Rural Studies

FROM FOLKLORE TO FEASIBILITY: COMMERCIALISATION OF SOUTH AFRICA’S INDIGENOUS GOATS

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In South Africa, the development of non-commercialised goat farmers and entrepreneurs and the transformation of the currently fragmented goat industry into a formal mainstream industry have been constrained by historical, institutional, market, information, and research factors. This thesis demonstrates that the task of integrating non-commercialised goat producers into a national and international agro-industrial goat industry requires several innovations including knowledge of the indigenous resource, product development, market analysis, provision of collection, transportation and processing infrastructure, and institutional innovations.

This thesis has shown that the goat resource in the country (mainly owned by non-commercialised farmers) is large enough to ensure a consistent supply of product to the market. Furthermore, several historical perceptions, marketing systems and the institutions that governed them are of little consequence today. Interesting and innovative product development targeted at specific target markets and based on sound market analysis is key to a viable commercialisation process. International trade opportunities and globalisation has created a niche for exotic (read indigenous) niche goat products.

However, to successfully enter and occupy this niche, certain enabling institutional arrangements, that are culturally acceptable to non-commercialised farmers, needed to be created, while at the same time, addressing the global challenges of quality, consistency and high standards that can be affected through traceability mechanisms. Both of these requirements have been affected by “Co-operative Contract Growing” arrangements. In this arrangement attention is paid to formal (contracts, organisations, markets) and informal (traditions, customs) institutions, both at macro (legal) and micro (organisational form) level. Strategic alliances, described through contracts, can be used to vertically co-ordinate the production and marketing chain. Throughout this development process strong technology transfer and information provision exercises ensure that non-commercialised farmers are kept abreast of developments and are not excluded from participating fully in the new industry.