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| Title | Sheep dairy and meat products: from consumers' perspective to industry innovations |
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Sheep production has a long history in Spain which is reflected in a large variety of native breeds, production systems and products. Nowadays (2015), sheep and goat represents 8% of the final livestock production and it holds the second largest sheep population of EU-28 (2015). However, despite its importance, it has suffered 15 years of negative evolution of sheep numbers and sheep meat consumption, which has drastically dropped from 2.7kg per capita (2006) to 1.7kg (in 2014). Conversely, cheese production has increased slowly but steadily during the last decade, with a sharper increase since 2012. These trends respond mainly to changes in consumption habits and consumers preferences which are highly influenced by urban way of life. In this context, four consumers' focus groups (part of iSAGE EU project), of 10 participants each, were conducted in Madrid aiming to explore urban consumers' awareness, attitudes and preferences towards meat and dairy sheep products. Focus groups session showed that despite their high consumption of cheese, participants had an important lack of knowledge on cheese products, sometimes not even knowing whether they are purchasing cow, sheep or goat cheese. Participants also gave increasing importance to environmental, and animal welfare issues, however it was globally acknowledged that price continue to be the main driver of sheep products consumption. These and other aspects will be analyzed in depth in the presentation and discussed in term of its implications for the design of sheep products marketing campaigns and inclusion of new goals in breeding programmes.