

Report of the meeting with the Turkish stakeholders for the Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform

Report by Anne-Marie Neeteson, European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders

The meeting with the Turkish stakeholders of the Sustainable Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Ankara at TÜBİTAK, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, on 2 April 2008.

Didem Celikkanat (TÜBİTAK) was the local organiser of the meeting. Representatives of Turkish animal breeding and production organisations, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and from the Turkish research organizations and universities were participating in the meeting. A total of 80 people participated in the full day event.

Okan Kara (TÜBİTAK) opened the meeting. Didem Celikkanat outlined what Technology Platforms are, and the conditions and possibilities for the set up of a Turkish Technology Platform. Anne-Marie Neeteson (EFFAB, www.effab.info) introduced FABRE TP, its SRA, role within the Framework Programme, and its regional and national opportunities. FABRE TP will be happy to cooperate with national platforms which represent the whole spectrum in their country. Code-EFABAR was presented and discussed. Cemal Cakmak (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs) described the Turkish Breeding and Reproduction sector, and Dilber Ayhan (TÜBİTAK-Public Research Grant Committee) the national funding opportunities, and Ilknur Yilmaz (TÜBİTAK) the European Research Programmes.. Two examples of research and business were outlined by Sezen Arat (TÜBİTAK) and Ahmet Gedik (Ege Vet): a project on genetic resources, and a Turkish breeding business disseminating a.o. semen and embryos. The Turkish country discussion is the 31st of 34 country discussions. The presentations can be downloaded from www.fabretp.org / country discussions / Turkey.

The possibilities for the set up of a national Turkish platform were discussed. The funding possibilities are generous; the condition is that there is 50% industry counter funding required. The participants were invited to indicate their interest and organize into the set up of a Turkish FABRE TP.

The audience was invited to comment on the SRA and indicate specific Turkish issues. Below are the comments given at the meeting and highlighted during the presentations. Turkey will start up a more detailed national discussion on research priorities – this can be added to the FABRE TP web site when ready.

Dual role animal agriculture The Turkish Ministry of Agriculture recognizes the dual role of agriculture. Animals and humans should be well fed and hunger is to be overcome. The employment role of animal production for the countryside is important. Improvement of food quality production is important. The aim for Turkey is to move from a feed and food importing country to a self supporting country. Feed production and use of the pastures have decreased and should be increased. Potential export markets are nearby: e.g. the Middle East.

Species

Important species for Turkey are the ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats), as well as ruminant breeding. There is ample need for both specific breeding programmes for the various breeds, as well as for imported semen, embryos, and breeding of global breeds in Turkey. Horse breeding was an important activity, historically, if linked to adapted goals it could gain importance (rare horse breeds are part of a large national AnGR project). Turkey has a developed poultry sector, the international breeding organizations foresee in the need for breeding stock satisfactory. Local poultry could be developed in Label or Appellation d'Origine Controlée like systems, but this would need long term investments and development. Bee keeping is playing its role in agriculture and should not get lost.

Data Recording

Improvement of data recording is a key item, especially for the various Turkish cattle, sheep and goat breeds. Due to the many small enterprises special attention should be paid to integration of data of small farms in the breeding programme. Support and increased organisation are of 'backbone' importance for animal breeding in Turkey. Proper record keeping - regular, reliable data and a good coverage of data recording per breed and across the country, are the starting point. Organisation of farmers in cooperatives is sometimes difficult, as there are no loan facilities for cooperatives, like in some other countries.

Breeding Programmes

Genetics and breeding are key – classical breeding specialists are important. Description of breeds, and adaptation and further development of breeding programmes per breed are necessary. Artificial Insemination should become more widespread, if breed improvement is going to take place (set up of AI studs). ET development and availability should accelerate.

Data recording and breeding programme development will require dedicated effort, cooperation between (adapted) research, farmers, farmers' organizations and local/national authorities, and consistency.

Important to be improved:

- Genetics of the breeds
- Animal health - animal diseases need attention, and proper control.
- Nutritional status of farm animals.
- Feed resources and quality.
- There is room for improvement in the efficiency of animal production
- Food safety

Code-EFABAR

The Code of Good Practice for Farm Animal Breeding organizations can be used as a tool to demonstrate the quality and professionalism of breeding organizations.

Niche production

Simultaneous to improvement of the main stream breeding, niche production and development of breeding schemes supporting niche market certification should take place to ensure long term viability of farming (serving restaurants, tourism, specialty products for European and Middle East international markets).

Education and Support to farmers

An educated young labour force will/should be the strength of Turkish agriculture. Education at various levels is being mentioned as key in the chain “research – technology – implementation”. It is difficult to disseminate knowledge to the sector. Some AI organizations offer tailor made courses to practitioners and thus foresee in the need for adapted knowledge with farmers and practitioners in AI, ET, data collection, milk control etc. There is room for improvement of support to farmers (technical advice etc).

Technology Transfer

The transfer from science to industry/practice will much benefit from improvement: meeting of producers with technology providers. As Technology Platforms are industry led, and industry oriented, the envisaged Turkish Technology Platform could contribute to increased transfer, bringing research closer to the practice, and identifying research and technology that answers the needs of the practice in Turkey. As Technology Platforms are A Strategic Research Agenda for Turkey will be made – the results can be put and updated on the Turkey page of FABRE TP website.