

Independent Chairman Nigel Garbutt, and Dr Kristian Moeller, Managing Director of FoodPLUS discuss the forthcoming JapanGAP with the delegation.

RECORD BREAKING CONFERENCE UNDERLINES GLOBAL IMPACT

Overwhelming evidence of the international stature that EurepGAP is achieving manifested itself at its 6th Global Conference in Paris over three days in October.

It attracted a record number of over 470 delegates from 46 countries representing not just the whole trade spectrum, but also governments and NGOs backing EurepGAP's benchmarking systems tailored to ensure the production of safe fresh food worldwide.

While fresh fruit and vegetables remain the largest representative sector there is increasing support from producers of arable crops, livestock, fisheries and flowers. Similarly, all schemes are independently audited and focussed on ensuring sustainable industries.

In his opening address Independent Chairman Nigel Garbutt stressed: "Our aim continues to be to provide a good agricultural practice (GAP) standard that is evenly and cost effectively applied to all products from wherever they are sourced.

"Responsible agriculture is not something to seek competitive advantage with, it is for the long term benefit of both industries and consumers."

EurepGAP's global role will become increasingly important, avoiding the chaos which would become evident, he believes, if retailers operated their own very different Protocols and audit systems.

One of the key themes of the conference was to establish greater levels of global harmonisation at a time when trading procedures and legislation becomes more complex.

"We have shown through group certification that the Protocols can be also applied to small scale farmers in developing countries. This helps put the mechanisms in place to support this sector on a long term basis.

"Producers around the world do not ask for favouritism - but they do want a level playing field.

"We must not duplicate but co-operate."

BENCHMARKING SETS THE STANDARD

EurepGAP's benchmarking Protocols backed by independent auditing systems have impressed the Chinese so much that the government is well on the way to adopting the standard, according to Yang Zhigang, from the Republic's Certification and Accreditation Administration.

Heading up one of the largest delegations he confirmed that ChinaGAP; laying down the standards tailored to local conditions will be operational by the end of the year. "Good Agricultural Practice is a wise choice," he added.

The impact that the Protocols are making across the Far East were also evident by the presence of Japan at the Paris conference, with the news that they too will be following this path. There was another historic moment when Obed Mayoral of MQS announced that Mexico had now also applied for EurepGAP benchmarking.

Mexico was so impressed with EurepGAP's professionalism that Independent Chairman Nigel Garbutt was presented with a message of congratulations from the Mexican President Vicente Fox Quesada.



GLOBAL REPORT - 2005

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

The number of EurepGAP certified growers has doubled in the last year bringing the total to over 35,000 worldwide, with a further 10,000 in the process of being certified in the year ahead, according to Dr Kristian Moeller, Managing Director and Secretary of FoodPLUS the organisation's executive arm.

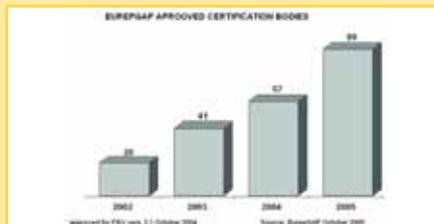
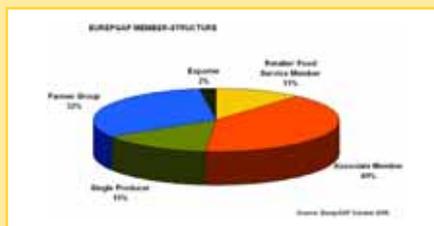
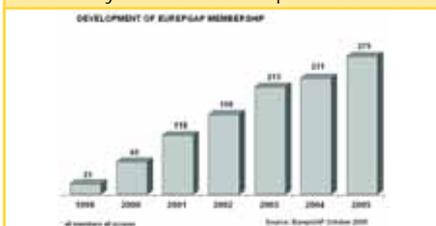
Presenting his progress report to delegates he added that many producers are also in large national farm assurance schemes now completing benchmarking processes. Certificates have been issued in more than 62 countries, and are backed by 89 accredited international certification bodies. This provides a wide choice to farmers who have the freedom to choose from a number of certification bodies.

Voluntary membership has also

boomed and now numbers 275, compared with the original 21 founders in 1999. As our graphs show these extend across the whole spectrum of a widening range of industries. While fresh fruit and vegetables remain the largest proportion, there is increasing participation across other sectors of agriculture.



