



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The General Assembly held a year ago in Bourg-en-Bresse underlined that in the ever-changing world and in conditions created by technological developments, ICAR should strengthen its structure and its activities to ensure its continued relevance to existing members and to ensure its attraction to new members. The future tasks should include also simplification and updating of ICAR guidelines and introduction of new services and topics so as to ensure consistency with requirements of Members and their clients – animal farmers worldwide. Cooperation among Members and dissemination of information are key issues to be the focus of ICAR's technical and governing bodies. A more detailed report on developments and activities over the past year will be presented by the Secretary General. In view of the fact that the current year is also the last year covered by our current Strategic Plan, I intend to draw attention of the General Assembly to salient points illustrating efforts, activities and initiatives that have led to the attainment of our strategic objectives.

The importance and relevance of the ICAR objects – to promote farm animal recording and evaluation and to develop standards and guidelines – has been strongly confirmed by the recent developments in related research and technologies. Ways and means for the implementation of our mission should be always critically analysed, evaluated and adjusted to new realities. In global and national markets ICAR is confronted with competitors allegedly offering the same or similar services. Joint work of volunteers from Member Organizations in Sub-Committees, working groups and task forces in fields of research, technology development and in structuring guidelines for animal identification, recording and evaluation represents the basic strength and advantage of ICAR. Let me use this opportunity to express appreciation for their work and thanks to their employers for supporting their involvement in producing new values which are becoming property and common goods of all ICAR Members in providing services to the animal industry in general.

The Bourg-en-Bresse meeting and technical workshop have been followed by intense activity by all ICAR governing and technical bodies. Meetings and consultations of the ICAR Board and the Executive Board focused on the preparation of Strategic Plan for 2012-14, revision of ICAR Guidelines, internal regulations and new system of membership fees. All sub-committees and working groups approved their programs of future activities focusing on adjustments to new developments in science, technology and agricultural policies, in particular to the impact of genomic evaluation, growing global interest for animal identification and to new policy requirements at national and regional levels.

We have for a period been focused on establishing a solid, future-proof foundation for the organization. This is now done, and we can turn to the core issues of ICAR, development and improving of technical standards and cooperation with partners in the world of farm animals.

Activities of governing and technical bodies

After the Bourg-en-Bresse General Assembly, the ICAR Board and the Executive Board held two regular and one conference call meeting each. They prepared amendments to the Statutes, budget and financial statement, strategic plan, new fee structure and initiated the new round of the revision of the ICAR guidelines. Technical bodies maintained the system of electronic communications among their members, while INTERBULL Sub-Committee organized one technical workshop. The work of a number of technical bodies resulted in changes in ICAR Guidelines and the production of new ones. More details will be presented by the chairpersons later in the week following their group meetings.



The new fee structure

The new fee structure approved by the ICAR Board is still based on the number of animals and the relative provided services as declared by the members. When a member believes these figures are commercially sensitive and do not want to share with others, ICAR will keep this information confidential. With the new structure ICAR also needs to accommodate and determine the international federations which are interested in joining ICAR with the fee based on number of members. The ICAR fees will be assigned based on the type of service divided in three main areas:

1. Performance Recording and Animal Identification;
2. Genetic Evaluation, and
3. Herd Book Recording.

The ICAR fee aims finally to consider all animal species and production types covered by our developing guidelines: Dairy cattle, Beef cattle, Dairy sheep, Meat sheep, Goats and Buffalo.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012

The Strategic plan approved in May 2009 at the Poreč (Croatia) General Assembly has set the updating of Guidelines, meeting demand for devices, implementation of Certificate of Quality, development of on-farm milk analysis guidelines, review of ICAR TF-WG-SC structure for effectiveness and the development and implementation of genomic strategy as priority issues for ICAR activities. Objectives to be attained by 2012 included the growth in membership and countries represented by members, growth of the number of Certificate of Quality assessments and the development of routine InterBeef evaluation services. Let me briefly mention the main achievements in the implementation of the Strategic plan.

