

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

The Near East region, i.e. from Morocco and Mauritania to Pakistan, raises some 240 million sheep or more than one-fifth of the world's total (Table 1). The present productivity of these animals is very low and experimental data suggest that their production potential is not adequately utilized. The demand in the region for sheep meat is very high. The data given in Table 1 indicate that notwithstanding intra-regional trade, about ten million live sheep and a quarter-million metric tons of sheep meat were imported into the region. Moreover, the price of fresh meat from animals slaughtered in the country is much higher than that of imported meat. Cheeses made from sheep milk also fetch a very high price. This provides a favourable economic climate for intensifying sheep production in the countries of the Near East.

An intensive sheep production system involves confinement of the flock with only limited grazing, the aim of which is to attain heavier lambs at slaughter, lower lambing interval and higher weaning percentage than that found in flocks maintained under extensive grazing conditions. Such a system requires improved forage production and utilization, use of concentrates, a high level of veterinary care and better housing and feeding facilities which could be mechanized whenever the required managerial skills are available.

Major advantages of an intensive system are as follows:

- forage production can be improved and grazing can be controlled;
- feed requirements are reduced because of reduced walking;
- sheep can be penned or separated in groups on the basis of their productive stage and managed accordingly;
- lamb losses due to diseases and predators are reduced;
- internal and external parasites are more easily controlled;
- feeding programme can be mechanized or even automated in order to save labour;
- a more stable supply of fresh meat and milk is assured throughout the year making the processing, storage and marketing more efficient.

These advantages add up to a high output per ewe, both in terms of meat and milk. Increased animal performance, efficient labour utilization and higher prices for the quality produce usually justify the initial investment in construction and equipment.

Chapter 2 of the paper indicates the levels of production that could be expected by following the various procedures involved, while Chapters 4 and 5 describe the management practices that should be followed. In Chapter 3, the constructions and equipment required are described and illustrated. These are based on the experiences gained in Cyprus and may need to be modified and improvised to suit the specific requirements of the enterprises in the other countries of the region.

Table 1 Sheep Production and Imports in the Countries of the Near East - 1981

Countries	Sheep Population 1000 heads	Live Sheep Imports 1000 heads	Sheep Meat Imports (MT)	Estimated Sheep Meat Supply/Person		Sheep Milk Productio n (1000 MT)
				Kg/Year	% of all meats**	
Afghanistan	20 000 F			4.5	55	225 F
Algeria	13 600 F	15	9 100 *	3.9	47	164 F
Bahrain	7 F	115 *	1 100 *	10.2	18	

Cyprus	525 F		1 175	10.5	17	26 F
Djibouti	330 F		15 *	3.0	23	
Egypt	1 599	50 *	9 207 *	0.9	6	23 F
Iran	34 377 F	1 200 F	124 000	9.2	39	705 F
Iraq	11 650 F	300 F	30 700 *	5.1	23	130 F
Jordan	1 000 F	430	14 703	6.2	35	25 F
Kuwait	158 F	2 101 *	11 000 F	22.4	47	5 F
Lebanon	148 F	320 *	5 000 *	5.2	21	15 F
Libya	6 258 F	1 800		17.5	55	40 F
Mauritania	5 200 F			5.0	19	57 F
Morocco	14 840			2.3	18	21 F
Oman	116	50 F	7 795	9.8	29	
Pakistan	28 468	-1 E	51	1.6	19	39
Qatar	50 F	400	3 800 F	29.8	49	2 F
Saudi Arabia	4 201 F	6 029 N	32 801	5.9	16	84 F
Somalia	10 200 F	-1 510 E		4.0	7	98 F
Sudan	18 125 F	-850 E		4.5	20	127 F
Syria	11 738	646		10.0	53	476
Tunisia	4 967 F	30 *	500 F	7.1	53	25 F
Turkey	48 630	-1 919 E	-24 712 E	6.8	35	1 200 *
United Arab Emirates	139 F	300 F	18 700 *	22.0	32	3 F
Yemen Arab Republic	3 159 F	160 F		2.8	58	49 F
Yemen People'sDem.Rep.	987 F	150	1 100 *	3.7	32	12 F

Source: -FAO Production and Trade Yearbooks, 1981.

-FAO Computer data.

E: Exports;

F: FAO estimate;

*: Unofficial figure;

N: Including imports for non-food use.

** : Total supply of cattle, buffalo, camel, sheep, goats, pig and poultry meat.