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Article

# Past, Present, and Future Perspectives of Small Ruminant Dairy Research <sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The objectives of this paper are to review small ruminant dairy research in relation to the dimensions of the dairy goat and dairy sheep industries in the United States and the world. At least 10 countries depend on goats and sheep for between 30 to 76% of total milk supply. Leading among developed countries is Greece producing 178 kg milk per person per year with 61% from sheep and goats. Most developing countries need research, extension service, and public support to improve apparent productivity of goats and sheep. Domestic supply from all milk sources is <100 kg/person per year, and annual apparent yields average <100 kg of milk/goat, <50 kg of milk/sheep, which makes supplies of animal protein and calcium from domestic sources very low. Statistical data on goat and sheep production for United States are not available. The small population of DHIA tested US dairy goats averaged in recent years >700 kg of milk/goat per year,

and some dairy sheep breeds may produce as much as 650 kg/yr. The need for more milk availability appears to be reflected in the dramatic increases of dairy goat populations during the last 20 yr: 52% for the world, 56% for developing, 17% for developed countries, while sheep populations decreased by 3% for the world, by 6% in developed, but increased 14% in developing countries. Research has been sparse on the unique qualities of goat and sheep milk compared with cow milk. Much development work by various agencies has been devoted to reducing mortality and improving feed supplies in harmony with the environment; this work is mostly published in proceedings of scientific meetings, often not in English. Results have shown in many cases that dairy goats and dairy sheep can be very profitable, even in developing countries with difficult climate and topographical conditions.



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## Key words

dairy goats; dairy sheep; goat milk; sheep milk

## Abbreviation key

**EAAP**, European Association for Animal Production; **FAO**, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome); **GTZ**, Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (Bonn); **HPI**, Heifer Project International (Little Rock); **IAEA**, International Atomic Energy Agency (Vienna); **ICAR**, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (New Delhi); **IDF**, International Dairy Federation (Brussels); **IDRC**, International Development Research Center (Ottawa); **IFS**, International Foundation for Science (Stockholm); **IGA**, International Goat Association; **ILCA**, International Livestock Center for Africa (Addis Ababa); **ILRI**, International Livestock Research Institute (Nairobi); **INRA**, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (Paris); **ITOVIC**, Institut Technique de Elevage Ovin et Caprin (Paris); **RDA**, recommended daily allowances; **SR-CRSP**, Small Ruminant-Collaborative Research Support Program Title XII; **USAID**, United States Agency for International Development (Washington, DC.)

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