

IDEA

Niche and Ethnic Markets
for Goat Meat in Illinois

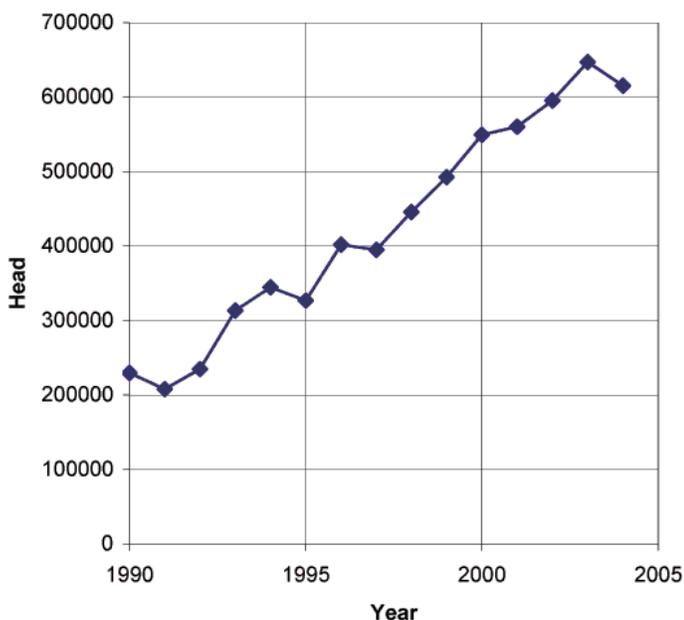
Initiative for the Development of Entrepreneurs in Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

The demand for goat meat in the United States is growing. Meat goat slaughter at federally inspected plants surpassed 100,000 head in 1984, but numbers have climbed to over 600,000 in 2003 and 2004 (NASS). The conventional goat distribution chain can

**Goats Slaughtered in
Federally Inspected Plants**



have many links, and each link represents a service that must be paid for, thus potentially reducing the portion of the final retail price that goes in the farmer's pocket. In recent years, many farmers and food producers have begun to see the advantage in marketing their products directly to someone further down the supply chain. For growers, the idea of eliminating middlemen and switching roles from 'price-taker' to 'price-maker' is attractive. However, each link that is bypassed also represents a service that the farmer must be prepared to provide or contract for personally. Promotion, advertising, transport, and delivery often become the farmer's responsibility, and one must decide whether or not the benefits of direct marketing outweigh the costs in time and management.

DIRECT TO CONSUMER

Meat goat growers in Illinois are in a unique position because their products often fit a number of appealing descriptors (e.g. free-range, pastured, natural, low fat, humanely-raised, etc.) that could add value to the product in a direct consumer market, but goat meat is less likely to be traditional fare in the majority of Illinois households. Thus, meat goat growers may want to focus their direct marketing efforts on the most receptive audiences. Much of the increasing demand for goat meat nationwide is motivated by growing ethnic populations. Hispanic/Latino populations (especially those of Mexican descent), Caribbean populations, and Muslim populations are generally considered to be the largest ethnic consumers of goat meat (Gipson). Some Mediterranean and Asian peoples also eat goat. When it comes to looking for ethnic consumers, the Chicago metro area is a major resource for Illinois goat producers.

Demand for goat meat is thought to be relatively inelastic, that is, demand will hold steady despite changes in price, because its consumption is tightly interwoven with maintenance of ethnic traditions and practices (Pinkerton et al.). Both religious holidays and non-religious ethnic celebrations often call for goat meat. Meeting demand for such celebrations requires some pre-planning. Each holiday may call for a different size or age of goat, or happen on a different date each year, so producers must time their breeding by back-calculating from the target date of delivery. Producers ought to be aware of the demand that surrounds these holidays and may choose to target one or more holiday markets specifically, but if such schedul-

Market	Preferences
Hispanic/Mexican	milk-fed cabrito kids at 15-35 lbs live weight
Caribbean	young, smelly bucks weighing 60-80 lbs live; also cubed, bone-in pieces
Chinese/Korean	quality goats 60-80 lbs live weight (demand is during the colder months)
Somalian	35-40 lbs dressed carcass weight (livers and kidneys may also be desired)
Italian	kids 20-25 lbs live weight
Greek	kids 30-40 lbs live weight

