



A word from the President

A word from the President: Towards the implementation of the 'Future ICAR' strategy

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Six months ago the General Assembly approved the 'Future ICAR' document as the long-term direction of our organisation. 'Future ICAR' reconfirms ICAR as a global provider of guidelines and standards for all aspects of animal recording and genetic evaluation in all the main production systems. It provides the basis of our ambition to grow ICAR membership and to expand our activities to cover more traits and the full range of production systems. A review by the ICAR Board at its November meeting of the programmes of our groups (Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Task Forces) confirmed that they focus on key issues stemming from the needs and requirements of the animal industry: efficiency, accuracy, equivalence and cost-effectiveness of identification, recording and genetic evaluation methods. In order to help our members, ICAR must continue to monitor developments of applicable new technologies and keep its guidelines updated, simple, relevant and user-friendly. Improvements in communication within ICAR – members, board, groups – and with other relevant entities – public, industry, other international organisations – remains a constant task of the board and the ICAR executive team.



Hans Wilmink, The ICAR President

Strategic priorities

On the basis of the 'Future ICAR' strategy and priorities set by Sub-Committees and Working Groups, the ICAR Board at its meeting on 18 November 2014 reviewed the strategic priorities for 2015. They include extending the scope of ICAR to better cover research and development for new recording devices, traits and systems. The board plans to undertake a review of its groups with a view to better defining their links to species, products (milk, meat, fibre etc.), traits, and farming systems (intensive, low input, climate etc.). Improved communication with members should lead to more visibility and more regular reports on priorities and on current work. Promotion of services available through SERVICE-ICAR should also be improved. Linked to this review, the structure of the ICAR Guidelines will be reviewed to better support links to species, products, traits and farming systems. The board will review internal communications and tools to aid communication between groups, the board and the secretariat. The ICAR website needs to ensure better communication and easier access to ICAR Guidelines. Links and cooperation with international bodies – ISO/ISAG/IDF/OIE/SLU etc. – will also be reviewed and further enhanced. The South African Identification workshop planned for April 2015 in cooperation with FAO should contribute to growing the reputation of ICAR in Africa.

ICAR transition

What worked well and what did not work well

In November 2014 the ICAR Board and the executive team analysed activities and achievements in the past six months. They found that ICAR's image has improved and that the ICAR brand is building and gaining more positive recognition. The monthly meetings of the board and staff meetings held every two weeks have contributed to better communication within the board and the executive team. The past six months were marked by transition from facilities and staff shared with EAAP to the appointment of ICAR's Acting Secretary General and the establishment of ICAR's own office facilities. In these circumstances some important tasks did not receive sufficient attention, such as strategic planning, contacts with Chairpersons of groups and contacts with some international organisations active in fields relevant to the ICAR mission.

ICAR Board

Activities of the ICAR Board

Between August and November 2014 the ICAR Board held four teleconferences and one face-to-face meeting. At its first meeting it unanimously endorsed the president's view that the board should be well organised, transparent and should provide open and honest feedback on issues of importance to ICAR and SERVICE-ICAR. On the basis of these principles it approved its 'Golden Rules' as an orientation and guide for its work.

One of its first major decisions was, following the resignation of the former secretary general, to appoint Brian Wickham as acting secretary general and to initiate the recruitment of a chief executive in accordance with 'Future ICAR' strategy. The board guided and supported the ICAR executive team in finding and establishing new office facilities and administration support.

The board endorsed priority actions proposed by its groups during meetings held in Berlin and changes in their membership. It established a task force under the direction of the Interbull Sub-Committee composed of representatives from the Genetic Analysis WG, Parentage Analysis WG, Interbeef WG and WG Breed Associations to undertake the detailed design of the GENOEX PSE (parentage SNP exchange) services. It committed financial support of €60,000 over three years from SERVICE-ICAR to help with the development of the GENOEX PSE services from the Interbull Centre. The identification workshop in South Africa to be held in April 2015 in cooperation with FAO and governments in the region and with the support of a number of sponsors was recognised as a priority task of the ID Sub-Committee and the ICAR Secretariat



The ICAR Board.

From left to right in the back row: Nils Henning Nielsen, Marco Winters, Japie van der Westhuizen, Bevin Harris, Bianca Lind and Laurent Journaux
In the front row: Jay Mattison, Hans Wilmink and Kaivo Ilves

ICAR Members

New ICAR Members

The ICAR Board admitted the following organisations in the ICAR membership:

Full members:

- Deltamune (Pty) Ltd. (South Africa)
- University of Novi Sad, Agricultural Faculty, Department of Animal Science (Serbia)
- DairyNZ (New Zealand)

Associate members:

- Wageningen UR Livestock Research (the Netherlands)
- Felixcan SL (Spain).

CoQ

Certificate of Quality

The ICAR Certificate of Quality was accorded to the following members:

- Vaxa (Sweden) for dairy and beef cattle, identification and production recording and genetic evaluations
- Czech Moravian Breeders Corporation (Czech Rep.) for identification system of beef cattle and recording production of beef cattle
- Breeding Services (Slovak Rep.) for identification system of beef cattle, recording production of beef cattle and data processing.

