



**European Regional Conference on Goats  
under the auspices of the International Goat Association  
8-11 April 2014  
Debrecen, Hungary / Oradea, Romania**

***FINAL REPORT***

**Executive summary**

The European Regional Conference organized under the auspices of the International Goat Association in cooperation with Hungarian Sheep and Goat Dairying Public Utility Association took place in Debrecen, Hungary and Oradea, Romania. The conference was held on 8-10 April in Debrecen and on 11 April in Oradea.

The participants of the conference were arriving from Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia (The Former Yugoslav Republic of), Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine, as well as South Africa, USA, Mexico, Malaysia, Israel, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco.

There were five sessions held within the conference (1. Breeding; 2. Nutrition; 3. Environment and production systems; 4. Animal health; 5. Human Health), along with one round-table (on animal welfare of goats), and three separate workshops on different sections of goat reproduction. As many as 92 papers were introduced as oral presentations (ten of them were invited speakers) and new scientific results were also shown on 19 posters. 184 participants from 29 countries participated in the conference programmes.

During the technical tours four goat farms (three of them having milk processing plants) and one national park (with all indigenous domestic animal breeds of Hungary) were introduced to the participants. All information was given in two languages in English and in Russian, and also Hungarian translation was offered for the Hungarian participants.

There was one post-conference tour offered to the participants in Romania on 12 April 2014 showing one big goat farm with milk processing plant.

The final program and the abstract of oral and poster presentations were printed. The booklet was given to all participants upon arrival.

The sixth issue of the "Hungarian Sheep and Goat Products" was published on the occasion of the conference. The bilingual (English and Hungarian) booklet was given to participants upon arrival. The booklet can be downloaded from the homepage of Hungarian Sheep and Goat Dairying Public Utility Association ([www.mjkkhe.hu](http://www.mjkkhe.hu)) after 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

## **Conference background and justification**

During the 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Goats, held in 2012 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain), the Board of the International Goat Association (IGA) authorized the Hungarian Sheep and Goat Dairying Public Utility Association to organise a European Regional Conference on Goats in 2014 in cooperation with Caprirom Romania. Based on an agreement between the Hungarian and Romanian Country Representatives of the IGA, the conference was organised as a joint Hungarian-Romanian event, named as „European Regional Conference on Goats 2014”. Most part of the conference took place in Hungary (Debrecen), while the last day’s program was carried out in Romania (Oradea).

The Hungarian Sheep and Goat Dairying Public Utility Association established two committees. The Local Organising Committee included the Hungarian Sheep Products’ Council, the Hungarian Sheep and Goat Breeders’ Association, the Research Institute for Animal Breeding and Nutrition, the University of Debrecen, the Eszterházy Károly College of Eger, the National Agricultural Advisory, Educational and Rural Development Institute and the Y-FOOD Ltd. The Romanian Organising Committee included Caprirom Romania (the Romanian Goat Breeders’ Association), the Research Institute for Development for Sheep and Goat Breeding of Constanta, the Banat University of Timisoara, and the University of Oradea. These are the most important organisations and companies involved in goat research and development in the two countries.

In addition, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Hungarian Sheep and Goat Dairying Public Utility Association have agreed that the Association will provide certain services in support of increasing knowledge on *sustainable goat breeding and goat farming, animal nutrition, environment protection and animal welfare, animal and human health through the organization and implementation of special FAO workshop on goat breeding* during the three days of the international conference. This special workshop was organised as the Session 1 (Breeding) during the Conference.

## **Conference agenda**

The whole program of the conference including the pre- and post tours lasted for six days. On 7th of April a special technical visit was organised for the FAO workshop participants and the IGA Board members.

The pre-conference technical visit was organised on 8th April 2014.

The conference was opened in Debrecen on 9th April 2014. The plenary session was followed by the FAO Workshop (Session 1. Breeding) in the morning and in the afternoon. Parallel to the Session 1, the Nutrition Session (Session 2.) was held.

A special „Hungarian Evening” was offered to the participants including dinner and entertainment.

In the morning of 10th April 2014 one session (Session 4. – Animal Health) and one workshop (Workshop 1. on goat reproduction) were kept followed by one round-table (on Animal Welfare) and one session (Session 3. Environment and production systems) in the afternoon.

The Hungarian part of the conference was closed with Gala Dinner in the evening of 10th April 2014.

The Romanian part of the conference was started in Oradea (Nagyvárad) on 11th April 2014. One session (Session 5. Human Health) was organised in the morning and in early afternoon, followed by other two workshops on goat reproduction.

The conference closing dinner was held in the evening of 11th April 2014. A whole day post-conference tour was organised by Caprirom Romania for the participants interested in visiting goat farm with dairy named GEEA ECOLACT on 12th April. The last participants left Hungary and the conference program on 13th April 2014.

