

A publication of the Market Information Service (MIS) - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
"Linking the market and Primary producers"

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SHEEP

Livestock plays a vital role in the economy of Samoa, contributing significantly to food security, income generation, and the nutritional well-being of families.

Ovis aries is the scientific name for sheep, a domestic ruminants which are typically kept as livestock. It is a species of domesticated ruminants (cud-chewing) commonly raise for meat, milk, and wool. Sheep are typically stockier than their relative, the goat. Male sheep are called rams, females are ewes and young sheep are known as lambs¹. Sheep belongs to the *Bovidae* family which also includes other livestock such as goats, cattle and others².

Sheep behavior is known to have a highly developed flocking and herding instinct.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/animal/domesticated-sheep>

² <https://www.oaklandzoo.org/animals/domestic-sheep#:~:text=Sheep%20and%20goats%20belong%20to,ru minants%2C%20or%20cud%20chewing%20herbivores.>

They move over areas in groups. There is no overall leader within the flock that initiates feeding, fleeing or flocking. Therefore the flocking instinct contributes to the success of single shepherd and shows one small way this species has become an efficient agricultural staple³.



LOCAL PRODUCTION

Sheep were first introduced to Samoa in 2004 through a relatively new initiative with its first shipment of 40 animals imported from Fiji. The Fantastic sheep was the first sheep breed imported to our homeland from Fiji with an average of 10 animals kept by households⁴.

According to the Agriculture Census 2019-2020, the sheep population in Samoa had increased significantly, reaching 1654 sheep. This represents a fivefold increase compared

³ <https://www.oaklandzoo.org/animals/domestic-sheep#:~:text=Sheep%20and%20goats%20belong%20to,ru minants%2C%20or%20cud%20chewing%20herbivores.>

⁴ Agriculture Census 2009

to the 2009 Agriculture Census, which recorded an average of 11 livestock per household⁵.

In 2023, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics conducted the Samoa Household Income and Expenditures Survey (HIES) surveying approximately 3074 households. From this, it has stated that 42% of Samoa's households raise livestock, with only 1% raise sheep which is equivalent to 265 households who raise sheep including 248 raised in the Urban Areas and 1815 raised in the Rural Areas, resulting in a total sheep population of 2063 being raised in Samoa. The survey also highlighted that livestock, including sheep, is another source of income for families in Samoa. Livestock is also known as the second most prevalent activity among the population of Samoa mainly undertaking primary activities⁶.

Lambing percentage

The lambing percentage is 120 percent. It assumes that for each lambing, approximately 50 percent of lambs born are male and 50 percent female.

Mortality rate

For lambs aged 0-6 months, the mortality rate is 10 percent (i.e. 2 lambs in 20 lambs born will not survive). For the remainder of the mob (i.e. animals over 6 months of age), the mortality rate is 2 percent (i.e. 1 animal in 50 will not survive).

Breeding life of Ewes and Rams

Replacement Ewes (Ewe Hogget) are first mated at 12 months with an approximate

gestation period of 5 months (i.e. purchased in Year 1 will be joined in Year 2 and calve in Year 3). Due to the small number of breeding ewes available for developing the mob, Ewes are retained for a maximum breeding season of six years (cullled at 6 years old)..

Stocking Rate

Eight acres of improved pastures are available for the sheep enterprise, allowing an acre per 5 livestock units when the enterprise reaches steady state production (i.e. 30 sheep). The farmer commences a pasture improvement program in Year 1, improving 5 acres per year, by incorporating improved pasture species and legumes into the native pasture. This pasture improvement helps to increase the carrying capacity of the grazing area.

Flock structure

For the development budget, the mob is established in Year 1 with the purchasing of 10 ewe lambs (5-6 months) and one Ram. The enterprise builds up to a steady self-replacing mob of 30 ewes (represented in gross margin budget). The mob structure over the 10 years is presented over the leaf. All wethers are not retained for mob development; they should be fattened and sold off to make room for the ewes.

Ewe replacement rate is the percentage of ewes replaced in the flock each year. You need to keep enough ewe lambs to replace the ewes that die, as well as the ones that you cull. A replacement rate of 15 to 20 percent is common. You can make more rapid genetic improvements if you replace ewes at a more rapid rate.

