



# ICAR NEWSLETTER

Focus on Sousse 34<sup>th</sup> ICAR Session, ICAR Activities, News from SC's WG's and TF

## 1. ICAR General Assembly Sousse, Tunisia, June 2004

In June 2004 the 34<sup>th</sup> ICAR Biennial Session was held in Sousse, Tunisia. The session was very successful characterized by over 40 meetings, the exceptionally high quality of more than 100 papers submitted, with meetings of the Sub-Committees, working groups, a very interesting workshop on fertility, a manufacturer showcase related to recording devices and two workshops organized in co-operation with FAO.

The 420 participants coming from 37 different countries was record high. The logistic organization by the Tunisian hosts was perfect under every aspect. The outstanding conference site at *El Mouradi Palace Hotel* in Sousse, was the right complement for a good sojourn in the Tunisian coast. Being aware that the success of the biennial session is very important for ICAR activities, we wish to thank for the results of the 34<sup>th</sup> session, the *Institut de l'Elevage et des Pâturages*, lead by Mustafa Guellouz.

At the General Assembly, the President Mark Jeffries gave the report on the state and activities of ICAR in the period between the two biennial sessions. The President's report had unanimous approval. The General Assembly unanimously endorsed the statement of accounts for 2003 with the total income of Euros 140.000 and expenditures of Euros 151.000. The deficit was mainly due to the extraordinary expenses for the milk and beef inquiries. The General Assembly also approved the final budget for the year 2004 with planned income of Euros 184.000 and expenditures of Euros 179.200, and the provisional budget for 2005.



*The past ICAR President, Mr. Mark Jeffries (on the right), and the new President Mr. Jarmo Juga (on the left) during the Sousse Session.*

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The new Board members elected unanimously by the General Assembly were Messrs. Frank Armitage (UK), Robert Poole (Australia), Guido Ongaro (Italy) and Mustafa Guellouz (Tunisia). Jarmo Juga was elected as new President in substitution of Mark Jeffries, who resigned due to a change of activity.

The General Assembly also approved the updated version of the ICAR Guidelines, prepared by the working groups and the Secretariat, including a new section for "beef recording" and revisions for parts on "artificial insemination and relevant technologies", "lactation calculation methods", and "dairy sheep recording".

At the same time, the General Assembly in Tunisia agreed that the final changes to the guideline sections for animal identification devices and milk recording devices be approved by Member Organizations through web consultation. The changes were then successively approved and included in the new version of the Guidelines due to be published in April 2005.

## 2. Strategic Plan 2004-2008

The General Assembly approved a new Strategic Plan for the period 2004 - 2008 as proposed by the Board and requested the Executive Board to follow up and report about the fulfillment of the planned objectives. In 2008 the Board will prepare a new strategic plan for the following four years period (2008-2012). The plan gives major focus for developing new services to Member Organizations, monitoring the intellectual property rights, and promoting new technology developments and benchmarking. The role of SERVICE-ICAR S.r.l., the society fully controlled and owned by ICAR, in providing paid services to Member Organizations was emphasized.

## 3. New Members Organisations

Two new member organizations joined ICAR during the Sousse session: the Swedish Dairy Association, represented by N. Larssen and the Meat and Wool New Zealand, represented by M. Jeffries. Both new organizations joined ICAR as associate members.

## 4. Registration of trade marks, logo and names

ICAR was finally successful to register the trade marks, names and logos of ICAR and of its Sub-Committee Interbull in selected countries. Other Member Organizations can obtain from the Secretariat the necessary information regarding the registration in their respective countries.

## 6. Special Stamp in Croatia

U. Lauritsen and A. Rosati made an inspection visit to Croatia to ascertain the implementation of ICAR rules, standards and guidelines in accordance with the ICAR Rules on Special Stamp. The overall situation of the recording system performed by the Croatian organizations was very satisfactory and in compliance with the ICAR requirements.

## 7. SUB-COMMITTEES REPORTS

### 7.1 Interbull Sub-Committee

For the technical activities of the SC, it was agreed to have a permanent Technical Committee (TC). Drawing upon the good experiences with conformation traits, the mandate of the TC was expanded to cover all traits. The objective of the TC is to identify and review technical issues that may be essential for providing a high quality service to countries participating in the

international genetic evaluations. The members of the TC are F. Fikse (Sweden), G. Kistemaker (Canada), T. Lawlor (USA), Z. Liu (Germany), E. Mäntysaari (Finland), R. Mrode (UK) and H. Wilmink (Chair, the Netherlands).

