The Chairperson of the Conference, Dr E. N. Sossidou officially opened the Conference by welcoming all participants for their presence and contributions and by thanking the Organisers for their efforts and the perfect organisation of the 32nd Day of Science, especially Prof. Kovacsné Katalin Gaál and Dr. Szilárd Konrád.

Regarding the procedure, Dr Sossidou –after having the speakers’ agreement - asked from the participants to feel free to interrupt the speakers at any moment of their presentation in order to ask questions and express their positions. The procedure should be more effective under an interactive model, she said.

The word was given to Prof. Bozkurt, the WELANIMAL Coordinator, to present the current situation analysis of the WELANIMAL project.

Prof. Bozkurt first expressed her acknowledgements to the organisers. Then she presented the main specifics of WELANIMAL project ending with the current situation analysis. She reported that, for the WP2 aiming the current situation analysis of local conditions within the countries of the WELANIMAL partners, the following results has been obtained until now: the web page has been constructed (http://www.welanimal.aku.edu.tr/), the logo of the project was democratically voted, several volunteers were accepted as silent partners in all partner countries, from mainly target groups e.g. private animal production and related sectors, status analysis of animal production systems and food processing plants of animal origin. She mentioned that up to date the statistical data shows that all the partner countries were implemented EU regulations on animal welfare and animal health. Regarding the education the first analysis indicated that the curricula in graduate, postgraduate and doctorate programs are similar within the partnership. It was concluded that, in general, requirements analyses and targets with a roadmap of animal welfare education, work definitions and structural conditions in higher and vocational education for the next stages of the project have emerged.

Because most of the people attending the WELANIMAL Conference were not aware about WELANIMAL activities, Dr Sossidou took the opportunity to explain what a “silent partner” means for the project and invited all the present people from outside the project to join us as a silent partner. She was saying that a silent partner is one individual, centre, institution, association or organization (Governmental or NGO) that could use our results in their activities and help us to spread the knowledge acquired during working on this project. No budget contribution is needed, just collaboration and common activities through the project. The participants expressed their willing to become silent partners of our project. An official invitation will be sent to them at the earliest convenience by the country partner.

Prof. Bozkurt added to the above issue that a silent partner equals a volunteer partner of the project and that in Turkey WELANIMAL project has already 25 silent partners. Moreover, she explained how the silent partners and partnership works in Turkey.
The word was given to Assoc. Prof. Ludovic Cziszter who presented his paper entitled ‘Preliminary results on evaluation the calves’ welfare in raising and fattening farms from Banat Region in Romania”. He presented the preliminary results of the calf rearing systems from the animal welfare point of view derived from a survey. The questionnaire used was prepared according to the Council Directive no. 91/629/EEC. The evaluation was carried out on four farms: two for rearing and fattening calves, one cow-calf farm and a dairy farm. Results showed that calves were not kept in individual pens after 8 wks of age. Pen dimensions were appropriate for calves with appropriate space allowance. Barns, pens and equipments used were made of proper materials. Equipments were inspected at least once a day in all farms. Only one farm had an artificial ventilation system. All farms had artificial lighting systems for calves rearing facilities. All the calf housing systems allowed animals to lie down, stand up, rest and groom themselves without difficulty. Three out of four farms used proper cleaning and disinfecting methodology. Feeding colostrum, milk and vegetal feedstuffs was carried out adequately in all farms. Microclimate factors were maintained within recommended limits in all farms. Generally, all the farms provided good conditions for calf rearing and fattening, except from one farm where the barn and pen cleanliness was improper. Discussions following the presentation were regarding the continuation of the study to base the results on statistical validity (Dr Sossidou). Dr Cziszter said they will be continued to address at least all the cattle farms in Timiş Country. Dr Demirkan asked if the conditions to ensure the welfare are costly. Dr Cziszter responded that the animal welfare could be attained with cheap solutions. It doesn’t have to be too expensive to be good, he said.

Dr. Sossidou was the next speaker with her paper entitled “Developmental research on farm animal welfare in European countries”. She presented the EU framework for farm animal welfare research and development of this topic within FP6 and FP7. Also, some project highlights regarding animal welfare and their objectives were presented. Among these projects, WELFOOD and WELANIMAL projects were further discussed and groups of stakeholders that could participate in these projects were presented. After that, the policies for the economic evaluation of the farm animal welfare were discussed together with legal framework of farm animal welfare. By concluding, Dr Sossidou presented achievements and future prospects of farm animal welfare research in European countries. Her presentation was followed by a very good discussion: “How to define happiness? What do you suggest as a nice topic for further research?”-two important questions raised by Prof. Szücs. Dr Demirkan stated that there are some welfare indicators. Dr Sossidou replied: “Of course there are as results of previous research studies, however there is still a need for a common applicable “welfare code” at farm level through EU countries. From this, a problem with welfare labelling occurs and there is a current research study and discussion on this topic. Also, the cost of farm animal welfare has to be estimated (few studies up to now). In any case, there is a need to inform consumers, farmers etc all stakeholders about recent research results”.