KRISTIAN MOELLER



TRAINING

AUDITOR'S EXAM TO BE OBLIGATORY

Details of EurepGAP's on line training programme for the army of independent inspectors and auditors that are the direct link with producers were unveiled at the Paris conference by Elmé Coetzer, its technical manager responsible for fruit, vegetables and ornamentals.

While this does not replace the established and valued workshops the strategy is to ensure the same levels of competence and interpretation exist world-wide.

The course which must be completed annually is already underway, and will become obligatory from January 1 next year, and will include flowers and ornamentals within 12 months, and IAA in 2007.

Coetzer explained that training material will be available as required,

but the exam can only be taken twice over a six month period. The course will be continually updated and eventually contain case studies and open ended questions.

Applicants will have their own password to the EurepGAP website.



ELMÉ COETZER

GETTING THE US ON BOARD

The importance of having nationally backed, government supported Protocols was forcibly illustrated by Wil Sumner of Californian-based Scientific Certification Systems who estimates that every food scare in the United States costs the industry between \$15-20 million.

But just how long it will be before there is the equivalent of USAGAP remains to be seen.

The speaker whose career has included working for the Food and Drug Administration, painted a picture of a trusted system which is already covered by both Federal and local legislation.

One stumbling block was the Anti Trust law which restrict dialogue between retailers.

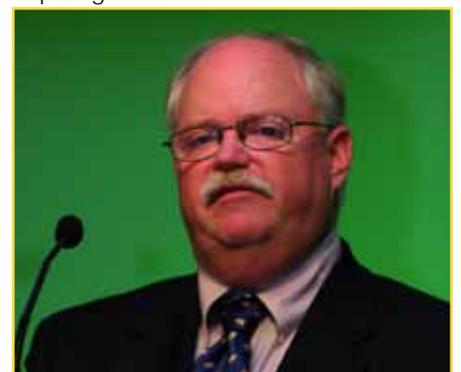
The majority of producers and retailers share a common interest and would support a greater level of standardisation, he said.

He itemised these as:

- Risk management, particularly microbiological
- Environmentally sound agriculture practices
- Conservation of water resources
- Social responsibility
- Waste management
- Conservation of ecological resources
- Product quality

New programmes are now being developed by the FDA which he said was now beginning to recognise the significance.

Meanwhile it has been the role of private auditing companies to develop systems which fulfil the needs of exporters and importers for products such as apples, pears, grapes and asparagus traded worldwide.



WIL SUMNER



The exhibition stands provided natural points of discussion as well as the collection of information

ENVIRONMENT

DON'T FORGET BIGGER PICTURE

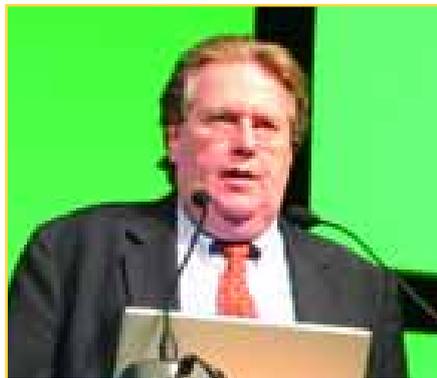
Looking past the need for agriculture to be sustainable and safe, Jason Clay from the Centre of Conservation at the World Wild Life Fund provided one of the most provocative presentations at the conference, when he related the development of food agribusiness to the future wellbeing of the planet.

"Can we measure sustainable agriculture?", he asked. "We have to define the end we are looking for, and measure it against loss of habitat, pollution and climate change."

Most certification practices do not move environmental practices forward, he claimed. "It usually takes 8 to 10 years of better management."

While growers are playing their part, he felt that equally important was the behaviour of buyers along the market chain.

"Innovation should be encouraged to find the best way forward. Ideally performance and market subsidy should be delinked."



JASON CLAY

"Don't certify producers that benefit from long term subsidies, because these are not sustainable."

HARMONISATION

SHAFFE STRESSES SIMPLICITY

The need for greater harmonisation of the various procedures even within certification bodies such as those which operate in the United States was spelt out forcibly by Ronald Bown, President of SHAFTE which represents southern hemisphere suppliers.

Exporting some 31 percent of total world fresh fruit all are truly international and are continuing to build new markets.

