

CHAPTER 3 : THE HISTORICAL CAUSES FOR NON-COMMERCIALISATION OF INDIGENOUS GOATS IN SOUTH AFRICA

“Ek wil haar hê vir 'n vrou, vir my seun”.... Die kaptein is tevrede, toe haal hy die beeste en die skape en die bokke uit vir die meisie.”

“I want her as a wife for my son”...The Chief was satisfied, so he took out his cattle and sheep and goats for the girl.”

Minnie Postma, Legendes uit Basoetoland.

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that the goat resource in South Africa is large enough to commercialise and that it could become a viable industry. The question thus becomes why it has not happened up till now? Goats have been part of the South African landscape for centuries and other countries have successfully commercialised and developed their goat industries (Australia and New Zealand for example). The line of reasoning here is that there are certain historical reasons for non-commercialisation in South Africa in particular, that are of lesser relevance today, thus making the commercialisation of goats an option for rural development in the current setting.

Several factors need to be investigated to test this second hypothesis. Firstly, the historical and traditional context of goats in South Africa needs to be understood. Furthermore, the institutional arrangements that have governed the industry up till now need to be studied. These institutional arrangements include those governing marketing and research. And finally, but most importantly, consumer perceptions of goat products need to be investigated. With this information in hand it becomes possible to address limitations and to suggest improvements or new avenues for development.

3.2 Goats in history and folklore

The goat has, for centuries, been intertwined in cultural history and tradition. Its long association with man has made it a common subject, or object, in myths, folklore, and fairytales. Unfortunately, because of some of these histories goats sometime have a negative connotation. If the origins of these uses could be understood then it is more likely that consumers will accept goats for what they are – an important livestock species that also has symbolic associations.

In the Egyptian town of Mendes the sacred goat Ba-neb-Djedet (the Billy goat, lord of Djedjet) was a symbol of fertility and abundance (The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt, 1974). In Celtic religions, the goat represented fertility, and goat-horned divinities are recorded in Britain and Gaul (France) (Green, 1992). The use of goat's milk by the Gauls is also, comically, illustrated in "Asterix and the Banquet" (Goscinnny and Uderzo, 1979). In Scotland, images of the goat have been found to represent fertility and aggression. In British fairytale, the goat is pictured as the steed of the king dwarf from Fairyland (Briggs, 1978). The Urisk or Uruisg was a solitary rough kind of brownie, half-human, half-goat, who herded cattle, did work around the farm, and was very lucky to have in the house (Briggs, 1978). In Norwegian myth, a goat that fed on the great world-tree, Yggdrasill, gave mead instead of milk, and this mead supplied the great feasts that the gods held (Barber, 1979). In Germany, an altar dedicated to the triple Matronae has, on the reverse, a carving of a snake-entwined tree and a triple bodied goat.

During the Renaissance dances were often styled on animals and birds. More sedate dances imitate the behaviour of birds such as the peacock, whereas the French dance, the capriole, imitated the bawdy behaviour of the goat (Lonsdale, 1981.). The most significant goat-use in mythology is most probably that of the mythology surrounding Dionysus, or Bacchus. This god was the god of vegetation and the vine, and the goat was sacred to him. Thus, the Greek tragedy plays had their origin in the festivals that were held to commemorate him and the harvest. The word tragedy has its origins in the word "*tragoidia*" or goat song, from "*tragos*" (goat) and "*aeidein*" (to sing). The word referred to either the prize, a goat, which was awarded to the dramatists whose plays won the earliest competitions or to the dress (goat skins) of

the performers, or to the goat that was sacrificed in the primitive rituals from which the tragedy developed (New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1986).

