumer populations to capture the most value. Behavioural changes include an increase in farmers producing for emerging markets, an increase in communication between producers and markets, and coordination for consumers, retailers, and producers through functional marketing partnerships that fit the social and ecological paradigm.

Conclusion The Ohio Meat Goat Task Force is a model for engaging resources and building leadership capacity to generate income and enhance sustainability of farm businesses. The collaboration of faculty, producers, allied industry, and ethnic cultures combines expertise and leadership with applied experience to foster entrepreneurship. Research has identified ethnic market preferences, processing infrastructure and capacity, and economically viable production systems. Education provides farm businesses capacity to build leadership, share knowledge, and network resources to capture value-added marketing opportunities.