Australia is the world's largest exporter of sheepmeat, and is the world's second largest producer of lamb and mutton (FAO). The off-farm meat value (domestic expenditure plus export value) of the Australian sheepmeat industry was approximately $5.23 billion in 2016-17 – up 3% on the 2015-16 period (ABS, MLA estimate).

At the time of publication, figures included in this document were the most up to date available but may be subject to revision.

**Flock facts and figures:**

- 31,136 agricultural businesses with sheep and lambs (ABS Agricultural Commodities 2015-16).
- There were 37.2 million head of breeding ewes aged one-year and older as at 30 June 2016 (ABS Agricultural Commodities 2015-16).
- Prime lamb producers are predominately located in the Riverina, the wheat-sheep zone of NSW, the Victorian and NSW Murray region and the high rainfall areas in south-west Victoria and eastern South Australia. Sheep are primarily located in south-west WA, south western part of Victoria and the southern part of NSW.
- The sheepmeat industry accounts for 36% of all businesses with agricultural activity (ABS Agricultural Commodities 2015-16).

**People in the industry:**

- Around 200,000 people are employed in the red meat industry, including on-farm production, processing and retail (MISP 2020).

**How much is produced?**

- In 2016-17, Australia produced 506,239 tonnes cwt of lamb and 163,365 tonnes cwt of mutton (ABS).

**What is the value of production**

- The gross value of Australian lamb and mutton production (including live exports) in 2016-17 is estimated at A$3.9 billion (ABARES Agricultural Commodities June 2017).
- Lamb and mutton production (including live exports) contributed 6% to the total farm value of A$62.8 billion in 2016-17 (ABARES Agricultural Commodities June 2017).

**Domestic value and consumption:**

- Domestic expenditure was approximately A$2.3 billion on lamb and $88 million on mutton in 2016-17 (ABS, MLA estimate).
- Australians ate around 9kg of lamb and 0.5kg of mutton per person in 2016-17 (ABS, DAWR, MLA Estimate) – among the highest sheepmeat consumption in the world.
- Lamb had the third-highest share of retail sales of any meat in 2016-17, with around 13% share of fresh meat sales (by value). (AC Nielsen HomeScan).

*Domestic per capita consumption is calculated by subtracting the volume exported from the volume produced and imported on a carcase weight equivalent basis, and then dividing by the latest ABS Australian population estimate.*
Fast Facts 2017

Australia’s sheep industry

Export value and volume:
- In 2016-17, Australia exported 57% of total Australian lamb production and 92% of total Australian mutton production (DAWR, ABS).
- The value of total lamb exports in 2016-17 was A$1.94 billion and the value of mutton exports was A$720 million (ABS/GTA).
- Australian live sheep exports were valued at A$234 million in 2016-17 (ABS).

Australia’s place in the world:
- Australia produced approximately 8% of the world’s lamb and mutton supply in 2014 (FAO).
- Australia is the largest exporter of sheepmeat in the world (FAO 2013).
- Australia is the world’s third largest live sheep exporter (FAO 2013).

Top ten world lamb and mutton exporters

Top ten world lamb and mutton producing countries

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Please note: The ABS have changed their collection method for the 2015-16 Agricultural Census, excluding businesses with an Estimated Value of Agricultural Operations of less than $40,000.