



Opportunities for the Irish sheep industry

IGA Sheep Conference 2011

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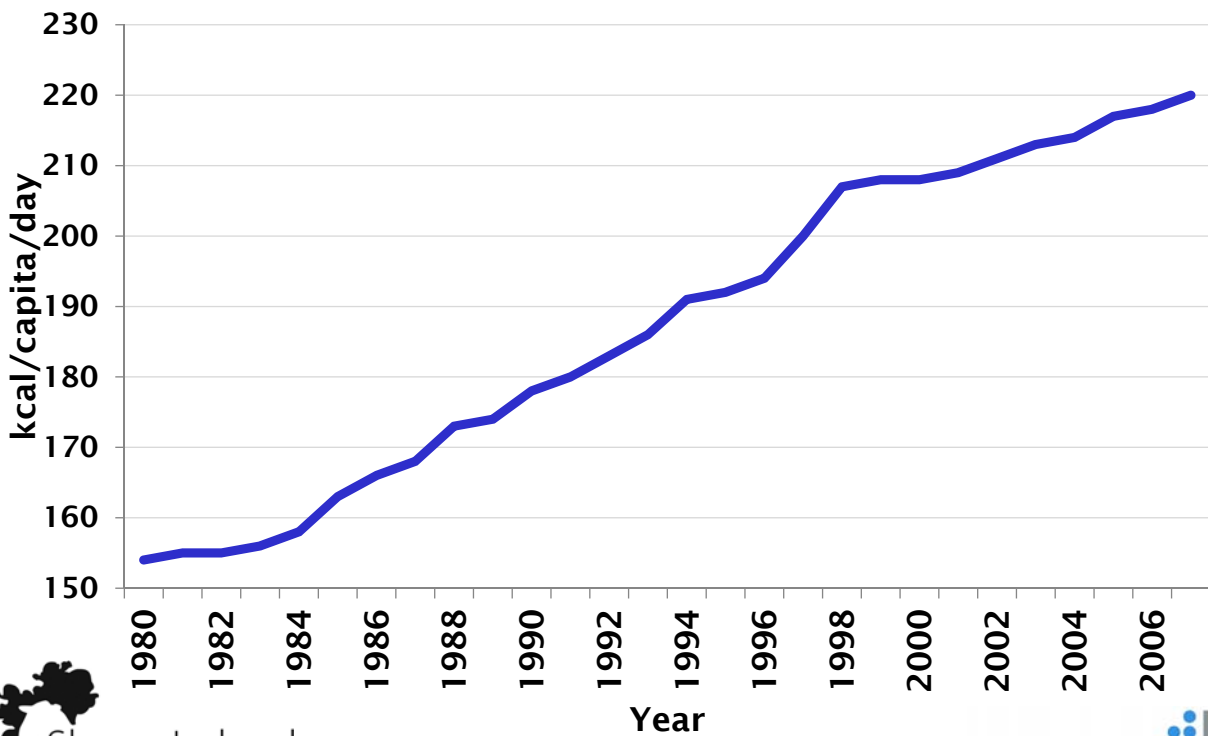
Outline

- Global snapshot
 - Consumption and production
- The current situation
 - Reduced supply/ increasing demand
- The new sheep world
 - Challenges Aus, NZ, Ireland
- Breeding practices
- Ireland's opportunity
 - Sheep Ireland so far
- What Ireland MUST do