The code of practice for the international genetic evaluation of dairy bulls at the Interbull Centre has been rewritten. The original document was written in 1994, and several modifications and amendments had been described and provided as appendices to the original document. The revision made it possible to collect all these into one document, which has slightly modified structure that will be easier to update. In addition, some aspects of the international genetic evaluations have been written in more detail. Comments of the members of Interbull to the suggested revision were collected, and incorporated after review by two members of the Steering Committee.

International genetic evaluation for conformation traits for the Ayrshire breed was investigated in research and pilot studies during 2001-2003. Genetic ties were weak between some of the countries, and estimated correlations were viewed as inaccurate. Research was undertaken to use genetic correlations from Holsteins as prior information, and results were presented during the Interbull Open Meeting in Interlaken and the Interbull Workshop in Beltsville. Pilot runs were conducted during 2003 and were discussed among participating countries. The Interbull technical committee reviewed the report and the conclusion was that routine international genetic evaluations could be recommended. The test-run of September 2003 thus introduced conformation trait evaluation for the Ayrshire breed, including data from nine countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States) and considering the same traits as for the Holstein breed. The first official routine evaluation was performed in November 2003.

In March 2004 the first test-run for direct longevity for the Holstein breed was computed. Ten countries participated with data (Canada, Denmark, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States). Results from the pilot study for the colored breeds were distributed to participating countries in April 2004. Since then routine test were performed.

A weighted bending procedure was implemented to obtain positive definite correlation matrices (number of common bulls was used as weighting factor). Improved data verification procedures were introduced. Problem evaluations are identified using differences in subsequent evaluations combined with basic statistics like EDCs (effective daughter contributions) and reliabilities, following ideas presented by Klei *et al.*, 2002.

The rule for inclusion of national evaluations based on only 2nd crop daughters was also changed. Such national evaluations are now included if they are identified as meeting the standard national rules for official publication in the country sending the information, or if they meet a minimum number of daughters and herds.

The edit for time period of data included in the estimation of sire variances and prediction of breeding values is no longer for a rolling period of data, and thus was not updated in the February routine evaluation.

## 7.2 Animal Identification Sub-Committee

An important part of the SC's recent work consisted in the elaboration and evaluation of a questionnaire on animal identification issues among ICAR member countries. In addition, the SC continued refining/extending/setting up guidelines and procedures for the testing of identification devices regarding their conformity with the current ISO standards and their performance in the field. Testing is based on several protocols elaborated by the SC after discussion with the identification industry. In the field of Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID), 84 transponders of different types have been successfully tested since the beginning of the procedure in 1995 and may officially be used in animal identification. Furthermore, in 2002 the first test on conformity of ISO-readers took place. Tests for conventional eartags used in

official identification programs are to be carried out soon. The Guidelines and procedures were refined, improved and are going to be printed in the new version in April 2005. The testing of devices and the extension of the agenda to sheep and goat identification matters was also considered.

### 7.3 Recording Devices Sub-Committee

The updating of Guidelines has been achieved. Members of the SC and the manufacturers have contributed to this update as well as the secretariat in Rome, has done a tremendous job to sort it all out. The new updated version is more simple, easier to understand.

A modernized calculation was recently implemented to support the milk meter test for approval. Bias and accuracy of the observed measures for meters in test are considered by the statistical analysis.

Recently is raised the question if ICAR should allow two types of milk meters for official records: level "A" approved for management and genetic data and level "B" approved only for management purposes. The SC Recording Devices will continue to follow up the matter closely, in order to secure solutions that will help the dairy farmers.

In collaboration with Milk Test Laboratory WG, initiatives are promoted for standardization of vials throughout ICAR member countries. The background is that equipment for (automatic) milking, milk recording and milk analyzers are becoming ever more sophisticated. The fewer the types of vials the less money needs to be invested in development of meters, auto-samplers and for lab equipment.

