

## **RMIS's 2025 Focus on small stock: *The Year of the Sheep***

In a strategic move to bolster South Africa's red meat sector, Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) has designated 2025 as the "Year of the Sheep." This initiative underscores the pivotal role of the sheep industry in the nation's agricultural landscape, focusing on enhancing lamb and mutton production, upholding rigorous standards, and fostering collaborative efforts to address industry challenges.

### **The Significance of the Sheep Industry in South Africa**

Sheep farming is integral to South Africa's agricultural economy, contributing significantly to both domestic consumption and export markets. In 2022, the country produced approximately 4.81 million head of sheep, reflecting a robust industry despite facing challenges such as fluctuating slaughter rates and environmental factors.

The economic impact of the sheep industry extends beyond meat production. It encompasses wool exports, employment opportunities in rural areas, and the sustenance of ancillary industries such as feed production and meat processing. Recognizing this multifaceted contribution, RMIS aims to elevate the profile of sheep farming through targeted initiatives and strategic partnerships.

### **RMIS's "Year of the Sheep" Initiative**

The "Year of the Sheep" initiative by RMIS is a comprehensive program designed to address key aspects of the sheep industry:

1. *Enhancing Production and Quality:* RMIS through 3<sup>rd</sup> party service providers plans to implement traceability, promote best farming practices, and provide access to modern technologies. These efforts aim to increase both the quantity and quality of lamb and mutton produced, ensuring competitiveness in both local and international markets.
2. *Strengthening Market Access:* By identifying new export opportunities and streamlining supply chains, RMIS seeks to expand the reach of South African sheep products. This includes navigating trade regulations and fostering relationships with international buyers.
3. *Upholding Industry Standards:* Maintaining high standards is crucial for consumer trust and marketability. RMIS is committed to enforcing stringent quality control measures, ensuring that South African lamb and mutton meet and exceed both local and international standards.

4. *Collaborative Efforts:* Recognising the importance of a unified approach, RMIS is partnering with various stakeholders, including National Wool Growers Association, the Red Meat Producers Organisation and looking to partner with Predation Management South Africa (PMSA), to address common challenges and promote sustainable practices.

### **Collaboration with Predation Management South Africa (PMSA)**

Predation poses a significant threat to sheep and goat farming, leading to substantial economic losses annually. In response, RMIS is investigating the possibilities to collaborate closely with PMSA throughout 2025 to develop and implement effective predation management strategies.

### **Importance of Upholding Standards Locally and Internationally**

In the global marketplace, adherence to stringent standards is non-negotiable. For South African lamb and mutton to remain competitive, it is imperative to maintain high-quality production processes and product offerings.

1. *Local Standards:* Ensuring food safety and quality within the domestic market builds consumer trust and supports public health. RMIS is dedicated to continuous monitoring and improvement of local standards, providing training and resources to farmers and processors through the Red Meat Abattoir Association as service provider.
2. *International Standards:* Compliance with international regulations opens doors to lucrative export markets. This involves meeting requirements related to animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and product traceability. RMIS's commitment to these standards is evident in its strategic plans and ongoing initiatives.

By upholding these standards, South African sheep products can secure premium positions in global markets, enhancing the industry's reputation and profitability.

### **Economic Outlook and Future Projections**

The global demand for sheep meat is on an upward trajectory, driven by population growth and changing dietary preferences. South Africa is poised to capitalise on this trend, with projections indicating a positive growth in both production and exports.

1. *Production Projections:* Sheep meat production in South Africa is expected to increase in 2025, supported by initiatives like the "Year of the Sheep" and improved farming practices.

2. *Export Growth*: With enhanced quality and compliance with international standards, South African sheep meat exports are anticipated to reach new markets, contributing to economic growth and industry sustainability.

These projections underscore the importance of RMIS's strategic focus and collaborative efforts in ensuring the long-term success of the sheep industry.

## **Conclusion**

The "*Year of the Sheep*" initiative by RMIS represents a significant milestone in advancing South Africa's red meat industry. By focusing on enhancing production, upholding rigorous standards, and fostering strategic collaborations, RMIS is paving the way for a resilient and prosperous sheep farming sector. As these efforts unfold throughout 2025, stakeholders across the value chain can look forward to a revitalized industry poised for sustained growth and success.

A key aspect of this initiative is collaboration. RMIS is working closely with the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO), the National Wool Growers Association (NWGA), and hopefully the Predation Management South Africa (PMSA) to address industry challenges collectively.

By uniting these key stakeholders, RMIS is fostering a coordinated approach to industry challenges, ensuring that South Africa's sheep industry remains competitive both locally and globally. Through these partnerships, RMIS is strengthening the foundation for a thriving and resilient sector that benefits all players in the value chain. As these collaborative efforts unfold throughout 2025, the "*Year of the Sheep*" promises to be a transformative period for the South African red meat industry.