Recording Devices SC

Recording Devices Sub-Committee

Testing and approval of new or modified recording devices and accurate sampling of same is central to the quality of data for both management and genetic evaluations. The ICAR Recording Devices Sub-Committee is charged with maintaining the ICAR recording guidelines (Section 11) as well as testing and approving the devices through three SERVICE-ICAR test centres in the Netherlands, France and Germany. Lists of approved meters are maintained on ICAR web site.

The Sub-Committee has good worldwide representation on the committee, with milk recording and DHI members coming from EU, North America and Oceania.



Sheep from China. Picture taken by Marco Antonini, Chairperson of the ICAR Animal Fibre Working Group



In addition to testing and approval of recording devices, the Sub-Committee also undertakes various improvement projects – some in conjunction with other ICAR groups. In past few years we have worked on:

1. AMS (automatic milking systems) universal sampler/data development
2. DataCal – using 365 electronic meter data for routine calibration
3. Carry-Over – test protocol development
4. Accuracy Task Force – reviewing standards guidelines and their application
5. Meter Approval webpage refresh (includes application details e.g. high line/low line, S/W rev etc.).

Interbull actions

Interbull Sub-Committee priority actions endorsed by the Board

The ICAR Board endorsed the priorities of the Interbull Sub-Committee. These include:

1. Establishing a world-class genomic infrastructure and services to support diverse customer needs
2. State-of-the-art classical genetic evaluation service
3. Business operations and image
4. Strategic communications and marketing
5. Network for research collaboration, quality assurance and best practice methods
6. Extending the pedigree module of the Interbull Data Exchange Area (IDEA) to cover other animal-specific information, such as specific genes (including genetic defects)
7. Establish the GENOEX PSE service
8. Routine implementation of the validation method (Mendelian Sample variance estimation) for all breeds and traits.

Milk Analysis SC ToR

New Terms of Reference of the Milk Analysis Sub-Committee

Between September and October 2014 several consultations with ICAR's Milk Analysis Sub-Committee resulted in revised Terms of Reference, which were approved by the ICAR Board at the meeting on 18-19 November 2014. The task of the Sub-Committee is to develop **universal** guidelines for milk analysis related to animal recording and to ensure the availability of operational systems and standards to achieve worldwide equivalence of analytical results. The Sub-Committee provides a **forum** for members of ICAR to collaborate, exchange information and learn from each other on all aspects of milk analysis as a part of animal recording and conducts periodic **international surveys**. Its task is also to establish and maintain effective collaboration with ISO and IDF in the field of milk analysis to support continuous improvement of milk analysis related services that ICAR members provide to farmers

ICAR Working Groups

News from ICAR Working Groups

Animal Welfare WG

'Cross-analysis' Animal Welfare Recording Working Group Report for the ICAR Board

The ICAR Animal Welfare Recording WG has prepared a cross-analysis by comparing the ICAR Guidelines and the OIE Guiding Principles for the Welfare of Animals in Production Systems. Animal welfare is increasingly becoming a part of the social 'licence' to farm. Recording organisations can play an important role

in animal welfare assessment and improvement, along with generating a large accessible database. The recording organisations form a worldwide routine data collection network, which involves 30 million animals in 53 countries across five continents. The common practice of standardised recording, as outlined in the ICAR Guidelines, can be used as a key tool for the improvement and management of animal welfare. Many animal-based parameters, including some potential new ones connected with milk composition, are routinely recorded and offer a practical means for improving welfare through both management and breeding. A wide range of traits have the potential to serve as animal welfare indicators:

- Production traits, such as milk yield, milk composition, or growth rate
- Functional traits that are already broadly recorded and included in breeding programmes, such as longevity/survival measures (e.g. functional herd life), culling reasons, conformation, calving ease, fertility, indirect health traits (e.g. SCS)
- New functional traits of increasing importance, such as body condition, mortality, metabolic stress, direct health traits (e.g. disease diagnoses, lameness, foot conditions).

The WG recommended that environmental parameters of possible relevance for phenotype interpretation and animal welfare assessment should be covered by the ICAR Guidelines. It has proposed changes to the ICAR Guidelines in order to have more a consistent approach to animal welfare across all ICAR.

Recommendations of the WG Animal Welfare Recording have been endorsed by the ICAR Board. The board requested that the WG suggestions be acted on by the secretariat in collaboration with the relevant ICAR groups.

