

Global dairy industry is expected to follow Europe's lead



Europe will set the standard for the global dairy industry in the future. This is just one of the predictions expressed by international dairy expert Dr Ynte Hein Schukken at a recent meeting hosted by Pfizer Animal Health in Brussels.

"Most of the milk produced throughout the developed world will be following the same standards as those set in the EU," he said.

"Already the USA is bracing itself for implementation of the stricter interpretation of the milk and milk product import rules from the EU. My prediction is that other countries will follow this example."

Access to the world market

According to Dr Schukken, who is Professor of Epidemiology and Herd Health at Cornell University in the USA, other major markets such as India and China will follow suit. This will make access to the world market for milk more equal for all players in the market.

"I have travelled onto farms in many countries across the EU and have seen that not all countries enforce the EU milk quality standards in an equally rigorous fashion.

I hope and predict that the enforcement of the EU somatic cell standard will become similar across all current and future members of the EU.

"It is very difficult to enforce higher quality standards on imported milk if the members of the European Union are not enforcing their own standards. Europe will not only be in the forefront of milk quality, it will also

Table 1. Average herd sizes and milk production.

| Area | Average herd size | Milk (kg/cow/year) |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Western France | 125 | 8,000 |
| Southern France | 100 | 8,000 |
| Spain | 1,000 | 12,000 |
| Germany | 320 | 9,500 |
| Italy | 550 | 9,000 |
| UK | 250 | |



lead the way in animal welfare standards on dairy farms," he added.

"Reducing pain events in cows will certainly need to include a reduction in clinical mastitis cases and an increase in pain-control medication. I also expect that use of antibiotics as one of the main components of curative and preventative programmes will be further scrutinised."

Universally available testing

Bulk tank somatic cell count testing is now universally available to EU dairy farmers and many also have access to SCC data at an individual cow or quarter level – but are they making the most of the data that is available?

Dr Ynte Schukken pointed out that somatic cells are a crucial part of the normal function of a healthy cow and so the objective should not be simply to reduce levels as far as possible.

"Cows can not live without somatic cells. A fully healthy cow will have approximately 50,000 cells per milliliter of milk and this number varies between 5,000 and 200,000 in fully healthy and normal cows."

The number of cells changes during different stages of lactation and increases as the cow gets older.

The use of cell counts as a diagnostic tool

at individual or herd level was discussed by Dr Francis Sérieyns – an agronomist engineer at Filière Blanche, France. "Dairy somatic cell counts provide a good diagnostic tool for identifying individual cows that are persistently infected by major pathogens," he said.

Management decisions

"This data can be used for management decisions. For example, cows with SCC >100,000 during the last month of lactation
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Table 2. The estimated cost of clinical mastitis (per case).

| Country | Cost (€) |
|-------------|----------|
| Netherlands | 211 |
| Spain | 74* |
| France | 93** |
| Portugal | 249** |
| UK | 236 |
| Germany | 471 |
| Denmark | 347 |

*includes only treatment products and discarded milk **cost/lactating cow/year/ including all mastitis cases