Also related to this mythology is the better-known Pan or the satyrs (the followers of Bacchus). The Zodiac sign of Capricorn is believed to be a representation of the Greek god Pan. The fishtail seen in this sign is thought to originate from the incident where Pan, trying to avoid the monster Typhon, jumped into the water just as he was changing into animal shape. The half above the water assumed the shape of a goat, while the lower half beneath the water assumed the shape of a fish (New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1986). The devil is often depicted as a Satyr (hence the word Satan). These creatures with the horns, legs and tail of a goat were symbols of abundance, wine, dance, and debauchery. Now if one recalls that “wine, women and song” were not looked on favourably by the church, one can realise how the goat got labelled as being a “devilish” creature. In medieval times, the Roman Catholic priests were at their wits-end trying to draw the pagans into Christianity. What they did was, they used the pagan symbols to draw the masses to the churches by using these “devilish-looking” creatures as adornment on the outsides of the church buildings. Thus, originated the gargoyles (from the French word “to gurgle” – since these structures essentially serve as the gutters of the buildings). The pagans felt comfortable entering a place that was festooned by creatures so familiar to them. Over time however, as the new faith was adopted, these very same creatures were used to denote that which is evil and were used to graphically illustrate the beasts that the followers would encounter in hell for their sins. A ‘faun’ was a Latin rural deity with goat’s horns, legs, and tail (Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 1984).

In Greek and Roman mythology the baby Zeus was raised by the goat Amalthea after he was hidden from his cannibalistic father Cronus by his mother Rhea. For her good work, the goat Amalthea was forever venerated by being changed into a constellation (Guerber, 1943).

The goat’s influence was also seen in China, where the goat spirit was seen as a goat that had a white face, a head furnished with horns, a long beard, and a special kind of headdress. So too, the goat is one of the animals used to mark the Chinese calendar. In Mongolia it was worshipped as a composite god being combined with the image of

the dog that had two horns on its head or the hair done in the shape of two short horns (Werner, 1977).

Even in the northwest Pacific, where the early tribes of the Tsimshian lived the goat was part of the belief system. The people of Temlaham, the earthly paradise of the Tsimshian people, did not maintain the required good relation with the goats, which they hunted. In a fearful retribution, the goats summoned an earthquake that destroyed all the hunters except one that had showed mercy to a mistreated kid in the past. Even the Eskimos had songs and poems to invoke the animal or guardian spirit of the goat (Lonsdale, 1981).

Apart from goats being woven into Arabian folklore when the black goat-hair tents of the nomadic Bedouin are described (black animals were considered the possession of the rich), goats are sometimes the subject of Arabian folklore. In the story of how the fox got back its tail, it was goats and goat's milk that sent him on a search to win it back. In "Little Mangy One" a little goat bravely saves his two brothers from the belly of a mean hyena. The goat's intelligence is portrayed in "Two Close Calls" when the goat outwits both the jackal and the lion (Bushnaq, 1986).

Different cultural traditions in southern Africa place differing values on goats and their products. Large flocks were present amongst the Pedi people in the mid 1800's and were kept mostly as a source of wealth but only in association with cattle. Quin (1959) comments that the Pedi evaluate their goats as follows, "1 ox = 5 sheep or 10 goats, 1 heifer or cow = 7 sheep or 14 goats". In terms of monetary value at the time, he mentions, that cattle were valued at £5, sheep at £1 and goats at 10 shillings. Within these societies, goats are still often used in rituals and sacrifices although they have little value in themselves. As far as folklore is concerned; a Nigerian story tells of how the goat was domesticated. The Yoruba story tells how the animals used to drink from a common pool that was cleaned by the animals once a year. The crafty goat avoided the task until it evoked the anger of the Leopard, which sprang at it with a roar. The goat leapt sideways and ran with all speed to the human village. Only there did the Leopard turn back and the Goat has been quite content to live with human beings ever since, but the Leopard kills goats whenever it finds them straying outside the village. In Ghana, a story very reminiscent of Jacob and Esau involves the goat that was told

by God to organise that the more diligent of two brothers received the best of the land to be shared between them. As in the Biblical story, the less obedient son disguised himself and received the best portion of land (Parrinder, 1982).