The ram replacement rate is an indication of how many years a ram is kept. A 33 percent

⁵ Samoa Agriculture Census 2019-2020

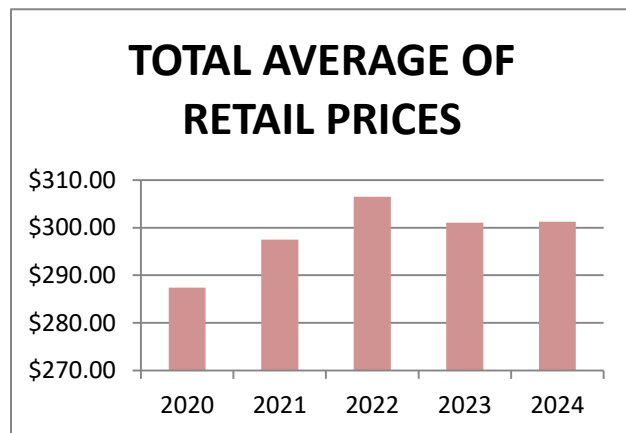
⁶ Samoa 2023 Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report

replacement rate means keeping a ram for three years before getting rid of him. In this budget, it is assumed that breeding rams are purchased. However, in most cases, it is the Animal health report and visual observations of these animals that will determine the viability of keeping the animal or are culled⁷.

MARKET INFORMATION

In Samoa, supermarkets are the primary retail outlet for meat. Retailers sell mutton flaps for an average price of \$29.50 per kilo. Mutton cut into pieces is typically sold at \$15.00 per packet. The graph below illustrates the total average retail prices of mutton flaps across retail channels from 2020 to 2024.

Figure 1: Total Average Retail Prices of Mutton Flaps a Year



Source: SBS-Consumer Price Index

The total quantity of imported sheep meat that was made available for public consumption as recorded in September 2024, is estimated at 1.4M kg and value at approximately \$11.7M SAT (C.I.F) for 2024. The majority of such sheep meat was imported from New Zealand, Australia, and other countries as well⁸.

⁷ Farm Management Manual 2022-2023

⁸ Import Monthly Report from SBS

Sales of Mutton to consume and Sheep for Breeding are as follows:

Culled Stock: - \$8.80/kg dress weight (i.e. this is the same throughout all classes of Sheep - avg. dressed weight 12kg)

Breeding Stock (i.e. Ram Hoggets’): - \$6.00/kg live weight – avg. wt. 22kg, and Ewe Hoggets’ = \$6.60/kg l wt. – avg. weight 35kg⁹.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDS

In both Fiji and Samoa, the two largest value chains for small ruminant products are formal retail markets. These markets primarily sell imported frozen products from Australia and New Zealand through formal retail outlets. Secondly, a festival market for locally produced whole animals sold at farm gates for backyard slaughter, mostly for religious holidays and customary uses¹⁰. In Samoa, farmers showcase their ruminants during the district’s First Harvest Events. Farmer then decides whether to sell their sheep or simply display them.

Fiji has the largest sheep population in the Pacific Island countries with 17,500 sheep. Samoa and Vanuatu are also significant producers of small ruminants with 13,000 sheep respectively. Therefore both Samoa and Fiji have a strong domestic demand for sheep meat. However, this demand is almost entirely supplied by the imported products¹¹.

⁹ Farm Management Manual 2022-2023

¹⁰ Assessment of markets and production constraints to small ruminant farming in the Pacific Island Countries

¹¹ Assessment of markets and production constraints to small ruminant farming in the Pacific Island Countries

Table 1: Average Prices at the Fugalei Market

Commodities (SAT\$/kg)	September 2024	October 2024	November 2024	Lowest Price for 2024 to date	Highest Price for 2024to date
Taro	5.82	5.27	5.62	3.66	5.82
Banana	2.58	2.16	2.22	1.46	2.58
Ta'amu	7.05	8.88	6.54	4.05	10.54
Coconut	0.98	1.05	0.93	0.86	1.05
Breadfruit	3.33	3.42	3.56	1.36	3.56
Yam	4.95	6.07	8.57	4.95	9.28
Head Cabbage	10.23	10.88	10.41	10.23	22.33
Tomato	21.96	23.77	23.12	21.96	52.64
Chinese Cabbage	6.58	8.64	10.51	6.58	16.02
Cucumber	9.86	9.72	8.14	6.91	9.86
Pumpkin	6.04	6.38	5.76	5.76	8.01

Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics

Table 2: Foreign Currency per Tala (SAT\$)

January 2025	USD\$	NZD\$	AUD\$	YEN\$	FJD\$	EURO
1 Samoan Tala SAT\$=	0.35	0.60	0.55	53.70	0.78	0.32

Source: BSP Exchange Rate

Market Link Newsletter

This newsletter is published bi-monthly and it seeks to assist stakeholders (farmers, consumers, wholesalers, policymakers) make informed market and marketing decisions based on credible, relevant price and supply information. Help us help you by providing constructive feedback on market information issues that will improve the service which will lead to growing a healthy and wealthy Samoa. For more information contact the Policy, Planning, Sector Coordination and Communication Division (PPSCCD) and ask for Fereni Tofilau.

Disclaimer

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Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
P.O Box 1874
Phone: (685) 22 561 or (685) 22 562
Email: fereni.tofilau@maf.gov.ws