*The detailed program of the conference including the abstracts of presentations can be found in **Annex 1**.*

## **List of participants and speakers of the conference**

The official number of participants was 184, they were coming from 29 countries. The total number of participants (including some VIP-s attending some special parts of the conference only and the cheese producers taking part in the competition) was 210. There were 91 oral and 19 poster presentations introduced during the conference.

*List of participants with their contact data could be read in **Annex 2**.*

## **Logistics**

- 1) Accommodation were reserved for the participants in:

**Hotel in Debrecen:** Hotel Lycium\*\*\*\*  
Address: H-4026 Debrecen, Hunyadi u. 1-3., Hungary  
Website: [www.hotellycium.hu](http://www.hotellycium.hu)

**Hotel in Oradea:** Continental Forum Oradea\*\*\*\*  
Address: 410051 Oradea, Aleea Strandului nr.1, Romania  
Website: [continentalhotels.ro/Continental-Forum-Oradea](http://continentalhotels.ro/Continental-Forum-Oradea)

- 2) The conference venues and all necessary technical equipment were reserved in.

Venue 9-10 April, 2014:

**Debrecen** Kölcsey Convention Center  
Address: H-4026 Debrecen, Hunyadi utca 1-3., Hungary

Venue 11 April, 2014

**Oradea** Continental Forum Oradea\*\*\*\*  
Address: 410051 Oradea, Aleea Strandului nr.1, Romania

- 3) Interpretation

The official language of the conference was English. Simultaneous interpretation was provided into Russian and Hungarian during the conference days in Debrecen, and also into Romanian in Oradea.

During the farm visits in Hungary and in Romania English and Russian speaking guide/interpreter helped participants to understand the happenings.

4) Meals were provided as follows:

Lunches were provided at the conference venue and during technical visits. Coffee, tea and cakes were served during the breaks. The breakfast was served at the hotel. Participants were invited to take part in the following social events: Welcome Reception, Hungarian evening – Get-together party, Gala dinners in Debrecen and in Oradea.

Special cheese tasting program was organised for the participants during the poster session in the afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014. The tasted milk products were taking part in the “IV. Hungarian National Goat and Sheep Milk Products Competition” in Debrecen at the occasion of the Conference on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

5) Information note was edited for the participants. The note was circulated.

### **Summary of the main activities carried out during the field trip**

Four goat farms (three of them were having milk processing plants) and one national park were visited during the conference.

On the 7th April 2014 one of the biggest goat farms of Hungary was visited at Valkó on the way from Budapest airport to Debrecen. There were 500 milking does belonging to different breeds (Alpine, Saanen, Hungarian Native, and their crosses) and their progenies kept on that particular farm along with 200 dairy cows (Holstein-Friesian). The milk produced is manufactured in their own dairy and several kinds of cheeses and other products made are sold in various shops (partly belonging to that farm).

During the technical trip of the conference on 8th April 2014 three goat farms with various herd sizes (having 35-, 100- and 300 does belonging to different breeds) were introduced to the participants of the conference. Two of these farms had officially licenced dairies in which many various milk products were manufactured.

Printed descriptions of these individual goat farms were also offered to the participating people in order to be able to follow the program and remember the farms they visited. These information can be read in *Annex 3*.

An important part of the technical tour / field trip was the visit on the Hortobágy National Park where the special collection of the Hungarian ancient domesticated / indigenous breeds of the various animal species (sheep, pig, poultry, goat, horse, cattle, pigeon, etc.) were introduced to the participants. Special attention was given to Hungarian Grey cattle, Hungarian Racka sheep (both of them are wearing special horns) as well as native goats and Nonius horse.

Special local foods were offered to the participants (along with the milk products tasted on the farms) as lunch at the last visited farm. The field trip program was officially finished with a get together party in the evening of 8th April 2014.

Some of the participants were invited to take part in the „IV. Hungarian National Goat and Sheep Milk Products Competition” as the members of the international jury of award. Some

cheese tasting possibilities were offered to other people in the evening of that day as well as during the poster session of the conference in the afternoon 10. April 2014.

Description of the goat farm (GEEA ECOLACT) visited during the post-conference tour in Romania could be read in *Annex 4*

Description of Hungarian and Romanian goat farming and sustainable production possibilities (in English) could be found in *Annex 5.* and *Annex 6.*

### **Main conclusions and recommendations of Conference organisers**

Providing the fact that there were several subjects discussed during the conference program the main conclusions of the conference should also cover different fields of goat farming.

