

SHEEP PRODUCERS OF NOVA SCOTIA

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026



7 Atlantic Central Drive, East Mountain, NS, B6L 2Z2
Phone: 902-893-7455
Email: novascotiasheep@gmail.com www.nssheep.ca

Introduction

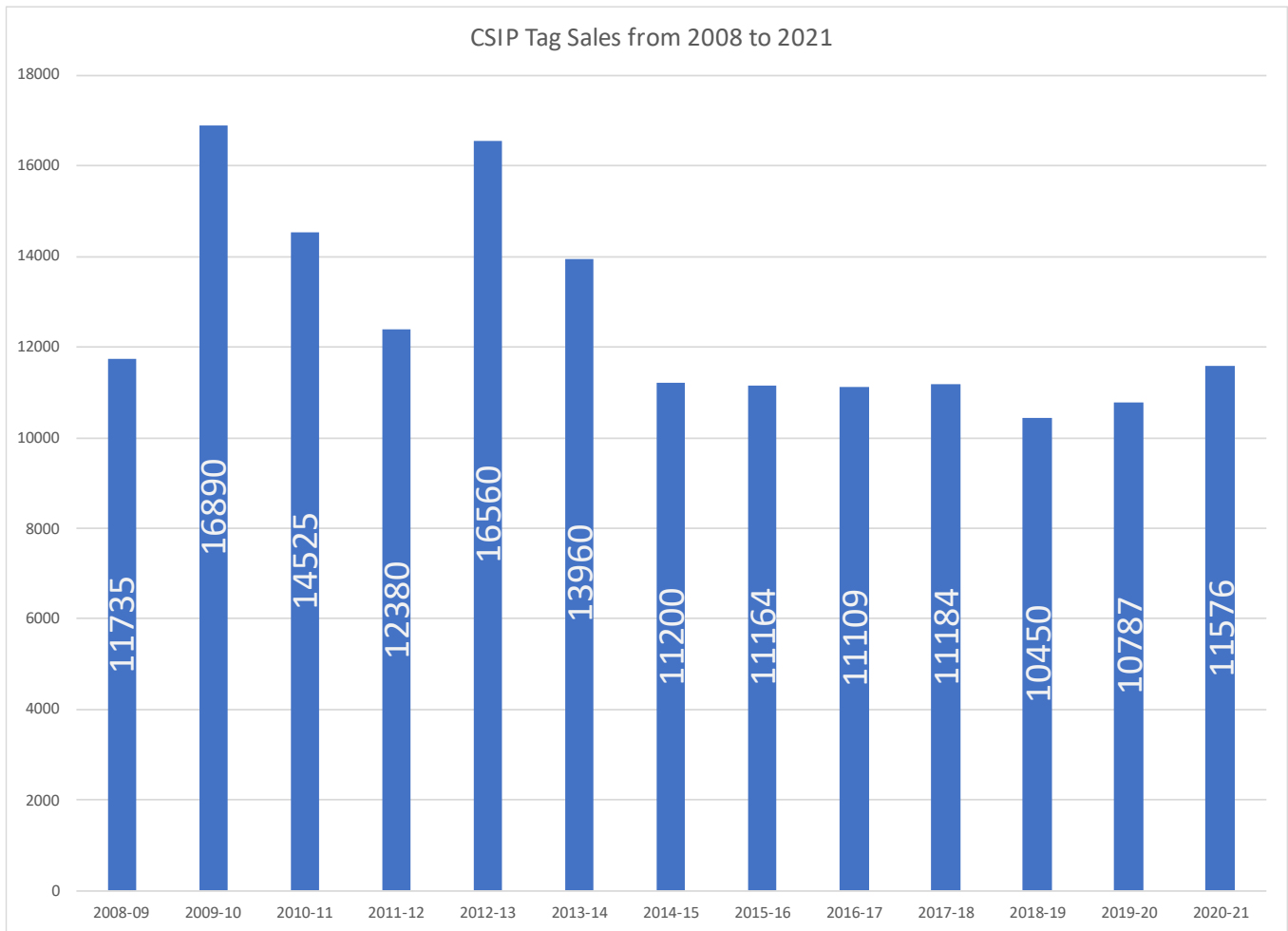
For almost 50 years the Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia (SPANS) has been the voice of the province's sheep farmers at the local, regional, and national levels. The organization actively works with the industry stakeholders to develop programs and resources, conduct research and participate in public awareness activities to increase the sheep industry's profile in the province.

