

INTRODUCTION

This special issue represents the ninth in a series of reports on OECD sponsored workshops, organized within the framework of the OECD Research program on "Management of biological resources", directed by Camille Raichon and, since January 1994, by Muriel Dunier. In its present form, the project started in 1990 and involves most OECD countries as members, the decision to be a member being voluntary and annual payment to the project being determined by each country's gross material product. The main activities of the project involve the granting of fellowships and the organization of workshops. The workshops organized within the research theme "The use of animal biotechnology to improve animal health status and meat quality" have taken place in Melle (November 1990), Nottingham (April 1991), Helsinki (June 1992), Zeist (November 1992), Theix (May 1993), Kepple island (August 1993), Celle (June 1994) and Tromsö (August 1994). More details on the history of the OECD project are given in their Proceedings (see e.g. Ouali *et al.*, 1993 and Raichon *et al.*, 1993). During the first workshop a whole array of subjects related to the theme was covered and it was decided to focus attention of the theme on the impact of biotechnology on consumer acceptance of meat. The Nottingham, Helsinki and Theix workshops indeed dealt with the relation of genetics and muscle metabolism to pork and beef quality, including consumer acceptance. It was realized however that other important aspects of the complex animal production systems should not be ignored. In Zeist, a discussion on biotechnology and animal welfare was held and in Nottingham Derek Lindsay emphasized the importance of vaccin technology in tropical animal production systems, leading to the Kepple island workshop. Frank Ellendorf and Eddy Decuypere initiated and organized the "poultry workshop" held in Celle June 1994 and an intervention by the Norwegian representative in the project's governing board was the starting point for the aquaculture workshop, organized within the 3d international marine biotechnology conference held in Tromsö.

Beginning 1995 the programme was renewed, incorporating "Quality of Animal Production" as one of the four research themes. The first initiatives within the new programme and this theme were the organisation of two "expert meetings", highlighting two very different quality aspects of animal production. The first was held in February 1995 at Kulmbach and dealt with colour measurement of meat and meat products. It was the last in a series of three meetings dealing with measurement of sensory quality of meat. The second and present one originated from the

wider concept of quality related to animal production, also involving the interaction of animal production with environment, as well as with animal welfare (Demeyer, 1994). The growing concern of meat consumers related to the impact of animal production on environment, the presence of Oswald Van Cleemput and the theme co-ordinator in the same university, their common interest in methanogenesis and the friendly willingness of Herwig Keymeulen, Director of the Centre of Agricultural Research in Flanders to act as a host are the other factors that have generated this “expert meeting”, where soil scientists and animal scientists were confronted in evaluating the relative importance of both ecosystems in methane emission.

DANIEL DEMEYER
Theme co-ordinator

OSWALD VAN CLEEMPUT
Co-organisator

References

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