- In most of the countries goats are kept in small herds, the ratio of profitable specialised goat farms (which are dominantly dairy herds) is low.
- The profitability of goat farming seems to be improving with the increasing herd sizes.
- The appreciation of local indigenous goat breeds is lower than necessary, and the low profitability is behind this fact.
- Only limited part of the goats kept is involved in nucleus breeding, the production ability of most part of goats is not known.
- In order to increase the profitability of goat farming exotic goat breeds are imported into every country, which are mainly used in improving milk production, but partly for increase the meat production ability as well.
- The exotic breeds are used in crossbreeding systems but the pure breeding utilization of them is intensively increasing.
- The nucleus breeding work of goats is not really profitable, and the preservation and protecting of local breeds could not be carried out without serious governmental monetary support.
- The consumption of goat milk and milk products are becoming fashionable, but the goat meat consumption is limited.
- The market organisation is very low for goat meat, but there is an urgent need even in milk production as well.
- Most of the goat farmers would need basic education and some of them further education to be able to utilise the improving breeds and being able to keep the indigenous breeds under more profitable system.
- The profitability of goat farming seems to be improving with the increasing herd sizes.
- Limited subsidy for goat farmers is available in various countries which is not enough to preserve their own breeds for the future.
- The goat farmers should improve their feeding systems as the level of nutrition is in a very strong relationship with production ability and profitability.
- Several feeding systems could be used, but it should follow the needs of breeds and the demands of people, as well as the available feed resources.
- Numerous new diseases appear in West Europe and some of them also could reach East part of Europe, so, a strong animal health protection protocol should be followed in the case of importation foreign livestock.
- Significant ratio of products lost from the farms as the consequences of internal any external parasites, however, there are good methods to diagnose and medicines to treat them.

- The environments have impacts on production systems and the goat farming is not an enemy of environment, but the production system used could be dangerous, because of the human and not because of the goat.
- At the same time, each environment could offer certain production systems to use, but for profitable goat farming (in the case of milk production) only the intensive system is applicable.
- There are tools to estimate the nutritional level of goats and the values of available feeds on different environments (body condition score) which could be used for prevent the animals from malnutrition and protect the environment from over grazing.
- In order to get healthier animals and better production animal welfare expectations should be followed.
- Serious attention should be taken on the reproduction traits of goats, several new methods could be used (AI, embryo transfer, sperm freezing, oestrus synchronisation, etc.) on farm level, but any hormonal treatment could not replace the good management and feeding.
- Goat products could improve the human via increasing the consumption of them, but the production of basic material and the manufactured products should be effectively controlled.
- The milk and meat of goats could be used for functional foods, and these materials (milk and meat) could be very good basic products in order to develop the functional values of foods for people.

Finally, the goat farming would also need some help following the dairy cattle, chicken or pigs in order to be able to improve the ability to survive and being profitable as well as keep the local domestic breeds involved in certain environmental conditions.

### ***The evaluations of the sessions, round table and workshops***

The chairs of the various sessions, round table and workshops were requested to evaluate and summarise their meetings. These summaries and comments can be read in *Annex 7*.

### ***Recommendations***

Many important information were presented during the conference and the breeding workshop as well, which would be urged to publish them as FAO publication containing the whole texts of papers in limited size (6 pages for oral and 4 pages for poster presentations) for improving the knowledge about goat breeding and farming today.

At the same time selected papers presented during the conference will be proposed to be published in Small Ruminant Research as original papers, and several ones as short communications in order to reach wider scientific interest.

Most of the East European countries and in many of the other participating countries would need strong goat breeders and farmers organisations in order to help the individual farmers to be able to survive. Frequent regional meetings should be organised covering this part of the world to discuss the new results and develop a useful cooperation.

Even the markets for goat milk products would need urgent help to reach the necessary level of development, and the market for goat meat should be founded in this part of Europe (mid and East Europe).

Serious governmental supports are needed in mid and East European (and most of the Balkan) countries to preserve and protect the local indigenous breeds and being able to improve them. Without it or offering only low support the exotic breeds would take over the dominant role in goat farming, and the old genetic values would slowly disappeared.

The goat farmers would need basic and further education to be able to consume and digest the new information and developments and apply them into their everyday managements in order to be able to build a sustainable and prospective future.

*13 June 2014*



***Sándor Kukovics***

## **ANNEXES**

### ***Annex 1.***

***The detailed program and the abstracts of the conference***

<http://ercg2014.org/jelentes/kiadvany/ERCG%202014%20A4%20kiadvany%20belivek%20PQ.pdf>

### ***Annex 2.***

***List of participants***

### ***Annex 3.***

***Description of the technical tour - information about visited goat farms in Hungary***

### ***Annex 4.***

***Description of the goat farm visited during the post-conference tour in Romania***

### ***Annex 5.***

***Goat farming in Hungary***

<http://ercg2014.org/the-short-history-of-goats-in-hungary/>

### ***Annex 6.***

***Goat farming in Romania***

<http://ercg2014.org/goat-breeding-in-romania/>

### ***Annex 7***

***Evaluations of meetings***