

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

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The meeting to encounter the Italian stakeholders for the Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform was held in Bern on May 23rd, 2008. The venue was the site of the Federal Office for Agriculture, Mattenhofstrasse 5, Bern.

Representatives of the animal industries and breeders organizations, Animal Science Research Institutes in Switzerland were invited to attend the meeting. There were 16 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.

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. There was a criticism for the fact that the draft Strategic Research Agenda is already too broad and the synthesis will be very difficult. Prioritizing the agenda items will be very important
2. The audience express the importance of sustaining research for local and quality products, especially those produced by ruminants
3. The selection is currently almost completely done by the proper use of quantitative genetics. Performance recording data is the information utilized by quantitative genetics to produce genetic indexes. large support should be given to render more efficient the performance data collection and recording.
4. After the performance data are collected and recorded, need to be analyzed and utilized by proper statistical tools. Selection indexes come from a statistical approach of performance and genealogic data. Sustain should be given to improve the statistical tools for this scope
5. Fitness traits are becoming more and more important. More emphasis should be given to recording tools of fitness traits to be able to select animal having better fitness traits
6. The Swiss audience requests that support should be given, as priority, for research on ruminants and swine
7. In view of the climate changes, we should consider the importance of new possible livestock systems. Obviously the selection objectives will change as well. The new breeding scheme must reflect such changes and it is strongly requested that the future research activities in animal breeding must consider the new goals
8. Importance should be also given to selection processes aiming at improving the feed efficiency of domestic animals. Emphasis must also be given to the use of by-products of food industries for breeding animals
9. For the social and environmental evolution that are on-going in Europe, the support to research must contemplate the possibility that more animals, than in the past will be reared in marginal and harsh areas

10. Importance necessarily must be given to biodiversity, but the participants believe that meaning must be given to biodiversity within breeds and not only among breeds
11. In mountain regions, quality of animal products is very important. More weight must be given therefore to select animals able to produce quality and distinctive products
12. Milk quality is very important for the typical and local cheese production from Switzerland
13. Fertility of cattle is an important issue nowadays. More research to find biological, physiologic and management tools to partially overcome this problem, must be considered. Male fertility is also very important
14. Reproduction traits on horses has also to be included in the future research activities to support. Especially the semen traits of stallions has to be well thought-out
15. One of the weakness of animal industry and animal research is the poor attention given to dissemination on civil society of the research done and applied production system. The audience believes that support should be, for this reason, given to enlarge the dissemination and also training activities
16. The audience expresses criticism for the large emphasis given in the draft Strategic Research Agenda to new technologies. The main reason of the criticism is due to the fact that it will increase the gap between large international companies and small breeding organizations that the most active in the field application of research done on animal breeding
17. It was requested to a large effort on protecting the free dissemination of researches funded by EU. This is becoming a crucial problem, therefore EU must have a policy of protecting research outcomes so that the free dissemination and a large use is not blocked
18. Support should also be given to automatic collection and detection of phenotypes. This will help very much for some definite traits like recording and measuring specific substance in the milk
19. Finally the audience expressed again the great importance of funding research to permit a better exploitation of research outcomes. It was noted that mainly basic research is funded. More emphasis must be given to application of research