

Division of Marketing
Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) Program

1989 Grant Final Report

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Proven Economic Potential

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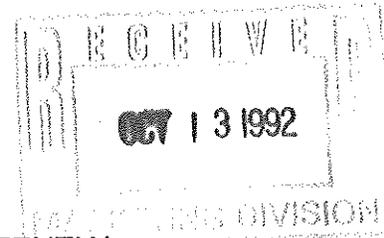
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FINAL REPORT
ANGORA GOATS AND MOHAIR IN WISCONSIN;
AN ALTERNATIVE ENTERPRISE WITH PROVEN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL
CONTRACT # 4016



I. FINAL PHASE

The final phase of the first contract (#4016) for the grant project entitled "Angora Goats and Mohair in Wisconsin; An Alternative Enterprise With Proven Economic Potential" was completed with the 1992 kidding of the 23 project does and distribution of the kids to farmer applicants. The last group was received by the applicant in September, 1992. Two of the original applicants who were chosen to receive project kids decided not to participate: Bill Manning and Jim and Ron Diny. Bill Manning was never clear about his reason, and the Diny brothers decided to raise elk. Both of these applicants communicated their decisions to me by telephone, not in writing. As none of the selected alternates appeared to be firmly committed, with the permission of Stacy Chrislaw of DATCP, a new alternate was selected based on demonstrated interest and commitment: Mary Clanin and Kemmer Speer, 3138 30th Ave., Wilson, WI., 54027. They have been in the beef business for a number of years and were seeking a way to diversify their operation. The other project kid recipients included Michael and Martha Breard, Laurel and Tom Kieffer, Mary Falk, Jay and Jannell Nichols, Vicky Weis and Lorna O'donovan (applications on file at DATCP). I am told that all project kids are doing well in their new situations. In total, 23 goats were distributed in 1992.

Three of the previous five participants have expanded their flocks with purchases of additional goats. I am told that the others intend to do so within the coming year. All will be requested to submit shearing and maintenance reports in the near future.

II. PROJECT INTENT AND BENEFIT

The original intent of this project was to help meet the need for family farm diversification in Wisconsin. Specifically, the project was intended to educate farmers about production and marketing opportunities for Angora goats and mohair in Wisconsin. Our own experience with raising Angora goats demonstrated that the goats could be successfully raised in the north and that they could make good use of under-utilized buildings and marginal or fragile pasture land. In addition to education, it was the intent of the project to make top quality breeding stock which produced commercially desirable hair readily available to Wisconsin farmers. The purpose of this aspect of the project was to stimulate active participation in the industry and to provide a good foundation of stock from which the industry in Wisconsin could grow. It was hoped that in a three year period about 30 farmers (not all project participants) would enter the industry with about 200 goats each. The project has supported the entry of 12 farmers into the business. As mentioned above, the growth of their flocks remains to be seen.

The perceived benefit to Wisconsin agriculture was that in 3 - 5 years (by 1995) hopefully about 30 farms would reach receipts of about \$400,000 to \$600,000 collectively for mohair produced in the state. With the commercial market as it has been in the last two years, our own farm has confirmed that this is a reachable goal on an average per farm basis with 150 - 200 Angora goats. If all project participants follow through with their stated commitment to expand their flocks, and based on market projections, this goal can be reached.

III. SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. This project, in view of the variety of project recipients, has both expanded the agriculture industry and has diversified Wisconsin agriculture. Two dairy farmers, an organic grower, two sheep producers, a beef producer, and a tree farmer are using the Angora goats as a farm diversification. The project also

OCT 13 1992

supported three existing producers by supplying top quality billies for improvement of their flocks. In addition, three new farmers entered the Angora goat industry, and two of these already have flocks of close to 20 goats. As the farmer participants were asked to commit to expanding to 100 -200 goats in 3 -5 years, the extent of expansion remains to be seen.

2. The project has helped to create an expanded market for breeding stock, as flock expansion will necessarily come from some additional purchased stock. This project has also increased the genetic diversity of Angora goat breeding stock in the state.

