

# Transhumance in Romania: past, present and future

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## SUMMARY

In Romania, there are 4 traditional sheep extensive production systems:

1. transhumance (nowadays representing 1 -5% of the 10 million sheep; and 20 % of the 3-4 mil. sheep, in the past);
2. summer-time grazing on the arable land in the not far-away mountain regions -Transtorminantes (15 -19%);
3. sedentary sheep farming in the upland-mountain area (40%); 4. sedentary sheep farming on the arable land estates (40%)

All these systems are used by 3 types of owners: (1) -peasants (not shepherds) with 1 to 20 sheep; (2) -salaried professional shepherds (20 to 200 sheep); (3) -big transhumant sheep-masters (more than 500 sheep).

The grazing period lasts about 8 to 11 months, and grazing is practiced on the marginal lands, in association or in private flocks counting around 200 to 500 milked sheep. Up to 1920, transhumance was mainly practiced by 40 mountain villages organized in 4 centers. Nowadays, only one village is known as a typical transhumant center, but transhumant sheep-masters can be met in many others. The main sheep breeds used in Romania are: Tsigai (medium wool) and Turcana (coarse wool). The main Transhumant wintering routes were directed from the Carpathians to: (1) the Danube Meadow and the Black Sea Coast (Vama -Caucasus); (2) N-W Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, etc; (3) S-W Romania, up to Istria. After 1920, all the routes were limited to the Romanian borders. The flock size / owner was of some 1300 sheep (821 -5220...40000 with 137 sheep / shepherd and horse, 603 sheep / donkey). In Romania, after 1989, the dramatic decrease the wool price, brought about a decrease in the sheep number, however, the transhumant sheep-masters do not seem yet to be affected. No governmental subvention for sheep production exists, and the danger is very great. The importance of the mountains in the Romanian territory (1/3 of the total), the price of the winter fodder in the mountain regions, impose the conservation and the management development of transhumance.

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