Bown spoke of the complexity of schemes which often asked for different implementation procedures even at the same control points.

"The situation is clouded when initial ones have not yet been achieved or even understood by growers," he said. His members were also concerned over costs which embraced traceability and security.

"In some countries there is no direct communication between growers and the market, so the only way is to comply with everything which can endanger sustainability."



RONALD BOWN

"Global harmonisation is not only a need. It is a MUST"

The common benefits, he said should avoid duplication of audits, reduce costs, and improve growers' understanding of having a harmonised requirement. "In so doing this would secure the correct "on field" implementation and enhance long term relationships with suppliers and food integrity, all of which would reduce food safety risks."

FRESHFEL SEEKS CLOSER LINKS

A greater level of integration of quality assurance schemes was also called for by Kai Krasemann, President of FreshFel Europe, the influential trade organisation which represents the importing/exporting and distributive industries in Brussels.

Contemporary problems were a stagnant or even declining consumption, market over supply, poor returns to growers and in line with the subject under discussion, lack of harmonisation, he said.

He reflected the view of many of the delegates that a co-ordinated approach was becoming increasingly necessary as a prerequisite for developing and implementing efficient supply chain solutions.

Each sector should take responsibility operating within critical control points and share the same goal of making the system efficient and economical.

He praised EurepGAP for now being firmly established as the pre-farm gate Protocol.

What FreshFel would now like to see is the two organisations working together on its own initiative to harmonise laboratory practices for testing residues, explained Dr. Tom Lyall, its Food Safety Advisor.

Already established, and linked to three of its national produce associations members - Germany, The Netherlands and Switzerland - the scheme will be unveiled this year.



KAI KRASEMANN



Delegates took every chance to discuss the 75 presentations during the 3 day event

DEBATE

STRONGER CONSUMER LINKS SEEN AS VALID

There is so much focus by producers on complying with food safety standards that there is less time to concentrate on other key issues such as developing new tastes and products, believes Benito Orihuel, from the giant Spanish Anecoop who is a member of EurepGAP's Steering Committee. In a lively debate moderated by Chris White of Eurofruit Magazine the subjects ranged between the effectiveness of EurepGAP in the public domain when there was a food scare, to the forthcoming EU changes expected in MRLs next year. Trade concern was not solely confined to the effect of this new legislation, but

the prospect of moves by retailers to eventually opt for a zero tolerance, which it was claimed was already being discussed by Marks and Spencer. "The problem is each retailer has its own agenda," added Richard Yudin of Fyffes. "Greater conformity would in fact create bigger marketing opportunities." Prof. Chris Payne, Chairman of the UK's Assured Produce scheme, identifying the continuance of the British LEAF marque, pointed out however that despite supporting the benefits of an international framework retailers were also concerned with their own brand protection.

MRLs:

CHANGES STILL UNCLEAR

Trade concern exists over potential changes envisaged by the European Commission when it eventually publishes new Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs). This is the upper legal limit for a particular residue in or on food, and is always established at a level consistent with human exposure. Fear stems initially from the fact that while the theoretical date has been set for April 6 next year, there is no indication that this will be the case, said Peter Watson, of ECPA when reviewing the challenges ahead in Europe. Setting the rules which have yet to be published and agreed is now the responsibility of the new European Food Safety Authority. Until the current measures which are mix of EU harmonised and national MRLs are repealed they will remain in place, although on the horizon is the Community policy of reducing levels to 0.01 mg/kg. Even when the information is forthcoming the trade will still have a



PETER WATSON

"At present there is grave concern that the EFSA simply does not have sufficient resources to do the job." 12 month period of grace. But Watson saw difficulties in the transitional stage whenever it may be. "Even at this stage we do not have the full data," he said. "At the same time the new regulation ultimately presents a great opportunity to enhance the trade and underscore the quality and safety of Europe's food suppliers."

