

Pigmeat Supply Chain Task Force – Improving Pig Herd Health Sub-Group

Note of Second Meeting held on Thursday 2 July 2009

Present:

Richard Lister, JC Lister (Chair)
Andrew Thornber, Morrisons
Jan Anderson, Yorkshire Forward
Zoë Davies, NPA
Howard Revell, BQP/Tulip
Derek Armstrong, BPEX
Tom Allen, Young NPA
Pete Bown, PVS
[REDACTED], VLA
[REDACTED], Defra
Marcus Bates, BPA
[REDACTED] consultant to BPEX
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] consultant to BPEX
Duncan Prior, Task Force Secretary

Apologies for Absence:

Dan Tucker, Cambridge University
Digby Scott, Pig World

1. Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed those present to the second meeting of the Sub-Group, and thanked Andrew Thornber for hosting the meeting at Morrisons' Head Office in Bradford. Each person introduced themselves.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising from Last Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May were approved and adopted as a true and accurate record.

2.2 On matters arising, [REDACTED] had raised within Defra the Sub-Group's concern about the lack of progress towards determining the next steps for the Animal Movement and ID Programme. She reported that the Department was fully aware of the concern and were actively considering the proposals for funding. It was hoped that a decision would be made around the middle of July.

3. Feedback from Task Force Meeting on 10 June 2009

3.1 The Chair reported that he had presented the Sub-Group's proposed workplan to the Task Force meeting on 10 June. He said that whilst the Task Force had approved the aim and objectives within the plan, TF members were keen to see specific projects identified that would secure delivery. It was important to pursue projects that addressed gaps in current pig health related activity to avoid duplication but which added value.

3.2 The Task Force had considered a paper prepared by Defra on pigmeat R&D priorities and gaps. That paper included elements relating to pig health, and the Task force had asked the Sub-Group to review the paper and make observations/recommendations to the next TF meeting in September. That action was covered separately on the Sub-Group meeting agenda [see section 8 below].

4. Workplan Objective (i) [addressing weaknesses]

4.1 During exploratory discussion, the Sub-Group noted the following key points in considering suitable projects under objective (i) of the workplan [ie to “*identify barriers to and weaknesses in pig health management at farm, regional and national levels; and to make recommendations for addressing them*”]:

- many farmers lacked understanding of their pig herd health status, and how to obtain/assess it (including the health status of neighbouring units);
- there needed to be better farmer appreciation of the relationship between health performance and economic performance;
- enhancing and maintaining bio-security was a significant issue (both at individual pig units and within pig movement arrangements);
- there was a need for more consistent, industry-wide professional advice to farmers (ie reducing the opportunity for independent advisors to be swayed by vested interests);
- farmers needed to develop effective disease contingency plans at farm level;
- better data recording/monitoring was required at farm level if health performance was to be improved (though it was possible to measure performance without recording).

4.2 The Sub-Group agreed that in designing effective solutions to these challenges, it would be necessary to adopt certain key generic factors, including:

- good communications with those to be engaged;
- sound baseline measurements and monitoring arrangements to determine changes in performance linked to an industry-wide scoring regime;
- operational simplicity at farm level; and
- drawing on existing best practice and promulgate through advice notes and case studies.

4.3 Looking more widely across the supply chain, particularly retailer interest, it would be important to capture higher health performance indicators within assurance schemes, to sit alongside (as well as links to) other product characteristics sought - such as animal welfare and environmental factors of pigmeat production.

4.4 The Sub-Group considered how Task Force projects would relate to an industry-wide vision for pig herd health. The Sub-Group agreed that it was not for the Task Force to review the pig industry’s vision and strategy for pig health and welfare – noting that BPEX had a Pig Health and Welfare Council in place for that – but that accelerating projects to address known specific challenges was a complementary function of the Task Force.

4.5 In concluding their consideration of activities to pursue under the Sub-Group’s workplan objective (i), the meeting agreed to adopt five specific workstreams:

- review BPHS;
- develop an economic model;
- produce bio-security protocols;
- review transport washing facilities; and
- address smallholder issues.

Each of those workstreams would be led by a Sub-Group member. (For workstream description and identified lead person, see annex A attached.) **Actions: Workstream leaders to pursue action plans and implementation.**

5. Workplan Objective (ii) [identifying EU best practice]

5.1 ██████████ explained an EU project that had looked into animal health disease recording. Countries participating in the project included the UK, Denmark, The Netherlands and France. The aim of the project was to identify data flows across Europe, their similarities, and to facilitate EU-wide use of such data. **Action: ██████████ agreed to distribute copied of the project report to Sub-Group members.**

5.2 The Chair suggested that workplan objective (ii) should not be made to be too onerous. He proposed that relevant existing information about EU practice could be accessed via one or two big producers operating at EU level (eg Tulip and Vion). The Chair would pursue that with known contacts in industry. Also, it would be useful to obtain information about EU practice from smaller producers: Marcus Bates agreed to contact some of his non-UK members (eg in France) to seek input from that part of the producer base. The findings of that workstream would usefully feed into those under objective (i) (see Annex A). **Actions: Richard Lister and Marcus Bates.**

6. Workplan Objective (iii) [roll-out of regional pig health initiative]

6.1 Jan Anderson reminded the meeting that the role of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) was to stimulate new/stronger economic activity/growth across their individual region. RDAs therefore sought to support activities that facilitated that aim. RDAs did not seek to support activities that benefited only a sole trader, nor projects that would normally be regarded as normal business/sector development. Support was considered for projects that delivered economic benefit across significant parts of the regional economy. It was also noted that the RDAs were principally agents for central Government in administering the European Regional Development Fund. RDAs did not set the rules of ERDF. Jan Anderson agreed to provide a background paper on ERDF for Sub-Group members, and to facilitate a meeting between Yorkshire Forward's ERDF Team and industry's project managers looking after the current Disease Mitigation Programme. **Actions: Jan Anderson to provide TF Secretary with background paper for distribution. ██████████ to liaise with Jan Anderson over meeting arrangements.**

