

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

Report by Chris Warkup, Genesis Faraday

The meeting with Norwegian stakeholders of the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Oslo on October 29th, 2007. The meeting was hosted by the Norwegian Research Council.

Dr Anna Sonesson from Akvaforsk, Ås, acted as the local contact to organise the meeting. Representatives of the major Norwegian animal and aquaculture industries and breeders organizations, and from relevant Universities and Research Institutions and other relevant organisations were invited to attend the meeting. A total of 15 people participated in the meeting with a good representation of industry organisations involved in several different species (salmon, dairy cattle, pigs, sheep and goats, and bees), the research base and Government.

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 Norway.

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. Overall the SRA was considered to capture the research needs of the sector well and delegates were content to give it their general support.
2. It was considered important that the SRA should try to strike the right balance between R&D needs in quantitative and molecular genetics research. The success of the Norwegian breeding industry to date had been based on quantitative approaches and research relevant to new quantitative tools (including new phenotyping methodologies) should receive sufficient priority in the SRA.
3. The SRA, and the implementation plan that would follow, should make a clear distinction between areas where industry would be involved in competitive research and those areas where pre-competitive collaborative or public research is most appropriate.
4. There was some discussion regarding the difficulties of sourcing funds for genome sequencing of minority species, with the Salmon being considered a high priority for investment in full genome sequencing. Delegates considered that it might be appropriate to examine more closely opportunities for international funding of minority species, e.g. via and ERA-NET of national funders.
5. Delegates considered that there were opportunities within Norway to improve national dialogue on genetics and genomics of farmed species, for example the

aquaculture industry association was not as engaged in issues of genetics as might be useful.

6. In the wider geopolitical context there was some discussion of the potentially competing issues of sustainability of agri- and aqua-culture versus the need to meet a growing global demand for food supply and biofuels. The Norwegian position was currently strongly focussed on sustainability and delegates considered it important that the SRA should allow for research relevant to sustainability and efficient/secure food supply.

7. Delegates had an extensive discussion on the potential merits of creating a National Mirror Group as a forum for breeders to work more closely together. Such a forum was not considered to exist at present but could be provided by re-establishing a previous meeting format (Soria Moria). It was agreed that delegates would look at the desirability of establishing a National Mirror Group.

8. It is important to note that this is just the start of the process, and that those involved in Norwegian 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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