Contribution to the definition of a global research program for organic farming in Walloon area

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**Introduction**

Organic sector:
- a strong evolution in Wallonia since 2005
- 6.9% of the UAA in 2011
- mainly grasslands (85%) and commercial crops (12%)
Aims

(1) Define research priorities for Walloon organic farming sector and for an increase in protein autonomy, from 2015 to 2020

(2) To precise the competencies of the Walloon research teams in these fields of interest

Results presented hereafter ➔ livestock sector
Method

• Individual open interviews of 90 organic farmers and/or conventional farmers (33%) aiming to increase their autonomy

• Among these farmers:
  • 27 have, at least, a dairy herd;
  • 25 have, at least, a suckling herd;
  • 16 have a pig or poultry production.

• Focus groups with, in average, 10 participants per group, with
  • advisory services (1 group);
  • administration and farmers labor unions (1 group);
  • research institutions / universities (4 groups).

=> Asked to identify research priorities in the four categories
Method (2)

• Steps:
  • Inventory;
  • Validation/adjustment of priorities identified by the focus groups;
  • Confrontation to existing research programs (Walloon area, Belgium, Europe)
  • Definition of future research program.

Results presented hereafter ➔ Inventory
Results – Livestock producers

Food chain – (Global occurrence of the theme = 9)

Food chain lock in

Product standardisation (conventionalisation)

Slaughter house centralisation => difficult to develop short chain

Food chain economy (pig) & dev (beef meat)

System approaches – (42)

Socio-economic sustainability

Agricultural, environmental and economical performances
Results – Livestock producers

Animal production (feed valorisation) (77)

By products or innovative alternatives (insects based diets)

Protein crops (Pure or association)

Interest of minerals and additives (tanins, alternatives to amino acids,..)

Immature cereals

DSS to optimise diet definition and valorisation (dairy and mono-gastrics)

Optimisation of meadows valorisation

Grazed grasslands valorisation
Results – Livestock producers

Animal production (feed production) (103)

Cereal and energy crops (beet, ..)

Protein crops in association with cereals

Weed management

Meadows

Fertilisation
Results – Livestock producers

Herd management (13)
- Schemes to reduce 1st calving age and inter calving delays
- Schemes to optimise growing and fattening perf in beef production

Animal Genetic (10)
- Breeds adapted to organic management

Animal Health (17)
- Gastro-intestinal parasite management
- Calve diarrhea
- Dairy cow drying up
Results – Comparison of farmer expectations, advisory services & farmers unions expectations and researchers proposals

Farmers (271)

Advisory services and farmer unions (102)

Researchers (96)

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Discussion

• On Food chain themes :
  - Weight to this topic
  - Necessity to focus also on dairy product valorisation
  - Product quality and traceability

• On System themes :
  - Necessity to perform global, systemic approaches
  - To focus on environmental performances ➔ justify the subsidises of the 2nd CAP pillar

• On Feed production themes, lack of research on :
  - Weed management
  - Initial material (seed, seedling) selection/production for organic farmers
Discussion (2)

• On Herd management themes:
  - Advisers, administration and farmer unions ask to pay a special interest to pig production

• On Animal health themes:
  - Focus on gastro-intestinal parasite management
  - Benchmarking possibilities offered by the organic farms
  - Necessity to evaluate animal welfare in these alternative systems

Conclusion

Basis for the definition of a research program after validation by stakeholders and confrontation to existing research program in organic sector.
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