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Fact Sheet

MIDWEST GOAT PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

Farm Characteristics and Production Outlook | A Producer Survey Fact Sheet

About the survey

A cross-sectional mail survey of Midwestern small ruminant producers was conducted May–August 2025. Producers were drawn from the U.S. Farm Data directory.

2,000 mailed → 1,598 valid mailings → 230 responses → 205 usable → 32 goat producers

Who is raising goats?

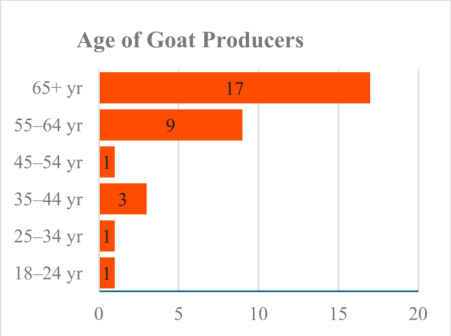
All 32 producers live in rural areas and respondents generally skew older. About half are female, and 41% hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

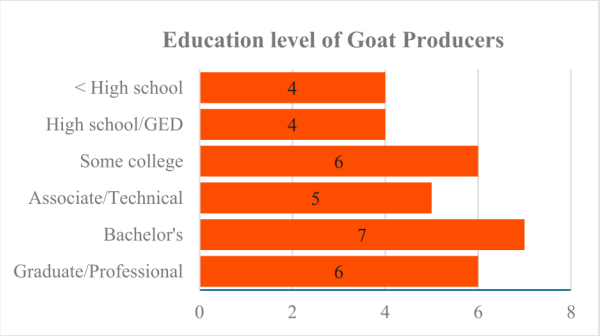
47% female (15 of 32)

41% bachelor's+ (13 producers)

53% age 65+ (17 producers)

100% rural (32 of 32)





Goat operation structure

Graze + feed: 28 (87.5%)

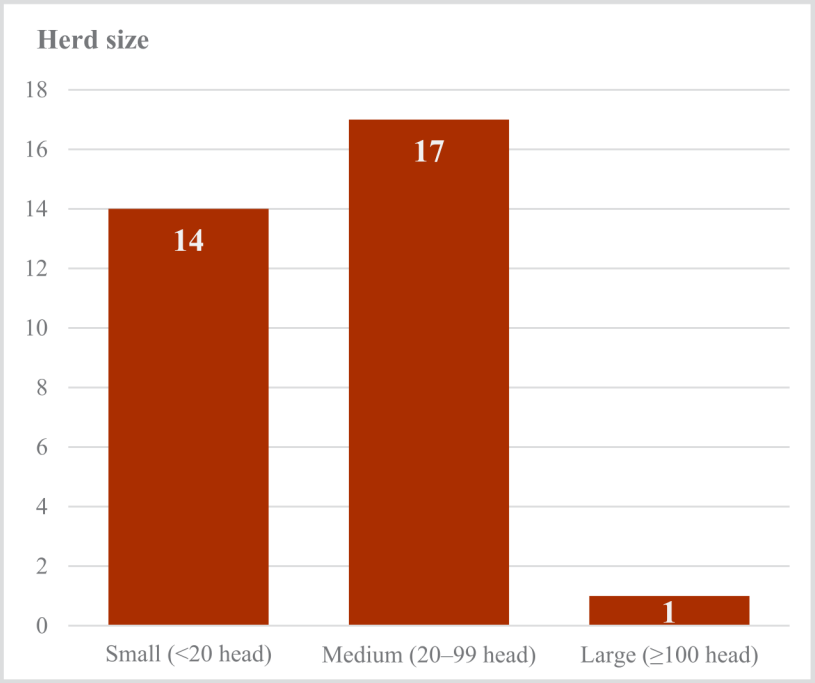
Buy feed: 28 (87.5%)

Family labor: 32 (100%)

Hired labor: 5 (15.6%)

Small-scale sector: most producers combine grazing with supplemental feeding and most purchase feed. Producers rely almost entirely on family labor, with only a handful hiring outside help. Reported sales volumes are modest, clustered in the low double digits of head per year.