But the key aspect influencing the multiple view was the need to have systems which created public confidence, explained Nick Ball of Tesco, reminding the audience that it was the retail sector which led to the formation of EurepGAP in 1996. Its future public role also preoccupied the membership. Despite its success it remains what is in effect an internal trade mechanism. "We all share a common problem. But if there is a food scare the government takes over," said Kai Krasemann, President of FreshFel. There is obviously still much to be done, but Nigel Garbutt stressed that: "harmonisation is an ongoing process which required organisations to link up not duplicate"



NICK BALL

TESCO SEES WIDER ROLE FOR SECTION 10

Tesco believes that EurepGAP's Section 10 which covers post harvest standards for produce graded and packed in small packhouses within the domain of the farm should be strengthened to fill a gap which will appear as more smaller suppliers enter the export market. At present these fall outside the private audit requirements carried by multiples in the large packing stations away from farms. Nick Ball of Tesco UK believes the EurepGAP rules are not sufficiently detailed, while the alternative BRC/IFS requirement can be too high for "developing" producers. But Section 10 could become a precursor without any conflict of interest. Initially submissions and comments will be handled by an investigating sub committee comprising himself, Raf de Blaiser of DRC, Belgium, and Ricardo Adonis of ChileGAP. It will then be put forward to the Technical and Standards Committee.

CANADIAN PLANS WELL IN HAND

Horticultural farm safety in Canada which accounts for 14.2 percent of the country's agriculture and employs over 300,000 people is high on the agenda, according to Annie Fowlie of the Canadian Horticultural Council.

Its mandate is based on members input and needs linked to a buyer/government recognised standard.

There is a four year strategic phase-in underway which has the potential to be completed more quickly if required by certain commodities. For simplification crops are grouped together by size and type where there are similarities.

"HACCP-based programmes are also being developed for truckers, packers, processors and retail distributors as well as retailers," she said.

WORKER SAFETY NOT FORGOTTEN

Often when farmers ask what they should do to protect themselves when using pesticides they find it difficult to get accurate information, says Angela Lopez, communications director of the European Crop Protection Association. The ECPA has already started to correct the situation with a European funded project in southern Europe which led to a case study in Almeria which Lopez said illustrated the difficult working conditions which existed.

However this had resulted in a reduction of a third of intoxication, with two thirds more workers claiming that they now actually read the instructions. This in turn led to better use of protective clothing and investment in better equipment.

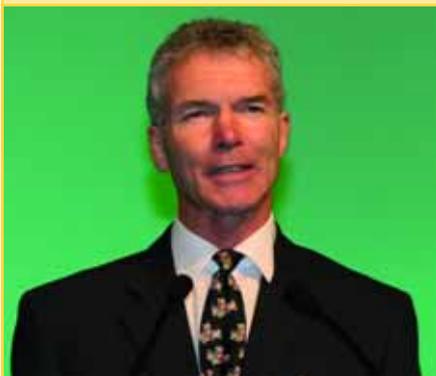
"EurepGAP could really help us," she added.

COMMUNICATION VITAL

Because growers do not always know whether their produce is sent, communication is vital, Bill Harvey of the UK supermarket chain Somerfield told the delegates.

The company have recently backed the UK ethical trading initiative agreement which aims to improve growers' rights in developing countries through agreed labour standards.

KENYAN EXAMPLE HIGHLIGHTS PRODUCER BENEFITS



ROD EVANS

"It has succeeded because we recognised that the answer was trade not aid."

The opportunity to see how Kenya's smallholders are financially and socially benefitting was evident from a joint presentation.

Rod Evans of Homegrown, one of the country's largest flower and vegetable producers which has given total support to the Protocol which created KenyaGAP since its conception in 2003, and Appollo Owour technical manager for the country's Fresh Produce Exporters' Association revealed that despite challenges and a degree of initial apprehension it now embraced over 1,000 producers.

Exports had increased 14 percent in 2004, there had been a reduction in costs and an increase in expertise.

The significance could be seen when the audience were told Kenya's exports



APOLLO OWUOR

"Our small growers can now meet supermarket standards with confidence"

accounted for some 160,000 tonnes of produce of which 90 percent was shipped to the EU. The industry supports over a million people.

"There are now 10,000 producers in the pipeline as a result," said Mr Owour. "KenyaGAP is now a focal part of the industry, and has been achieved through government, farmers, exporters, NGOs, experts and donors working together."

Smallholders had also benefited through working together to supply the needs of companies such as Homegrown which were able to provide technical support.

The result was that even the smallest unit was able to provide produce to the high standards required by the multiples.

KenyaGAP now expects to gain equivalence with EurepGAP in a matter of a few months.