Currently there are two devices approved for milk sampling from milking robots and a third is under test. The ideal situation both for manufacturers, associations and farmers would be only to have one type, which could serve all brands of robots. In March 2004, a meeting was held in Lelystad, Holland, where all the manufacturers of robots discussed the matter with the Sub-Committee.

## 8. WORKING GROUPS REPORTS

### 8.1 Lactation calculation methods Working Group

The ICAR Lactation Working Group had a very positive meeting in Sousse during the ICAR meeting. Three main issues discussed were: a) Automatic Milking Systems (AMS), b) Electronic Milk Meters (EMM), and c) AM/PM milk recording. Guidelines for AMS were reviewed for approval at the ICAR General Assembly and they will be available in the updated version of the Guidelines. Current national protocols for EMM were outlined and discussed. Regarding AM/PM milk recording, a new series of guidelines drafted by a German colleague were reviewed for presentation to the ICAR General Assembly, where they were approved. Finally on-going research for AMS and EMM by WG members was presented and discussed. Results from those research projects will improve and update milk recording Guidelines for AMS and EMM.

### 8.2 Milk Testing Laboratories Working Group

The need appears for the future to extend the activities of the working group so as to cover South American and African areas. A possible candidature from Israel is foreseen to strengthen the consideration of Mediterranean and Middle East area issues and those of other species than cow.

From July 2002, the web-space dedicated to MTL WG at the ICAR website under "Milk Laboratories" has progressively been filled in. Adequate information is provided to make it a practical and useful source for ICAR country laboratories. In May-June 2004 in Sousse Tunisia,

three subjects dealt with by MTL WG were presented during the ICAR Reference Laboratory Network Meeting and two presentations were made during Technical Session 5 by members (on behalf) of the group.

The Protocol for the evaluation of milk analyzers and official approval by ICAR has been produced by the WG. It constitutes a guide for instrument manufacturers and national organizations who evaluate milk analyzers. It describes the steps for the evaluation and the technical objectives to meet. It represents a practical standardized way aiming at a better efficiency and economy in evaluation efforts for new instruments. The protocol is in line with the criteria approach promoted by the Codex Alimentarius.

In 2002, an inquiry was carried out through a joint action of MTL WG and the then SC MJ to collect information on the current situation of sample vials and containers within ICAR. After a first report produced in 2003 (available on ICAR website, space of MTL WG) the findings and conclusions were presented at the Sousse technical sessions. The output is used in the development of guidelines for sampling with automatic milking systems in conjunction with representatives from the ICAR Sub-Committee Recording Devices and the manufacturers of sampling equipment.

For the harmonization of analytical methods and practices within ICAR countries, some members of MTL WG will participate as experts in the IDF/ISO/AOAC Analytical Week in South Africa (May 23-27, 2005). Items of interest are the revision and extension of standardized analytical methodology for the determination of fat, protein, lactose, SCC, urea, and casein in milk as well as Analytical Quality Assurance.

The composition of the international DHI Reference Laboratory Network, at the present time, is 38 laboratories, nominated by 32 National Committees. In 2002, the network extended its interest to sheep and goat milk analysis. At the present time, there are 14 members designated as reference laboratory for sheep milk and 14 for goat milk in addition to their former reference status for cow. The list of members is available on the ICAR website.

About the ICAR International Inter-laboratory Studies, two series of trials were organized for cow milk. A second round in Autumn was also completed last Autumn. For sheep and goat milk, only one proficiency study per species was scheduled. For all species, the criteria concerned are fat, protein, lactose, urea and somatic cell count. The Organizers are CECALAIT (France) for cow milk and AIA-LSL (Italy) for sheep and goat milk.

The annual program of 2004 was renewed in 2005. An early information letter was dispatched in December 2004 with the annual announcement for the inter-laboratory proficiency study programs of 2005 for the three species cow, sheep and goat. No changes were considered in the organization except for an adjustments of the dates. The yearly information/announcement letters are available on the ICAR website and can be used for registration to trials.

