EVALUATING THE MARKET DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK FOR GOAT MEAT

Robert E. Branson

Professor Emeritus

Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University, and President, Branson Research Associates, Inc., Bryan, Texas

Changes in U.S. agriculture policies take away the longstanding price supports for wool and mohair. More interest results in marketing goats for meat. The Livestock Division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, together with state agricultural departments, has made several goat meat marketing research projects possible. One was a nation-wide study of goat meat marketing within the basic U.S. food marketing channels. The national study also included a consumer survey in four major U.S. cities. A second study evaluated goat meat ratings by a consumer taste panel at Texas A&M University.

The national study was in 15 cities among the 5 geographic regions of the U.S. Telephone interviews were made with 60 wholesalers, with 45 central or division offices of food chains, and 104 independent food stores. A total of 50 chain/franchise eating establishment headquarters were interviewed nationwide, and 199 independent eating establishments. The consumer survey included 418 households among the cities of Philadelphia, Kansas City, Houston, and San Francisco.

Goat meat is now marketed mostly in whole carcass form at 20 to 30 pounds dressed weight. It is consumed primarily by ethnic groups whose culture has included goat meat use. An added marketing challenge is to also produce goats placed in feedlots to reach a 50 to 60 pound dressed carcass size, or about double present marketing weight. That would permit marketing of primal cuts instead of the whole carcasses. It would thereby set the stage for marketing goat in more retail food stores and, to the broader spectrum of present consumers of other meats. An appreciable number of the meat wholesalers surveyed are already carrying goat meat. The same holds true for food chain stores.

Independent food stores catering to ethnic groups have goat meat. Therefore, the marketing channels are already present. Found lacking most is serving of goat in restaurants and other eating establishments. Goat meat processing is mostly by small local slaughter houses, much of it is on a custom order basis.

Of the 45 food chain division offices, 44 percent were marketing goat in selected stores. Among their total stores, 9 percent were selling goat meat. In independent food stores selling fresh meats, 26 percent sold goat. Average size carcass purchased was 30 to 35 pounds. In about half of the independent stores selling goat, it was only on a seasonal basis.

Among food chain division offices, 80 percent were buying whole carcasses. The preference instead of half of them was to buy primal. Independent stores had about a third instead wanting to buy parts. Most food chains were inclined to buy direct from packers or local slaughter plants, but also used
meat wholesalers. Independents relied more on wholesalers. Among food chains only 4 percent would like to buy it frozen versus 23 percent among the independent stores with meat markets. Attitudes toward expanding goat meat marketing were generally positive, if a supportive meat supply and marketing programs were provided.

The consumer survey found about 15 to 20 percent said they had eaten goat meat. Consumers in Houston and San Francisco were more likely to have eaten goat meat than those in Kansas City or Philadelphia. That likely reflects more of a Hispanic influence in Houston and San Francisco. Liking of goat meat can be influenced by how it is cooked. The average proportion liking goat meat, if they had eaten it, varied from about a third in Kansas City and San Francisco to 64 and 78 percent respectively in Philadelphia and Houston.

Expanding the marketing of goat meat depends upon developing a better vertically integrated production and marketing program. Use of feedlots, higher volume packing houses and direct liaison with food chains would be a start. Consumers, according to the survey, have the cooking equipment to prepare goat meat, but need to know how to cook and serve it. In-store demonstrations are needed and recipes should be made available to shoppers.

Further consumer taste panel tests are needed to identify the most appealing dishes, and meat seasoning procedures. According to the consumer panels, no major rating differences were recognized in blind taste tests among the following combinations: Boer/Angora, Boer/Spanish, Spanish/Angora, the Spanish or the Angora breeds. This was a stringent test because no seasoning whatsoever was used on the meat. Both baked and broiled cooking methods were employed. Ground goat meat from the carcass shoulder was tested at 1,00 percent goat and 25 and 45 percent beef mixtures. Favorable ratings were given.

If goat meat were placed on more stores where there is potential interest, the minimum requirement would likely be to triple the number of carcasses marketed per year. This, of course, depends on good market development to fit consumer interests.
The proper citation for this article is: