

FOREWORD

Sheep meat is the preferred meat in the Near East and in some countries it constitutes a major part of the total meat supply. In the Eastern Mediterranean countries, sheep milk is also a valuable commodity. In recent years the demand for sheep meat has grown dramatically and the traditional extensive system of production is not able to cope with it. Consequently, the high-income countries have resorted to imports; mainly from outside the region.

In some countries of the region, the potential for increasing sheep production is limited, while in most of the other countries the land, animal and feed resources can be appropriately developed and utilized to produce sufficient meat for domestic consumption and in some cases for export. There are many possibilities of increasing meat production through improved management of rangelands and the range sheep. Similarly, in arable lands and higher rainfall areas, meat and milk output can be greatly increased by establishing intensified patterns of sheep production. Small or medium scale intensive sheep production has been popular in some countries of the region and needs to be promoted in others.

The FAO Workshop on the Improved Utilization of Feed Resources for Sheep Fattening in the Near East held at Amman from 25 - 29 April 1981, pointed out the need to identify and demonstrate appropriate procedures for intensifying sheep production in breeding/fattening as well as in fattening units. The practical aspects of animal management in such units needed to be compiled and documented. In 1982, FAO requested Dr. Soterios Economides of the Agricultural Research Institute, Nicosia, Cyprus, to undertake this task. He has had long experience in sheep production research and extension and has conducted regional sheep production courses organized by the FAO regional project on animal production and health, MINEADEP.

The report prepared by Dr. Economides is presented in this paper. It is hoped that the material presented in the paper will be useful to the producers and extension workers in the countries of the Near East region.

A.W. Qureshi
Near East Regional
Animal Production and Health Officer
Animal Production and Health Division