In his book about the importance of various animals to African spirituality, Credo Mutwa (1996) writes the following poem about the goat:

I hear you cry, oh imbuzi, on the altars of our ancestors

I hear you cry, oh goat, in the shrines of our forefathers

You are the one who asks the questions

That is the meaning of your name

The animal which asks questions

Questions which often have no answer

You are the delight of the old men

Old men without teeth who grow old on your milk

You are also the delight of the gods

The angry gods who adore your flesh

You are the creature that came from the heavens

Sent by the gods to human beings on Earth

That whenever we seek knowledge from those above

We must make you ask the gods the question

You are a cousin of the impala that roam the plains of our fatherland

They cannot ask any questions, but you can

For you, oh goat – you are the wisest of the wise!

Your hooves have etched the soil of Africa deeply

Your bleating has been heard from one end of the land to the other

You are the joy of our children, the joy of our little sons and daughters who love to caress your beard, and to brush your ears, and to count the rings in your horns

Your hide keeps our grandmothers warm and our grandfathers from shivering

Your eyes are as gentle as those of a lover

But your butting is forceful as that of a Bapedi warrior!

You are the lover of the trees

You are the one who remains alive when other animals have long since perished from the face of the land

For you are the imbuzi, the asker of questions

You are the goat!

You are the animal!

Our sisters often say that your smell is overpowering, but they fail to understand that it is the perfume of wisdom

Our brothers often say that your beard is ridiculous, but they do not know it is the beard of wisdom

Our cousins say that your genitals dangle like drunkards' calabashes inside a beer-brewing hut

But they do not know that they are the gonads of fertility itself

The gods revere you, oh imbuzi

And the demons fear you below

For you are the goat, the one who asks many questions

Bayete!

In almost all the South African languages, “goat” means “the questioning animal” or “that which asks a question”; in Zulu, *imbuzi*, in Xhosa *ibhokhwe*, in Sotho and Setswana *pudi* and, in Venda, Tonga and Shangaan, *mpundzi*. This is because the goat has been used for centuries by the tribes of South Africa to communicate with the gods and ancestral spirits (Mutwa, 1996). The colour, sex and age of a goat slaughtered for cultural purposes are important, but vary from tribe to tribe (ARC, 1999; Mkhwanazi, 1997; Mutwa, 1996). So, for example, the Zulus consider a black goat as possessing the most powerful magic, a reddish-brown goat is believed to prevent conflict and bloodshed, an all-white goat is used to bless a wedding ceremony, a black-and-white goat is used in thanksgiving for wishes granted, and a red-and-white goat in thanksgiving for ending conflict (Mutwa, 1996). White goats are also slaughtered for the wedding ceremonies of the Tsonga, Pedi and Ndebele (ARC, 1999). Red or brown goats are used by young sangoma (*ithwasa*) once they have completed their training (Mkhwanazi, 1997). Black goats are slaughtered when someone has bad luck and white goats are used for thanksgiving, apologies, cleansing and requests (Mkhwanazi, 1997).

In general, ceremonies in which goats are used include, *lobola* (wedding dowries), religious rituals, asking for luck, chasing away bad luck, initiation, weddings, child births and birthdays, reporting (*amadlozi*) and asking for forgiveness (ARC, 1999). The colour and sex of the animal is often communicated in a dream to the person who will slaughter the goat (ARC, 1999; Mutwa, 1996).

In the stories of Minnie Postma (1956), where she chronicles Basotho folklore, several stories capture the significance of goats. The use of goat's milk is mentioned in 'Litsomo in die kombuis – *Hlankanyana*', and goats are used for *lobola* in 'Die Laaste Legende – *Tsaile*' and 'Die Droomverhaal – *Lehe*'. In a further work by Postma (1974) 'Molaetsane', she tells the story of a barren heifer that is driven away from the kraal she loves and later gives birth to many cattle and goats. These goats, speak and walk like humans, and care for Molaetsane, grinding corn, brewing beer, making porridge, fetching water, making clay pots and cooking meat.

