

SPANISH DAIRY SHEEP BREED ASSOCIATIONS WERE GRANTED WITH THE ICAR CERTIFICATE OF QUALITY

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In 2020, FEAGAS (Spanish federation of breeding organisations) applied for the ICAR Certificate of Quality for four Spanish dairy sheep associations, under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture and the support of INIA-CSIC (Agricultural Spanish Research and Technology Institute). As it was the first application, a visited audit was scheduled in autumn 2020. But the Covid pandemic made necessary to cancel the visit on site at the last moment. The usual process was therefore adapted in an agile and unexpected way, in agreement with all the parties, ICAR, the breed associations members of FEAGAS, and INIA-CSIC, by replacing the visits with video conference to review the documents prepared by the associations. The visited audit was delayed to the year after, in 2021. The associations audited, members of FEAGAS, were the main four dairy sheep breed associations in Spain: AGRAMA for the Manchega breed, ANCHE for the Churra breed, ASSAFE for the Assaf breed and CONFELAC for the Latxa breed. The scope of the audit covered the 6 possible fields: animal identification, herdbook recording, milk recording, conformation recording, genetic evaluation, and data processing. The documentary audit consisted in four 3-hours-meetings in videoconference, with each of the four associations. It permitted an efficient review of the documents, bridge the gaps, answer all pending questions. This was a useful preparatory step for the in-person visits to audit scheduled the year after. In 2021, the visited audit was undertaken in each association, with one day per association, including a comprehensive review of the processes, and discussion with the breed managers and stakeholders, as well as a milk recording visit on-farm. The visits were completed by an informal meeting with INIA-CSIC and the Ministry of Agriculture to discuss the first main impressions that struck the auditor during his visits. Finally, the four associations audited were granted the ICAR Certificate of Quality for all the activities. This Certificate of Quality recognizes the high standards followed by the associations work, allowing them to produce output and services of quality for the farmers. Besides, as the aim to shift towards genomic selection is shared among the four Spanish dairy sheep breed associations, the audit was an opportunity to address this concern and to suggest that an increase in the coordination at the national level, by exchanging, harmonising, stimulating, might improve the benefits for each of the associations.

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