Advances in Animal Biosciences (2014), **5:3**, pp 281–282 © The Animal Consortium 2014
doi:10.1017/S2040470014000156

advances in animal biosciences

Foreword

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In modern society there is a growing awareness that animals may suffer pain. Pain in animals is perceived in a wide variety of contexts ranging from animal testing and experimentation, through mistreatment of pets and performing animals, such as in the circus, to the husbandry and treatment of farm animals destined for human consumption. This awareness has given rise to a rather difficult dialogue between animal rights activists who are against any animal exploitation, those who advocate improved living conditions for animals and the economic stakeholders who highlight the financial constraints that face them in their sector of activity.

There is thus a strain between the growing demand in the world for animal products and the social acceptability of the treatment of farm animals under modern farming systems. Over the second half of the 20th century, the capacity to supply markets was based largely on a concept of livestock farming which did not place animal pain at the forefront of its concerns. It was within this context that in 2008, at the initiative of the President of the French Republic, the *Rencontres Animal-Société* Animal-Society forum was held with the aim of providing a statement of the issues raised in the various domains of the relationship between man and animals. These meetings, which brought together members of the trade, scientists, politicians, government authorities and associations, progressively highlighted the need to come to agreement on the primary cause for debate: defining what constitutes pain and suffering in animals and what knowledge is available to clarify this issue? Hence the action plan emanating from the talks requested a multidisciplinary scientific assessment (ESCo) into animal pain. This request was addressed to INRA by the Ministers in charge of Agriculture and Research.

Expertise at INRA in support of public policy

The mission of public research in providing expert reporting in support of public policy-making was reaffirmed by the law on research direction (2006). Providing scientific argument in support of political stance is now a necessity in international negotiations. However, the ever-increasing volume of scientific knowledge emanates from very diverse areas and is inaccessible in the raw state to policy makers. The ESCo activity developed at INRA since 2002 can be characterised as putting together and clarifying for public policy-making relevant findings produced in very diverse fields of knowledge.

A charter for the expert scientific assessment at INRA

The expert analyses were guided by a charter outlining the principles of practice to follow in order to ensure the robustness of the assessment produced. The charter set out four principles of conduct: competence, diversity, impartiality and transparency. The principle of competence was manifested by the INRA institute only undertaking to report on issues that fall within its field of expertise, the scientific legitimacy of which is assured by strong anchoring in long-term research. This principle of competence was equally applied to the experts who were deemed to be aptly qualified on the basis of their scientific publications and also by their adherence to process quality in conducting the assessment. Plurality was taken as a multidisciplinary approach to the issues raised and dealt with from the perspectives of both the life sciences and human and social sciences. The plurality was also reflected in the diversity of institutional origin of the experts, since INRA called on outside assistance to complement the range of expertise available internally. By ensuring plurality in research domains and disciplinary perspectives the intention was to stimulate debate and favour discussion on controversial issues thereby enhancing critical analysis. The principle of impartiality was safeguarded by the multiplicity of points of view presented and by requiring each expert to declare any links held with stakeholders or groups with vested interests. Finally, transparency is guaranteed by the publication of the summary and work documents which are freely available to all.

Definition and functioning of the ESCo

The task assigned to an ESCo is to establish an inventory of academic scientific knowledge from which components are extracted and assembled to address matters raised by the commissioning body. The directives given to INRA were outlined in the terms of reference, decided upon after back and forth consultation between the Ministries of Agriculture and Research as commissioners and the group of experts, who fixed the content and scope of the expert assessment. A monitoring committee, convened on the initiative of the commissioning body, provided an interface between the experts and oversaw smooth running of the inquiry. The experts were required to sign the report and are responsible for their contribution. INRA undertook responsibility for the conditions

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2040470014000156 Published online by Cambridge University Press

under which the expert inquiry proceeded: the quality of the literature research for updating bibliographic sources, transparency of discussions between experts, providing leadership for the work group and writing of ESCo reports in a form that reconciled scientific rigour with intelligibility to a wide audience.

Prior to this present assessment, five collective ESCo have been conducted on a wide and complex range of topics concerning food and the environment: 'Storage of carbon in agricultural soils in France', 'Pesticides, agriculture and the environment', 'Drought and agriculture', 'The consumption of fruit and vegetables' and 'Agriculture and Biodiversity'. The present study is the first in the field of animal production.

Animal pain: a central issue for INRA

INRA has been actively developing research programs on animal welfare for several years now. In 1998 INRA created the network Agri Animal Welfare (AgriBea), which now draws together a hundred research scientists from various research organisations, and conducts transversal leadership and support activities in this domain of research. INRA has not only been heavily implicated in work on the effects of rearing conditions on the welfare of animals, but as a research institute it is also involved in animal experimentation. The breadth of research conducted in this area is considerable, ranging from fundamental aspects to the techno-economic dimension, without forgetting reflection on ethical issues.

The information brought together in this expert report is destined to provide elucidation for public decision making, and beyond that, to bring a broad frame of reference to the debate on which positions and decisions can be argued and research needs identified so as to better respond to the questions raised.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S2040470014000156 Published online by Cambridge University Press