Members benefit by accessing production, research, and marketing resources, as well as gaining eligibility to programs for advanced payments, sheep handling, elite rams, parasite control and overall industry enhancement. Since 2010, the seven-member board of directors has been diligently working with the Agri-Commodity Management Association (ACMA) to deliver these industry focused initiatives. ACMA provides administrative support to SPANS by managing daily activities such as finances, advocacy, internal and external policy development, program development and delivery, and communications.

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) is a mandatory, industry-led initiative that provides full-scale traceability. The program also assists producers with concerns related to sheep health, flock management input, and meeting consumer expectations for quality assurance and food safety. A marketing levy is collected by SPANS from producers under the Agriculture and Marketing Act. This levy is collected via an agreement with CSIP tag distributors. Payment of this levy automatically enrolls the farmer as a member of SPANS.



Figure 1: CSIP Tag Sales from 2008 to 2021¹



SPANS has 385 members in the Province, of which 55 are recognized as primarily sheep farms within the Provincial farm registration system. These farms, with an average flock size 35 to 40 ewes, combine to result in 6,000 head of breeding stock and produces approximately 12,000 lambs annually. In 2018, Statistics Canada listed the value of sheep and lamb farm capital in Nova Scotia at \$4.3 million, which is the approximate five-year average.

According to CSIP tag numbers, which track sales by county, most of the sheep are farmed centrally within the province. Approximately 88% are raised in Pictou, Colchester, Hants, Cumberland, Lunenburg, and Kings counties. Table 1 shows a by county breakdown of SPANS membership, registered sheep farms and annual CSIP sales for the years 2015 to 2021.

¹Spikes in 2010 and 2013 were not due to an increase in production. These spikes are associated with the change from metal tags to electronic tags in 2010 and an increase in levy in 2013. In both cases producers bought large volumes of tags before the changes came into place.



Table 1: Sheep Producer Demographics²

County	2021 Farms		CSIP Tags						
	SPANS Members	Registered Sheep Farms	2015	2016	2017	2018	Jan – Oct 2019	Oct 2019 to Oct 2020	Oct 2020 to Oct 2021
<i>Annapolis</i>	31	7	820	786	201	701	430	785	365
<i>Antigonish</i>	27	2	700	475	501	614	222	480	808
<i>Cape Breton</i>	10	1	110	32	144	89	65	44	84
<i>Colchester</i>	48	8	2,460	2,000	1,787	2,792	1,267	1,434	2,272
<i>Cumberland</i>	42	7	1,550	798	1,536	2,027	1,253	2,935	1,692
<i>Digby</i>	4	0	20	30	9	0	0	109	35
<i>Guysborough</i>	10	0	180	44	161	11	136	59	179
<i>Halifax</i>	20	2	180	168	345	210	184	42	183
<i>Hants</i>	48	5	1,400	1,213	1,197	1,086	1,250	1,345	1,769
<i>Inverness</i>	10	1	290	372	260	285	373	225	475
<i>Kings</i>	48	8	1,260	569	1,221	1,076	1,162	1,052	1,123
<i>Lunenburg</i>	25	2	420	410	325	460	290	265	522
<i>Pictou</i>	42	9	2,130	2,240	2,237	1,170	1,526	1,548	1,596
<i>Queens</i>	5	0	0	20	0	0	8	150	110
<i>Richmond</i>	4	0	20	80	50	75	83	70	52
<i>Shelburne</i>	4	1	50	67	27	5	8	10	21
<i>Victoria</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Yarmouth</i>	7	2	250	266	232	459	145	88	290

² Registered sheep farms in this table are representative of those that registered as their primary commodity being sheep. In the 2020 Industry Survey we learned that there are registered farms in the province with sheep, however their primary commodity is often cattle, or something else as their primary source of income.