The Shona have several superstitions about living things. It is believed that a man should not eat the intestines of a goat, lest he forget his trade and soon be out of a job (Miller, 1979). The Sotho-Tswana also practice ancestor worship, especially for curing certain illnesses. A goat can be brought into the presence of the patient, then killed by being pierced with a needle behind the shoulder. The longer it takes to die, and the louder it bleats, the more it will please the spirit, and thus affect a satisfactory cure (Miller, 1979). This is in contrast to the practices of the Zulu, who treat a goat to be slaughtered with the utmost respect and reverence. Only a person who is trained and skilled enough to cause the sacrificial animal the minimum amount of pain and agony may slaughter a goat (Mutwa, 1996).

Thus cultural use and tradition have epitomised the utilisation of goats globally, especially in Africa, for centuries but may be a reason for the non-commercialisation of its high value commodities: distaste for the practise of sacrifice felt by other religions and its associations with Satan.

3.3 Historical trends and institutional arrangements

It seems reasonable to assume that goat meat consumption in South Africa was relatively popular in the early part of the 19th century if one considers that approximately 68 000 indigenous short-haired goats could be found in Swellendam alone in 1840, and as many as 94 000 in 1843 (Uys, 1988). Blacks kept their own goats, so these statistics were probably related to the goats consumed by the White population. What then caused the demise of the popularity of goats as a commodity among the White population of South Africa?

Lack of availability and perceptions created

Could it have been caused by a similar situation to the non-use of mutton in the U.S.A.? It has been suggested that the general non-use of mutton by the Americans was caused when the American forces spent the last part of the Second World War in Europe. Apparently, the most common meat type that they were offered was mutton. On returning to America these soldiers associated mutton with the unpleasantness of war and thus their children, later to be known as the “baby-boomers” (that sector of the American population who were to set the trends in America for the next 60 years) were never exposed to mutton as they were growing up. Consequently, mutton is not a well-known commodity in the United States, and yet few people can actually explain the trend (S. Hart, E. (Kika) de la Garza Goat Research Institute, Oklahoma, USA – Personal communication, 1995).

Thus, similarly, the decrease in the use of goat meat may have been caused by the sharp decline in the popularity of mohair in the late 1920's (Uys, 1988). This prompted the South African Government to urge Angora farmers to replace their goats with Merino sheep. This situation was further exacerbated by the drought and depression of the 1930's when it became Government policy to promote the replacement of Angoras with Merino and Persian sheep (since it was felt that goats further ruined the environment – although the greater economic importance of mutton and wool could also have played a role – wool was a major South African export product along with minerals). This led to a substantial decline in Angora numbers, from 4.3 million in 1912 to approximately 624 261 in 1939 (Uys, 1988). This may have led to very few

goats being consumed by the White population during a certain period of time (it seems obvious that traditional and cultural use by Blacks continued through this period), causing goats to be unfamiliar to a certain generation of consumers, and where negative perceptions originated, these were reinforced through lack of knowledge or exposure to the product.

Popular perceptions that fuelled this negativity included the perception that goats are a cause of erosion. This fact has been debated since the 1940's. In 1944 a letter to the Farmer's Weekly by Ted Outram explained that farmers and not the goats were to blame for exploiting the grazing. His arguments in favour of goats included the less damaging browsing behaviour of goats versus the grazing of sheep close to the ground, the inclination of sheep and not goats to work in single file causing foot-paths, and also, the propensity of goats to curb bush growth which improved grazing (Uys, 1988). However, this negative perception has endured because goats are often seen in badly degraded areas. What needs to be understood is that the selective feeding behaviour allows the goat to survive in areas where other animals cannot, thus their presence is explained. However, these negative perceptions continue. If farmers feel that goats cause degradation, then few goats will be produced and less goats will be available to the market.

Organisation of the meat industry and emphasis on other commodities

The lack of commercialisation of goats was further exacerbated by several government institutions within the Apartheid government. The Meat Board, for example, paid very little attention to research, marketing or data collection for the goat industry. Meat Board resources were spent developing industries of importance to White consumers, thus those such as beef, mutton, pork and poultry (although poultry had their own marketing board).

