

MEDIA RELEASE

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PROMISING OUTCOMES FROM ALLIANCE GROUP'S HOGGET PILOT

Leading food company Alliance Group has reported promising outcomes from a pilot programme marketing hogget as a premium product as the co-operative seeks to capture more value for farmer shareholders.

A number of farmer shareholders asked the co-operative to explore the development of a market for hogget because of the large price differential between lamb and mutton.

The co-operative carried out the pilot in the UK food service sector, with a particular focus on the ethnic foods market, from November 2017 to February this year.

John Rabbitt, Sales Manager at Alliance Group, said the UK has one of Europe's largest markets for ethnic foods, so is accustomed to using both New Zealand lamb and mutton.

"The product has been very well received, with recently-conducted testing on Alliance hogget rating the taste and succulence.

"The market is looking forward to ongoing supply and development of our hogget cuts. Some pilot product has also been sent to Asia and we are awaiting market feedback."

Heather Stacy, General Manager Livestock and Shareholder Services at Alliance Group, said traditionally lambs are distinguished from mutton when their first adult teeth come through.

"However, the response to the UK pilot, and growing demand for hogget from New Zealand chefs, demonstrates this is not the only approach and the value should be determined by the quality of the meat."

The pilot initially saw a large number of previous season lambs, which had incisors erupt, capturing a hogget grade in November. The schedule for the trial gave these significantly better returns than mutton prices, she said.

A number of cull breeding hoggets were also supplied for processing as farmers drafted off lighter stock due to the dry conditions.

Mr Rabbitt said the key to the success of marketing hogget as a premium product, was selecting the right animals with good meat and fat colour, despite being no longer conventionally considered to be lamb.

The company is now undertaking a full evaluation of the pilot before making a decision on the next steps.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

Alliance Group is a co-operative owned by approximately 5000 farmer shareholders and is the world's largest processor and exporter of sheepmeat.



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