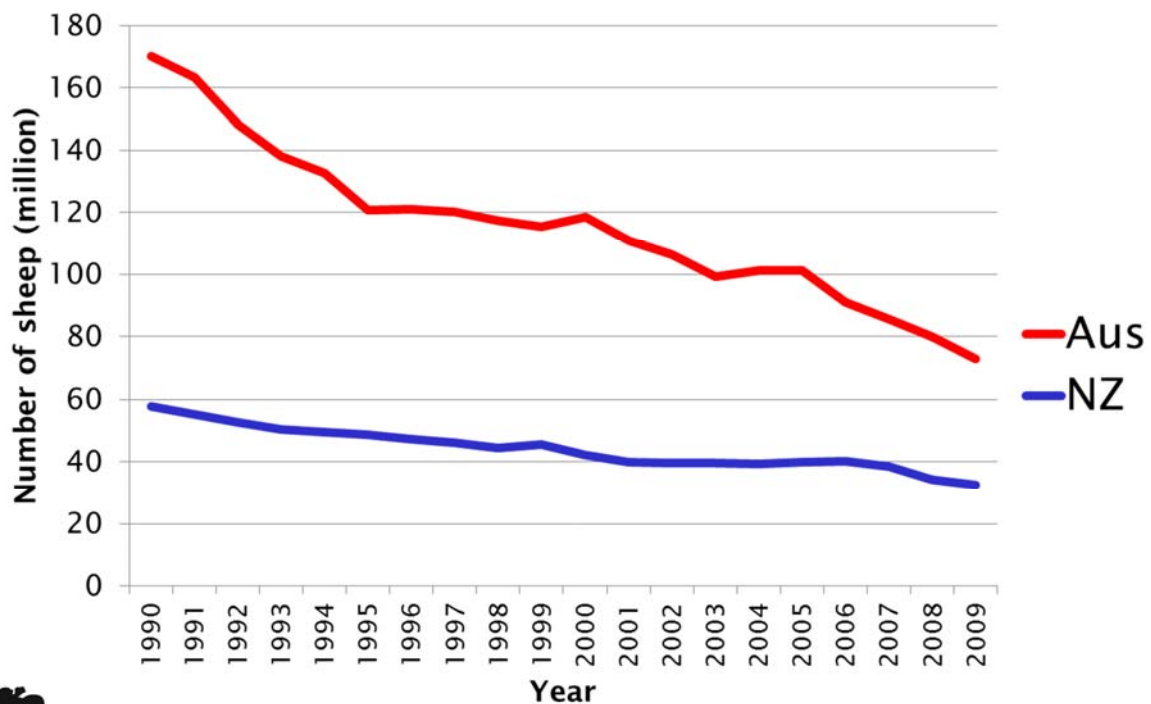


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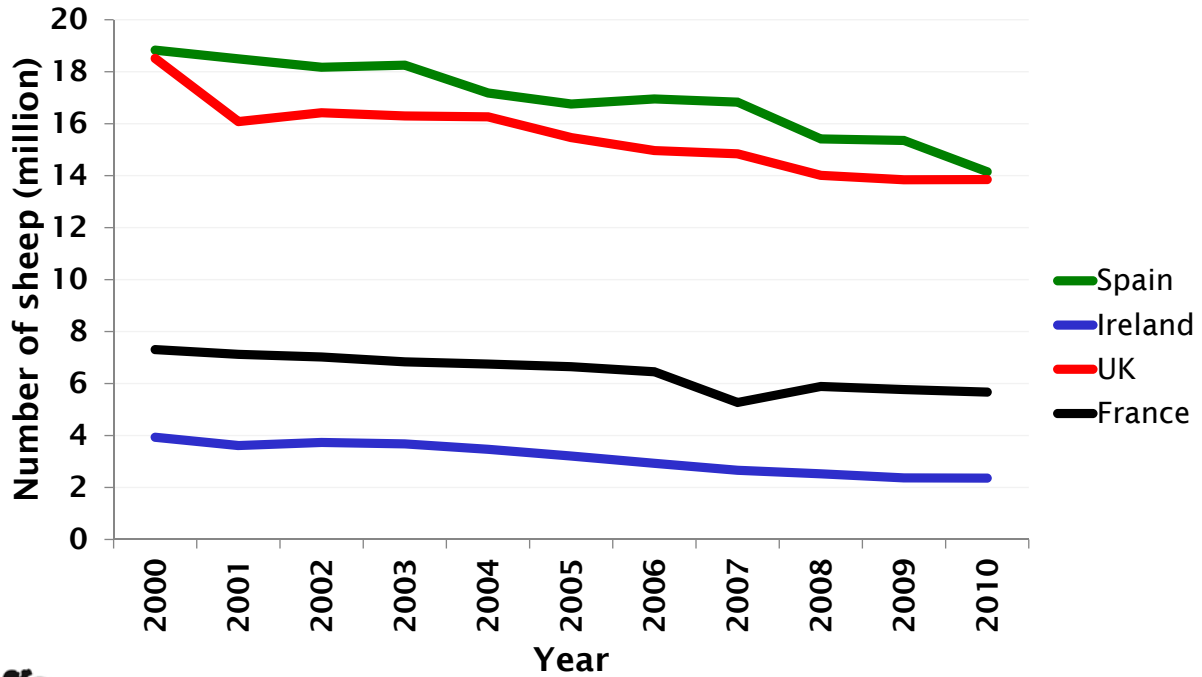
Global Meat Consumption