Sources: SheepGoatMarketing.info, Buckeye Meat Goat Newsletter

Holiday	Religion	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Type of Goat Wanted
Eid al Adha begins (Festival of Sacrifice)	Muslim	21-Jan	10-Jan	31-Dec	20-Dec	9-Dec*	29-Nov*	yearlings with one set of adult teeth and blemish-free (no animals with broken horns, broken skin, castration, or docked tails)
Western/Roman Easter	Christian	27-Mar	16-Apr	8-Apr	23-Mar	12-Apr	4-Apr	fleshy, milk-fed kids 3 months old or younger with light colored meat and live weight 20-50 lbs (with 25-30 lbs considered optimum)
Eastern/Greek Easter	Orthodox	1-May	23-Apr	8-Apr	27-Apr	19-Apr	4-Apr	similar to Western/Roman Easter, but with an optimum live weight around 35 lbs
Cinco de Mayo (Mexico's Independence Day)	Interfaith	5-May	5-May	5-May	5-May	5-May	5-May	milk-fed cabrito kids at 20-35 lbs live weight
U.S. Independence Day	Interfaith	4-Jul	4-Jul	4-Jul	4-Jul	4-Jul	4-Jul	cabrito or young kids with no more than 1 set of adult teeth
Jamaica's Independence Day	Interfaith	6-Aug	6-Aug	6-Aug	6-Aug	6-Aug	6-Aug	young, smelly bucks 60-80 lbs live weight
Ramadan begins (Month of Fasting)	Muslim	4-Oct	24-Sep	13-Sep	2-Sep	22-Aug	24-Sep	kids with all milk teeth <12 months old; optimum live weight ~60 lbs (but not overly fat); may want head on carcass
Navratra	Hindu	12-Oct	~~~information not yet available~~~					tender male goats, weight depends on number of people to be fed
Eid al Fitr (Ramadan ends)	Muslim	3-Nov	24-Oct	13-Oct	2-Oct	21-Sep	24-Oct	same as for Ramadan
Christmas	Christian	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	milk-fed kids, 18 lbs or more

Sources: SheepGoatMarketing.info at <http://sheepgoatmarketing.info/index.cfm>; Interfaith Calendar at <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org>

ing is not a good fit for a meat goat producer, he or she should become familiar with peoples that make goat meat a regular part of their diet.

MARKETS BY ORIGIN

The Hispanic market for cabrito, or kid goat, is likely to be year-round, especially among Mexican-Americans (Gipson). Hispanics spend 15-20% more of their disposable income on food than the national average and their populations tend to be highly concentrated (Pinkerton et al.). With more than 1.4 million Hispanics, Chicago has the fourth largest Hispanic population among urbanized areas in the continental United States, accounting for 4% of all Hispanics in America. Nearly 75% of these Hispanics are of Mexican origin (American FactFinder). Chicago's population of people with non-Hispanic West Indian ancestry is considerably smaller, lagging especially behind urbanized areas on the eastern seaboard. Nonetheless, Caribbean peoples will often buy older, larger goats that do not have a place in other consumer markets, so targeting them may be worth the effort.

There are a number of free tools available to help growers find these kinds of specific markets. The U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov/>) has a staggering amount of

demographic information for the entire Unites States from Census 2000 built into an online database. Information on population, age, sex, race, income, housing, etc. is searchable by geographic boundaries that range from state to census tract and, with some practice, can be downloaded in map and table form. For those producers looking for consumer markets in Illinois specifically, University of Illinois MarketMaker (<http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>) allows for similar demographic searches on race, income, education, country of birth, and household type with a simpler interface. Outputs will be interactive maps, providing demographic details for each census tract. MarketMaker can then overlay food-related businesses that serve those markets on the maps (including grocers, restaurants, gourmet shops, ethnic shops, farmers markets, and meat markets), providing business details and contact information for each. These resources can help a producer know great detail about a potential market before even traveling there.



Photo: Sweet Victory Farm, Alvin, IL

MARKETS BY RELIGION

Although there is a market for Easter kids among peoples of Christian and Orthodox faiths, Islam has the largest proportion of followers that eat goat. Muslims generally consider goat meat (chevon) a staple food and can be stable buyers even outside of

holiday demand (Gipson). However, their populations and concentrations are not as easily traceable as that of Mexican or Caribbean peoples because their origins are based on common religion, not geography. Since the U. S. Census Bureau does not collect and publish information based on religion, population estimates vary widely and people seeking Muslim concentrations are likely to have better luck locating and contacting religious centers or searching populations by country of origin. Foreign-born Muslims are likely to be from the Middle East or the northern and/or eastern regions of Africa. Producers must also be aware that Islamic law imparts certain requirements for the processing of goats that go above and beyond preferences for carcass size and age.