Limited research support

From information kept by institutions such as the Boer Goat Breeder's Association, and the Milk Goat Breeder's Society (S.A. Milch Goat Annual, 1963), lack of government support did not deter the enthusiasm of a handful of goat breeders and producers. From time to time these institutions roped in the assistance of researchers,

since there are several publications available that show that some research in the field of goats was done (Work done by Hofeyer, personal communication, 2004). At that time, research was almost completely sponsored by the government, so it is reasonable to assume that much of this research was basic in nature and aimed at adding to the general international body of knowledge on goats.

This dearth in goat research results was investigated by a workshop held in 1997 to assimilate as much information on the types of goat research that has been, and is being, done in South Africa (Roets, 1998). This workshop concentrated on research regarding mostly indigenous goats. Slippers (1998) listed recent initiatives in goat research which included: Research on the production and disease resistance of Saanen X indigenous goats at Medunsa, (Donkin, 1991); Anatomical and physiological research at Medunsa (Green and Baker, 1996); Indigenous goat productivity at the University of Fort Hare (Raats and Stead, 1990); Alternative feed resources and value-adding to goat products research at ARC – Animal Nutrition and Products Institute (Smuts-Ayers and Pienaar, 1996); Research on the genetic relationships between Southern African indigenous goats at ARC – Animal Improvement Institute (Ibronke, Cronjé and Kotzé, 1996); Research on the nutritional physiology of indigenous goats in relation to conditions in less developed areas at the University of Pretoria (De Jager, Cronjé and Casey, 1996; Pambu, Cronjé and Casey, 1996, Vlok, Cronjé and Casey, 1996); Evaluation of indigenous x Saanen goats for milk production and cashmere production of indigenous goats in KwaZulu -Natal at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture (J.F. de Villiers, - personal communication -1997); Integration of indigenous goats into small farm systems and the use of goats milk by rural households at Makhathini Experimental Station (Du Toit, 1994), Cashmere production and processing research at CSIR – Textek (Braun and Van Rensburg, 1996); Introduction and multiplication of Gorno Altai and Australian Feral Goats for cashmere production at Rumevite farm Rondebult, Pretoria (Roets, 1998).

At the workshop (Roets, 1998) these projects were further explained and other research was added to the body of work. Only those presentations that involved new research are presented here (Some papers merely reported on production issues or presented reviews on a subject of interest). Other research topics presented included: Rural leather tanning at the International School of Tanning Technology (Jackson-

Moss, 1998); Rural handcrafting of goat skins leather (Ginn, 1998); Indigenous sheep and goat farming systems research at the ARC – Range and Forage Institute (Swart, 1998); Assisted reproduction research at the University of the Free State (Greyling, 1998), and; Export protocols of goat embryos (Terblanche, 1998).

Work done at the various Department of Agriculture Experimental and Development Stations included: Bush utilisation and economic viability of various species in grazing systems in the Northern Province (Jordaan, 1998); Saanen x indigenous goat research in KwaZulu-Natal (Louw, 1998); Surveys of production and reproduction of non-commercialised goat farmer systems in Qwa-Qwa (Matli, 1998); Surveys of goat production and marketing in the North West Province (Fisser, 1998); Cashmere and Boer goat research in the Eastern Cape (Roux, 1998); Angora goat research for the Mohair industry (Snyman, 1998); Goat production emphasis in the Western Cape (King, 1998); Bush encroachment research at Armoedsvlakte (Van Zyl, 1998), and; Management of communal farming systems research in the North West Province (Celliers, 1998).

Slippers (1992) conducted a review of small ruminant nutrition research in South Africa for the period 1980 – 1990 and found that 11.2% of articles published in the South African Journal of Animal Science were focussed on goats, whereas goats make up 18% of the small ruminant numbers in South Africa. Congress presentations reflected the same relative neglect of goat research.

