

"My sheep can resist diseases in this rough climate"

Mr Ataei lives in the town of Esmaeil Abad, not far from Karaj, a large city close to Tehran. In this semi-arid area, Ataei has a partly nomadic lifestyle with his wife and five children. They depend on one particular breed of sheep: the Zandi sheep.

The Karaj region is known for its large population of Zandi sheep; more than 150 000 roam the dry hills.

"Water shortage is a common problem," explains Ataei, "and feed for the sheep is also often not available".

Nonetheless, the Zandi sheep provide Ataei with high-quality wool and they have excellent reproductive characteristics. *"I am happy with this*



Mr Ataei speaking about his Zandi sheep.



Mr Ataei with his wife and two sons

breed because it gives 10 to 15 percent twins, and sometimes even three lambs!" says Ataei. The growth rate of the sheep is also considerable. *"Females weigh about 55 kg at four months, and males weigh 80 to 95 kg when they are sexually mature."*

The main advantage of Zandi, however, is its capability of surviving in the harsh climatic conditions. According to Ataei *"the breed is highly resistant to the different diseases in this region"*. He adds: *"They are perfectly adapted to the tough conditions"*.

In fact, the Zandi don't pose any problems at all for Ataei and his family. Ataei: *"Frankly speaking, I am not interested in any other breeds"*.



The herd of Zandi sheep of Mr Ataei
Photo credits: Mr Mehdizadeh