FLOWERS

SECTOR RESPONSE REFLECTS REAL NEED

While Protocols for flower and ornamentals are a more recent extension of EurepGAP's work, the fact that the sector now has the third largest membership after integrated farm assurance and fresh produce is proof of its growing importance.

The first certification body only received accreditation in 2004, and since then more and more industries have recognised its worth, reported Steve Homer, chairman of the TSC.

Starting from scratch the Code had to be revised to take into account the differences in major industries across the world.

But the result was that it was now accepted by growers as diverse as Holland and Colombia, and the UK and Kenya.



STEVE HOMER

"Consumers are demanding more of retailers, and we have in effect become the guardians of supermarket brands"

"We had to create a level where there was no safety bar to jump over, yet raise the standards high enough without creating a barrier to entry," he added.

CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

International Feed Safety Alliance chairman Yvan Dejaegher has called for international action to harmonise national compound feed assurance schemes.

He explained that a lot of ingredients and protein sources came from Third countries.

Therefore, any initiative to set up one standard to assure the safety of the feed chain had to include all the national and private scheme owners.

He pointed out that feed, or co-products provided about 40 per cent of animal feed.

Any problems could lead to a loss of confidence and extremely high costs for the feed industry, so it was in its own interests to take action.

Mutual recognition between EU member states had taken a long time. The industry now needed to be proactive and work together with stakeholders to develop one scheme that could be adopted by manufacturers and buyers across the world.

It was vital to do something, because he pointed out that when things went wrong in one area, the reputation of the whole industry suffered and materials could be banned.

(Examples were meat and bonemeal in the UK following the BSE scare, or used cooking oil).

He suggested that the IFSA was focusing on ingredients, because it had found that most feed scares had their origin in unsafe ingredients.

"Assuring feed ingredients at source is the most cost-effective solution for the feed chain as a whole," he claimed, while pointing out that achieving zero risk was impossible.

He defined feed ingredients as "a component part or constituent of any combination or mixture making up a



YVAN DEJAEGHER

feed, whether or not it has a nutritional value in the animals diet, including feed additives."

Explaining the International Feed Ingredient Standard (IFIS), Mr Dejaegher said that it included legal compliance, a certification process and a quality management system.

It also included transport, because contamination of feed during transportation was an important issue.

Certified companies would be listed on the Internet, so that buyers could see which feed ingredient suppliers were assured, and which factories and feed ingredients were covered.

He told EurepGAP delegates that IFIS was officially launched by IFSA in September 2005 and it was hoping to start audits against its standards in January next year.

Foreign suppliers without certification needed to be IFSA-compliant by January 2007.

"We are still discussing with trade about possible extra modules that should be added to IFIS and I hope all national schemes will join in our efforts to harmonise certification."

It was pointed out that EurepGAP was watching closely and believed in the common approach that was being developed by IFSA.

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO ASSURE THE FEED CHAIN

A feeling that there should be something in EurepGAP regarding safe animal feed led to detailed discussions.

Speaking at one of the special 'breakout sessions' at the conference, Marc Jansen, of the Dutch Retail Association, pointed out that the impact of feed products on food safety and consumer confidence in food in general could be gigantic..

Replying to these concerns, EurepGAP Secretary Kristian Moeller said new proposals were already in the pipeline. Paying tribute to the hard work already undertaken by EurepGAP's Hugo Hays, who was not at the conference because his wife had just had a baby, Dr Moeller said: "We don't want to re-invent the wheel. We want to provide the industry with a tool that allows it to recognise compound feed schemes across borders and increase transparency, while reducing costs.

"We want to see integrated links between them and to see how we can work to avoid duplication and unnecessary costs.

"We are looking at an online system where national feed assurance schemes can demonstrate compliance and additional requirements in a transparent manner to a EurepGAP compound feed manufacturer reference standard (CFMR)."

It would be based on the HACCP system, including current EU legislation.

"The important thing is that it would cover unmedicated feed production from ingredient sourcing to transport from the feed mill."

COMPOUNDERS HAVE KEY ROLE IN FEEDING THE WORLD

Compound feeds are vital to feed the world and meet the growing demand for animal protein. "Manufacturers have a direct responsibility to ensure consumers can get safe food," says Roger Gilbert, of IFIF, UK.

