

Robust cows, healthier milk

Our European cows produce a lot of milk thanks to years of breeding and good craftsmanship of our farmers. However, our cows are less 'robust' now than they have been. Our aim is to produce milk that adds greater nutritional value to our diet. RobustMilk is an EU-wide programme that investigates breeding to deal with both the robustness of dairy cows and making their milk healthier for humans simultaneously.

Our focus is to breed cows which are more robust, healthier, need less veterinarian and drug treatment, will live longer, still produce a lot of milk and therefore be even more economical to farmers. Consumers will be able to achieve healthier milk in the supermarket from a more durable dairy production system with less impact on the environment which will be a win-win situation for the dairy industry and society as a whole.

How are we going to reach this goal? With 5 integrated work packages, we will:

- create a common European database with unique measurement for traits underlying robustness and milk quality
- develop measurement tools for robustness and milk quality such as energy balance and fatty acid composition
- create statistic tools with special emphasis on somatic cell count, which is the thermometer of udder and cow health
- conduct research using the latest DNA tools that will speed up the breeding program for our true type cow
- collate the data on robustness and milk quality

The goal is to allow farmers, as well as society and EU consumers, to benefit from new breeding insights, but most of all our



cows will benefit because they will live longer and happier.

What is ROBUSTMILK?

ROBUSTMILK is a research programme, established by the partnership of six organisations in five different countries. They have a strong background in dairy cattle breeding in common including links with the dairy industry. ROBUSTMILK started the four-year project in 2008 and the first results are expected late 2009.

These six organisations are:

- 1 Animal Sciences Group (The Netherlands)
- 2 Teagasc Moorepark (Ireland)
- 3 Gembloux Agricultural University (Belgium)

4 Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden)

5 Wageningen University (The Netherlands)

6 Scottish Agricultural College (Scotland, UK)

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