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ANIMAL BREEDING IN EU RESEARCH PROGRAMMES
EFFAB and FABRE TP reaction

Animal breeding contribution to EU competitiveness and sustainability

Animal breeding contributes to more competitive and sustainable animal production in Europe. Examples of these achievements include: reduction of mastitis prevalence and therefore lower antibiotic use, lower milk losses and higher productivity at farm level; improvements in leg strength, heart and lung functions in poultry, thus increasing animal welfare and poultry production; higher piglet survival; and reduced mortality threats in aquaculture by the introduction of certain disease resistances in salmon farming[1].

Moreover, modern animal breeding has significantly lowered the resource requirements and carbon footprints of livestock operations with higher feed conversion efficiency. Farmed animals now require 30% less feed compared to 30 years ago, creating a highly positive economic and environmental impact. Furthermore, targeted genetic progress directly mitigates greenhouse gases and waste products with a consistent 1% annual reduction in methane emissions. All these achievements are the result of a very highly innovative and research-intense animal breeding sector, based on private and public funding.

European Public Investment in Animal Breeding R&I

Over 18 years (2007–2025), the EU invested EUR 551 million in 208 animal breeding R&I projects across three Framework Programmes (FP7, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe), engaging 921 partner organisations from 58 countries. During this period, the EU budget for the different Research Framework Programmes has increased by 43%, while funding for animal breeding has halved[2].

The Framework Programmes are by far the main source of public R&I investment in this field. EU Partnerships - including EUPAHW, ERA-NET co-funded actions, national programmes, and Structural Funds - invest comparatively little in animal breeding research specifically. Concretely for EUPAHW, its mandate covers animal health and welfare; it does not extend to the broader animal breeding and genetics R&I agenda. Dedicated Framework Programme funding therefore remains the primary and increasingly insufficient instrument for sustaining Europe's breeding research base.

EFFAB and FABRE TP position

Genetic improvements are cumulative and persistent when introduced to a population. In the realm of animal breeding, the focus has traditionally been on productive traits. However, the last three decades have seen a significant shift towards sustainable practices, and with it a compromise between productivity, animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

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[1] European Animal Breeders Vision 2030, *www.bit.ly/4zTHuP4*

[2] *"Trends in European Public Investment in Animal Breeding R&I — From Framework Programme 7 to Horizon Europe (2007–2025)"* FABRE-TP September 2026

Responsible and balanced breeding[3] has been possible because of the development of further scientific knowledge and associated technologies.

In order to keep improving competitiveness and sustainability of EU livestock farmers, we must ensure further improvements in animal breeding. Therefore, EFFAB and FABRE TP believe that Europe must invest in ambitious EU research and innovation frameworks for animal breeding activities; from genetic discovery to farm-ready tools and technologies.

Future Outlook — Eight Priority Actions

1	STRATEGIC PRIORITY **Re-establish animal breeding as a named strategic priority in Cluster 6 and Excellent Science** Ensure animal genetics and genomics are explicitly named; not subsumed under broader agrifood calls, in the next Framework Programme work programme.
2	FUNDING RESTORATION **Restore animal breeding's relative funding share to at least FP7 / H2020 levels** Commit to a more balanced investment in animal breeding R&I across the full Horizon Europe programme, and set a clear floor for the next Framework Programme.
3	DEDICATED CALLS **Create dedicated calls targeting climate resilience, resource efficiency, welfare and biodiversity** Cover genomic selection, reproductive technologies, feed efficiency, climate adaptation breeding, and genetic resource conservation; areas outside EUPAHW's mandate.
4	TRL PIPELINE **Build an explicit low-to-high TRL pipeline from genetic discovery through validation to farm adoption** Require a clear low-to-high TRL progression in collaborative projects, and fund dedicated translation calls that bridge the gap between academic output and on-farm adoption.
5	LONG-TERM FUNDING **Enable longer grants and sequenced follow-on funding to match multi-generation breeding timescales** Align funding mechanisms with the biological reality of breeding programmes — incremental genetic gain requires continuity, not one-off project cycles.
6	PRIVATE SECTOR ENTRY **Improve conditions for private-sector entry: SMEs, breeding companies and technology providers** Lower barriers through simplified consortia rules, streamlined IP frameworks, and dedicated industry-oriented funding tracks that match the investment cycles of breeding companies.
7	FUNDING THRESHOLDS **Set minimum per-partner funding thresholds to prevent resource dilution in large consortia** Formally confirm that EUPAHW complements; and does not substitute for, dedicated Framework Programme funding for animal breeding research across the full R&I spectrum.
8	STANDARDISED REPORTING **Standardise project reporting (species, traits, TRL, outcomes) for better comparability and policy use** Track animal breeding R&I investment across all EU instruments (Framework Programmes, ERA-NET, national co-funding) to enable evidence-based decisions on gaps and overlaps.

[3] Code-EFABAR - Responsible and Balanced Breeding, *www.responsiblebreeding.eu*