

Already one year of PPILOW project for the welfare of organic or low input outdoor pigs and poultry!

From the 5th to the 7th of October was held the first annual meeting of the European PPILOW project (Poultry and PIG Low-input and Organic production systems' Welfare, 2019-2024, www.ppilow.eu). Despite the sanitary issues replacing the foreseen meeting in Venice by a 3-day online meeting, more than 80 attendees from the 23 PPILOW partner organizations in 9 countries and members of the project European Multiactor Board gathered online to share on the project advances.

Especially, the inventory of issues and potential levers of welfare improvements in the target systems were presented; and the work is going on to consider the practitioners', consumers' and citizens' expectations and to handle a first economic evaluation of the potential levers to test. Nine National Practitioner Groups started the project multiactor participatory approach this year: they have already interacted with the project partners on the welfare issues and part of the tools to co-create, before being part of field studies and reflecting on their outputs, with the objective of facilitating the change in practices. The creation of shared tools enabling to build-up with end-users the welfare self-assessment tools (EBENE and PIGLOW phone applications) and the PPILOW data collection framework was presented. These tools will enable further sustainability assessments of the tested levers according to the One Welfare concept, particularly emphasizing animal and human welfare, and the creation of the associated business models.

Sessions dedicated to the currently running experimental activities of PPILOW proposed an overview of the already foreseen levers of interest for animal welfare improvement:

For fulfilling the objective of limiting the adverse effects of avoiding mutilations; changes in early management and outdoor enrichment to avoid feather pecking in non-beak-trimmed layer hens, as well as genetic and management strategies to enable to rear organic entire male pigs without altering the meat quality were presented.

Studies have started in Denmark, and are set-up in Germany and France for evaluating the multiple impacts of rearing dual-purpose genotypes able to produce both eggs and meat, in order to avoid the elimination of day-old layer chicks. Another strategy on this purpose is the development of a non-invasive in ovo sexing method, within experiments combining physics techniques and molecular studies.

Finally, strategies enabling to enhance the robustness and health of pigs and poultry are currently tested, among which the use of new genotypes of slow-growing broilers favoring the free range exploration, the selection of pig genotypes and improved hut designs for sows reared outdoor in view of decreasing piglet mortality rates. Original nutritional studies including plant extracts and fermented components are currently under study for decreasing parasitism or bacterial diseases in pigs and laying hens.

The current development of videos, dissemination materials and the partners' continuous interactions with practitioners, collaborative networks and policy makers, ensure the impact of the PPILOW project for pig and poultry welfare improvement throughout Europe.

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