Functional Traits WG

Meeting of the ICAR Working Group on Functional Traits with claw health experts in Vienna on 22-23 October 2014

Claw health and foot and leg disorders are gaining considerable importance in many countries, so the ICAR WGFT has begun working on the harmonisation of recording of claw disorders/foot and leg conditions. The first meeting with experts on claw health from all over the world was held in Berlin in May 2014 in conjunction with the ICAR Conference 2014. To get an overview of recent activities in this field in the different countries, a survey was carried out by ICAR between August and September 2014. Replies from more than 20 countries showed that some countries already have routine systems in place. Several other countries are running projects in cooperation with breeding organisations to set up a system of documentation



Part of the ICAR family at the last meeting held in Berlin (May, 2014)



Some of the participants to the Meeting of the ICAR Working Group on Functional Traits (ICAR WGFT) with claw health experts in Vienna on 22-23 October 2014

and recording of foot and leg conditions for herd management and breeding purposes. To allow cooperation in genetic evaluation across countries, it is important that the trait definitions are harmonised. This was the main aim of the recent meeting in Vienna in October 2014. Experts on claw health from veterinary universities, practitioners and geneticists collaborated on harmonised descriptions of claw disorders and further foot and leg conditions. After intense and constructive discussions, harmonised descriptions were achieved. The next step is to compile unambiguous illustrations i.e. pictures showing a single lesion each. The common aim of the group is for the harmonised descriptions of the claw disorders/foot and leg conditions to be ready for approval by ICAR in 2015

Performance Recording in Dairy Sheep WG

The Performance Recording in Dairy Sheep Working Group approved new guidelines

The Working Group on Performance Recording of Dairy Sheep, jointly with the Working Group on Goat Performance Recording held a meeting in Berlin on Tuesday 20 May 2014, with 20 attendees. The meeting was also open to participants other than the members of both working groups. The main topics on the agenda were the changes in the guidelines for both species, the presentation of the results of the online enquiries in dairy sheep and goats, and the issue of electronic on-farm recording devices. Feedback on the different experiences of on-farm electronic recording devices in Italy and France was presented and discussed. At the end of the meeting, members of a Turkish delegation from the Sheep and Goat Breeders Association introduced themselves and their main activities and goals.

During the General Assembly in Berlin, the new guidelines for sheep were approved. After the Berlin meeting, and following the conclusions around the issue of recording devices, talks began with the Recording Devices Sub-Committee about the configuration of the milking installation in which the meters have been, or will be, approved. We suggested that it is in the interests of all parties (manufacturers, milk recording organisations and breeders) that ICAR should display the configuration(s) in which the approved meters are tested (for meters already approved and for future approval).

Goat Performance Recording WG

Goat Performance Recording Working Group embarked on goat meet recording

After the Berlin meeting the final text with the proposed changes of guidelines for goat milk recording was disseminated to the members of both the Goat Performance Recording Working Group and the Working Group on Performance Recording of Dairy Sheep. After final comments the material was sent to the ICAR Secretariat for further procedures. The proposed guideline changes will probably be adopted at the next assembly in Krakow in 2015.

The working groups' activities are also focused after the Berlin meeting on expanding the online survey with new tables, primarily on milk composition, and at the same time motivating members to more actively update the questionnaire with new data. The group has also started to develop an online survey on goat meat recording and has taken the first step towards creating a questionnaire with several tables on goat meat recording data. Data from this database will be the basis for developing standards on goat meat recording.

Parentage Recording WG

Parentage Recording Working Group prepares guidelines for laboratories accreditation

The working group has met once by teleconference, in July. The group has been asked to draw up guidelines for laboratory accreditation of applying the results of genotype identification. This work is in progress. Items for consideration over the next 12 months are:

- a. The council has asked that the group sets up a survey to collect information from different countries
- b. Developing new guidelines for
 - i. imputing parentage microsatellites from special additional high density SNPs
 - ii. using microsatellite and SNP genotyping to verify parentage
 - iii. parentage discovery
 - iv. using SNPs to define the breeds
- c. Catching up on work done by USDA identifying breeds by using homozygous alleles
- d. Reviewing basic parentage protocols
- e. Looking at other species.

Animal Fibre WG

Animal Fibre Working Group – Cooperation with Industry

Following the definition of the new ICAR Guidelines on the identification and production of cashmere fibre, the ICAR Animal Fibre Working Group (AF WG) has a new member, Mr. Zheng Wen Xin (Xinjiang Academy of Animal Science) who will help to apply the ICAR Guidelines in the selection centre of Hoboksar, located in the Xinjiang province (Ta Chen Banner), close to the border with Kazakhstan. This selection centre is involved in a project to improve the quality and quantity of cashmere production and is funded by an Italian company that is a leader in the textile luxury clothing industry. This collaboration is expected to be launched early next year with the new reproductive season.



A recent visit of the Chairperson of the ICAR Animal Fibre WG (Marco Antonini) to China (Xinjiang Province)

Krakow registration open

Registration open for the ICAR Technical Meeting, Krakow (Poland), 10-12 June 2015

The local organising committee advises that registration for the ICAR Technical Meeting (Krakow 2015) is now open. To register, go to www.icar2015.pl/registration_form.

We remind you that upcoming deadlines for this meeting are:

- 30 January – Submission of complete abstracts
- 15 March – Deadline for early registrations
- 1 May – Beginning of late registrations.

