

Science and society

Welfare Quality[®]: EU integrated project Food-CT-2004-506508

improving animal welfare in the food quality chain

Animal welfare is of considerable importance to European consumers. Nowadays food quality is not only determined by the overall nature and safety of the end product but also by the perceived welfare status of the animals from which the food is produced. The fact that improving the animal's welfare can positively affect product quality, pathology and disease resistance also has a direct bearing on food quality and safety.

The WELFARE QUALITY[®] project is about integration of animal welfare in the food quality chain: from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality. The project aims to accommodate societal concerns and market demands, to develop reliable on-farm monitoring systems, product information systems, and practical species-specific strategies to improve animal welfare. WELFARE QUALITY[®] will make significant contributions to the societal sustainability of European agriculture. Forty-four institutes and universities (representing thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries) with specialist expertise participate in this integrated research project. The project started May 2004 and will take five years to complete.

Overall objectives

The research program is designed to develop European standards for on-farm welfare assessment and product information systems as well as practical strategies for improving animal welfare.

The standards for on-farm welfare assessment and information systems will be based upon consumer demands, the marketing requirements of retailers and stringent scientific validation. The key is to link informed animal product consumption to animal husbandry practices on the farm. The project therefore adopts a "fork to farm" rather than the traditional "farm to fork" approach".

- Considerable effort is focussed on analysing and addressing the perceptions and concerns of consumers, retailers and producers about animal welfare.
- The results will be translated into reliable on-farm systems for monitoring the welfare status of cattle, pigs and poultry. This requires a transparent understanding of production processes and how they affect welfare.

- The development of practical improvement strategies will provide producers with the opportunity to enhance the welfare status of their stock. The substantial effort devoted to developing these strategies aims to minimize the occurrence of harmful behavioural and psychological states, to create safe and stimulating environments and to improve product quality.

- The standardised welfare measures will be converted into accessible and understandable information that allows clear marketing and profiling of the products.

Dialogue and knowledge transfer

Through establishing a continuing science-society dialogue during the project, we aim to involve all the interested stakeholders, i.e. the public, industry, government, policymakers and academics.

The resultant knowledge about the identified welfare monitoring and product information systems, as well as the improvement strategies, will be disseminated and transferred to the crucial target groups. Strategies for implementation have been identified. For example, we will

ensure effective knowledge transfer by on farm demonstrations, training of trainers, educational programs, web-based knowledge platforms and media initiatives. Implementation of the collective knowledge generated by this project will support the development of welfare-friendly husbandry systems and genotypes. This, in turn, will contribute significantly to the diversification and societal sustainability of farm animal production in Europe.

Strengthening the research area

The project brings together leading groups of scientists with the appropriate specialist expertise. Within the project many activities will contribute to the strengthening of the European research area. These include integration workshops and a web-based platform for knowledge exchange. The Training and Mobility desk helps young researchers building their professional plan and provides support for research groups in search of young scientists. Overall, this project affords Europe a clear opportunity to reinforce its position as the world leader in animal welfare research.

Implementation plan

DESCRIPTION SUBPROJECTS

Consumer, retailers and producers concerns

- 1 Consumer concerns
- 2 The market
- 3 Barriers to producers
- 4 Food service outlets

Develop robust on-farm monitoring and information systems

- 1 Definition of framework
- 2 Development of prototype
- 3 Multi criteria evaluation
- 4 Definition of system

