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François Leimbacher, Gisèle Alexandre, Maurice Mahieu, Michel Naves,
Nathalie Mandonnet

► To cite this version:

François Leimbacher, Gisèle Alexandre, Maurice Mahieu, Michel Naves, Nathalie Mandonnet. The Martinik Hair Sheep: a high potential breed for mutton production in the Tropics. 8. Conférence Mondiale Mérinos, May 2010, Rambouillet, France. , 1 p., 2010. hal-02818741

HAL Id: hal-02818741

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02818741>

Submitted on 6 Jun 2020

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

F.Leimbacher ⁽¹⁾, G. Alexandre ⁽¹⁾, M. Mahieu ⁽¹⁾, M. Naves * ⁽¹⁾ and N. Mandonnet ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Unité de Recherches Zootechniques, UR 143, INRA, F97170 Petit-Bourg, Guadeloupe, FWI

* Corresponding author : Michel.Naves@antilles.inra.fr

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*)

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

Typical Martinik Hair Sheep, localisation and logotype



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.

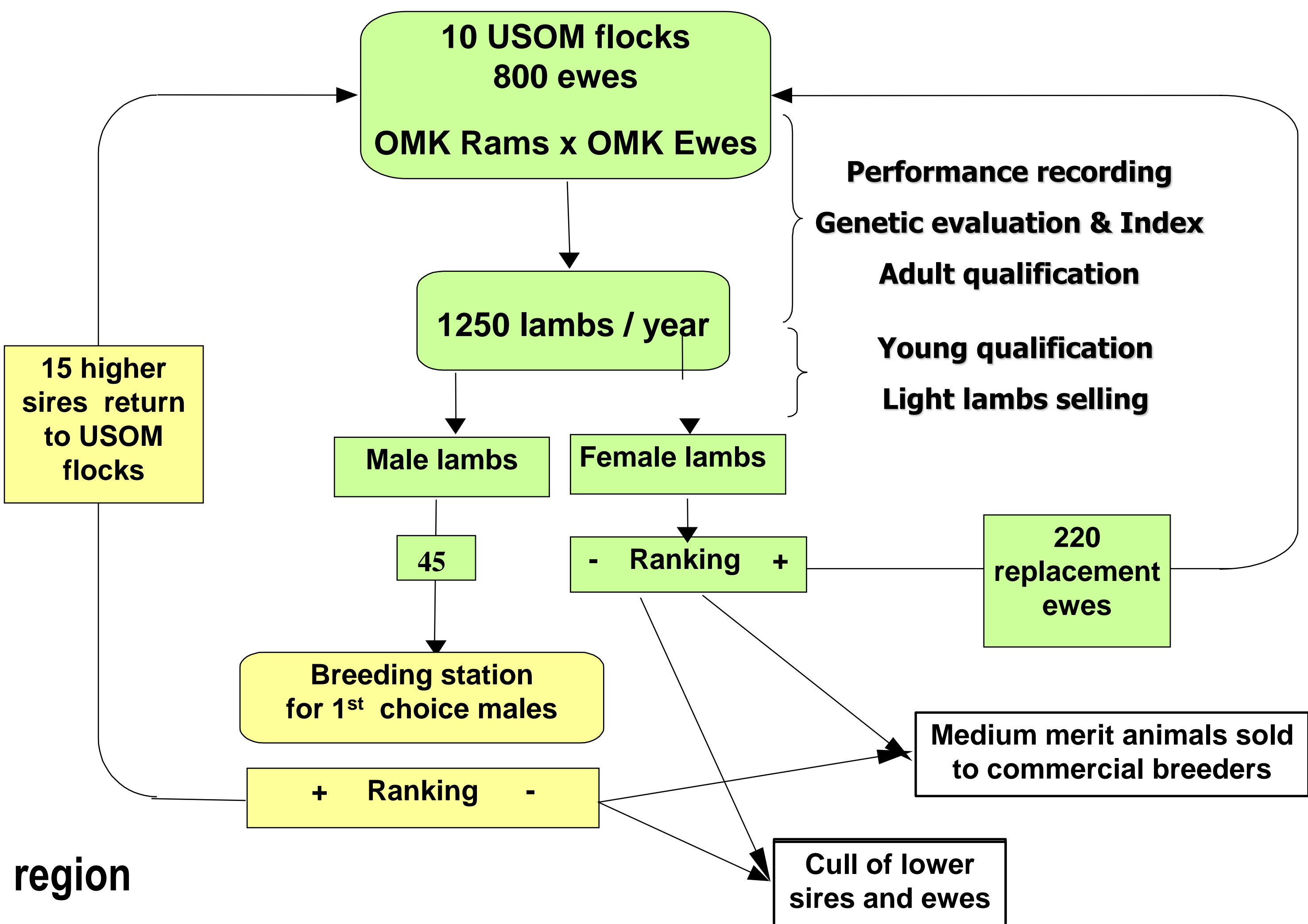
Implementation of the breeding program

- ✓ 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.

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.

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



The authors wish to thank the involvement of USOM association and the sheep breeders, the technical staff of Chambre d’Agriculture de la Martinique, the scientific partnership of the Pôle Agro-alimentaire Régional de la Martinique, and the financial support of the EU funds (FEDER, FEOGA), the ODEADOM, the Région Martinique and the AMIV, who contribute to the success of the development of sheep production and the genetic program.