The new activities planned for the TL WG are:

- Inventory of reference materials (RMs) available for milk recording purposes and list of suppliers: two databases are identified. Their implementation is still underway.
- Milk recording analysis in farm.
- Collection of information: A presentation was made to MTL WG and RD SC about the Merkur project of Lattec by Tove Asmussen (Denmark). She provided information on the manufacturer objectives, their needs with respect to technical specifications for milk recording and the present status.
- Future consideration by MTL WG: In connection with Recording Devices Sub-Committee, to define requirements for on-farm measurement devices (milk and analysis) so as to be used for official milk recording and get ICAR approval including recommendations for quality assurance control on measurements.
- Workshop on analytical methods: a prospect is being made to organize a workshop on reference methods used in milk recording to calibrate routine milk analyzers. It would be devoted to members of the ICAR Reference Laboratory Network and could be organized in



connection with IDF partner laboratories who are members of the IDF Reference Laboratory Network.

### 8.3 Conformation Recording Working Group

An open meeting of the working group was held in Sousse to discuss the current ICAR recommendations and trait definitions. A number of changes had occurred internationally which required amendment to the current recommendations for the administration and monitoring of national type evaluation schemes. In addition the collection of additional traits, such as locomotion and condition score, were considered to be extremely important for the development of the program. It was decided that the working group would review the current recommendations and present any proposed amendments to the ICAR Board May 2005. It was also considered important to work closely with the World Holstein Friesian Federation type harmonization working group to continue the successful progress of the harmonized international type assessment program.

For the first time the international linear type evaluation of sheep was discussed with a valuable contribution from A.M. de la Rosa (Spain). It is intended to investigate the possibility of developing this as a specific project with the ICAR board.

### 8.4 Milk Recording in Sheep Working Group

In Sousse, a meeting of the Working Group on Milk Recording of Sheep took place. The agenda of the meeting focused on the main activities of the WG over the last 2 years: the evolution of the ICAR Guidelines and the survey on milk recording in sheep approved at the General Assembly which took place in Sousse. Furthermore the new proposals had been previously proposed on the website. The following points were updated:

Method "E" was introduced in the Guidelines after being discussed for a long time among the WG. Method "E" is a flexible official method applied when the breeding purpose is to maintain the breed with all the typical standard performance signs (flocks without milk production and/or flocks whose only a part of the ewes belongs to the herd-book). In the first case, the rule of not recording suckling ewes may be not respected. In the second case, the rules of recording all the animals of the flocks may be not respected. Nevertheless, this flexible method must follow a framework of rules.

- Systematization of the classification of the methods in dairy sheep, based on the recording method (A, B, C, D, E), the recording scheme (no simplified or simplified [T, C] schemes), the recording interval (4, 5, 6 weeks).
- Clarification of the terms for milk yield. Total Milk Yield (TMY) is applied for lactations with milking from lambing. Total Milked Milk (TMM) is applied for lactations with milking after a suckling period and includes the milk produced during the milking-only period. Total Suckled plus Milked Milk (TSMM) is applied for lactations with milking after a suckling period and includes the suckling and the milking-only periods.

A new survey (it is the sixth since 1994) has been carried out by the working group. This survey not only deals with the situation of milk recording in sheep in the different countries and breeds, but also includes topics such as simplification of milk recording, somatic cell counts, other traits, molecular information, milk recording equipment, artificial insemination and progeny tests.

The results of the survey are in the biennial report of the working group which was presented in Sousse. This report is also available on the ICAR website in the space dedicated to the working group.

## 8.5 Animal Recording Data Working Group

Much work has been recently done within the framework of harmonizing both the methodology of electronic data transfer on farm, between farm and off-farm databases and the formatting of required data.

To ensure that the greatest beneficial use of effort and least duplication takes place ICAR thought that cooperation with other bodies would lead to the best solution. In the case of data transfer mechanisms ICAR now has a role within the ISO/TC23/SC19/N17532. This project, Network Livestock Farming (NFL) is charged with bringing to ISO a recommended standard for data transfer in the livestock sector, through the use of an international data dictionary based on ADED (ISO 11788) and syntax of ADIS (ISO 11787).

The World Holstein Friesian Federation (WHFF) is progressing its work, which commenced in 1996, to bring about a standard format of record definition. Already there are moves to bring together the national data dictionaries of Germany and the Netherlands. Such moves should set the example for other organizations and countries to do the same to the benefit of farmers and others who serve them.

## 8.6 Functional Traits Working Group

The working group on functional trait is currently working on new Guidelines for recording and evaluation of female fertility. The WG is also planning to start work on Guidelines for longevity and calving performance traits. The new Guidelines will follow the same general layout as those on udder health.