Guidelines

To facilitate the work of technical bodies in up-dating Guidelines, the ICAR Board has approved standardised procedure as a supplement to the ICAR Bylaws regulating the revision and development of Guidelines. The Board, Recording Devices Sub-Committee, Milk Analysis Sub-Committee, Interbeef Working Group, Animal Recording Data Working Group, Genetic Analysis Working Group and Functional Traits Working Group have prepared proposals for complete new sections and amendments to the International Agreement and ICAR Guidelines. These have been placed on the agenda of the current General Assembly. Further changes will be communicated electronically to the membership later in the year.

Devices

Identification, Recording Devices and Milk Analysis Sub-Committees, in cooperation with Service-ICAR, have timely met all requests for testing and approval of devices. As in the past, their basic criteria for registration and approval of devices were the quality of products and ICAR members providing ID, recording and analytical services. The work of Sub-Committees has been facilitated by co-operative spirit and understanding of manufacturers of devices and the excellent work of the ICAR test centres.

On-farm milk analysis guidelines

On-farm milk analysis guidelines have been approved in 2010 and placed on the ICAR web site.

Review of ICAR TF-WG-SC structure

The Board has kept activities and effectiveness of the ICAR technical bodies under the constant review through the monitoring and coordination service carried out by the ICAR



Secretariat (let me be allowed to express my personal appreciation to Frank Armitage for his work in this field) and through the regular joint meetings and communications with chairs of Sub-Committees and Working Groups. Over the past year the number of participants in our groups has increased as has the members represented. Since Bourg-en-Bresse, each Board member has a watching brief over their assigned group and has ensured even closer links between Board and groups. The Board has abolished the WG Lactation Calculation in view of the fact that it has completed its tasks and established the new WG Cow Milk Recording which will encompass part of terms of reference of the Milk Calculation WG. The Board encouraged technical bodies to improve the quality of their work and to expand their competence to other fields relevant to animal identification, recording and evaluation, such as recording of other animal fibres and recording of meat in small ruminants.

Certificate of Quality

As of March 2012, total of 37 ICAR Members availed themselves of CoQ services for over 100 activities. Certificate of Quality has been highly appreciated by ICAR Members as a peer review which contributes to the identification of potential improvements members may make and recognises value and effectiveness of services provided by Members to their clients. In addition, auditors always learn something to take back to their organizations. We would like to thank our auditors for their time and expertise and, additionally in making suggestions to ensure the development and relevance of the service.

Genomic strategy

Developments in the DNA analysis have led to its use in the genetic evaluation. In the early stages of DNA research the INTERBULL Sub-Committee, scientists and experts involved in co-operative research have recognised that the use of genomic data technology could have the largest impact on dairy genetics since the introduction of artificial insemination. In 2007, the Scientific Advisory Committee of INTERBULL Sub-Committee started the first action which was followed by the establishment of the Task Force in 2008, definition of the role of INTERBULL in 2009 and a rich programme since 2010 which included the first validation of data, the Inter-Genomics project, the first GEVB test and the first G-MACE test. Workshops held in Guelph, Paris, Uppsala, Verona and Cork evaluated past experiences and defined the role of INTERBULL in providing international genomic evaluation services. The recent GEBV validation test started in April 2012, for all production traits (milk, fat and protein yields) and also for somatic cell score, direct longevity, stature and cow conception rate (CC1). Results have been reviewed by the ITC at the Cork meeting in connection with the GMACE pilot results.

The ICAR Board, fully aware that the use of genomic in genetic evaluation has a bearing on the major part of activities of ICAR Members involved in recording and evaluation of dairy cattle, strongly supported activities of INTERBULL Sub-Committee.

InterBeef

The ICAR Board supported the project aimed at the establishment of the international genetic evaluation service for beef cattle and approved the financial support. The WG Beef Recording and the WG InterBeef have been merged so as to avoid duplication of efforts. It is expected that the service would become operational during the current year.

Membership

The total number of Members has been increased by 12 new members and now there are 70 full members and 28 associate members.



