

Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform (FABRE-TP)

Anne-Marie Neeteson, General Manager of the European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB) and Coordinator of FABRE-TP, talks to International Innovation about mobilising research, technological development and innovation efforts in Europe to tackle major issues concerning sustainable animal breeding and reproduction across the world

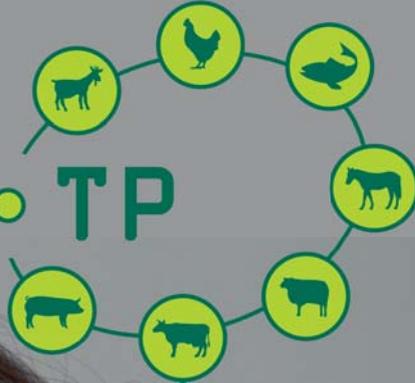
What is the Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform (FABRE-TP) and how would you sum up your mission?

FABRE-TP is officially recognised by the European Commission as one of the two animal based European Technology Platforms. It brings together cooperatives, industries, umbrella organisations, research institutions and society/farmer stakeholders which have developed a Vision for 2025, a Strategic Research Agenda and an Implementation Plan. The management of approximately 120 organisations have committed themselves to the FABRE-TP Vision. The documents are used by the European Commission to set up their vision and research agenda for the near and long term future. It was started as an initiative of proactive partners in breeding in 2005, then continued as an EC funded project, and is now in its third phase.

What are your main areas of focus? To what extent do you consider the developing world in your overall aims?

Our main areas of focus are the breeding and reproduction of farmed and companion animals, to provide Europe and the world with animals in a sustainable way. There is an intensive cooperation between continents, and between large and small research and business units.

Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction is a knowledge intensive and highly competitive sector at the beginning of the food chain with many SMEs, as well as several mid-sized and large international players. European research funding is crucial to ensure that the European animal breeding industry is able to respond to the needs of the society and to



FABRE TP



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remain competitive at the global level. This is demonstrated by the following:

- Its impact on animal food production is enormous: activities influence nearly every animal product.
- Global animal breeding is largely in European hands.
- Animal breeding is based on sustainability and aims for a strong European knowledge base with important outreach to the diverse smaller research and industry players in Europe.
- Animal breeding balances intellectual property issues via the EFFAB Patent Watch and ICAR Sentinel.
- Animal breeding has implemented a Good Practice Code-EFABAR based on sustainability and transparency.
- Animal breeding has a major influence on the European landscape, biodiversity, animal welfare, environmental footprint, food safety and food quality.
- The mid-sized companies play a crucial role in uptaking the high level knowledge developments (e.g. genomics, IT related, reproduction), whilst the relatively open structure ensures further implementation to SMEs.

What are the major problems facing sustainable animal breeding and reproduction at the moment and in what way are you helping to address them?

Globally, animal protein consumption will be increasing in the next 15-20 years due to the demand-driven livestock revolution; consumption and animal production is set to increase in the developing economies, especially in Asia, Africa and South America. Animal breeding must contribute to this huge increase by providing genetics that can sustain this production increase with less input per kilogram of animal protein. The expected climate change will increase the need for genetics that are fit for high production efficiency under less favourable conditions than in Europe and North America.

To be able to answer the global consumer-driven demand for animal products, and at the same time health, welfare, safety, biodiversity and environmental needs, breeders need to continuously improve the focus, functionality and broadness of their breeding programmes and have access to the best feedback mechanisms. With climate change production areas and methods set to alter, responsible development of phenotypes, husbandry and stockmanship will be necessary to meet these global developments in a sustainable, welfare-friendly, healthy, and safe way. The concept

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of welfare – the well being of the animal in its broad sense as an intrinsic and important item for breeding companies – needs to be communicated clearly and in a transparent way.

By what means is the Technology Platform industry-led, and what involvement from stakeholders do you enjoy?

The European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB), an industry forum, is coordinating FABRE TP. We have involvement from many stakeholders in expert groups, via management support (see website), and through financial input from EFFAB, three research organisations (WUR, INRA, Nofima), and BKTN (Biosciences Knowledge Transfer Network).

With so many different stakeholders, how do you bring them together to share a common vision for the development of the technologies and issues around farm animal breeding and reproduction?

We link to the umbrella organisations in our sectors; in depth, we run 13 expert groups to develop detailed information, and have 34 country reports with country specific information, provided by the countries themselves. Summaries of our work have been translated in 28 languages, so that our joint work cannot only be used at the European level, but also at the national and regional levels.

Do you interact and collaborate with other technology platforms, and if so, who, and what benefits has this brought to your own platform and your targets?

We collaborate with both formal and informal technology platforms within the animal area of the Animal Task Force. FABRE-TP is participating in the Knowledge Based Bio Economy Technology Platforms (BECOTEPS). This project is a joint effort of nine Technology Platforms to improve collaboration between stakeholders in the Bioeconomy area.

Our collaboration has demonstrated that animal breeding is a key technology needed for sustainable responsible global and European food production, and that much of the developments and ownerships are still in European hands. This recognition is very important since it has not always been clear how important animal breeding is or how broad and

balanced the animal breeding programmes are; having increased the welfare, health and production of farm animals over the last few decades.

FABRE-TP is participating in the Knowledge Based Bio Economy Technology Platforms (BECOTEPS). Could you explain your link with this project and why it is improving collaboration between stakeholders in the Bioeconomy area?

FABRE TP is actively involved in the bioeconomy efforts for BECOTEPS, organising the workshops on the Food-Feed chain and Sustainability, development of the BECOTEPS white paper, and organisation of the EC-ETP meeting on the 14th October.

Would you say that there are any unquantifiable future developments that successful sustainable farm animal breeding and reproduction rely on? To what extent will climate change impact them? What measures need to be taken to counteract this movement?

FABRE TP is writing white papers on Food Security and Climate Change. These will be ready by mid 2011 and link animal breeding and reproduction to these items, demonstrating their global importance, as well as to a Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change. We therefore need joint research programmes to include farm animal breeding and reproduction research.

How are you funded and how do you distribute this across the platform?

We are self funded and distribute this across the website, as well as using it to execute the major activities I have outlined and for participating in various European initiatives. We are now updating our expert group reports, and writing white papers on Food Security and Climate Change. Some additional funding would of course be very helpful, but we hope to continue in this way regardless.

Is there anything else you would like to highlight?

Animal breeding is a knowledge intensive area, having a major influence on the European landscape, biodiversity, animal welfare, our environmental footprint, food safety and food quality, and on global food security.