Table 2: Nova Scotia CSIP Tag Purchasing Distribution 2014 to 2019

Year	Total Trans	Total Tags	%	% Total	%	% Total	%	% Total	%	% Total
			Trans ≥ 200 Tags	Tags ≥ 200 Tags	Trans ≥ 100 Tags	Tags ≥ 100 Tags	Trans ≥ 50 Tags	Tags ≥ 50 Tags	Trans ≤ 20 Tags	Tags ≤ 20 Tags
2014	84	7,670	15.42%	49.28%	22.62%	28.16%	7.14%	5.22%	54.76%	17.345%
2015	105	8,600	10.48%	42.84%	20.00%	27.60%	18.10%	13.97%	51.43%	15.59%
2016	102	7,149	10.78%	43.64%	13.73%	22.18%	20.59%	18.06%	54.90%	16.11%
2017	126	8,676	11.90%	45.87%	13.49%	21.73%	21.43%	18.04%	53.17%	14.36%
2018	185	9,703	7.57%	43.44%	8.11%	18.16%	14.05%	15.61%	70.27%	22.79%
Jan to Oct 2019	165	8,399	6.06%	40.00%	9.70%	20.56%	10.91%	13.79%	73.33%	25.65%
Oct 2019 to Oct 2020	181	10,641	7.18%	52.18%	5.52%	11.89%	12.71%	12.43%	74.59%	22.86%
Oct 2020 to Oct 2021	173	11,576	8.09%	48.98%	10.40%	19.22%	10.40%	10.13%	71.10%	21.67%

Like many other sectors, farm size is variable, ranging from small hobby-type farms to large commercial farms. The top 8% of farms produced 49% of the lambs while the bottom 71% of farms produced not quite 22% of the lambs, this can be seen in the details of Table 2.

Most Nova Scotia raised lambs are purchased and/or processed by the Federal and Provincial Abattoirs for meat. The meat products are sold by the abattoirs to their retail and food service customers or sell the meat direct to consumers at a retail location at the site of the abattoir. Farmers also pay the abattoirs for conducting custom processing and then direct market the inspected meat themselves. There are ten provincially inspected and one federal registered red meat abattoirs within the Province.

Whole lamb consumption is up in Nova Scotia, the demand for lamb in Nova Scotia is being driven by consumers for various reasons such as cultural background, demand for local products, greater culinary knowledge and a focus on healthier diets.



Although the majority of sheep farm revenue is generated through the production of market lambs, SPANS recognizes industry opportunities for value-adding meat, milk, wool, and other by-products. There are also opportunities for live animal sales for breeding stock and out of province processing. SPANS will support members and industry stakeholders by increasing awareness of products and their markets.

SPANS acknowledges that the time has come to take a more strategic approach to developing the industry. This strategic plan will work with the SPANS members to leverage their strengths and build value creating opportunities that will ensure sustainability and success at all levels from the farm to the processor to the retailer. SPANS has developed this plan, a living document, to use industry knowledge and resources to leverage partnerships that contribute to the growth of the Nova Scotia sheep industry.

DRAFT



Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia

Vision and Objectives

VISION

The Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia envision the collaborative development of our industry's farms, products, and markets. An industry focused on growth through innovation and producing the highest quality products as efficiently as possible. Markets will recognize the value and significance of our products.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase profitability and efficiency of Nova Scotia sheep producers
- Grow the industry in numbers of farms and animals being produced
- Improve product quality
- Identify new markets and build awareness of Nova Scotia lamb in current markets
- Develop business relationships along the sheep product value-chain



Situational Analysis

The SPANS Board of Directors hosted an industry situational analysis and business planning activity. This activity allowed SPANS to gain input, review and discuss the industry environment to effectively set goals and strategies for success. Through conducting this analysis, the top five strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the industry were identified.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Industry organizations/support ○ Access to grass (land and climate) ○ Federally registered abattoir ○ Provincial animal health lab ○ Potential for farm and sector growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Business planning (awareness to resources) ○ Nutrition knowledge ○ Data gaps ○ Marketing resources ○ Veterinarian/Vet Tech knowledge and availability
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Product and farm (industry) branding ○ Consumer education ○ Coordinated marketing/sales contracts ○ Year-round lambing/accelerated lambing ○ Room to grow for processing capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trade and market access ○ Animal activism ○ Farm demographics ○ Alternative protein ○ Lack of access to funds to increase production/Seen as lack of security

SPANS established its strategic priorities by analyzing the top five internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) against the top five external factors (opportunities and threats) through a Threats Opportunities Weaknesses and Strengths (TOWS) matrix. With the organization's objectives in mind, the strategies will aim to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses to capitalize on opportunities while mitigating threats.



Strategic Priorities

SPANS strategic priorities will focus this plan to have a direct impact on their five overarching objectives.