## 8.7 Beef Recording Working Group

The biennial beef recording survey was carried out by using an updated questionnaire which allowed for facilitated data capture. A new comprehensive guideline was established. Special attention was paid to match the guideline with the North American beef recording standards as defined by the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) and with other ICAR recommendations laid down in the International Agreement on Recording Practices. With regard to the importance and role of BIF, an efficient partnership with BIF is aspired that aims to approximate and to harmonize the appropriate beef recording guidelines.

Initiated by Brian Wickham of the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation an investigation was carried out about joint international genetic evaluation for beef traits based on raw data from Ireland, United Kingdom and France. The Beef Recording WG followed up the project closely. After successful completion of this pilot project, a proposal was made that Interbull establishes genetic evaluation services for beef breeds and traits. If accepted by Interbull it would have to adapt a new structure and establish a Beef Technical Committee where the ICAR Beef Recording WG would function as an advising body.

## 8.8 Artificial Insemination and other Relevant Technologies Working Group

The main goal of the WG is to harmonize and improve data collection and exchanges of data in AI and in other relevant technologies, such as embryo production. Those records are used directly or indirectly for genetic evaluations. It deals only with cattle. Thus, discussion matters of the group include the harmonization of relevant items to record AI or embryo recovering-transfer, the description of existing systems of data processing, the harmonization of the definition of relevant concepts and ratio used in the industry, and gathering statistics in AI and in other relevant fields.

The main activity of the group during the last 4 years has been focused on "Recording and validation of bovine AI data". This topic was fully covered and there are 2 major deliverables of this work:

- "Survey on recording and validation of bovine AI data among some ICAR member countries" which is a summary of answers to the questionnaire worked out by the group during the meetings. This paper is available on the ICAR web site and can be used by organizations or countries that have to build up new systems of livestock data processing. Its structure is described in table 2.
- "Recommendation of recording and validation of AI data". The paper was adopted during the meeting in Rome 2003 and has to be adopted by the ICAR board to become a new ICAR guideline. It may address some major points. The purpose of this recommendation is to improve the quality of data in Artificial Insemination of cattle (AI) by harmonizing and improving data collection for guaranteeing a high level of exchanges at an international level. It recommends the minimum items that should be recorded for using AI data and the minimum of controls that data must undergo for being declared as valid. It applies for usage of AI data for genetic purposes such as: a) using AI data to establish parentage of bovines prior to registration in the herd-book and/or in files used for genetic evaluations for any trait; b) printing AI on pedigrees of pregnant females; c) genetic evaluation fertility of bulls, daughter fertility and establishment of Non-Return-Rates.

It describes data that have to be recorded, compulsory or not, and tests that have to be carried out for validation of AI data in genetic systems (completeness, integrity, coherence, likelihood). It also makes some provision for the transmission of AI data to databases for parentage assessment and quality controls.

According to its terms of reference, the WG on AI has also to handle the matters associated with reproductive technologies, having an incidence on data used in the process of genetic evaluation, in particular those linked with the assessment of parentage of animals used in recording schemes. This matter concerns today only embryos and associated bio-technologies.

The purpose of the ICAR group was not clear for the International Embryo Transfer Society and its representatives feared that it could interfere with the existing rules elaborated for a long time by this well-known organization. During its last meeting, the Board of Governors of the IETS requested ICAR "to accept the embryo identification system recommended by the IETS". However, the goals of the two organizations are very different, thus misunderstanding is impossible.

## 8.9 Goat Milk Recording Working Group

The ICAR Working group on goat milk recording carried out in 2004 a second biennial survey, using answers from 12 countries. The report points out the state of milk recording in ICAR countries in 2003, the increasing importance of simplification of milk recording, the great diversity in lactation calculation, the development of optional recordings such as milk composition and somatic cell counts, urea, and in some countries the udder scoring, reproductive traits and other. The future activities of the working group will be the preparation of the ICAR Guidelines (clarification of the definition of milk traits), close cooperation with the working group on milk recording of sheep and cooperation with the milk testing laboratories working group.