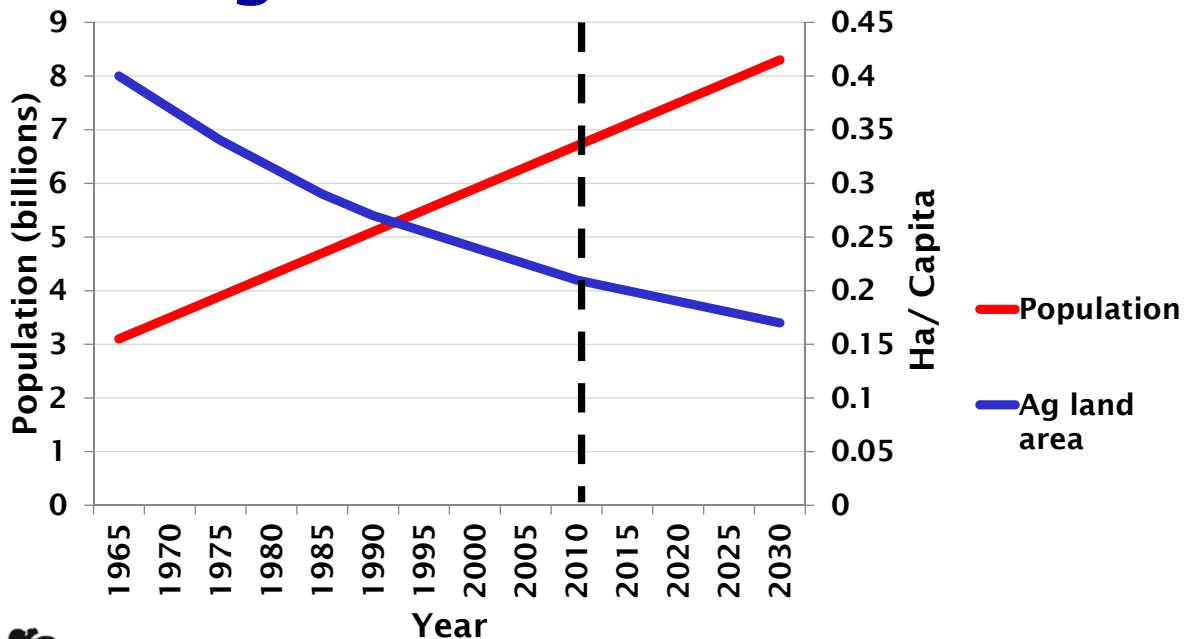
Australia/ NZ numbers fall



Europe numbers fall



Global population and agricultural land area



Why the decline?

