

Sheep production – a global perspective

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During October and November 2012, we visited a number of focus groups with farmers in the Eastern Cape, to present information on global trends in sheep farming and to determine local thinking in terms of wool and meat production. Below is some of the global information discussed in the focus groups.

Sheep Populations

World sheep populations were found to be largest in Asia, followed by Africa, where sheep numbers are highest in Sudan and Nigeria. See Figure 1.

The global population of sheep between 2006 and 2010 was shown to be stable, although population density had moved between countries over this time. See Figure 2.

Predictions to 2020 are that global sheep numbers will remain stable.

Sheep numbers in South African experienced a sharp decline from 2000 to 2006, as a result of many factors including theft, predation and land ownership changes over that period. However, numbers have stabilised over the last six years and are expected to remain relatively stable going forward, with a nominal decline to 2020. See Figure 3.

Figure 1 Regional Sheep Population Split (2010)

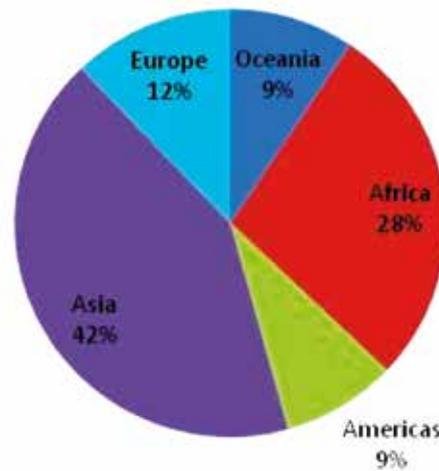
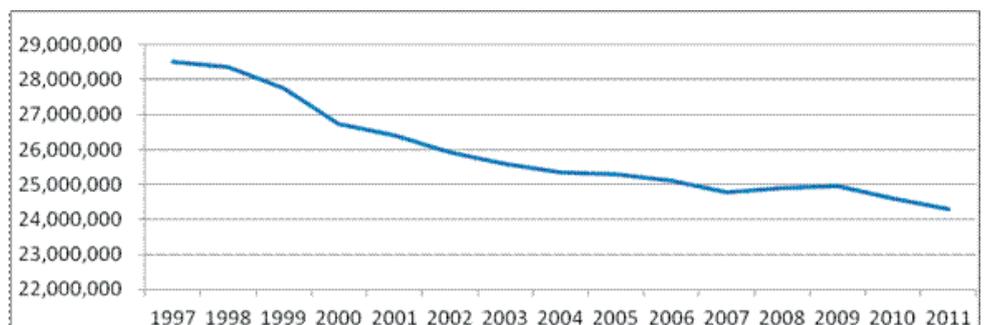


Figure 2 Global Sheep Numbers 2006 - 2010

Country	2006	2010	Trend
Global Population	1'106'532'236	1077'762'456	➡
1 China	151'337'213	134'021'213	▼
2 India	68'885'000	73'991'000	▲
3 Australia	91'028'400	68'085'500	▼
4 Iran	53'800'000	54'000'000	➡
5 Sudan	50'390'000	52'079'000	▲
6 Nigeria	32'305'000	35'519'800	▲
7 New Zealand	40'098'200	32'562'600	▼
8 United Kingdom	34'722'000	31'084'000	▼
9 Pakistan	26'488'000	27'800'000	▲
10 Ethiopia	23'633'000	25'509'000	▲
11 <u>South Africa</u>	24'983'000	24'501'000	➡
12 Turkey	25'304'300	21'794'500	▼
13 Algeria	19'615'700	20'000'000	▲
14 Russian Federation	16'074'400	19'849'700	▲
15 Spain	22'451'600	18'551'600	▼
16 Morocco	17'259'700	18'023'200	▲
17 Brazil	16'019'200	17'380'600	▲
18 Argentina	15'476'000	15'800'000	➡
19 Syrian Arab Republic	21'380'000	15'511'000	▼
20 Kazakhstan	12'005'500	14'660'800	▲
Rest of World	328'460'923	343'276'023	▲

Figure 3 Number of heads of sheep in South Africa 2000 to 2011



Source: National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Trends in the Agricultural Sector 2011

Sheep Wool Production

Wool production in tonnes is illustrated below to compare output by country. See Figure 4.

Global Sheep Product Movement

In spite of other regions having larger sheep numbers, Australia and New Zealand continue to dominate sheep product exports to other countries. China continues to increase imports for fine and course wool, and the United States and China remain net importers of sheep meat. Asia, Africa and Latin America consume sheep products within the region of production, and Africa and Latin America do not currently receive any sheep product imports.

Sheep Farmer Sentiment

In general, sheep farmer sentiment in most countries surveyed was positive, with farmers seeing a stable or positive trend in their flock numbers. Within the Eastern Cape farmer groups surveyed, productivity was highlighted as key for farmers, with the management of animal health a main driver of productivity. Challenges to sheep farming in South Africa included high levels of predation and theft, both of which required a different and more intensive approach to management of a successful sheep enterprise.

Fig 1, 2 & 4 Source: FAOSTAT October 2012
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Figure 4: Global Wool Production