The following strategic priority themes have been developed to address these objectives by connecting short- and long-term activities.

1. Maximizing Stakeholder Engagement and Support
 - a. Industry Involvement
 - b. Production and Business Advisors
2. Improving Farm Practices
 - a. Production Planning
 - b. Business Planning
3. Ensuring Availability of High-Quality Nova Scotia Lamb
 - a. Processing
 - b. Product Quality
4. Market Development
 - a. Consumer/Retailer Education
 - b. Brand Development

The strategies will intertwine activities and position stakeholders to have a positive impact on multiple priorities. In many cases, successfully implementing and accomplishing a strategic action will have a positive impact on the other strategic objectives.



1. Maximizing Stakeholder Engagement and Support

In the development of strategic priorities, SPANS recognized that stakeholder engagement is the key to success. Ongoing involvement and input are needed to develop a thorough understanding of the assistance required as well as the level of support that can be provided by all the value-chain participants. SPANS resources are limited and successfully implementing this plan will require support from all capable stakeholders. Ideally, relationships will develop between stakeholders where they realize the positive impact that they can have on each other's organization by participating and communicating for industry growth. It is important that relationships are established and enhanced with stakeholders who are not directly involved with sheep or agriculture.

Stakeholders include SPANS Members, Sheep Industry Stakeholders, Agricultural Industry Stakeholders, and Potential Influencers.

A – Industry Involvement

To move forward with the actions in this plan, a solid strategy for communication must be in place. SPANS Board of Directors have developed many concepts for achieving their overall objectives. These ideas will be shared with all those involved within the industry through various communication methods and framework of the messaging.

It is important to the Board of Directors that all stakeholders can identify with the plan, see the significance of the activities, and feel that they had the opportunity to contribute. Organizations that have the capability to provide expertise and guidance will be encouraged to become industry development advisors.

SPANS will foster the role as the recognized source of all information regarding the sheep industry in Nova Scotia. Consistent two-way communication will be developed between stakeholders as the industry will benefit from engaged communication taking place between all points of the value chain.



B – Production and Business Advisors

For Nova Scotia's sheep industry to grow in numbers of farms and animals, it will require the strong foundation of SPANS current membership, combined with new entrants and farms in other commodities looking to diversify. SPANS will strengthen the support network of advisors for the industry to assist in leveraging the efforts its members put into running their farms daily.

These advisors will contribute to industry development by remaining connected to SPANS and proactively addressing the needs of sheep producers. Sheep producers will be able to connect with advisors confidently and comfortably in their region for operational and business consultation.

DRAFT



2. Improving Farm Practices

Regardless of the industry, well run operations of all sizes rely on access to the latest research and information regarding innovation, efficiency, and business insight. SPANS will identify and foster relationships with advisors and organizations that can contribute to industry information as well as business resources to assist with on-farm planning and implementation. SPANS will provide sheep farms with production and financial information and tools to make well informed, supported decisions.

A – Production Planning

SPANS will partner with identified production advisors to develop a support network that will share knowledge and insight opportunities with sheep producers on how to enhance their operations.

B – Business Planning

SPANS will encourage all members to engage in formal business planning for their operations. Identified business advisors will be available to assist members with combining their sound production practices with business planning activities. Farms will benefit from the ability to make timely and accurate decisions to strengthen their bottom line, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the industry.



3. Ensuring the Availability of High-Quality Nova Scotia Lamb

The ability to consistently deliver a high-quality product to the marketplace is essential for developing Nova Scotia's sheep industry. SPANS will work with industry participants to inspire a culture that recognizes value and quality. This influence will begin on our farms and be reinforced with intertwining supports until the end consumer purchases their product.

SPANS will work to influence the creation of quality and value for each segment, as well as encourage value chain participants to be aware and supportive of each other.

A – Processing

There is one federally registered abattoir exclusively processing lamb and ten provincial abattoirs processing red meat in Nova Scotia. Working on strategic actions together will enhance the working relationship between SPANS and the processing sector and improve the business model for the entire industry.

B – Product Quality

There are many ways that Nova Scotia lamb can get onto the plate of the consumer. Regardless the route, if it is Nova Scotia lamb, SPANS wants to ensure the consumer is consistently having the best experience possible.