Many Muslims try to seek out zabiha goat meat that has undergone halal slaughter in accordance with Muslim religious tradition. This type of slaughter is allowed in Illinois under religious exemption and is intended to minimize stress and suffering on the part of the animal. The goat is moved quickly to the place of slaughter and placed in a humane double-railed restraining device or, if the animal is small, held firmly yet comfortably in place by the persons performing the slaughter (Regenstein). The slaughterer faces the animal towards Mecca and recites the appropriate prayer, "Bismillah Allah-u-Akbar," which shows the animal is being slaughtered in the name of God (Mangione). Then, using a perfectly-honed stainless steel slaughter knife, the slaughterer slices the trachea, esophagus, and blood vessels forward of the neck bone in one swift motion (Regenstein). This should provide for quick unconsciousness and near-complete draining of blood. Once the animal is totally insensible, it can be hoisted in order to drain any remaining blood and remove the entrails. In Illinois, it is illegal to hoist the animal live.

SLAUGHTERING CONSIDERATIONS

Some customers, especially Muslims, prefer to perform the goat slaughter themselves in order to ensure appropriate practices and may request that the farmer from whom they purchased the animal make accommodations for this on the farm. However, current regulations in Illinois encourage a more conven-

tional supply chain from farm to final consumer. In Illinois, the owner of a meat animal can only slaughter and butcher that animal on-farm for personal use by immediate family and/or unpaying guests. The meat cannot otherwise change hands by sale, gift, or donation. It is not currently allowable for a person to perform an animal slaughter on another person's farm, unless that property is certified and licensed as a meat processing facility. Therefore, farmers cannot allow customers to slaughter livestock on-farm unless it is equipped, inspected, and licensed as a meat processing facility. Meat animals are sometimes sold "on the hoof" from the farm on a live weight basis and later transported to a licensed processing facility where the meat is picked up by the final consumer. Custom processing services can only be performed for the owner of the animal and, technically, a person in Illinois must be in possession of the animal for 30 days to be considered the owner. The processor is paid separately from the farmer for services rendered.



Photo: Sweet Victory Farm, Alvin, IL

Meat processing facilities licensed by the Bureau of Meat and Poultry Inspection in the Illinois Department of Agriculture come in two forms: Type 1 and Type 2. According to the IDOA, establishments issued a type 1 license shall be permitted to receive live animals and/or poultry and/or meat and poultry products for slaughter and processing, under inspection, by Department Personnel. Meat and/or poultry products that are produced, under inspection, and properly labeled are eligible for sale in Illinois commerce. Only meat that is slaughtered in federal establishments can be sold across state lines. Establishments issued a type 2 license shall be permitted to receive live animals and/or poultry and/or meat and poultry products for slaughter and processing as a service only. Animals and poultry and/or animal and poultry products may be presented for slaughter and/or processing by the owner for the owner's own personal use in his or her household. Meat and/or poultry products processed and/or produced in a type 2 establishment are not eligible for sale in commerce. Type 2 facilities are often called custom processors.

If a producer is targeting Muslim customers, there are special considerations for halal processing in a meat plant situation. Pork is considered haram,

or prohibited for Muslim consumption, so products must be segregated and facilities and equipment must be clean according to Islamic law in order to prevent any possibility of pork products and halal meat commingling. Also, while some Muslims consider animals slaughtered appropriately by a Christian or Jew acceptable for consumption (Stock), others believe that halal slaughter must be performed by a slaughterer of the Muslim faith. It is possible for a licensed facility to accommodate the presence of a customer on the kill floor to make religious recitations or expressions, but, for the sake of liability, meat processors generally will not allow the customer to perform the actual slaughter. Therefore, it may be necessary for the producer to outsource for a Muslim slaughterer from a halal certification agency; one such group that can provide this service in Illinois is IFANCA, the Chicago-based Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (773-283-3708). Producers should contact the processing facility first in order to determine their willingness to provide for halal slaughter, if they have a preferred contract slaughterer, and if they require a minimum number of animals.



Photo: Sweet Victory Farm, Alvin, IL

DIRECT TO RETAIL

Selling goat direct to food retail establishments like stores or restaurants takes patience, persistence, and excellent salesmanship on the part of goat producers. A grower must consider scale, seasonal availability, and personal disposition when tailoring a marketing plan to establishments that he or she can most appropriately serve. Many direct marketers target upscale

Cooked Meat (100g = 0.22 lbs)	Energy (Cal)	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Iron (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Cholesterol (mg)
Goat	143	27.1	3.03	3.73	86	75
Veal	196	31.9	6.58	1.16	89	118
Lamb	206	28.22	9.52	2.05	76	92
Pork	212	29.27	9.66	1.1	59	86
Beef	222	29.58	10.66	2.99	67	86

All data is from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference and based on a cooked composite of trimmed retail cuts comprised of separable lean only. The exception is goat, which is still classified as "game meat" and the cuts from which the sample was derived are not specified.

retailers and restaurateurs who have an interest in working with local produce, have flexible menus, support seasonal products, show a willingness to try new products, and can pay a premium for quality; large chains seldom have such flexibility (Lewandowski). The appeal of chevon as a gourmet item has potential for growth with health-conscious consumers looking for low-fat meats (Engle et al.). When meeting with a chef or owner, a goat producer should prepare promotional materials, samples, recipes, and even a cooking demonstration, especially if the potential buyers are unfamiliar with chevon and its attributes. Rather than asking how much buyers are willing to pay, producers should also have a set price list that will provide for a sustainable return on production (Lewandowski).

