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# The Martinik Hair Sheep : a high potential breed for mutton production in the Tropics

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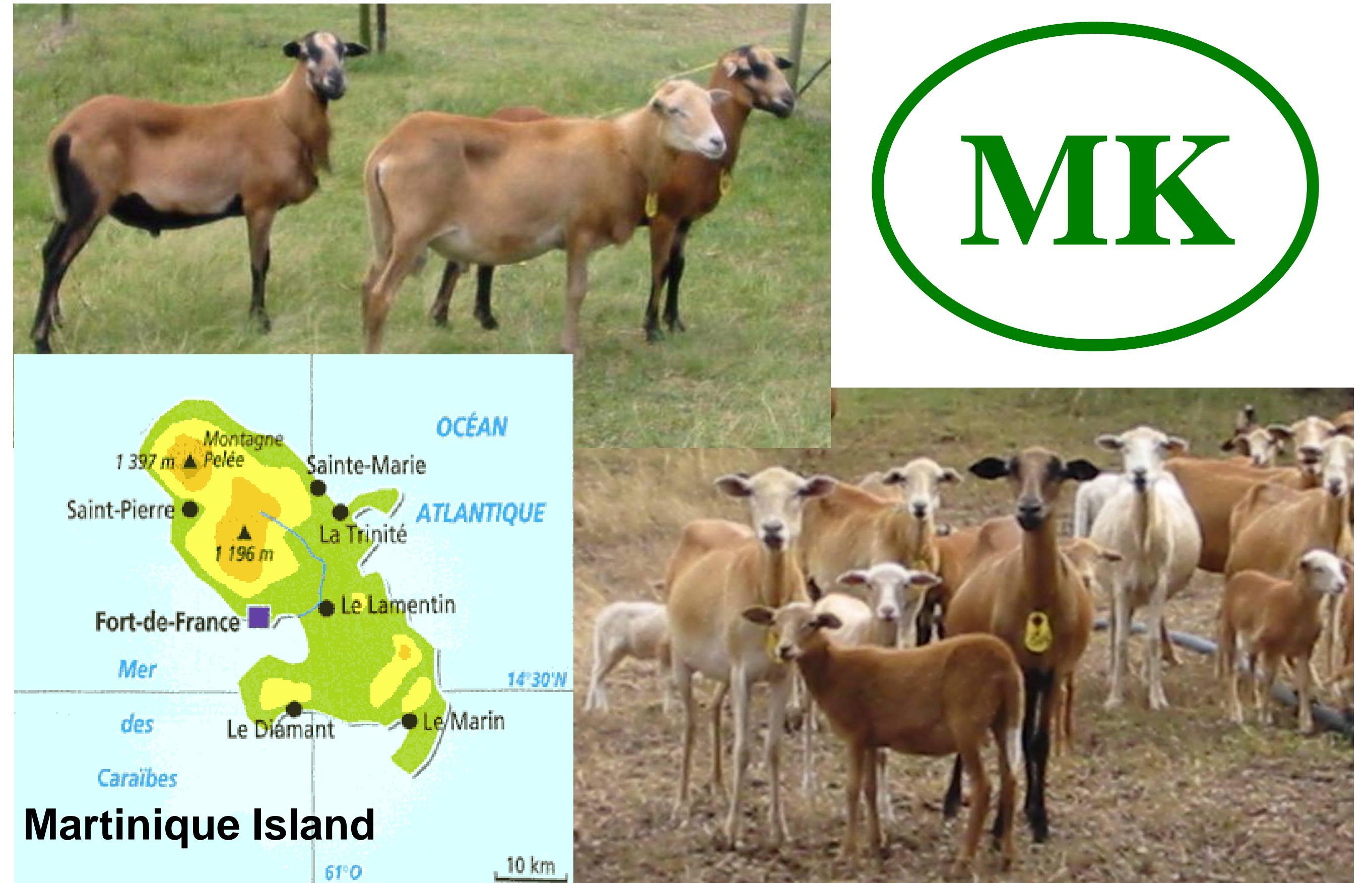
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## Context :

- ✓ Sheep population is estimated to 25 000 heads in Martinique.
- ✓ High demand and good prices for local meat in “niche” market.
- ✓ Since the late 70’s: a sheep production development program has been set up to improve the productivity in the French Antilles through better breeding practices, and pasture management.
- ✓ High productivity can be achieved by several means:
  - irrigated and fertilized grazing system and management with high stocking rates (40 ewes or 1600 kg/ha).
  - Breed improvement and flock husbandry according to physiological status with intensive reproduction (3 lambing / 2 years).
  - Control of internal and external parasitism (GIS: *Haemonchus*, Ticks : *Amblyomma* or *Boophilus*)

## Typical Martinik Hair Sheep, localisation and logotype



## Productivity of Martinik hair sheep (1992-2002, 5835 lambing – 9035 lambs born)

Trait	mean
Fertility	85 %
Prolificacy	1.8 lamb born / ewe
Mortality (weaning)	13 %
LW at 70 days	12.5 kg
Productivity	2.2 weaned lamb
/ewe /year	27.9 kg weaned lamb