Most of the above-mentioned research involved little involvement of non-commercialised farmers, albeit in the context of surveys, although some work (especially work on Boer goats and Angoras) was done at the request of and with the involvement of commercial producers. Little, if any, work was done on marketing, product development, or institutional arrangements that could serve the goat industry (such as that which was done for other commodities by the Meat Board). In the discussion that followed the workshop (Roets, 1998), there was much debate regarding the identity of the intended beneficiaries of research, and although marketing and product development was mentioned as important research topics, a plan of action of how such work could be done, and who could take leadership in such work was left unanswered. Furthermore, reporting of this research is limited to scientific

journals and conference proceedings, with some work being published in station reports or the popular press such as the “Farmer’s Weekly” or “Landbou Weekblad”. Farmer’s Days at Experimental Stations are also used as a means to transfer research results to farmers. However, it can be debated whether non-commercialised farmers have access to these information types or whether they can translate these results into practical and useful knowledge that can be applied to their production systems with real economic returns.

Thus producers have essentially been left to their own devices regarding commercialisation of their goat resources. The high cost of marketing any product, be it through magazines, to supermarkets and perhaps even on television or radio, has forced goat producers to rely on word-of-mouth marketing mechanisms, and this has led to the development of informal institutional arrangements in the goat industry in lieu of any government or state sponsored support.

Exploitive historical marketing channels

The lack of any co-ordinated support to the Goat industry led to the development of the speculator industry. Because no formal marketing channels were created, no price indices were available, no control boards were set up, and no retail stores were demanding stock for their White consumers (although the Indian and Black communities still required goats for their traditional or cultural uses), the speculator industry developed to fill this need. Thus individual speculators drive around rural areas buying goats from non-commercialised goat farmers who are in the market for cash-flow purposes (personal observation; 1996 – 2004). If larger quantities of stock are required, speculators also negotiate with livestock and meat co-operatives or agents who have connections with commercial goat farmers, or auctions are arranged at which speculators buy the stock required. The main market for the goats collected in this way is in KwaZulu-Natal, where more than 5 large auction operations sell goats to Black traders throughout the year (Letty, 1997).

Why then did the non-commercialised farmers not fill this niche themselves? The answer can be found in the limitations imposed by high transaction costs. Non-commercialised farmers often have no access to any means of transport (vehicles or roads) or communications (telephones etc.) (As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis).

Thus, it becomes necessary that their animals are purchased from them on their land or as close as possible to their land, making them dependant on the “drive-by” speculator industry. Speculators do not, as a rule, develop formal agreements with non-commercialised farmers. As such, the price that will be offered for the animals is unknown, and the date of the next sale is not determined beforehand. Often, resource-poor farmers in need of cash flow will hold goats in holding pens at the side of busy roads or intersections, in the hope that a speculator will pass (Non-commercialised farmers – personal communication, 1996 - 2004). This often results in animals dying or being in poor condition when the transaction eventually takes place. Furthermore, the speculator will then argue that he has grounds for paying a lower price for poor quality goods, and the transaction ultimately holds little value for the farmer. This will either result in the resource-poor farmer being less likely to attempt this method of transaction in the future, and he will not market his animals in this way until he is forced to do it again because of dire cash-flow problems (Non-commercialised farmers – personal communication, 1996 - 2004). Cases have also been reported where resource-poor farmers needing a larger transaction would send many animals to a local market place, only to be told that the speculator had only brought money for a certain number of animals. Because it was more inconvenient for the resource-poor farmer to transport the animals back to his land, he would consent to the sale of all the animals at a greatly reduced price (Ben Benjamin, Namibian Department of Agriculture – personal communication, 2000; non-commercialised farmers – personal communication, 1996 - 2004).