Herd size



Support systems

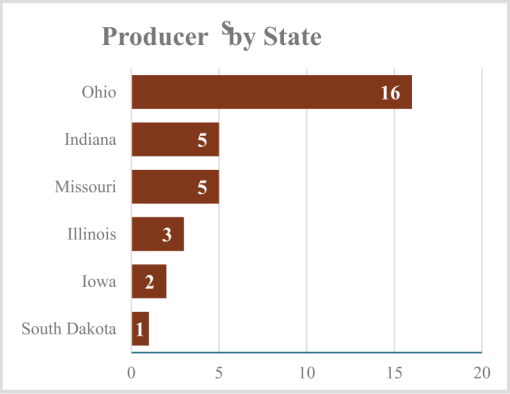
34%
Cooperative membership (11 of 32)

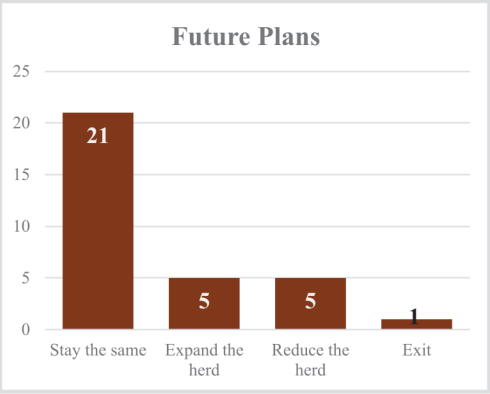
0%
Credit access (0 of 32)

6%
Had Extension visits (2 of 32)

Where they farm and future plans

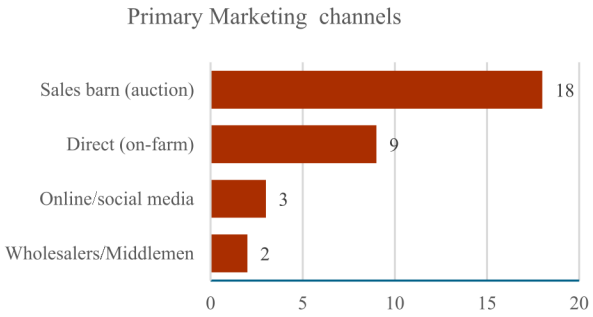
Goat producers come from six Midwestern states, with half of respondents located in Ohio. They are experienced producers, although they report fewer years in goat production than sheep producers report in sheep production. The sector appears relatively stable, with most producers planning to maintain their current herd size and only one planning to exit.

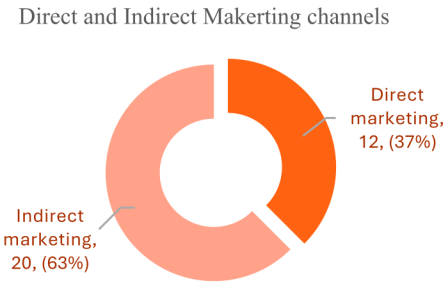




How goats are marketed

Goat producers use multiple channels to sell goats and related products, with the majority involved in indirect marketing. Indirect marketing refers to sales made to consumers through distributors or retailers, while direct marketing does not involve an intermediary. Among the channels, most producers sell through auction yards. Respondents reported relatively short travel distances and no difficulty securing transportation to market. No respondents reported marketing expenses.



