

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

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The meeting to encounter the Belgian stakeholders for the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Brussels on June 6th, 2007. Suzy Van Gansbeke was chairing the meeting.

Representatives of dairy and beef cattle breeding, pig industry, research institutions, governmental offices, farmers associations, animal industry, milk recording and AI service. There were 16 people attending the meeting.

After a short presentation to explain the role and the functioning of the technology platforms in the EU policy, it was fully presented the FABRE TP. The purpose of the presentation was to detail the objectives of the platform and the activities so far. Finally it has been described the first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda. The people attending the meeting were invited to express their views on the FABRE technology platform in general and more specifically the comments about the first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda and the specificities of Belgium.

During the meeting, the mirror group role was explained.

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 negative impact of infectious disease in modern European livestock systems is increasing. For this reason it will be requested to strengthen the support to do research for reducing the risk of infectious disease in animals and, moreover, if transmissible to human beings
2. The audience though affirmed that the on of the objective already included in the draft 0 of the Strategic Research Agenda, i.e. the eradication of diseases, is practically impossible to obtain
3. There are more than thirty Technology Platforms. At least other two, the “Food for Life” and the “Animal Health” are important for the animal industry sector. Therefore a closer collaboration with these Technology Platforms is essential
4. The consumers’ opinion is very important. The breeding objectives should encounter the consumers requests, therefore this must be fully considered when supporting research about breeding animals
5. Because of the problem, especially in Europe, of availability of animal feed, the selection should also aim at improving feeding efficiency of animals. This will also be more important if the animal feeding will be in competition with the making bio-energy, i.e. gas for automobiles from maize or similar natural sources
6. More research should be focused on genetic determination of milk molecular composition to select animals able to produce milk having parts to be extracted for pharmaceutical composition, like lactoferrin.
7. The Strategic Research Agenda should also contain items relative to non-food production. The importance of non-food production breeding objectives will increase in the next decades
8. The importance of international genetic evaluation is very high for some species. Nowadays the dairy cattle, through the ICAR activities in the Interbull centre, are in the most advanced situation. Currently the Interstallion for the horse species is also

established. The importance of the international genetic evaluation is especially high for mid size countries like Belgium. Research to improve the services of international genetic evaluation is therefore necessary and needs to be supported

9. The transgenic animal must be studied. The European expertise, regardless the use of transgenic animals in our continent or not, must be maintained and expanded
10. Among the list of items defined by the Strategic Research Agenda there are not enough rooms about the sport animals. The economic importance of such livestock system will certainly increase in Europe. The most important sector of sport animals will certainly be sport horses
11. Research on statistics application for the full utilization of MAS selection. Part of the difficulties is due to the proper statistical approach to utilize, therefore more studies in this subject is certainly necessary to successfully apply the MAS selection
12. Many more efforts should be given to disseminate the results and the methods of selection activities to train technicians and farmers
13. The audience stressed the importance of mechanization and engineer technologies to improve the efficiency for collecting information of animal production and welfare
14. The Belgian representatives also invite to include in the Strategic Research Agenda some research activities including social science for better predict the views of consumers
15. The audience explained that much more emphasis should be given to improve the local meat quality production. In fact meat quality can be improved starting by the farm level with proper breeding scheme