



## The IGP Sardinian Lamb – The Story of Sardinia: Tradition, Innovation, and Future

### – The Consortium

The Sardinian IGP Lamb is far more than premium meat, it is the embodiment of a millennia-old pastoral tradition shaped by a unique environment and rooted in the ancient Nuragic civilization. Born, raised, and slaughtered exclusively in Sardinia, this lamb reflects the island's authenticity, where time still follows the rhythm of the seasons and the slow pace of grazing flocks.

Raised mostly in the wild, on pastures rich in native herbs and under the sun and wind of Sardinia, the lamb develops a flavor, tenderness, and nutritional profile that are truly distinctive. Its pale pink meat and firm white fat are prized for delicacy and versatility. The IGP certification ensures origin, traceability, and quality, safeguarding both the work of local farmers and the biodiversity of the territory.

**Certified types of Sardinian IGP Lamb:** • Milk-fed (4.5–8.5 kg): exceptionally tender, ideal for traditional recipes • Light (8.5–10 kg): balanced, perfect for roasting and grilling • Cutting (10–13 kg): more structured, suited for gourmet and modern preparations

This excellence of Italian agro-food is managed by the **Consortium for the Protection of Sardinian IGP Lamb (CONTAS)**, founded in 2005 to promote, protect, and enhance one of Sardinia's most authentic products. Headquartered in Macomer, the Consortium represents the entire supply chain, with 5,100 members including breeders, slaughterhouses, and processors. It is led by President Battista Cualbu, supported by Director Dr. Alessandro Mazzette and a Board of Directors representing the sector's diversity and expertise.

Despite rising energy and raw material costs, the sector has shown remarkable resilience. In 2024, **732,628 IGP-certified lambs** were processed—over **84%** of all lambs slaughtered in Sardinia. The IGP designation now accounts for **60% of the national lamb market** and **84% of all IGP-branded lamb in Italy**, far surpassing other regional denominations.

Consumer value exceeded **€56 million** in 2024, with additional revenue from offal and hides bringing the total to over **€66 million** annually. Exports represent **25%** of production, with **1,200 tons** shipped abroad each year, worth **€13 million**. IGP lamb commands a premium of around **€2/kg** over other national and foreign products, with seasonal peaks reaching **€6.54/kg** at Christmas 2024 and **€7.80/kg** at Easter 2025.

These results stem from growing demand for certified products, strategic partnerships with major retailers, and rigorous monitoring that has strengthened transparency and traceability. The IGP label is now present in **90% of national supermarket chains**, with increasing visibility in refrigerated sections. CONTAS has invested heavily in promotion—attending national and international fairs, launching campaigns across TV, social media, and print, and producing **5 million adhesive labels** over the past four years to ensure recognizability.



## – Internationalization and Global Fairs

One of CONTAS's strategic goals is expanding into international markets. The Consortium has actively participated in leading global food fairs such as Fancy Food (USA), Anuga (Germany), Foodex (Japan), Finefood Australia, and Speciality Food (Dubai), where its stand attracted strong interest from buyers and consumers.

These events serve not only as prestigious showcases but also as key opportunities to build commercial relationships, track global trends, and present innovations from the Sardinian supply chain. Sardinian IGP Lamb stands out for its certified quality, guaranteed traceability, and deep territorial identity, capturing the attention of importers, distributors, and international chefs.

Guided tastings, technical presentations, and pairings with other Sardinian DOP and IGP products help convey the cultural and culinary value of the lamb, positioning it as a premium offering in the global ovine meat segment.

**For the Australian market**, CONTAS is preparing to introduce a **new pre-cooked IGP Sardinian Lamb product**, specifically developed to comply with **Australian food safety and import legislation**. This innovation aims to facilitate market entry, ensure regulatory alignment, and offer Australian consumers a high-quality, ready-to-heat product that preserves the authentic flavor and identity of Sardinian lamb.

Internationalization is not only an economic strategy, it is a cultural mission: sharing the taste, sustainability, and pastoral heritage of Sardinia with the world.

## – Innovation and New Products

CONTAS has launched a major innovation and diversification initiative, introducing new cuts, frozen and pre-cooked products, and ready-to-eat options tailored to evolving consumer needs. Among the most popular innovations: • IGP Lamb Arrostiticini: packaged and ready to grill • Burgers, meatballs, tartare, and panadas: modern, convenient formats • Pre-cooked braised and stewed lamb: ideal for restaurants and home use • Frozen and vacuum-packed meats

**In line with this strategy, a dedicated pre-cooked product for the Australian market is under development**, designed to meet **Australian import requirements**, ensure microbiological safety, and maintain the sensory characteristics of Sardinian IGP Lamb. This product will support CONTAS's expansion into Oceania and strengthen the international positioning of the IGP designation.

These innovations have been well received at international fairs, where they were served in creative tastings—such as tartare paired with Vermentino, or lamb with DOP spiny artichoke and Cannonau wine. The goal is to valorize the entire carcass, not just prime cuts, and make IGP lamb available year-round.



### – Sustainability and Research

CONTAS is deeply involved in research projects aimed at developing sustainable and innovative farming practices. This commitment was recognized with first place at the national **Italia Next DOP** competition, organized by the Qualivita Foundation.

Through the **Versoa** project, CONTAS achieved a world-first: certifying **zero-emission ovine meat** in collaboration with the University of Sassari. The **NeutryFood®** label identifies livestock products with zero environmental impact, meeting international standards for sustainability and animal welfare.

Thanks to scientific partnerships with Agris Sardegna and the University of Sassari, CONTAS is helping define climate mitigation strategies, field assessments, and demonstration actions that reinforce the sustainability of Sardinia's ovine sector.

### – Challenges Ahead

CONTAS remains committed to enhancing Sardinian IGP Lamb, supporting farmers, and promoting ethical, sustainable, and innovative agriculture beyond national borders.

Key challenges include: • Market diversification toward Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North America, and Oceania • Ecological transition through Life Green Sheep, Versoa, and organic IGP Lamb • Innovation in traceability, animal welfare, and environmental impact reduction • Protection against counterfeiting and misleading labels • Economic valorization and fair compensation for farmers • Generational renewal and rural entrepreneurship • Communication and identity building, positioning IGP Lamb as a cultural ambassador of Sardinia

**President: Battista Cualbu**

**Director: Dr. Alessandro Mazzette**