

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

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The meeting to encounter the Finnish stakeholders for the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Helsinki on September 18th, 2007. The venue was the Farm Animal Breeding Association. Asko Maki-Tanila was chairing the meeting.

Representatives of the major animal industries and breeders organizations, Animal Science Research Institutes in Finland and the Ministry of Agriculture were invited to attend the meeting. There were 14 people attending.

The meeting began by presenting, shortly, EAAP activities, by Andrea Rosati, and the Finnish livestock system, by Asko Maki-Tanila. Then Rosati explained the role and the functioning of the technology platforms in the EU policy and then it was fully presented the FABRE TP. The presentation was directed to explain the reasons 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 Finland, or at least it was expressed the importance of the national mirror group.

After collecting the comments, the list of comments, advises, criticisms about the first draft of the Strategic Research Agenda including also the Finnish specificities in terms of animal breeding and reproduction was sent back to those who attended the meeting for possible corrections and additions. The final list is then detailed:

1. The Finnish animal science and industries communities expressed their views to mention that there is more need to develop research on genetic defects to render more efficient the cattle and pig industries
2. More research activities are needed in the field of inbreeding. Many breeds, not only the local breeds, but also the cosmopolitan breeds as the Holstein breed, express large average value of inbreeding coefficient. This is a serious problem for the worldwide livestock industry. One of the solutions expressed was to do more studies based on the pedigree information. The main objective is to avoid to take into surface the genetic defects caused by inbreeding
3. For the problem of constant inbreeding increase, there will be more need to do research on crossbreeding systems. Many farmers currently utilize this system to overcome the inbreeding problems, but the management of crossbreeding systems is not always based on scientific investigations
4. The audience was also requiring to make more studies about metabolic and physiologic problems of animal breeding
5. Considering of the Finnish livestock system, the local animal science and industries communities request deeper research on grass utilization by the animals on pasture. Related to this aspect, more research on energy balance parameters for well management of cattle. Moreover the genetic improvement should create genotypes that will be able to produce efficiently in pasture conditions

6. The patenting problem is a very important issue for research on animal genetics. Deeper discussions should be made for what could be the impact of patenting on genetic research and on the relative applications
7. More research is also needed to plan and manage the recording schemes for animal disease to detect, but not exclusively, health and fitness problems
8. Very important is the utilization of the data collected of production and of pedigree collected from farms. More investigations are necessary to increase the efficiency of the schemes and methods of data collection. The importance is not only for genetic improvement, but also to properly collect information for herd management
9. One of the main priority for Finnish animal farming system is the research for dairy production by using grass pasturing
10. Finland is also a very important country for fur production, therefore support on research for this type of animal production is requested by the animal science and industries communities
11. More research on welfare issues and their impact on animal breeding and reproduction is also necessary
12. It is important to improve the feed utilization of animals by genetic selection. This is a very important economic factor for animal farmers. 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. It must also be considered to increase research to take in account the competition that some animal feed has with human utilization. This is especially important for pig and poultry feeding
13. The genetic improvement should be aimed also to reduce nitrogen excretions from animals. More research is necessary in this field
14. The Finnish animal science and industry community ask for more support on research in the field of meat quality
15. More research is also requested for milk quality, especially more investigations are necessary for the very detailed composition of milk
16. Mastitis resistance is a very important economic factor for dairy animal farming. More research in this field is strongly recommended. 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
17. It is important to better understand the effect of selection activities related to animal diversity. The diversity of application and effects of selection activities among local and cosmopolitan breeds should be investigated
18. The Finnish animal science and industries communities hope that breeding objectives and relative studies must be defined considering the economic efficiency of animal farming
19. The importance of deciphering the genotype-environment interaction was also outlined. This is extremely important especially in pasturing system as in the Finnish environment
20. An important issue to better exploit 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