Feed and the feed industry was the most important one that a country had to offer to its people, so Mr Gilbert was concerned that standards, codes of practice and so forth should be applied globally via Codex, the FAO, WHO, national governments and national associations.

"We have to recognise the global importance of compound feeds and their impact on food safety."

The top four producers in the world were the United States of America, the European Union, China and Brazil. Together they produced some 431 million tons of animal feed which would rise as the population ballooned from 6.4 billion in 2005 to an estimated 9.2 billion in 2050.

There was, therefore, a great need to harmonise protocols to raise safety standards and encourage consumer

confidence regarding the feed, additives and labelling.

Mr Gilbert pointed out that compound feed industry was similar across the world, in that it fed the same species, used the same genetics, formulas and raw materials wherever it was made.

Only the culture, skills and local economies were different.

The key challenge was to meet the growing demand for animal protein and provide safe products for safe foods.

HUSBANDRY

ANIMAL WELFARE PROVIDES RECIPE FOR WINNING

Good practice in animal husbandry can have a positive effect on production, as well as meat quality and help reduce costs.

That is the view of Johann Zueblin, head of standards and marketing services at Switzerland's biggest retailer, the Federation of Migros Co-operatives.

Opening the debate Mr Zueblin said: "We have to admit that animals are living beings and that the ethical aspects are becoming more and more important."

He pointed out that where animals were concerned consumers became an important pressure group. "We need to communicate with them and be more transparent.

"We must involve stakeholders so that we can show people what we are doing and work with producers to see how we can help them achieve the necessary standards and set up the required certification systems."

Mr Zueblin argued that the advantages of good practice in animal welfare included healthy, happy animals, better growth, less medication and less feed, reduced costs and better quality products.

It also provided a better image for the whole industry and gave it more credibility and a better defence if attacked by pressure groups.

Migros already had its own programme of seven statements for meat production. They included feed safety,

health and welfare, transport, slaughter, traceability and records.

EurepGAP provided the basic level of standards, which was higher than the legal requirements and Migros then added its own 'extras'.

However, Migros did not just want its own standards. They all needed to be set on a benchmarked global basis, so that retailers could source from abroad with confidence.

The EurepGAP Protocols would be the basic requirement for Migros' suppliers in animal production.

Mr Zueblin said there were still some problems, but he claimed effective risk management practices at Migros included ensuring that all the existing laws were rigorously applied, as well as external control and certification.

The Federation also ensured that it involved as many stakeholders as possible in the process and it worked with farmers' associations wherever possible. It also focused a lot of attention on communication to tell people exactly what it was doing.

As far as the implementation of EurepGAP within it's food chain was concerned, Mr Zueblin said that it would be introduced for all the production systems that were not currently covered by the Migros animal production programme, including non-label products.

Priority areas included poultry, imported cheese and production of other imported animal products.



JOHANN ZUEBLIN

"At Migros, we want to extend our market leadership by reinforcing our range of services for our customers. We will continue to set an example through our cultural, social and ecological commitments."

POSITIVE APPROACH BY SPAIN

Carlos Pineiro, of PigCHAMP Pro, part of the Proinserga Group in Spain, gaining EurepGAP certification would help producers meet customer demands and make a difference with other companies.

Mr. Pineiro pointed out that his group's co-operative-like structure allowed it to control the whole production chain and it already had an internal system that allowed it to reach EurepGAP requirements reasonably easily.

It was now planning to add improvements to add value for a percentage of its farms.

Spanish pig production had increased from 1.1 million tons in 1980 to a current level of some 2.9 million tons (the fourth largest in the world), with a national herd of 2.6 million sows and 36 million slaughtered pigs a year, he claimed.

"We know what farmers need and we want to train them for self-assessment. I hope we will be ready for the first EurepGAP certification inspection in spring 2006."



CARLOS PINEIRO

POULTRY:

CLEAR MESSAGE FOR PRODUCERS

Brazilian poultry producers and exporters received a clear message from customers that all their systems had to be approved by EurepGAP, says Sidnei Gris, of the Brazilian Poultry Exporter's Association.

And while the country's producers could cope with the current demand, they would need more time to get everything certified.

EurepGAP protocols included regular checks on farms, in hatcheries and at feed mills.

"Farmers who do not meet the minimum standards are not allowed to supply our customers, so there is an enormous incentive to get things right as quickly as possible,"

He explained how Brazil's poultry industry had moved to the south of the country and the poultry houses were all open-sided with natural ventilation. The feed was based on corn and soya.