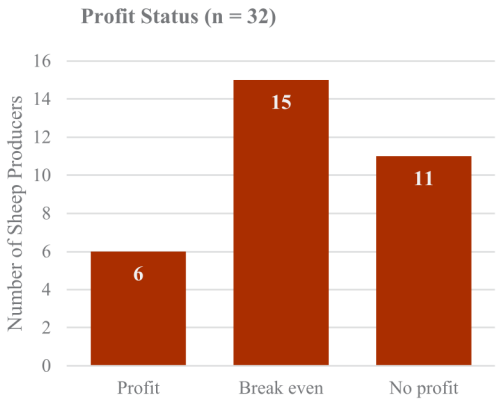


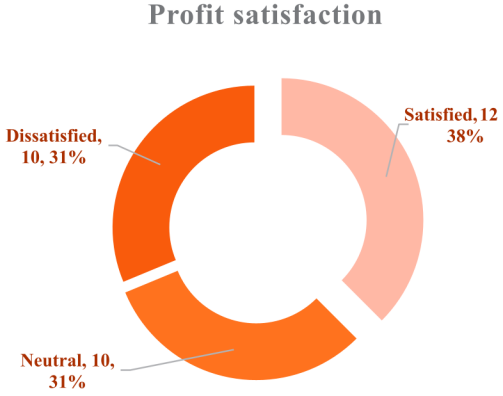
Market access: very low barriers

$0	9	25 miles	3
marketing cost reported	sell on-farm (0 miles)	median travel to market	travel 90+ miles

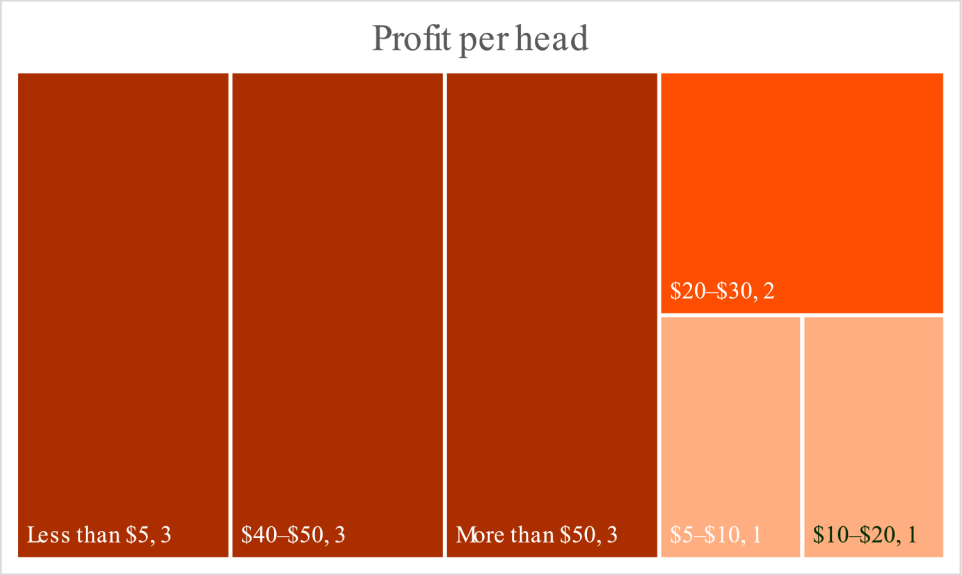
Profitability and value addition

Profitability is a major challenge among surveyed goat producers, and few respondents reported value-added activities. Despite thin margins, producer satisfaction is mixed rather than negative.





Profitability and value addition



Core challenges

19% earn a profit (6 of 32)

