Sharing experiences and best practice of dairy cattle welfare assessment across Europe

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BACKGROUND

EuroDairy is a new network to connect dairy farmers wishing to improve the performance of their farms, and to provide a more sustainable future for their farms and families.

OBJECTIVE

The Animal Care objective focuses on improving animal welfare, specifically sharing experiences on the use of practical outcome-based welfare measures. A survey was conducted to identify innovative activities in practical welfare assessment. A total of 11 partners from 9 member states responded to the survey including Netherlands (NL), United Kingdom (UK x2), Sweden (SE), Denmark (DK), Spain (ES x2), Italy (IT), Finland (FI), Slovenia (SI) and France (FR).

WELFARE PRIORITIES

The welfare priorities identified in the survey were:
• prevention of production diseases
• better on-farm recording of health and welfare data
• improving housing conditions both indoor and outdoor systems
• pain prevention during management procedures e.g. disbudding

NEXT STEPS

EuroDairy puts farmers at the center of practice-based innovation:
• Adapt and develop new and existing scientific knowledge to produce implementable solutions, which can be shared across the network
• Convene regional “operational groups” so that good ideas can be captured and exchanged
• Pilot farmers operating excellent levels of physical and financial performance, will demonstrate best practice, and push boundaries in the application of new knowledge
• Facilitate farmer exchange visits so that innovation identified in one country or region, can be shared with another
• Deliver webinars and workshops on welfare assessment

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Network

EuroDairy spans 14 member states, encompassing 40% of dairy farms, 45% of cows and 60% of European milk production. Twenty partners, well connected to the dairy of Europe are involved.

Survey results

• Welfare assessment initiatives reported: AssureWel (UK), Ask the Cow (SE) and those based on Welfare Quality® (FI, IT)
• None of the countries set targets for welfare outcome measures.
• DK & NL set targets for cow (14%) and calf (20%) mortality
• There were some similarities in the top 3 non-compliances across member states: Udder health, cleanliness, space allowance, herd health review with vet and water provision
• Future planned welfare activities include Cow Compass Beta (NL), positive welfare (UK), welfare index for cows and calves (DK), design and use of welfare pen (DK), comparing Naseva health care visit to Welfare Quality (FI), improve welfare in Parmigiano Reggiano cheese supply chain (IT)

Save the Date

Join us at IDF World Dairy Summit in Belfast on 1st November 2017 where EuroDairy will facilitate a session on “Dairy Cattle Welfare Assessment” to foster co-ordination and exchange of information and experiences.

EURODIARY PARTNERS

Visit www.eurodairy.eu or email eurodairy@wur.nl