

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

Report by Chris Warkup and David Telford, Genesis Faraday

The meeting with the Cypriot stakeholders of the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Lefkosia on June 29th, 2007. The meeting was hosted by the Agricultural Research Institute.

Christos Papachristoforou from the Agricultural Research Institute, Lefkosia acted as the local contact to organise the meeting. Representatives of the major Cypriot animal production industries and breeders organizations, and from the Universities and Research Institutions involved in animal breeding and reproduction, and other relevant organisations like the Department of Agriculture and Department of Fisheries, were invited to attend the meeting. A total of 18 people participated in the meeting.

Chris Warkup gave a presentation introducing FABRE-TP. He outlined what Technology Platforms are, and why they are important. The presentation was then used to describe why and how FABRE-TP has been established and its activities so far. Following this, the Strategic Research Agenda was explained, with particular focus on the Technology Research Priorities. The participants were also informed of the opportunity to set up a National Mirror Group for Cyprus.

Andreas Mavrogenis from the Holstein-Friesian Association of Cyprus (formerly of the Agricultural Research Institute), also gave a presentation outlining the Cypriot Agricultural Research Institute's livestock improvement objectives and methods, and an overview of the research and technology transfer undertaken to date. He also provided a focus on the issues of particular relevance to Cyprus in order to stimulate discussion.

The attendants were then provided with an opportunity to express their views on FABRE-TP in general, and in particular, the Strategic Research Agenda. These comments were recorded, and then circulated to those who attended the meeting for possible corrections and additions. The final list of significant comments is as follows:

1. Goat farming to produce both meat and milk is very important for Cyprus, and it was therefore important that research in this area is considered as a research priority within FABRE. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of focus on research on selection for milk quality in goats because of the importance of this for Haloumi cheese production.
2. It was also stated that sheep and goat production is very important to other Mediterranean countries, but goat production is also of increasing importance in Northern European countries, which are now increasing production.
3. Cypriot farmers considered that they needed subsidies to assist the successful dissemination of technology and uptake of breeding stock of high genetic merit.
4. Mobility of animals within Cyprus is a problem in breed improvement schemes. State Veterinary restrictions to limit the spread of disease make it very hard to move male breeding animals around to implement breeding programmes.

5. Sheep and goat producers would like improved Artificial Insemination techniques. This is a particular problem due to the seasonal breeding in goats, i.e. if conception to the insemination does not occur, there is only limited time to inseminate/mate the animal again. Improved reproductive technologies are important, to help disseminate high-merit breeding stock.

6. Participants in the meeting considered that animals are becoming more sensitive to disease following intensive genetic selection for limited number of traits in each species, and this is something that needs to be addressed. It is important to consider trade-offs between improvement of limited traits (meat, milk etc) and genetic variation, and also negative impacts on animal health.

7. A question was asked as to how the Ministry of Agriculture could get involved in FABRE-TP. It was explained that the Ministry can sign up to show support for FABRE-TP. Also, Cyprus can also set up a National Mirror group, as this would be a very good way to help research and industry work together to try and establish a single voice to say what are the most important research priorities, and then take this forward to the Cypriot government and also to feed into FABRE-TP to emphasise where funding is most needed.

8. It is important to note that this is just the start of the process, and that those involved in Cypriot animal breeding and reproduction will have continual opportunities to feed into FABRE, either through a National Mirror group if this is set up, or immediately, via the FABRE website: <http://www.fabretp.org>

Participants

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