- Competition from more profitable land uses (dairy/ forestry/ cropping)
- Poor climatic conditions
- Scale – Small-holder not viable
- Health and labour costs
- High processing costs
- Sheep meat expensive

The current situation

- NZ and Aus account for 90% of globally traded sheep meat
 - Numbers falling in these countries
- Developing countries (China and India) increasing production but...
 - Domestic demand will soak all this up
- Result is tight supplies/ high price
- Growing world population with an increasing demand for protein

The new sheep world

- Given reduced supply:
 - Who can fill the increased demand and what challenges face those countries
 - What breeding practices and direction are being employed
 - What must Ireland do

Challenges in NZ

- Land use competition from dairy and forestry
- Lack of technology transfer to top farmers
- Supply chain difficulties
- Number of lambs born may be at optimum

Challenges in Australia

- Persistent and severe drought
- Lack of viable land for sheep
- A reliance on Merino and Merino cross for meat production
 - Slower genetic gain
- Health (fly strike and animals welfare) challenges

Challenges in Ireland

- Dairy will continue to compete for best pasture
- Scale in sheep farms
- Beef production is ultimately more likely to be dependant on grain
- But pasture based beef systems will also be a challenge to sheep farms

Breeding perspectives

- A drive to:
 - Reduce ewe maintenance as proportion total energy (multiple lambing in a year)
 - Increase number of lambs weaned per ewe (lamb survival)
 - Increase carcass weight and carcass yield
 - Increase health (parasite resistance)

Breeding perspectives

- Research into:
 - Which trait changes impact on carbon emissions
 - The genetic basis for meat quality
 - Genomics
- Shift in research from on-farm production to product quality/market access

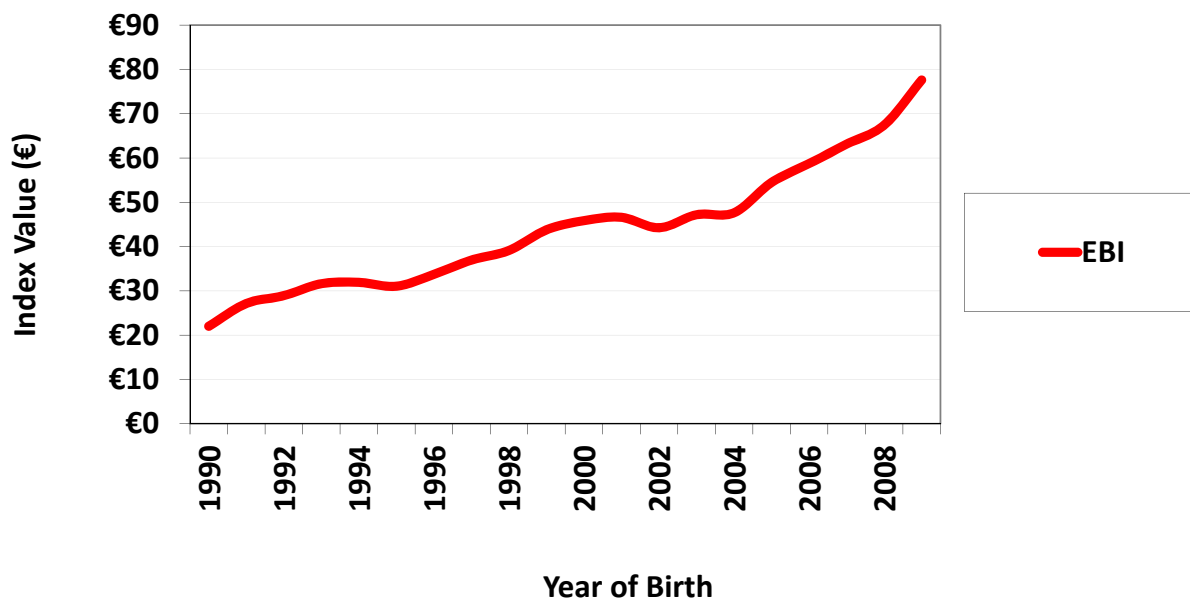
Ireland's opportunity

- Ireland has a good reputation for quality meat product
- Continental Europe becoming less self-sufficient (main export dest.)
- Potential for a grass-based system
- Have experience in the genetic improvement of dairy and beef cattle



It worked in dairy

Female Genetic Trends in EBI (1990 - 2009)