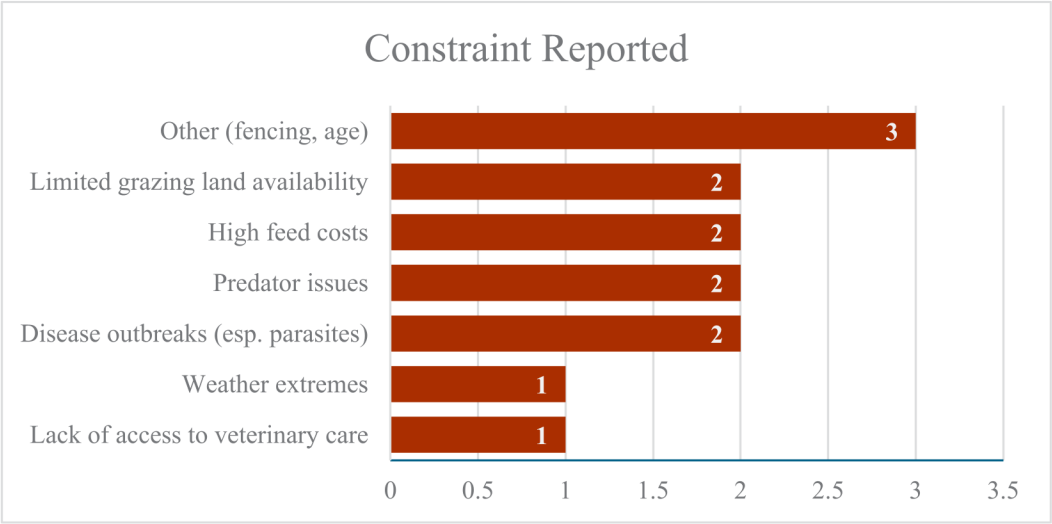
2 add value to goat products

0 reported credit access

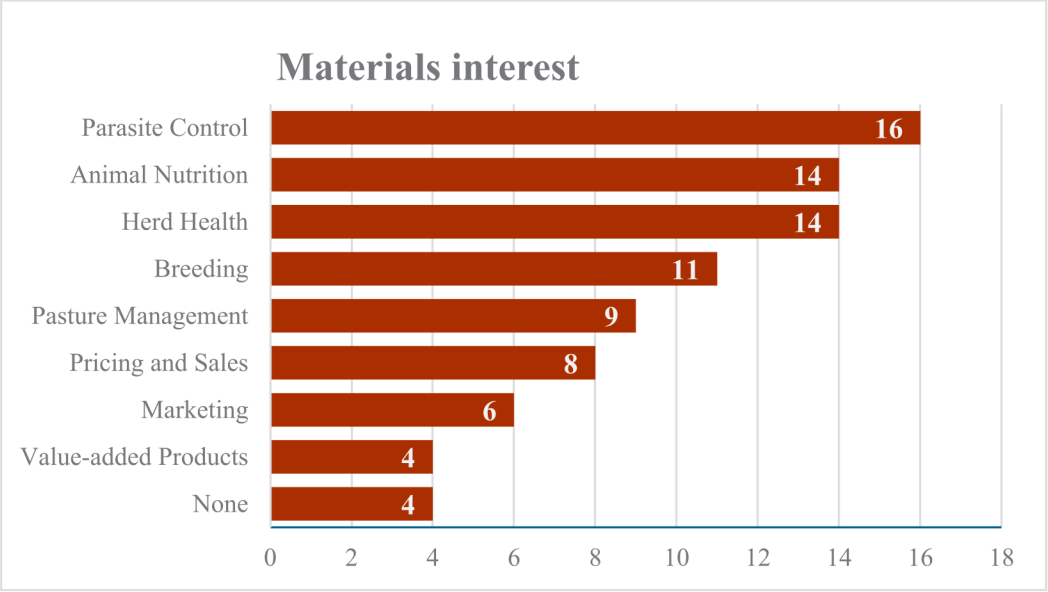
2 ever had an extension visit

Constraints and educational needs

Few producers report constraints, and those named are scattered. Interest in educational materials centers primarily on production topics, while fewer producers requested marketing and value-added information.



Constraints and educational needs



Key takeaways

- Although some producers use direct and online marketing, most continue to depend on auctions.
- Reported profitability is low, while value-added activity and credit access are uncommon among surveyed producers.
- Outreach should also recognize the substantial participation of women, who represent 47% of surveyed goat producers.
- Extension barely reaches goat producers. Outreach focused on the parasite, nutrition and herd-health topics producers request most is a priority. This includes the female producer dominant sectors.
- The sector appears stable rather than expanding, and no surveyed producers reported marketing expenditures.

Source: Producer survey on sheep and goat marketing, Midwestern U.S., May–August 2025 (goat-only producers, n = 32). Small sample—interpret with caution. Some items have fewer responses (profit per head n = 13; head sold n = 29; constraints cited by 9 producers). Part 2 of a two-part fact sheet series.