# 9. TASK FORCE REPORT

## 9.1 DNA Task Force

The task force is chaired by P. Ajmone Marsan (Italy), and members are U. Emanuelson (Sweden), E. Genzini (Italy) and W. van Haeringen (the Netherlands). The contact person at the International Society for Animal Genetics is C. Penedo (USA).



Methods in DNA analysis are rapidly evolving and are being used in a number of application in the animal field. Some technologies are now well established in several Countries worldwide, as the use of microsattelites for paternity testing. Others diagnostic assays are less defined, like technologies aiming at the detection of single mutations in disease or production genes, that may employ different principles.

Aims of the DNA task force were the identification of key issues, limits and bias that may in some way negatively affect a correct exchange of DNA information across countries, and to propose, when possible, support and strategies that may overcome these limits or lower their negative effects. The group focused the discussion on cattle and on issues related to the most frequent application of molecular markers in breeding, that are paternity testing, fingerprinting and negative or positive marker or gene assisted selection.

To monitor the international state of the art in applied molecular diagnostics a questionnaire concerning the use of molecular information in breeding programs was distributed to member countries of ICAR, addressed to representatives of either the Ministry of Agriculture, breeders organizations, breeder associations or laboratories in charge of paternity testing. The survey although not exhaustive and not perfectly representative, particularly because Europe is over-represented, is indicative of a trend towards the use of molecular methods in paternity and diagnostic analyses.

During the Sousse meeting the group discussed a number of key issues to be considered for the accreditation of laboratories and exchange of information across Countries. According to the opinion of the group, the three issues that have the highest priority are:

- a) national or international certification;
- b) participation and performance in ring tests;
- c) use of the official nomenclature.

The DNA task force suggests to follow a stepwise approach and use cattle and paternity testing as pilot assay to be harmonized across Countries and accredited to laboratories meeting the minimum standards. A proposal to be submitted to the 2005 ICAR General Assembly is in preparation.

## 10. Benchmarking

An ICAR Task Force has completed the development of a benchmark service for ICAR, with the important cooperation of the Canadian member, CanWest .The new ICAR Benchmark Service will be launched in 2005 first as a pilot project and then expanded to cover all members . The General Assembly commended Neil Petreny for his project leadership and the excellent results of his team (Toni Craven, Joseph Crettenand, David Hemara, Juho Kyntaja, and Jean Luc Gadenne).

The detailed action plan of the project includes:

1. Offer of the pilot services in 2005 to include up to 50 milk recording organisations on the first come - first served basis;
2. Implement the project within the following timeframe:
  - a. service shall be offered on an annual basis;
  - b. it shall be based on a calendar year period;
  - c. submission from participants shall be made by April 2005; and
  - d. results of the analysis shall be returned to participants by May 2005.
3. Engage the CanWest DHI/University of Guelph for the 2005 run to build on their experience and to pass, and eventually train, ICAR Secretariat to take over by 2006;
4. Present the global summary at the June 2005 General Assembly.
5. Open the Benchmark service to a larger participation in 2006 and present the service at the ICAR Biennial Session in Finland.

## 11. Cornell Patent

The situation regarding the European ICAR members opposition against the Cornell patent is that on January 2005 at the hearing held in Munich (Germany), the opposition of the German member Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Rinderzüchter, on behalf of all the ICAR members belonging to the European Union, won the trial. Cornell University still have the possibility to appeal to the court decision. But what was important is that ICAR members had an important success to see their rights recognized. This shows that when recording organization work together they have greater chance to succeed. We all are thankful to the German ICAR member, and particularly to Carl-Stefan Schaeffer and to Gottfried Averdunk. ICAR is also giving support to the Canadian member for this important issue.

## 12. Intellectual Property Monitoring

Encouraged by the experience with the Cornell Patent and believing that in the future ICAR member organizations can have more impact on issues of intellectual property, ICAR is planning to establish a service for monitoring of patents in areas of the highest priority for member organizations.

## 13. Interbeef

Biennial ICAR surveys show that many countries apply beef recording schemes that in principle would allow for international genetic evaluation. Interbull Sub-Committee became involved in international genetic evaluation by applying a pilot study for weaning weight in the Charolais and Limousin breeds carried out by Ireland, UK and France.