Thus, the speculator industry, although currently fulfilling a vital function and service to non-commercialised farmers, has created an institutional arrangement which is maintained through lack of knowledge or access to the means of operation on the part of the non-commercialised farmer. A new institutional arrangement that brings the market to the non-commercialised farmer, that provides this market in a reliable, consistent manner and that offers the non-commercialised farmer a fair price, is needed. Also, further benefits could be found in an institutional arrangement where the non-commercialised farmer may reap further rewards from value-adding operations. The market for live animals will essentially remain, but further markets, especially for value-added products and penetration into the retail and export markets

need to be investigated. This will allow non-commercialised farmers to become truly linked to the market economy, and will encourage improved production practices, responsible resource utilisation and ultimately, quality produce in the shopping carts of consumers.

3.4 Prevailing negative consumer perceptions

As mentioned above, it seems likely that a generation gap in the everyday utilisation of goat products has led to lack of knowledge and negative perceptions regarding goat products. In rural areas, older people often mention that they recall using goat milk as children (Tribal elders – personal communication, 1999). Others remember that as children on farms or small towns in the Eastern Cape (Green, 1998) everyone in the neighbourhood had a small herd of goats, and that milk and meat was often consumed.

Nowadays, when goat meat is mentioned, mixed reactions result. Some acquaintances mention that when they tried it, they couldn't tell the difference between mutton and goat meat, while others state that it tastes terrible. A meat scientist colleague mentioned that she recalls a gala dinner where "leg of lamb" was served, which anatomically, looked remarkably like goat (Hettie Schönfeldt – personal communication, 2000)! My grandfather, Nicholas Smuts, was the chief abattoir inspector in the Cape Peninsula for most of his life. He also told me stories of misleading friends with goat meat at dinner parties. I have had many, similar, stories recounted. Some meat processors substitute mutton with goat meat when the price of mutton is high (Personal communication with butchers in KwaZulu-Natal, 1999). Thus, it seems clear that many consumers, while having a "mental block" regarding goat meat, have probably consumed it, without knowing, on several occasions. Such is the power of perception.

A consumer survey commissioned in 1997 (Smuts, 1998a) showed that negative and positive perceptions regarding goat meat exist (More detail of this survey is presented later in this text). These include that goat meat is smelly, stringy and tough, while, on the positive side, that correct farming methods are applied, and that the meat is nutritious. Mothers of young babies are generally quite knowledgeable regarding the

benefits of goat's milk for babies with allergic reactions to cow's milk. A database of producers and suppliers of goat's milk is updated annually by the Animal Nutrition and Products Institute at Irene that is often requested by baby companies, mothers and paediatricians alike.

In the consumer survey mentioned above (Smuts, 1998a), consumers responded quite positively to taste samples of both goat meat and milk. In all instances both consumer and retail respondents indicated an increased willingness to buy the products if they saw them on a retail shelf, after tasting them.

3.5 Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the historical and traditional context of goats which may be one of the main reasons for the non-commercialisation of indigenous goat products in South Africa (and quite possibly Africa as a whole) as suggested by Hypothesis 2. The importance of the traditional use of goats far outweighs its economic worth in the tribal customs of many indigenous people. As has been the case with cattle throughout Africa, where the number of animals owned is more important than the quality or production of the animal, similarly, the size, weight, milk or meat production or product quality of a goat has not been as important as the goat itself, its colour, its sex or the use to which it will be put traditionally.

A good way to describe this trend is that some people keep several types of domestic animals for companionship, such as dogs and cats. A few people have commercialised the companion animal industry, such as the pet food industry, pedigree animal breeders, and veterinary practices and so on, but few people would think of breeding their pets for commercial gain. If however, these pet owners were faced with poverty, food insecurity and no other means of income generation, one could assume that some would turn to selling their animals and others may even turn to eating their pets, if necessary. As absurd as this may seem, a similar reaction of amusement was received from some non-commercialised farmers when they were told how sought-after goat meat or milk is in some overseas countries! The thought of eating or utilising goat products has not been part of their social paradigm. This is

similar to the reaction one would receive if you were to suggest eating cattle in India where the animal is sacred.