Then, according to the Conference programme, Dr Konrád gave the presentation on the “Significance of training organic animal husbandry in the MSc education”. He presented the courses in animal welfare given at different universities through Hungary, along with the teaching level of these courses. Also, the topics of the lectures and seminars in farm animal welfare were presented.

After Dr Konrád’s presentation, Dr Sossidou was passing Dr Bozkurt’s question if everybody is agreeing to post all the presentations and full papers made during the Conference on
the WELANIMAL web site. Everybody agreed with this idea.

A short refreshment break was taken.

Prof. Szabó was the next speaker to present his paper on “Relevance of animal welfare and environmental effects of and on animals in beef cattle production”. He presented the welfare issues in cattle ranching compared to cattle fattening in facilities. Also, he presented welfare issues regarding the cattle management, such as branding, castration, dehorning, handling, and transportation, were addressed. Dr Sossidou added a critical point to the discussion followed Prof. Szabó’s presentation regarding the cultural differences in animal husbandry operations, such as animal handling, branding, tagging, dehorning. This is the main objective of WELANIMAL project to outline these differences and to complain them with the regulations.

Prof. Szücs presented the paper entitled “Stewardship and stockmanship in sustainable animal production”. In his presentation, Prof. Szücs addressed the ethical concerns and ideas to identify key elements that constitute the concept of sustainable agriculture. He pointed out that future implication towards sustainable animal production cover two terms: stockmanship and stewardship and gave the definition of these terms from different religion points of view. “Moving toward sustainable animal production our duties and obligations addresses careful and responsible management”, he said. An interesting discussion followed.

The paper authored by Radacsi et al. was not presented; the authors were not present at the session.

Prof. Bozkurt has given the results of the paper regarding the effects of stoking density and position of cages on performance of laying hens from different genotypes. Results of these experiments showed that the high density of poultry had a positive effect on light and medium genotype hens and a negative effect on heavy genotype hens. Lower and higher densities of hens per cage were heavier than average density. Higher density hens produced more eggs than lower densities. Hens in top tier cages produced more eggs than lower tier cages. Dr Cziszter said he is looking forward to see the averages and watch at the statistical performance. As he stated, the results are very contradictory and pose some questions.

Dr. Sossidou presented her paper entitled “Assuring quality in farm animal welfare curricula: the case of WELFOOD curricula”. In this paper, virtual learning environments have been analyzed to provide a framework for assuring quality in farm animal welfare curricula. The framework was constructed according to the experimental learning for a case study developed in the context of the Leonardo da Vinci Community Vocational Training Action Pilot Project entitled “WELFOOD-Promoting quality assurance in animal welfare-environment-food quality interaction studies through upgraded e-Learning”.

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Dr Szalay presented his paper on old Hungarian breeds of farm animals from the Carpathians basin, focusing on old poultry breeds and approaches to their conservation. He presented Hungarian project to act on reintroduction into farms of these old breeds. Also, he presented some books regarding these issues. Dr Szalay concluded that “conservation of local breeds (both plants and animals) through the development of different ecological type of production systems and products have real importance in maintaining agro-biodiversity and agro-ecosystems”.

Dr. Gergácz was the last speaker and presented the paper on critical points in the feeding of high quality yielding dairy cows comparing the Body Condition Score (BCS) with some physiological blood constants. He concluded that at a farm level BCS system offer a reliable and cheap tool for assessing the risk of metabolic disorders in dairy cow. Dr Cziszter expressed his position as follows: “I think BCS is a fairly objective tool for management at the farm level. The data showed in this paper complied with the general rules accepted in BCS theory that a cow should have 3.5 points at calving, not more than one point lower at nadir and almost 3 points at the end of lactation. Sure the physiological indices followed the changes of BCS during lactation”.

Dr Sossidou came with the concluding remarks showing that papers presented in this session showed different approaches of farm animal welfare, being very interesting approaches. Ethical approach presented by Prof. Szücs and Prof. Szabó papers is a very important one to stand against the trend of globalization. The sustainability of farm animal husbandry mentioned by Dr. Szalay will conduct us toward better efforts for breeds’ conservation. Education and training in farm animal welfare is playing an important role to promote this concept for the consumers and public. In any case, there is a need to assure quality of the curricula in the educational programs.

Overall, it was concluded that the well attended WELANIMAL Satellite Conference provided the opportunity to hear excellent presentations and lively discussions that followed.

Reported by:

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