

A new farming venture, Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms, announces the formation of a major sheep production operation initially focused in Western Canada. Canada Sheep is a business venture between Sarto Sheep Farms Inc. of Manitoba, including its proven highly productive sheep flock, facilities and experienced team, and Integrated Foods Ltd of New Zealand and its extensive experience in large scale integrated sheep production and lamb processing for domestic and international markets.

Patrick Smith, current owner of Sarto Sheep Farms Inc., will be the President of Canada Sheep Farms, with ongoing responsibility to grow the existing flock from 5,000 breeding ewes to 30,000 within the first 5 years and further growth beyond that. "I'm very excited by the potential to leverage 40 years experience developing our breeding ewes to their current level of productivity in this new venture."

Gary Alexander, Managing Director of Integrated Foods, will be the Chairman of Canada Sheep. A Canadian, originally from Alberta but resident in New Zealand for the last 25 years, he is well aware of the potential to grow sheep production and processing in Western Canada. "I'm impressed by the productivity of the Sarto Sheep operation and believe we can add real value in expanding the marketable lamb flock to meet the tremendous unserved demand for fresh lamb in Canada and internationally."

Canada Sheep will provide contracted producers ("Multipliers") with bred ewes to be managed through lambing and the resulting lambs first 10 weeks of growth to weaning. These lambs will be moved to a Canada Sheep lamb feeding facility to be finished either as additional breeding ewes for existing or new Multipliers or as market lambs.

Multipliers will utilize existing barns and shelters and crop lands to manage the ewe flock under the Canada Sheep protocol and will benefit from early payback for their lambs. Canada Sheep will provide hands-on training with detailed instructions to help new producers leverage the Sarto Sheep experience to avoid many of the pitfalls new producers encounter. Multipliers will each have the potential to manage 2,500+ ewes within 5 years. This will be sufficient to support the objectives of many family farms.

Canada Sheep has signed a first Multiplier, the Sytse van der Zijl family, near Beausejour, Manitoba. They are lambing 1000 ewes provided by Canada Sheep and plan to grow to 2500 ewes in the next 2 years. Sytse says "Canada Sheep allows our family to stay on the farm and work together using an existing dairy barn and hay sheds to manage the ewe flock effectively." Canada Sheep plans to add 3 additional Multipliers in 2014 and 5 additional in 2015.

Canada Sheep plans to market lambs through the Canadian Lamb Co-op, and the additional production will help to ensure that the Co-op has sufficient lambs to service the domestic and international market demand at a fair price to all producers. In combination with the Co-op, Canada Sheep will assist in the development of federally inspected processing facilities in Western Canada to service the Canadian and international markets.

The expansion of market lamb production will provide the impetus to improve transportation and services to the sheep industry throughout Western Canada. Purebred producers of terminal sires will soon have a much larger opportunity to sell their sires at fair prices.

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