

Supporting Aussie exports

Given the limited size of the Australian market, the ongoing viability of sheep production in Australia relies heavily on exports and maintaining our ability to sell products to markets overseas – known as 'market access'.

Australian sheepmeat is fortunate to have some of the best market access globally. This is thanks to the quality of our products and the priority the Australian Government has placed on establishing free trade agreements to govern trade relationships and promoting two-way benefits.

Sheep Producers Australia supports this by monitoring current and emerging trade risks and developing industry policy positions and input that can be used in trade negotiations.

Representing Australia, and feeding the world

Sheep and goat meat is Australia's 5th largest agricultural export by value at \$4.7bn in 2022-23. This represents a significant, resilient and consistent contribution to our economy.

The role our farmers play in helping feed the world is something to be truly proud of. Many countries don't produce enough protein to feed their citizens, and Australian lamb and mutton are helping them to maintain food security and fill this gap.

Lamb is recognised as being synonymous with Australia and associated with celebration and sustenance in countries and cultures all over the world.

Australia is the world's largest sheep meat exporter, accounting for 50% of global [sheepmeat](#) in 2023. We export as much as 70% of our lamb, over 90% of our mutton and our key export markets include the US, China, Korea, Malaysia, the Middle East and North Africa region.

Australia is also the world's largest exporter of wool.

Key ingredients for market access

Australia's reputation, and trust, has been earned through:

- **A strong track record in animal health and food safety:** Australia is free of many diseases found overseas, and has advanced surveillance systems, agreements and protocols in place to rapidly detect and respond if needed.
- **Our world-leading national traceability system:** Australia's livestock traceability system is world-class, ensuring every sheep is traceable through the supply chain from birth to processing. If there is a disease outbreak, a biosecurity threat or a food safety incident, rapid and reliable tracing of sheep will identify the source of a disease or issue, contain it and minimise impacts.

- **Low residues and national testing:** Export markets demand that meat is free of unacceptable chemical residues that can arise from the environment, fertilisers or veterinary medicine - setting maximum residue limits. Australia's [National Residue Survey](#) is an ongoing testing program for chemical residues in meat that confirms Australia as a provider of clean food. In 2022-23 the overall compliance rating confirmed for sheep meat samples was 99.1%.
- **Strict animal welfare practices:** Animal welfare is protected by law in Australia and underpinned by stringent Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. It is supported by knowledge and skilled management through the prevention of disease and injury, veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, nutrition, and recognised Australian industry best practice with regard to handling, transport, processing and euthanasia.
- **Quality products:** As a protein, lamb and mutton is nutritious and delicious. Australia has a strong reputation as a reliable supplier of high quality, safe and consistent products that meet and exceed expectations.
- **The Livestock Production Assurance program:** Australia's [on-farm quality assurance system](#) serves as a quantifiable measure of good practice. It is an independently audited, on-farm assurance program covering food safety, animal welfare and biosecurity that provides evidence of livestock history and on-farm practices to provide assurance that the food products that we supply are ethically and safely produced.

Premium products and pricing, in line with global demand

Global demand for sheepmeat continues rising and Australia has high quality products, but maintaining Australia's competitive position cannot be taken for granted.

Meat Standards Australia (MSA) is an eating quality program for beef and sheep meat, based on extensive consumer research. All meat underpinned by the MSA program has met strict criteria to ensure it meets consumer expectations for attributes of tenderness, juiciness and flavour, and is labelled according to recommended cooking method.

MSA and its partners have spent 10 years researching and developing a 'cut by cooking method model' that will reward producers of high-quality meat and help boost the industry's profitability via pricing scales based on objective carcase measurement.

Technologies have been developed using sheepmeat industry levies to objectively measure meat attributes during carcase processing by assessing intramuscular fat, eye muscle depth and fat cover. This will provide measurable proof of meat quality to customers and create marketing opportunities to increase demand for Australian products.

Sheep Producers Australia endorses this approach and individual carcase tracking so that producers can receive feedback about lean meat yields and eating quality traits of their livestock. This will not only inform individual producers' decisions, it will support ongoing productivity and profitability improvements for the long-term benefit of the industry as a whole.