

PRESS RELEASE

EU-FP7 Project: EU-PLF

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European project to bring Precision Livestock Farming from the lab to the farm

Improving animal welfare and reducing environmental impact of animal production while preserving technical and economic performance of farms is the goal of Precision Livestock Farming (PLF). The EU-PLF project (www.eu-plf.eu), funded by the European Commission is designed to look at the feasibility of bringing proven and cost-effective PLF tools from the lab to the farm.

“As the wealth of countries increases, the worldwide demand for animal products will increase in the next 15 years by 40%. This puts a lot of pressure and workload on farmers since they have not enough time anymore to follow each individual animal the way their grandparents did. At the same time farmers are faced and worried about the health, welfare, environmental impact and productivity of their animals since they make their living and money from working with animals. EU-PLF is designed to help farmers to be able to meet the increasing demands of the consumer without comprising the health and welfare of their animals. EU-PLF aims to realize fully automated electronic ears and eyes monitoring the animals continuously day and night. The final aim is to give animals in livestock production a life worth living in a more sustainable production system for farmer and animal,” states Daniel Berckmans, EU-PLF project coordinator.

Giving attention to the animals in order to closely meet their needs, which is the focus of PLF, has existed in farming since the beginning of time. However such individualized attention is neither easily done nor cost-effective in modern farms where animals are raised on grander scales. PLF technology can play an enormous part in helping farmers fit into the model of today's economy of scale while allowing them pay close attention to the welfare and health of animals.

Since 2003 scientists mainly in Europe have developed a number of PLF tools at the laboratory levels and as prototypes. These tools allow the farmer to monitor animals automatically and continuously, and warn him if something goes wrong. In six European Conferences of Precision Livestock Farming (EC-PLF) over 790 scientific papers have been presented on PLF technologies in 10 years. In the last conference in Leuven, Belgium there were 222 participants from 31 countries. The purpose of the EU-PLF project is to develop these tools into services for farms. Specifically, EU-PLF investigates the process of making these tools operational in dairy, pig and poultry farms and will produce a generic procedure (blueprint) that will assist people to translate PLF concepts into operational tools at farm level. This blueprint will be a reference tool offering pragmatic guidance on how PLF systems can be applied at the farm level in order to create value for the farmer and other stakeholders such as veterinarians, ethologists, immunologists, companies bringing services for farmers, meat consumers, the general public, authorities at different levels and the press.

In the last EC-PLF conference results were shown from different European Projects since Europe has the lead in this technology: the EU-PLF project (www.eu-plf.eu), the BioBusiness project (www.bio-business.eu), and the ALL-Smart-Pigs project (www.allsmartpigs.com).

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