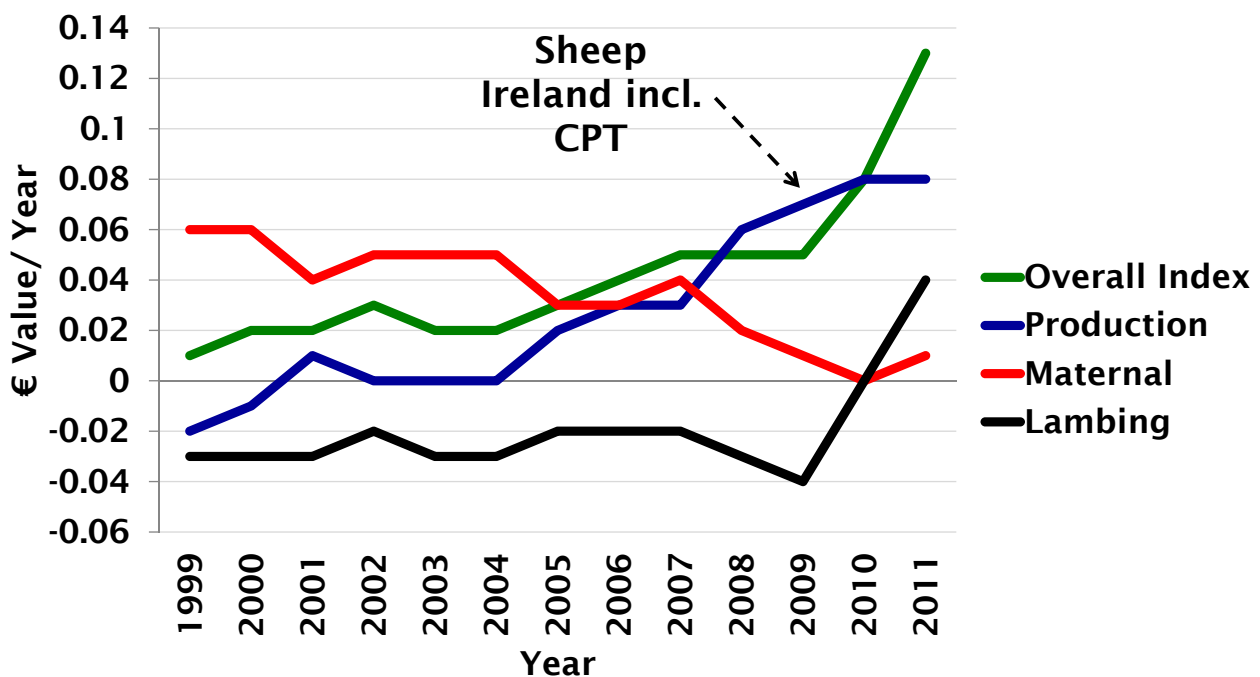


Sheep Ireland so far

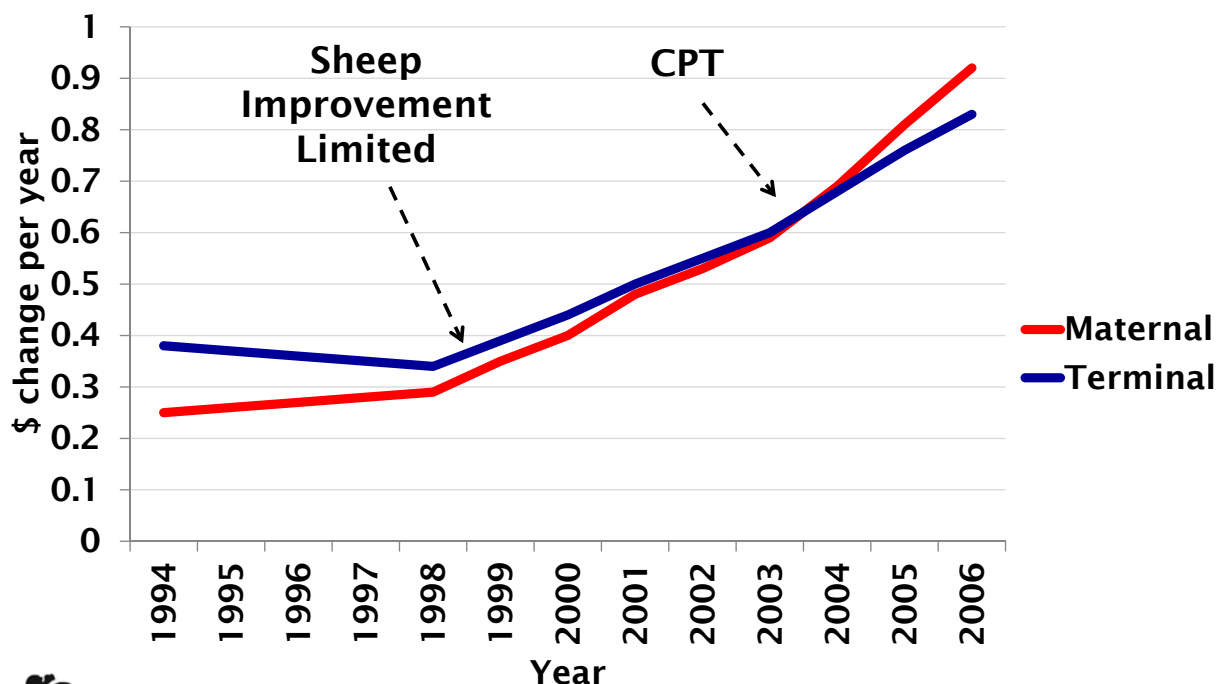
- Launched in 2009 involving
 - Pedigree and commercial flock owners
 - Using DNA and EID technology to record parentage and data
- Performance recording
- Genetic evaluations provided
 - Euro STAR economic indexes
 - Overall
 - Production
 - Maternal
 - Lambing



Sheep Genetic Trend (IRE)



Sheep Genetic Trend (NZ)



Rams sold with figures

	NZ 2011	IRE 2005	IRE 2011
Ewes (million)	32.38	3.21	2.36
Rams required (NZ 1:100, IRE 1:50)	323,836	64,180	47,200
Proportion sold with terminal index	85%	10%	15%
Proportion sold with maternal index	75%	0%	15%

What Ireland MUST do

- Fundamental change required in the way animals are bred:
 - A focus on commercial assessment of genetic merit
 - There needs to be a culture of performance recording established
 - Redirecting genetics to “do it” entirely off pasture
 - UPTAKE of genetic improvement and technology



Breed for purpose – commercial end use



Lot:1 Owner: John & Mary L... Bighill, Co...perary

Animal Details	Ancillary Details	€URO-STAR INDEXES - 15/04/10				
Official ID	E1110222702116	% Recd	Star Rating	Indexes	€ Value	Acc%
