



# Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe

## Findings and recommendation from innovation case studies

**Daniel Martin-Collado and Mariana Cardoso Vogg (Agrifood Research and Technology Centre of Aragon (CITA))**

Sheep and goat farming systems are usually considered to be less innovative specially compared to dairy cows, beef, pig, and poultry farming systems. Indeed, slow adoption of innovation has been identified in iSAGE as one of the key challenges that the sector faces concerning its sustainability. However, this situation is changing and the EU sheep and goat farming sector, through farmer, breeders and breed associations, cooperatives, universities, research centres and individual farmers, are developing, testing and implementing multiple innovation actions and processes. Innovations in the sector are not only focusing on breeding, reproduction, agronomical, biotechnological and IT technologies, but also on marketing processes, organizational methods, business practices and farmer training programmes.

To address these issues, iSAGE has implemented 31 innovation case studies through industry-research partnerships aiming to identify and test innovative solutions for the sector sustainability. Specific findings of each case study can be found in iSAGE website. <https://www.isage.eu/innovation-leaflets/>

Globally, the iSAGE experience indicated that the main challenge to boost innovation, is not the creation of new knowledge, tools, methods and/or practices, which generally are well-developed and ready available to be implemented, but the socioeconomic and structural constrains that prevent innovation uptake on farm.

Socioeconomic constrains relate to the lack of innovation culture across farmer communities and to the low farmer investment capacity. The ageing of farmer populations, the rural area depopulation trends and the consequent fragmentation of rural and farmer communities further compound the situation, especially in less favoured areas and extensive farming systems.

At the structural level, the iSAGE experience has shown that strong and well-organized long-term farmer collaboration is required for most innovation to be successfully implemented. If farmer collaboration is lacking or is deficient, attempts to implement these innovations will most likely be inefficient. The role of farmers' institutions (e.g. farmers levy organizations,



# Innovation for Sustainable Sheep and Goat Production in Europe

breeds and breeders Associations, cooperatives etc.) is the key to facilitate, regulate and manage such collaboration.

Within the sector, the existing relations and interactions between value chain actors reduce sector's competitiveness in international markets, but also in relation to other livestock species and to non-livestock food products. A strong vertical sheep and goat value chain integration in inter-branch organizations or any other organizational form will likely facilitate innovations in products development and marketing, which are required in order to face the social demands (e.g. environmental and animal welfare issues) and meet the new consumption habits (e.g. healthy diets, easy to prepare food).



Innovation for Sustainable  
Sheep and Goat  
Production in Europe

**iSAGE Newsletter**  
Winter 2019/2020



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 679302.

[www.isage.eu](http://www.isage.eu)