4. Market Development

The Nova Scotia agriculture industry has had a goal of doubling the volume of products produced and consumed within the province for the last six years. It is recognized by SPANS that provincial lamb consumption has increased during this period while local production and processing has remained relatively consistent. This signifies the importance of developing high quality marketplace activities that will match the efforts of the sheep producers moving forward.

A - Consumer and Retailer Education

The Nova Scotia lamb market consists of multiple points of sale servicing consumers with a variety of needs, in different ways. SPANS will work with stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the consumers and their patterns to assist with influencing purchasing decisions. Consumer education and marketing activities will aid in creating additional transactions along the value chain.

B – Brand Development

An industry wide dedication to quality products enables the processors to differentiate their products through branding. SPANS will work with and encourage abattoirs and processors to differentiate their products through branding and will support the development of those brands through the provision of information to support their value propositions.



Conclusion

The following charts summarize the activities planned to support the strategic priorities outline. SPANS will work collaboratively with its members, all levels of government and industry to successfully execute the identified activities.

A prioritization matrix was used to evaluate the priority of the identified activities to ensure meaningful deadlines were developed and to assist in prioritizing where efforts and resources needed to be placed to achieve the desired outcomes.

Prioritization Matrix

Impact	High	1	2
	Low	3	4
		Low	High
		Effort	



Strategic Priorities Activity Charts

Maximizing Stakeholder Engagement and Support

1A: Industry Involvement

Activity	Priority Level
Connect with wool stakeholders during strategic planning	3
Conduct an industry survey	1
Develop a communications plan and matrix for SPANS	3
Maintain the communications plan and matrix for SPANS	3
Engage post-secondary institutions with culinary arts programs regarding use of lamb in training	1
Approach NB and PEI regarding the development of a Maritime Sheep Council	2
Maintain existing working relationship between SPANS and PSBANS	3
Reach out to the Maritime Beef Council to discuss joint activities	1
Forecast a budget and develop a funding strategy to proceed with strategic priority activities	1

1B: Production and Business Advisors

Activity	Priority Level
Identify advisors and develop a network to assist with production and business advice	3
Ensure ongoing communication with advisor network, enabling them to understand the industry needs	3
ACMA staff engagement with the NSDA KTT team on research priorities	3
Work with advisor network to research methods and resources being used by others to support growth	3
Facilitate consistent input on industry information and research from producers	1
Engage new sheep producers to develop a list of beneficial training topics for the development of tools	3
Peer mentoring of new sheep producers	3



Improving Farm Practices

2A: Production Planning

Activity	Priority Level
Work with NSDA KTT Commodity Team for sheep to determine what research is happening and to share ideas of research priorities for the industry	1
Recommend the adoption of the Canadian Verified Sheep program to encourage uptake of the best management practices	1
Work with production advisors to share information on the latest production management support tools	1
Participate in efforts to address common factors impacting production	1
Participate in the Climate change Adaptation Scan with NSCP	1
Host an event to communicate information from processors and buyers of lamb to producers on what their markets are looking for	1
Inform producers of the various program options available to assist them with accessing financing and inputs.	1

2B: Business Planning

Activity	Priority Level
Update cost of production model for benchmarking.	2
Relevant business and production planning tools identified to continuously improve data management and on farm COP – reference Beef Finance matchmaking document.	2
Develop an Advanced Sheep Farm Management Training Program	2
Provide producers with information on business plan development	
Sources of Agriculture Financing pamphlet to be sent out with Newsletter	



Ensuring Availability of High-Quality Nova Scotia Lamb

3A: Processing

Activity	Priority Level
Develop meaningful relationships with processors to open conversations related to their needs	1
Encourage abattoirs and processors to work together where they have common goals	1
Conduct a market review to determine the types of sheep meat products being sold. Identify opportunities to develop value-added products.	1

3B: Product Quality

Activity	Priority Level
Participate in discussions related to marketing of lamb products and the impact that production variables might have on their sale	1

DRAFT



Market Development Activities

4A: Consumer and Retailer Education

Activity	Priority Level
Encourage abattoirs to develop business and marketing plans for lamb products	1
Request Northumberland to communicate the quality standard requirements for their products	1
Participate in development activities through provision of information for the planning done by processors	1

4B: Brand Development

v	Priority Level
Encourage abattoirs to develop a brand for recognition of differentiated product	1
Participate in development activities through provision of information for the planning done by processors	1

DRAFT

