

## Annex 4

# HERITAGE SHEEP

European Commission Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004 AGRI GEN RES 2006

## Work Package 2

### Development and evaluation of strategies for in situ conservation

Work Package 2 was aimed at collecting information to define from a detailed analysis of breeding programmes across Europe what the technical, economical and social means necessary to achieve a successful development programme for the “Heritage Sheep Breeds”.

The breeds’ cases studied were:

France	UK	The Netherlands	Greece	Slovenia
- Basco Béarnaise, Manech Tête Noire, Manech Tête Rousse - Causses du Lot	- Herdwick - Shetland	- Kempen Heath Sheep - Milksheep (Friesan & Zeeland)	- Frizarta - Katsika	- Bela Krajina Pramenka - Bovec Sheep

The first example studied were milk sheep in France with the breeds: Basco Béarnaise, Manech Tête Noire and Manech Tête Rousse.

Following this a questionnaire was written and sent to the countries partners to analyse two breeds in each of their countries. This questionnaire was designed to show which themes should be answered in the report per breed and each was free to choose the presentation of their study.

You can find in annexes the complete reports per breed written by each partner.

## 1. Comparisons of the different breed cases studied

The breeds chosen by each country are very different in term of size of the population, products valorised, environmental conditions etc...

We will try to underline these differences but also the common points between these breeds.

## 1) Numbers and trend

You will find in the following table, the population and number of herds of each breed.

Country	Breed	Population	Nb herds	Trends since 2 000
France	Basco Béarnaise	82 876	420	Stable
	Manech tête rousse	285 484	1 170	Increasing
	Manech tête noire	100 837	510	Decreasing
	Causse du Lot	106 000	250	Increasing
Greece	Frizarta	50 000	64	Increasing
	Katsika	1 865	6	Increasing
The Netherlands	Kempen Heath Sheep	2 030	8	Stable
	Milksheep (Friesan & Zeeland)	6 110	50	Increasing
Slovenia	Bela Krajina Pramenka	900	24	Increasing
	Bovec Sheep	3700	28	Increasing
UK	Herdwick	49 408	149	Decreasing
	Shetland	16 238	78	Decreasing

We can see that the cases studied are very different in term of number of animals and of breeders. The smallest breed, the Bela Krajina Pramenka from Slovenia has less than 1000 animals, and the largest one, Manech Tête Rousse from France, almost 300 000. It is obvious that the strategies develop to maintain these different breeds could not be of the same type.

The trends are different too: for example, the 2 UK breed trends are decreasing since 2000 because these 2 breeds were severely affected due to factors including the foot and mouth disease in 2001 and the national scrapie plan in the UK. In comparison some breeds with quite small population are increasing for example the Bovec breed in Slovenia with a doubling of the number of sheep in less than 10 years.

## 2) Breeding systems and geographical distribution

All the breeds studied are in challenging areas: either mountainous regions as for the Bovec in the Alps, Herdwick in the Lake District or Manech Tête Noire in the Pyrenees, adverse climate as for the Shetland, Frizarta and/or poor soil as for the Kempen Heath or Causse du Lot breeds. All breeds are characterized by their adaptation to these harsh environmental conditions of breeding.

In most cases, the importance of sheep grazing is underlined for its positive impact on the landscape maintenance and to keep landscape "open".

### 3) Breed management

For all breeds, there is a breed society. It can be specific for one breed or gather several breeds for example for Friesian and Zeeland, there is the “Dutch organisation of professional milksheep farmers”.

One of the objectives of these organisations is to maintain the breed when it is a breed in conservation with few animals, and/or to develop the breed.

### 4) Reproduction and selection

Country	Breed	Main criteria of selection
France	Basco Béarnaise	+ Standard + Milk production and quality
	Manech tête rousse	++ Milk production and quality
	Manech tête noire	++ Standard + Milk production and quality
	Causse du Lot	Rusticity, maternal
Greece	Frizarta	Milk production, growth and morphological traits
	Katsika	Milk production
The Netherlands	Kempen Heath Sheep	Phenotypic conformation traits
	Milksheep (Friesian & Zeeland)	Phenotypic conformation traits
Slovenia	Bela Krajina Pramenka	Prolificity (prefer twins) Slaughter and carcass characteristics
	Bovec Sheep	Milk yield and composition, fertility
UK	Herdwick	Rusticity (ability to survive, raise lambs and resistance to disease)
	Shetland	Rusticity (ability to survive, raise lambs and resistance to disease)

### 5) Valorisation of products

Most of the breeds studied developed their own system of valorisation of products in a more or less structured way. But for some of them it is not the case.

The Frizarta breed in Greece has not developed a system for the valorisation because of lack of the suitable infrastructures and the milk price is not based on its quality. The milk sheep breeds in Netherlands do not have any quality label either but the milk price is set to fat and protein contents, and to quality. For the farmers who are selling their products on

the farm, they are doing their own advertising in local news papers and billboards along the road.

For the other Greek breed, the Katsika, a Farmers association is beginning to work on the promotion of the products. Regardless if milk or lamb produced by this breed do not have any certification or quality label, they are characterized as high quality products by the consumers.