The pilot study demonstrated that international evaluations using phenotypes from several countries and fitting them to an appropriate statistical model is a practical proposition. Further, this research demonstrated these methods are preferred over a number of others including the MACE method currently used by Interbull for dairy breeds. It is envisaged that the countries will choose either to use the International Evaluations as their National Evaluations or to incorporate the International Evaluations into their National Evaluations. Over time the methods to be used will evolve in accordance with normal Interbull processes for improving the quality of the international evaluations.

International evaluation mainly was appraised by ICAR members as useful, providing additional benefits to the breed.

There is an increasing demand for joint international genetic evaluation as genetic exchange across countries by live animals and semen of AI bulls is increasing and breeders want to compare their animals at common scales.

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) initiated a pilot study about joint international evaluation for beef breeds and beef traits based on raw data of Irish, French and British Charolais and Limousin cattle. Apart from overcoming the difficulty to identify identical sires that were used across the involved countries, the study clearly evidenced the feasibility of joint international evaluation.

After completion of the pilot study, it was proposed that Interbull Sub-Committee implement genetic evaluation services for beef breeds and beef traits. In order to make a decision, a business plan was requested by ICAR. The following persons were involved in a Task Force: H. Schild (Germany, chair), B. Wickham (Ireland) and H. Wilmink (the Netherlands). In addition to these members, the following persons were consulted for the activity of this Task Force: F. Fikse (Sweden), H. Graser (Australia), G. Renand (France) and J. van der Westhuizen (South Africa).

The possible new Interbull services shall provide international evaluation of beef cattle. Provided there are sufficient links across national cattle breeds, and sufficient data structure of the pedigree and performance data. The plan of the TF aims to account for the following issues:

- Establishment of market for international genetic evaluation services for beef breeds and beef traits.
- Establishment of operational and financial basis for the provision of these extra services by Interbull.
- Identification and evaluation of the risks associated with these extra services

Joint international evaluation primarily refers to international beef breeds that are kept in many countries.

## 14. NDHIA 100 years celebration of milk recording in USA

J. Juga, N. Petreny and A. Rosati were invited to attend the celebration for the 100 years of milk recording in USA by the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association. During the meeting in Lansing there were close contacts between ICAR governing bodies and NDHIA. For ICAR the activities of the North American members are very valuable for their importance in the world of dairy production and of the advanced technologies involved in this environment. The first outcome of the strengthening of such relation was that NDHIA will propose to ICAR Board to host the 2008 Biennial session in USA.



*From left to right: J. Juga, J. Mattison and N. Petreny in Michigan, during the technical visit.*

## 14. Future meetings

- ICAR co-sponsored conference on Physiological and Technical Aspects of Machine Milking to be held in Nitra (Slovakia), 26-28 April 2005.
- General Assembly 2005 on June 1st 2005 in Uppsala (Sweden).
- ICAR Board, Board and Chairpersons meetings on May 31st and June 1st 2005 in Uppsala (Sweden).
- Interbull Session on June 2-4, 2005 in Uppsala (Sweden).
- 35th Biennial Session on 7-10 June 2006 in Kuopio (Finland).

## 15. ICAR publications in the last year

- Development of animal identification and recording systems for developing countries, Sousse 29 May 2004. ICAR T.S. no. 9 (Published in November 2004).
- Performance recording of animals: state of the art 2004. Proceedings of the 34th Biennial Session of the ICAR and the Interbull Meeting, Sousse, Tunisia from 28 May-3 June 2004 EAAP Scientific Series no. 113. Published by Wageningen Academic Publishers. (Published in December 2004).
- Physiological and technical aspects of machine milking. Proceedings of a seminar held in Nitra, Slovak Republic, 26-28 April 2005. ICAR Technical Series no. 10. (Published in May 2005).
- Camelids. Proceedings of a seminar held in Sousse, Tunisia, 30 May 2004. ICAR Technical Series no.11 (It will be published on the web in August 2005).

### Secretary General:

Andrea Rosati  
Via G. Tomassetti 3, 1/A  
00161 Rome (Italy)  
Tel: + 39-06-44202639  
Fax: + 39-06-86329263  
E-mail: [rosati@icar.org](mailto:rosati@icar.org)

### Editor:

Cesare Mosconi  
E-mail: [mosconi@eaap.org](mailto:mosconi@eaap.org)

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