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PigSurfer – SURveillance, FEedback & Reporting within ProPIG for communication with 75 pig farmers

C. Leeb¹, D. Bochicchio², G. Butler³, S. Edwards³, B. Frueh⁴, G. Illmann⁵, A. Prunier⁶, T. Rousing⁷, G. Rudolph¹ and S. Dippel⁸

¹Univ. of Natural Resources and Appl. Life Sciences (BOKU), Dep. of Sustainable Agric. Systems, Gregor Mendelstr. 33, 1180 Vienna, Austria, ²CRA-SUI, Italy, Agricultural Research Council, San Cesario sul Panaro, 41018 Modena, Italy, ³School of Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Newcastle University, Agriculture Building, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU, United Kingdom, ⁴FiBL, Animal Husbandry Division, Ackerstrasse 21, 5070 Frick, Switzerland, ⁵Institute of Animal Science, Pratelstvi 815, 10400 Prague, Czech Republic, ⁶INRA, UMR1348 PEGASE, 35590 Saint-Gilles, France, ⁷Aarhus University, Dept. of Animal Science, Blichers Allé 20, 8830 Tjele, Denmark, ⁸Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, Institute of Animal Welfare and Animal Husbandry, Doernbergstr. 25/27, 29223 Celle, Germany; christine.leeb@boku.ac.at

The CoreOrganic2 research project ProPIG is carried out in 75 organic pig farms in 8 European countries (AT; CH; CZ; DE; DK; FR; IT; UK) to improve animal health, welfare and nutrition using farm customised strategies. For future on-farm application (e.g. advisory/certification activities which are carried out during one day visits), an automatic recording and feedback tool was developed. This should allow on-farm data collection, import of data into a database and the possibility for benchmarking, including a printed output for the farmer to facilitate immediate discussion of results and improvement strategies. To document not only animal health and welfare, but also integrate diet composition and productivity data, it was important to choose key indicators from all areas, which would be available across all eight countries. Based on existing on-farm welfare assessment protocols (e.g. WelfareQuality®, CorePIG) indicators were selected by the consortium, which were then transferred into a Software programme ('PigSurfer'). This Software is available as Desktop- or Android version to be used on Tablet PCs, so that on-farm data (interview with farmer; direct observations on weaners, finishers, sows; productivity and treatment records; feed) can be entered directly. During two visits a database was built and a 'Farm report' was printed for each farm including benchmarking of results for feedback and discussion with the farmer. After a year 'PigSurfer' was used to carry out the following complete process during one day visits across Europe: Surveillance of health and welfare, feedback of data in comparison with results from the previous year as well as benchmarking with 75 other pig farms and printing a report. 'PigSurfer' is a promising tool for communicating with health and welfare, as it provides not only a database, which can be continuously extended, but is an important step to move from research to on-farm application across Europe.