Tattoo	B0L0125834	Sire's Sire	Bighill Terry (E8117132285123)	Top 60%	★★★	Overall Sheep Value €3 38%
Name	Bighill Lenny	Sire's Dam	Royal Cecilia (E1432834023094)	60%	★★	Lambing €1.80 3%
Birthdate	01-Jan-10	Sire	Bighill Frank (E8117456372931)	Top 20%	★★★★	Production €0.80 10%
Breed		Dam	Bighill Sabina (E8117456372931)			Maternal NA NA
Sex	Male	Dam's Sire	Mr Lancelot (E8117456374431)			Other Key Traits
Birth Type	Twin	Dam's Dam	Shea Linda (E8117455574431)	Top 1%	★★★★★	Days to Slaughter -2.5 Days 5%
Dams Rec	122			Top 60%	★★★★	Lamb Survival +8% 22%

Comment: ARROgenotype Copyright, Sheep Ireland



What Ireland MUST do

- Fundamental change required in production systems:
 - Improving pasture management capability
 - Reduced reliance on grain and meal feeding
 - Redirecting production systems to “do it” entirely off pasture
- This will not be easy



Final messages

- **A move to focus on performance recording for commercial end use is essential**
- **A focus on improving maternal and health traits will increase the competitiveness of sheep**
- **Drive a pasture production system**
- **Strong Sheep Ireland = Strong Future Industry**

