

PRESS RELEASE

EU-FP7 Project: EU-PLF

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EU-PLF partners gather to share results

Seventeen months into the EU FP7 project, all EU-PLF partners met on 2-3 April in Unna, Germany to share on the progress and results. Particular emphasis was given to the interaction between the groups aiming at making economical and societal sense of the use of PLF and those implementing PLF tools at the technical level.

“We have established the list of key indicators and related gold standards,” stated Harry Blokhuis from Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and leader of Work Package 1 (WP1). The importance of these indicators and standards is that they can be potentially used by Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) to better understand collected data and translate them into valuable information for farmers and the production chains in the areas of animal welfare and health, environmental load and productivity. “For each key indicator, we identified the technologies that have the potential to be used for measuring gold standards”, Harry continued. Thus far, there are specific lists for dairy cows, dairy calves, broilers and fattening pigs.

PLF technologies from Fancom, SoundTalks and GEA Farm Technologies have been implemented in farms in nine countries: Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, France, Hungary, Italy, Spain and UK. Data is currently being collected from ten fattening pig farms, five broiler farms and one calf farm. The first dairy farms have also been equipped with PLF technology.

A big emphasis of the EU-PLF project is to study the social and economic value for different PLF applications on-farm and in supply chains with the final aim to find stakeholder-dependent social and economic incentives for the adoption of PLF. Kees Lokhorst, Wageningen UR Livestock Research, presented the initial results of PLF-relevant socio and economic indicators that were derived from experts, stakeholder chains and a European questionnaire on PLF aspects. He noted that the most important social key indicators of PLF were labour conditions and duration, job related pride/motivation, the availability of advisory systems and the availability of successor to continue the farm business. The most important economic key indicators were feed conversion, growth, health costs, delivery weight and energy costs.

The Value Creation group aims to provide guidance on the potential benefits from the use of PLF technologies. Brainstorming with the more technical-orientated Cow and Pig/Poultry groups aimed at establishing a hierarchy of factors that impact economic performance and which can be monitored with PLF technologies. No precise figures were derived yet neither for social impact, nor even for economic impact, however, the magnitude and direction of the impact (benefit or loss) could be established from modelling on farm level. Follow-up brainstorming sessions have been planned to get more precise results.

To further disseminate efforts of the project, on 25 August 2014, EU-PLF is co-organising a full-day of PLF sessions at the EAAP Annual Meeting in Copenhagen. During the sessions, more results from the project will be shared as well as a comparison of PLF technologies in USA and in the EU. More information on the sessions will become available on the project website: <http://www.eu-plf.eu/>

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