For the Bela Krajina Pramenka in Slovenia, the situation is similar: The marketing of the lambs is not organised but because the quality of the lambs is recognised, they can be sold with higher prices than other breed to restaurants or through agro tourism.

The meat products of Kempen Heath sheep are now sold under the 'Slow Food'-label which permit to these products to be better known.

There are two examples of cheese with PDO (Protected Designation of Origin): the Bovec cheese for the breed of the same name in Slovenia, and the "Ossau-Iraty" for the three French Pyrenean dairy breeds. In both cases, the label has been obtained as a result of the implication of breeders associations. The specifications allowing the production of these cheeses are clearly in favour of the local breeds with the recognition of the name of the breeds: in the case of Bovec cheese the content of other milk than Bovec can not be more than 20% and for the Ossau-Iraty only the three local breeds are authorized.

For the Shetland breed, there is a PDO associated for meat production and one in progress for wool. For meat production, Shetland lamb has to be pure bred or crosses and must be born, reared and finished in the Shetland Islands. Concerning wool, Shetland is famous for Shetland knitwear, and it is the breed with the widest ranges of colours (11 main colours!). The PDO "Native Shetland organic wool" concerns for the moment ten certified organic producers but has not yet been accepted.

## **6) Breed's network organisation**

The initiators of the breed's network organisation are most of the time the breeders themselves who chose to join together on a voluntary basis to defend their breed.

The breed's network organisation can be of very different levels. In France for example, the two cases studied are integrated in a very organised industry through an "interprofession": all the partners are integrated in the industry from the breeders to the consumers with special quality label to identify the products of these special breeds. When it is a breed society gathering only, breeders and supporters of a breed, the principal objectives are the protection and promotion of this breed.

Some of these breed societies have existed for a very long time: for Herdwick sheep it was formed in 1916 and for Shetland in 1927 in UK.

## **7) Second activity development**

The most common second activity development is the landscape management. This activity is mentioned in almost all the cases but is more or less organised. The Kempen Heat sheep as described in the annex receive subsidies for maintaining the heath land.

The agro-tourism and sale on the farm can be important too, but is based on individual action, and these activities are increasing in most cases for example Bela Krajina Pramenka sheep in Slovenia.

## **8) Relation to regional policy**

Some breeds receive subsidies but not specifically for the breed itself, but for the maintenance of the landscape, as for example the heath land in Netherlands for the Kempen Heath sheep.

## **9) Relation to national and European policy**

The only European subsidies for the breeds with a small population in conservation are the agri-environmental measures for the endangered breeds, help that farmers may receive however it is not implemented by all the governments, for example it is not implemented in the UK. The Greek and Slovenian farmers are supported by this measure if the breed is named on the "List of autochthonous and traditional animal" in their country and approved by their Ministry of Agriculture. Furthermore, in France, each region has the choice to implement this provision, which means breeders of the same breed may or may not have this subsidy depending on the region where they are living.

## 2. Identification of the “successful factors”

One of the major characteristics of these breeds is their rusticity and their capacity to live in harsh environments. Indeed, all breeds are living in difficult areas where other species or other breed of sheep are not adapted. It can be in mountainous region or with adverse climate, and in these conditions they can valorise their qualities and by not being in competition with main stream breeds (which are unproductivel in these environments).

Their positive impact on the landscape of these areas is most of the time well known but it is rarely translated into a specific subsidy to encourage maintenance of sheep in these regions. We have only one example where breeders are receiving subsidies with the heath land in Netherlands for the Kempen Heath sheep. But the help is not dependant on the sheep breed but is available to all the sheep in this specific region.

The support from national or European level is very limited and through the agri-environmental measures for the endangered breeds help, however this is not implemented in all countries.

While support from local and/or regional level is most of the time strong, it is not necessarily by means of special subsidies for the breed but through the support to the sheep industry on a local level. It can be as a result of the organisation of the industry when the breed is not too small, or a support to the breed society.

Some breeds have specific products, even sometimes a Protected Designation of Origin. In our example, it is difficult to see the real impact of such a quality label. It is often important to make known the specific product, even if not all the production is made under the quality label, as it can help to commercialise the meat or cheese. But in most of cases studied there is not one original product associated with the breed. In this case, the main thing is to find a niche product to be able to sell the product through sale on the farm or on local markets.

One of the major successful factors is that breeders are taking an interest in their own breed. They are very attached to the phenotypic conformation traits. They are also conscious of the qualities and abilities of their breeds, and the challenge is to take advantage of them through an adapted way of breeding.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the different breeds in five countries: France, Greece, Slovenia, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, with a successful development program was very interesting. The cases studied in each country were very different and it was not easy to find common points between them to define what could be the factors of their success. What is apparent is that all these breeds live in harsh environment where other breeds or species have difficulty in surviving. And they are recognised for their positive impact on the landscape. The organisations around these specific breeds are most of the time sustain on a local level. The sale of products is not often under a specific label but can be done quite easily. And one of the major thing is to have breeders who have a passion for their breed.