Marketing to retailers and ethnic restaurants that serve populations with established preferences for goat meat may help lighten the educational burden. Primary research by the IDEA team ethnic market specialist in Chicago has classified some characteristics of goat meat retailers in the city. Pakistani and Middle Eastern stores that cater to Muslim populations tend to sell the largest volume of goat meat, much of which is halal. They are generally small, simple neighborhood stores in which customers deal directly with the butcher. The goat may be in a display case or kept in the cooler, but the meat is

not pre-packaged. They will sell wholes, halves, quarters, legs, shoulders, ribs, ground meat, and stew meat (bone-in or boneless), as well as organ and variety meats including the head, tongue, liver, brain, heart, and kidney. Some stores have whole baby goats and baby goat legs.

A number of larger Mexican markets in Chicago sell goat meat. These stores will carry ribs, legs, and bone-in stew meat, and some have steamed goat in



Photo: Sweet Victory Farm, Alvin, IL

the deli on weekends. The butcher will place special orders for cabrito goat. Authentic Mexican restaurants and taco stands may also have goat meat available. Stores that serve African and Caribbean populations may carry goat as well. West African stores are likely to have quarters, legs, and shoulders (sometimes with the skin left on), and bone-in stew meat. Jamaican stores sell legs, ribs, and a large amount of bone-in stew meat. Large fresh produce stores that cater to multiple ethnicities are also likely to have goat, sometimes pre-packaged, cut according to the preferences of their clientele. For instance, stores that serve Bosnians and Russians may carry goat legs, or stores that serve Vietnamese may have bone-in stew meat.

Many such retail establishments present opportunities for direct marketing, but producers should remember that, like dealing with customers on the farm, dealing with shop owners of a different ethnic background may present cultural differences that require tactful and diplomatic interaction. They may like to negotiate prices, they may only do business with men, or they may want meat slaughtered according to religious customs. The amount of flexibility in their requirements depends upon business practices and personal dispo-

sitions, but shop owners may be taking on added inconvenience and expense to sell local product from a small producer because of perceived quality and value. Therefore, a degree of adaptability and eagerness to please may be necessary on the part of the producer to reach a marketing arrangement that will be profitable for everyone.

CONCLUSION

As ethnic consumer markets grow in size and buying power, the demand for goats should continue to increase. The appeal of low-carb foods, low-fat meats, and naturally raised products, combined with a little consumer education, may also push goat meat into new markets. Armed with market research, knowledge of state regulations, a quality product, and willingness to learn, Illinois meat goat producers ought to be well-prepared to begin selling their products directly and capturing a larger portion of consumers' food-buying dollar.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC)
<http://www.agmrc.org/lambgoats/goats.html>

American FactFinder – U.S. Census Bureau
<http://factfinder.census.gov/>

American Meat Goat Association (AMGA)
<http://www.meatgoats.com/>

Boer & Meat Goat Information Center
<http://www.boergoats.com/clean/coverpage.phtml>

Buckeye Meat Goat Newsletter – The Ohio State University Extension
<http://south.osu.edu/cle/news.htm>

Bureau of Meat & Poultry – Illinois Dept. of Agriculture
<http://www.agr.state.il.us/AnimalHW/MP/index.html>

E (Kika) de la Garza Institute for Goat Research – Langston University
<http://www2.luresext.edu/goats/index.htm>

Empire State Meat Goat Producers Association
<http://www.esmgpa.org/>

Goat Droppings – Clemson University
<http://www.clemson.edu/agronomy/goats/>

Goat World
<http://www.goatworld.com/>

Illinois Meat Goat Producers Newsletter
<http://www.imgp.us/newsletter.html>

MarketMaker – University of Illinois Extension
<http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>

Maryland Small Ruminant Page
<http://sheepandgoat.com/Index.html>

Meat Goat Home Study Course - Penn State University Extension
<http://bedford.extension.psu.edu/agriculture/goat/Goat%20Lessons.htm>

National Sustainable Ag Information Service (ATTRA)
<http://attra.ncat.org/livestock.html>

SheepGoatMarketing.info – University of Maryland, Cornell University
<http://sheepgoatmarketing.info/index.cfm>

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