

Report of the meeting to encounter the Austrian stakeholders for the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform

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The meeting to encounter the Austrian stakeholders for the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Vienna on July 2nd, 2007. The venue was the Ministry of Agriculture. Konrad Blaas, representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, was chairing the meeting.

Representatives of the major animal industries and breeders organizations, Animal Science Research Institutes in Austria and the Ministry of Agriculture was invited to attend the meeting. There were 21 people attending.

The meeting began by presenting, shortly; to explain the role and the functioning of the technology platforms in the EU policy then it was fully presented the FABRE TP. The presentation was directed to explain the reason of the creation of the platform and then the activities of the platform so far. Finally it has been described the first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda. The people attending the meeting were then stimulated to express their views on the FABRE technology platform in general and more specifically the comments, advises and criticisms about the first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda.

During the meeting, the importance of the mirror group role was explained. There was some interest to organize the national mirror group for Austria, or at least it was expressed the importance of the national mirror group.

After collecting the comments, the list was sent back to those who attended the meeting for possible corrections and additions. The final list is then detailed:

1. The Austrian animal science and industries communities expressed their concerns about the need to increase efficiency of animal farming for the decreasing level of competitiveness of Austrian livestock systems. The breeding objectives and relative studies must be defined considering the economic efficiency of animal farming
2. The importance of deciphering the genotype-environment interaction was also outlined. This is extremely important especially in low-input system
3. The participants to the meeting expressed the view to strengthen the importance of health traits for the large impact they have on economic efficiency and welfare requirements. To emphasis methods of genomic research are for traits with low heratibilities especially important.
4. One of the most important problems in dairy cattle farming is the mastitis incidence. This cause large part of culling animals, it cause decrease of production and the highest producing cows are those that are more than other affected by mastitis. For all these reasons more studies on mastitis are requested.
The whole breeding cycle from breeding goal to genetic gain including data recording/performance testing, genetic evaluation and the design of breeding programmes should be covered within research activities.
5. The aspect of responsible use of resources in terms of the relation input to output should be looked at. At the respect of ecological footprint in animal breeding as well should be a research topic as well.
6. Investments for studying cloning and transgenomic animals should not be done, not even for maintaining European expertise on these subjects

7. More studies should be done on poultry sector to support healthy and robust animals
8. Studies on semen sexing on poultry must be deepened for the killing of young male chicken is an important issue in Austria and the same is for all welfare aspects of animal farming
9. More research should be done to utilize new breeding, reproduction and management techniques to increase cost effectiveness at farm .
10. The wool fibre from sheep does not have any importance for Austria.
11. More efforts and investments should be done to discover new methods of performance recordings of small ruminants so to diminish the costs. This factor, together with the difficulties to utilize artificial insemination, has a large impact for the low level of genetic improvement in small ruminants.
12. More research on sperm sexing is certainly welcomed, especially for swine and cattle farming.
13. The audience also considered very important the studies to increase disease resistance in pig and cattle breeding.
14. One of the objective for research on animal breeding is to obtain animals that, with the particular systems in which they will be kept, will suffer less therefore increasing naturally the level of animal welfare.
15. In Austria, as well as in other alpine regions, the double purposes cattle breeding system is very important. In Austria the estimated percentage of the double purposes cows is around 90%. Studies to increase, through breeding and reproductive issues, the economic efficiency of double purposes cattle breeding is envisaged.
16. Studies on fertility with main respect to early embryo developed including reproduction strategies for animal breeding.
17. Aspects of food safety and consumer needs are important to consider within research in animal breeding and production.
18. One of the most important aspects of diminishing the economic efficiency of dairy cattle breeding is the low fertility of cows. More studies aimed at increasing the fertility level will be certainly appreciated.
19. An important issue to better exploits the current and future knowledge of breeding activities is the science of data management. Most of the new disciplines are utilizing a large amount of data collected. Other important field of application for animal science is the technology of collecting data. The data management should therefore be studied and consequently improved. The improvement of technique for data management will automatically increase the efficiency of the entire system
20. One of the main limits in pig breeding is the poor technique to identify the animals. Proper, economic, welfare sustainable and simple technique of pig identification is envisaged
21. The Technology Platform developed a strategic research agenda that is lacking actions in favour of traditional farming systems. In the probable future European animal farming there will be an important role for the marginal areas. Research support is necessary to make the traditional animal farming very efficient and competitive. The SRA should better consider that for the many conditions the breeding objectives should be less than optimum about productive level. The main breeding objective should be to look for animals fitting well and having high efficient production in the systems in which is bred. An example raised by the Austrian representatives would be to look for animals that are able to have good productions in mountain areas. Finally the suggestion was to consider breeding and reproduction technologies for low input systems.
22. Increasing the production level of already high producing animals will certainly create some negative impact, such like welfare issues, fertility problems, creating pollution. More studies should be done to eliminate, or at least diminish, such impact

23. In the view of competition of natural bio-fuelling with animal feeding and consequent increase of the price for animal feeding supply, more research for selecting animals having more efficient utilization of animal feed should be certainly done.
24. More research is needed about the economic impact of outdoor and mountain grazing for the public sector and for keeping the landscape.