Full members:

- Asociatia Crescatorilor de Vaci “Baltata Romaneasca” Tip Simmental – Romania
- Executive Agency for Selection and Reproduction in Animal Breeding – Bulgaria
- Registros Genealógicos Zootécnicos del Perú , Peru
- Consejo Nacional de los Recursos Genéticos Pecuarios A.C. (CONARGEN A.C.), Mexico
- Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Acuacultura y Pesca - Subsecretaría de Ganadería, Ecuador

Associate members:

- Pyramid-protection of plants-777 Ltd. – Kazakhstan
- IDEXX Europe BV – The Netherlands
- KazPoliPlast Ltd. – Kazakhstan
- TarazPolyHim Ltd. – Kazakhstan
- Confidex – Finland
- Datamars SA – Switzerland
- Allflex Europe SAS, France

To all these new Members we give a warm welcome from ICAR.

New Strategic Plan

The ICAR Board approved strategic goals to be attained in coming years. Elements of the plan have been published in the ICAR Newsletter with the invitation to Members for comments and suggestions. The plan has been developed on the basis of a thorough analysis of past experiences, developments and trends in the animal industry worldwide, developments in science and technology related to the ICAR mandate. It includes objectives related to governance and finance, technical studies, guidelines and communication. The implementation of the new strategy will depend on the financial position of ICAR. Improvements in the financial position will be seen with an increase in the number of Members and in the introduction of new paid-for services as required. More details on the new plan will be presented by the Secretary General.

Dissemination of information

ICAR Technical Series publishes proceedings from workshops and seminars organized by ICAR. In last two years proceedings of ICAR sessions, workshops and meetings have been placed on the ICAR web site for free downloading which greatly contributed to an increase in visits - in the last 12 months there were over 136 000 visits or some 360 visits every day!

Four issues of the ICAR Newsletter published in the period July 2011 - May 2012 contained information on activities of the ICAR governing and technical bodies and news from ICAR Members.

Strategic alliances

Since its establishment, ICAR has attached great importance to the development of strategic alliances and good working relations with a number of international bodies and organizations relevant to the animal industry in general and complimentary the fields covered by the ICAR mandate in particular. Strategic alliances and cooperation with other international institutions and organizations, primarily with FAO, ISO, IDF, ISAG and the



European Commission greatly contribute to quality of ICAR services and relevance of its programs. Let me mention some recent activities and events that illustrate importance of these alliances.

Intensive cooperation with **FAO** covers issues related primarily to animal sector in developing countries, such as animal identification and recording and evaluation in low to medium input production systems. The joint FAO – ICAR – FEPALE continental conference held in 2011 in Santiago de Chile on animal identification resulted in strengthened role of ICAR in Latin America and the recruitment of new ICAR members from this region. Our future plans must pay more attention to this continent and to respond to the increasing demand for ICAR support and services from the growing animal sector in Latin American countries. The EU also participated at the workshop held in Santiago de Chile.

Since 1995 the ICAR has carried out approval tests on RFID devices and since 2007 ICAR does the testing as **ISO** registration authority for granting (shared and unshared) manufacturer codes and product codes related to animal identification. Close collaboration with ISO was also reflected in the acceptance of ICAR standards and guidelines as ISO standards in the field of electronic identification.

In dairy sector, ICAR and **IDF** are working in different parts of the same chain, having many similarities, but also elements which are specific to each organization. Cooperation includes mutual attendance at meetings and implementation of a joint project on milk analysis.

The research and development work on genomics at the Interbull Centre has been facilitated by the welcome support from **EU**.

ICAR and the German Holstein Federation (DHV) are partners in the EU-funded project of the Association of Turkish Cattle Breeders on development of advisory service for dairy farmers in the province of Aydin.

Conclusions

The past year has been one of change and planning for the future, involving all parts of our organization and has demonstrated, yet again, the skills and enthusiasm of our members at all levels. We will face challenges in the coming years and we must be ready for them, which, with our members' cooperation and dynamism, we will be.

ICAR is a global organization and we must reflect this in the services we provide, which will sometimes be different in certain circumstances; however, our standards should ensure that all end-users benefit from their service-providers being part of our organization and who believe in our ethos.

I would like to place on record my thanks and appreciation to my Board for their help and guidance; to my colleagues in the Secretariat and especially the Secretary General Andrea Rosati, all of whom have ensured service provision to you, our members.

Cork (Ireland), June 2012