Define practical species-specific strategies to improve welfare

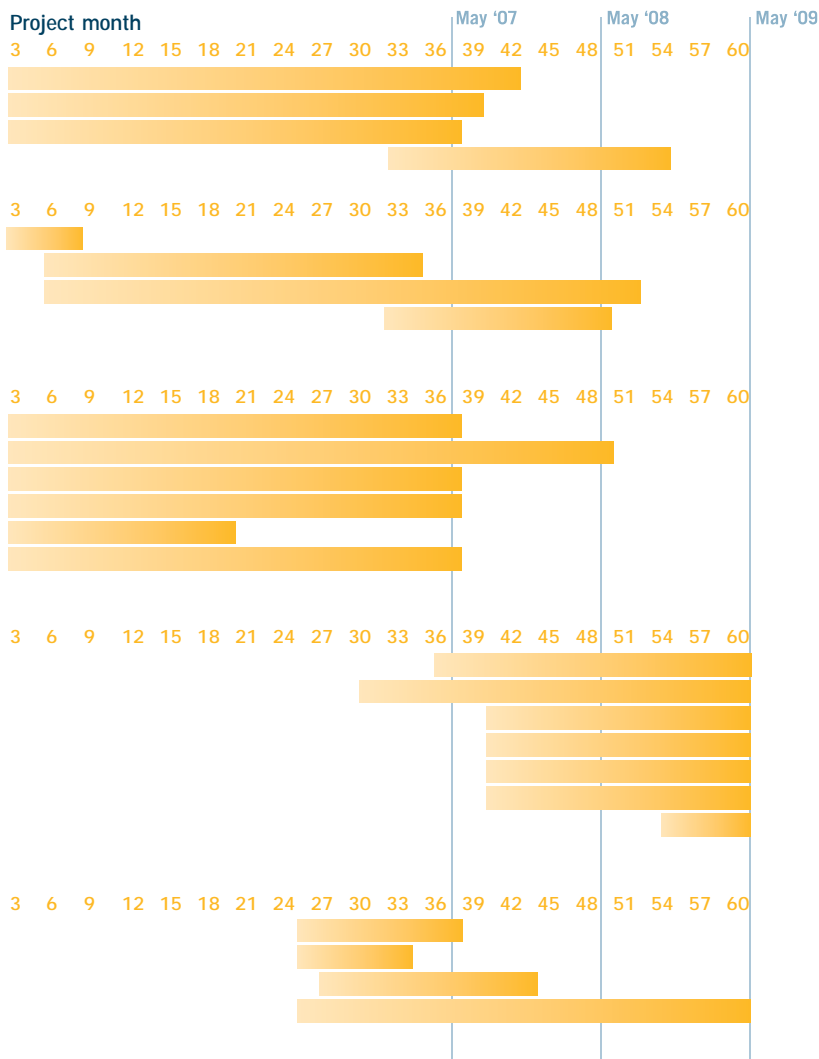
- 1 Handling stress
- 2 Genetic solutions
- 3 Injurious behaviour
- 4 Lameness
- 5 Neonatal mortality
- 6 Social stress

To implement a monitoring and information system, improvement strategies

- 1 Construction of WQ[®] technical documents
- 2 Training material resources
- 3 Web based information resource
- 4 Studies on acceptability
- 5 Economic implications 'on farm' and implementation
- 6 Implementation mechanisms
- 7 Recommendations for policymakers

Integration of animal welfare developments in Europe and Latin America

- 1 Consumers' attitudes in Latin America
- 2 Monitoring system in Latin American conditions
- 3 Improving welfare during transport and slaughter
- 4 Welfare effect of seasonal underfeeding



Facts

Acronym project **WELFARE QUALITY[®]**

Official title **Integration of animal welfare in the food quality chain:**

from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality

Funding **European Union | FP6 Priority 5 "Food Quality and Safety"**

Total cost **€17 million | EC contribution: €14.6 million**

Project number **EU Food-CT-2004-506508**

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Countries involved **Austria | Belgium | Czech Republic | Denmark |**

France | Germany | Hungary | Ireland | Italy | Norway | Spain | Sweden |

Switzerland | The Netherlands | United Kingdom | Australia | Brazil |

Chile | Mexico | Uruguay

Number of participants **44 institutes and universities**

Website www.welfarequality.net

Training and Mobility desk www.welfarequality.net/everyone/27181

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