The different standards of housing and feed meant that some of the EurepGAP standards had to be adapted to meet EurepGAP approval and this was all being done in close consultation with the organisation's national technical work group, with exporters and producers involved in the debate.

Mr Gris explained that the whole industry was focusing a lot of attention on bio-security for Brazil's smaller poultry farms that have intensive production.

ANIMAL WELFARE

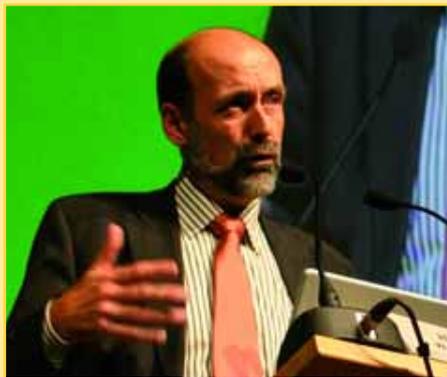
URGENT NEED TO MOVE FORWARD

Public concern over farm animal welfare is leading to much more research into the subject to help retailers and farmers to improve conditions for livestock, says Dutch animal scientist Harry Blokhuis.

He is currently leading an EU research project 'Welfare Quality' to develop new European standards for on-farm welfare assessments, as well as providing practical strategies for improvement.

Explaining why he felt there was such an urgent need he said that a recent survey of some 25,000 consumers across the European Union revealed that more than 50 per cent were "very worried" especially about intensive systems. As they believed the animals could not behave naturally.

Improving animal welfare could help improve product quality with food safety, an added bonus. He believed that retailers had a key role to play in providing consumers with more information about the products that they



HARRY BLOKHUIS

were buying, especially in this regard. Current labelling was confusing and often not very clear about animal welfare conditions, he claimed. "Consumers need to know what they are buying."

Dr. Blokhuis explained that the five-year Welfare Quality Project (which was launched in May, 2004) was about the integration of animal welfare into the food quality chain and aimed to develop reliable on-farm monitoring, product information systems and

practical species-specific strategies.

"We are looking at animal behaviour, disease patterns, and indicators of fear in cattle, pigs and poultry.

"We want to establish animal-based parameters, rather than have regulation figures, like animals need so many millimetres, or centimetres.

"We hope that we will be able to use these animal parameters to develop systems that are suitable for intensive and extensive systems and to provide the necessary tools for transparency."

The key was to link informed animal product consumption to practices on farms in a "fork to farm", rather than a "farm to fork" approach."

Additionally, a lot could be done by improving housing conditions and transport systems, as well as management even though there was a cost involved.

* *Welfare Quality is funded by the European Commission and is a joint project involving 39 institutions and universities from 13 EU-member states.*

RED MEAT

AUSTRALIA WANTS TO SIT DOWN AND TALK

Australians are confident that their current farm assurance and food safety programmes for red meat will meet most of EurepGAP's requirements for harmonised global standards.

And, although there were questions about the need for them, producers had started to find that several customers in Asia were starting to ask for them, said Patrick Hutchinson, of Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd (MLA). Mr Hutchinson suggested that EurepGAP standards should be launched into Australia on a voluntary basis, using the national programmes as core models, with any extras added on as voluntary modules. He explained that the MLA, which was funded by transaction levies paid by producers on livestock sales, had already set up the country's own Safe Meat scheme.

It included every sector of the red meat production chain and maintained the highest possible standards of safety and



PATRICK HUTCHINSON

"Australia wants to sit down and talk to the world meat industry about meeting the needs of people who eat meat," said Mr. Hutchinson.

hygiene from farm to consumer. In addition, he explained that he was manager of the MLA subsidiary body Livestock Quality Systems, which maintained food safety and quality assurance programmes that included keeping a close eye on residue levels,

feed and disease.

The closely monitored systems included risk assessment, on-farm audits, and commodity vendor declarations, which were in addition to state animal welfare codes of practice and environmental stewardship laws in seven states and territories.

He suggested that the Australian red meat industry should allow EurepGAP to see all these programmes to ensure that it had a complete picture of farm assurance in the country.

He believed that EurepGAP would be well-received in his country, if it was put forward as a voluntary programme and needed just one audit per farm.

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