

DELEGATES FROM FIVE CONTINENTS LAUNCH BRIGHTANIMAL PLF PROJECT AT UK CONFERENCE

Nearly 50 delegates from five continents ensured the successful launch of BrightAnimal, the new EU Framework 7 project on precision livestock farming, when the kick-off meeting was held at the AIDC European Centre of Excellence in Halifax, UK.

During the next two years BrightAnimal will work towards producing a framework for effective and acceptable PLF for small and medium sized enterprises in Europe and world-wide.

In particular, it will focus on the potential for using location and identification technologies such as RFID, barcodes, mobile data capture and natural feature identification to optimise the use of feed and other resources and to improve yield factors, animal health and welfare. Its work will contribute to the economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development of the livestock industry.

BrightAnimal's partners represent senior research institutions, government bodies and technology providers from China, Malaysia, South Africa, Thailand, Australia, Brazil, UK, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Estonia and the Faroe Islands.

Giving the keynote address, Prof. Dr. Daniel Berckmans of Leuven University, Belgium, and a world authority on precision livestock farming, said PLF had huge potential to contribute to modern livestock farming. It would help meet the challenges posed by an expected 40% increase in demand for meat over the next 15 years, the need for higher levels of assurance on food safety and quality and the effects of livestock production on the environment.

He added that the PLF debate had to date failed to take the needs of farmers into account. With low product prices, higher animal numbers and more welfare and environmental issues to address farmers now had less time to devote to individual animals and audio-visual scoring was no longer practicable. Technology could help but it must be strongly focused on the needs of the primary producer.

BrightAnimal co-ordinator Ian G. Smith said the international attendance showed the need for a unified approach to PLF and for a framework that would make it accessible to producers. "BrightAnimal is essentially about developing technology systems and best practice guidelines to make life easier and business more profitable for small producers. That is why at the outset we wanted to have the views, experiences and concerns from as many global markets as possible. Thanks to the enthusiastic participation of delegates the project partners are now well placed to determine the priorities and focus of their work over the next two years."

BrightAnimal will produce a number of deliverables including a book on PLF and user-guides for applying PLF in the dairy cattle, laying chickens, pig and fish sectors.

“The potential of PLF to transform livestock production will only be realised if the systems are made user-friendly and farmers can easily understand the on-going benefits. There is also a need to communicate with consumers and retailers on the improvements to animal health and welfare that PLF can enable. These enhanced areas will, in turn, lead to higher quality products and better levels of food safety,” said Ian Smith.

A series of BrightAnimal workshops will be held during the next two years to enable stakeholders to comment on the project’s work and to contribute to its progress. A full report and recommendations on the way forward for PLF will be presented at a final conference in 2011.

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Further information:

Coming soon our project website www.brightanimal.eu