3. It was an assumption of this project that most of the mohair produced in Wisconsin would initially be marketed through the Texas-based existing commercial market. The breeding stock provided through the project were the fine-haired type of Angora goats, which produce the most commercially desirable mohair, thereby improving the competitive position of Wisconsin in the commercial market. By seeking to expand the number of goats in the state, it is hoped that in a few years it will be possible to attract individual commercial buyers directly to the state by virtue of the quality of hair we can produce. In addition, the project which was an extension of this one established the Angora Goat and Mohair Association of Wisconsin, the stated purpose of which is to assist in education and marketing, both of which should support the competitive position of this industry in Wisconsin.

4. Angora goats are relatively easy keepers and low-maintenance animals. They can readily utilize marginal pastureland and hay, and can be easily housed in older existing buildings, drawing these resources into economic productivity for a farm.

IV. EXPECTATIONS, SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

At this point in time I can say that the grant project results have largely met my original expectations. There were around 100 inquiries each year regarding the project in general and the project kids, which certainly indicates a strong interest in the state for a diversified agriculture, and for Angora goats specifically. In both 1991 and 1992 there were around 20 actual applications for project kids, which confirmed a serious interest. The radio and newspaper coverage assisted by DATCP certainly was beneficial for exposure for the goats and for the program in general. I was also pleased that experienced and active farmers joined the project to diversify their farms. I would have liked to see more of the applicants expand their flocks considerably in the first year; however, the commitment to do so appears to be there, and some are expecting to purchase stock in the coming year. I would have also liked to see more non-project farmers enter the industry on a large scale. To my knowledge, in the last two years one large scale producer retired and dispersed his flock, a medium-scale producer did the same, and there was a new flock of 200-300 commercial goats obtained from Oklahoma started in the Green Bay area (I have not spoken with this producer). Our own flock is presently 160 Angora goats, 20% of which are commercial, and 80% are registered.

The two-day intensive workshop sponsored by the grant in March, 1991, attracted 65 active and potential producers. The interest was strong and the comments were very favorable. This was a very beneficial aspect of the project.

V. EDUCATION

1. In March, 1991, the grant sponsored a two-day intensive school on Angora goat management and mohair grading. The school was taught by a Texas Angora goat expert, Jack Groff of Kerrville, Tx. The school was held in Madison in conjunction with the Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference, which is one of the largest of its kind in the country. The purpose of the school was to introduce potential producers to Angora goat management, and to improve the management skills of active producers to increase the profitability of their operations. Knowledge of mohair grading is critical for receiving top dollar for commercially sold mohair. The school was very well received, and promoted confidence and interest in the industry. As part of the school, participants spent about 3 hours at this farm observing our

management system and our kidding operation which was underway.

The success of this school led to a second school being offered in September, 1992, as part of the extension of this grant project. It was attended by about 30 producers.

2. In response to the large number of phone inquiries I received, a 16-page information packet was developed and distributed. The same information packet is being used by the Angora Goat and Mohair Association in response to inquiries. Information in the packet covers marketing, shearing, nutrition and general management.

3. Although no specific project field days other than the one associated with the school were offered at Odyssey Farm, we received probably close to 50 visitors (or more). In addition, we participated in a farm tour day sponsored by a Madison food cooperative and in a tour for Wisconsin high school and vo-tech agriculture teachers. Both were attended by 30 - 40 people.

4. Information will be collected from farmer participants, mainly regarding shearing yields and kidding, in order to evaluate the likelihood of large production differences under different management systems.

VI. FUTURE PROJECTIONS

As described above, the Angora goat population in Wisconsin will surely increase in the next 2-5 years. This growth will serve to attract large buyers of mohair directly to the state. In addition, the Angora Goat and Mohair Association has a strong and enthusiastic membership and leadership. The goals of the Association are education and marketing assistance, both of which should support the growth of the industry in Wisconsin.



OCT 13 1992