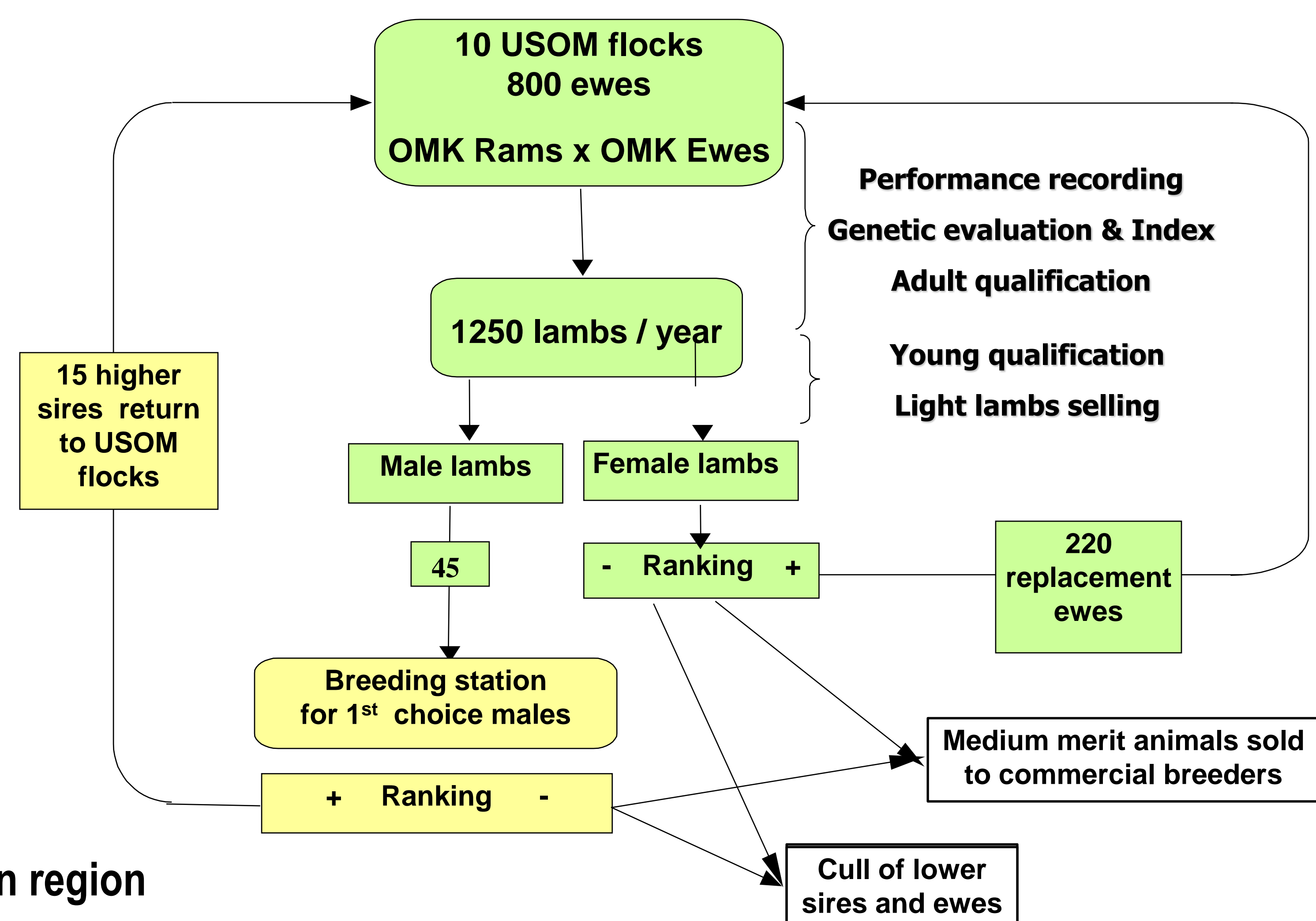
## The Martinik hair sheep:

- ✓ Several strains found locally, from same origins than BBB, St Croix or Pelibuey, originated from Western Africa (Guinea Gulf); showed no production differences between strains.
- ✓ Coat : Hair only – no specific colour required  
Wool and horns prohibited  
Adult weight: male: 50-60 kg / female: 35-40 kg.
- ✓ Genetic resource well adapted to tropical constraints: low incidence of parasites, hot climate, outdoor management, low quality roughage or pastures.

## Implementation of the breeding program

- ✓ Managed by ‘Union pour la Sélection du Mouton Martinik’ (USOM)
- ✓ Breeders’ association and Flock Book created in 1993, approved by Ministry of Agriculture in 2004, confirmed in 2008.
- ✓ 10 flocks in Martinique and Guadeloupe, owning about 800 ewes
- ✓ USOM defines the breed standard, keeps the Flock Book, checks and certifies the conformity of the animals.
- ✓ Partnership with : technical sector, commercial breeders, territory representatives and scientific research institutions.

## The Martinik Hair Sheep Breeding program managed by the breeders’ association USOM



## Conclusion

- ✓ The Martinik hair sheep and the genetic program managed by the breeders contributed to the development of sheep production in Martinique in the last 3 decades.
- ✓ Its success and the growing interest for the breed in the Caribbean region shows that it could pay a useful contribution to sustainable farming systems in tropical regions.

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