Thus, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and the gradual urbanisation and Westernisation of rural and indigenous peoples, coupled with the increased access to information regarding the various uses of goats, has created a shift in the perceived importance of goats towards one as an object of potential economic benefit. Non-commercialised farmers, once provided with the necessary information, are most keen to improve the production of their goats. However, it is interesting to note that although they will tend to increase the production potential of their animals (given the correct training and information), they also wish to maintain a certain part or number of their flock for traditional use (either for their own ceremonies or for sale to other community members who use the animals traditionally) (Non-commercialised farmers – personal communication, 1996 - 2004). This practise should be encouraged, since the process of commercialisation is not intended to strip rural inhabitants of their traditions and customs, but essentially to assist them to gain, not only economically, but also to create and maintain their traditional lifestyles in a sustainable environment, in which they can function and live comfortably in their rural surroundings. This would decrease their need to move to urban centres to ensure their livelihoods, and which would, in any event, strip them of their traditional ways of life.

Thus, information regarding the potential commercial uses of goats should be distributed effectively and widely to non-commercialised goat farmers in rural areas. It is not their lack of interest that has resulted in non-commercialisation of their goats, but a lack of knowledge regarding their economic uses. Knowledge which has not been part of their social paradigm, knowledge which was not encouraged by the institutional arrangements of the day and which has thus limited the economic utilisation of their animals.

Furthermore, where vertical co-ordination is to be encouraged, a system should be created for non-commercialised farmers to use some animals themselves, as well as to market animals to other community members for traditional use. It is felt that a draconian style of co-ordination will inhibit a sense of ownership, responsibility and

empowerment that would be necessary for the success of a vertically co-ordinated venture in this industry.

As far as the current informal goat marketing institutions are concerned, its informal nature is a clear example of how differential access to information has created a viable goat industry for some sectors of the population whereas others, without the information or resources to access the industry, have not developed, even though they own the greatest part of the goat resource base. Formal institutional arrangements need to be created, or existing institutional arrangements need to be adapted to better serve the non-commercialised farmer as part of the national goat industry. Such institutional arrangements need to manage and facilitate aspects such as branding, marketing and quality control, and need to take the information, communication, transport, and social constraints of the non-commercialised farmer into consideration in its design.

Further problems within the current industry include the rigid institutional distinctions between research and extension organisations. This was also found to be a major inhibitory factor in the servicing of the needs of farmers in real-world situations in other countries (Hall, Clark, Taylor and Sulaiman, 2001) and this institutional distinction has been debated in South Africa for many years. Generating and transferring technologies require strong national agricultural research systems. Eponou (1989) suggested that there also has to be good linkages between research and the users of the technologies. Any development programme should aim to strengthen service provision to the non-commercialised sector by various means. These include technical personnel better trained to deal with development and non-commercialised farmer issues, and services that will serve these sectors in a relevant manner. Approaches should be holistic and ensure that development initiatives will focus on the real problems of the users and not only on transfer of technology.

From the overview of research conducted at research and extension institutions it seems that most are involved in research on-station and that little work is done with, for, or by, non-commercialised or commercial goat farmers. Institutional innovations at these research and extension institutions may be required to assist with the development of this industry. Research emphasis needs to be shifted to areas where

the greatest return for farmers can be achieved. This includes product related research, product development, and market analysis. Research in nutrition, genetics and physiology will be requested as the industry matures, thus creating a demand-led research system.

And finally, although negative consumer perceptions regarding goat products exist, it seems that these may be decreased with a well-planned marketing and advertising campaign, and the presentation of high quality, well presented, convenient and varied goat product ranges, accessible to urban and foreign consumers. It seems clear that negative perceptions, coupled with a lack of knowledge regarding goat products and their benefits, and especially the lack of access to these products by the urban consumers has exacerbated the non-commercialisation of goat products in South Africa. This problem could be remedied with the supply of high value products to the retail industry coupled with an active marketing and advertising campaign expounding the benefits of goat products. These matters will be further addressed in Part 2 of this thesis.