6.2 Defra was keen to help resolve issues within the ERDF regime that acted as barriers to progress. An example was interpretation of 'standard farming practice', where funding would not be available for standard practice, but the challenge was defining it in a way that allowed non-standard practice to be identified with confidence. The Sub-Group agreed that ██████████ ██████████ would lead the principal workstream [see Annex A] under workplan objective (iii) to

identify barriers and issues, and pursue possible solutions with Defra. **Action:** [REDACTED]

7. Driving Workstreams Forward

7.1 The Chair asked each workstream lead to develop a plan of action that identified: anticipated outputs, milestones and target dates for delivery. Andrew Thornber and the TF Secretary would together develop a standard template to be used. The template should be populated by workstream leaders not later than 31 July, and then used systematically to record progress. Also, workstream leaders would be invited to regular, short stock-take meetings with the Chair and TF Secretary to help unblock any obstacles/issues along the way. Andrew Thornber offered to make Morrisons' teleconf facilities available to assist efficiency. **Actions: Andrew Thornber to provide draft template to TF Secretary for distribution to workstream leaders for completion. TF Secretary to set up regular stock-take meetings with key personnel.**

8. Pigmeat R&D

8.1 The Task Force had asked the Sub-Group to review the pig health elements of a paper prepared by Defra on R&D priorities and gaps. The paper had been distributed to Sub-Group members in advance of the meeting. Zoë Davies had met [REDACTED] (Defra's author of the paper) to suggest a simplification of the priorities/gaps table appended to the paper.

8.2 The meeting noted that the R&D review might be a good opportunity to explore a project to improve disease diagnostic techniques, but that needed to be assessed against other competing demands on R&D funds.

8.3 The Chair suggested that Sub-Group members should send comments to [REDACTED] who would assemble them into a proposition for the next Sub-Group meeting for consideration before submission to the Task Force. As well as prioritising projects already identified in Defra's paper and proposing others where significant gaps existed, Sub-Group members were asked to provide, where possible, an economic interpretation of each R&D project to help build a business case where necessary. Given the time constraints to this task, it was appreciated that assessments of economic impact were likely to be subjective, but nonetheless useful to the ultimate decision makers. **Action: Sub-Group members to let [REDACTED] have comments on Defra's paper by 31 July.**

9. Communications and Publicity

9.1 The meeting noted that the Task Force meeting on 10 June had considered the need for a communications strategy, but wished – in the first instance - to allow individual sub-groups the opportunity to develop arrangements that were directly relevant to their own workplans. The Pig Herd Health Sub-Group decided that it would revisit communications and publicity at their next meeting, when there should be more clarity about key messages/products to promulgate/promote. **Action: TF Secretary to include on next meeting agenda.**

10. Key Issues and Risks

10.1 The Sub-Group would be able to more readily identify project risks and issues now that workstreams had been established. The next meeting of the Sub-Group would consider risks and issues against the progress of individual workstreams. However, the meeting did identify

as an issue the lack of access in rural areas to broadband internet. Although the Government had undertaken an initiative to address this problem, it remained the case that the lack of efficient internet access was having a negative economic impact in rural areas at a time when solutions to other industrial challenges depended on IT/internet access. The Sub-Group wished that issue to be flagged with Defra. **Action: TF Secretary to include issue on Sub-Group log, and draw Defra's attention to it.**

11. Conclusion and Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The Chair concluded by saying he felt the Sub-Group had now recovered ground in preparing a credible workplan. It was important that the agreed workstreams were pursued in a way that allowed the Task Force to see real progress and emerging outputs at its next meeting on 21 September.

11.2 The next meeting of the Sub-Group would be held at 10.00hrs on Thursday 10 September at the NPA/NFU offices at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. The NPA kindly offered to provide lunch at the end of the meeting. **Action: Sub-Group members to note meeting arrangements in diaries.**

Secretary to the Pigmear Supply Chain Task Force
July 2009

Pig Supply Chain Task Force

Pig Herd Health Sub-Group

Adopted Workstreams to deliver key objectives of Sub-Group's Workplan

Sub-Group Objective (i) [addressing barriers and weaknesses]

Workstream	Description	Lead Person(s)
(a) Review BPHS	Explore reasons for low take-up of existing BPHS and take actions to improve take-up	Pete Bown (and Derek Armstrong)
(b) Develop Economic Model	Identify and facilitate links between health performance and productivity/economic performance, and produce advice note to producers on rationale and ways of measuring	[redacted] (and Howard Revell) [name of consultant to BPEX redacted]
(c) Produce Bio-security Protocol(s)	Identify best practice at key points across the supply chain, and prepare guidance notes for promulgation. To include on-farm disease contingency plans.	[redacted] (and Zoe Davies and [redacted]) [names of consultants to BPEX redacted]
(d) Review Transport Washing Facilities	Review current washing arrangements/facilities at abattoirs and feed supply stations, and prepare protocols of best practice; with advice to practitioners on how to score and improve performance.	Howard Revell
(e) Address Smallholder Issues	Identify and prioritise principal issues relating to small pig holdings and hobby owners pig health performance; and make recommendations for improvements (to be carried forward separately and/or within the other workstreams).	Marcus Bates

Sub-Group Objective (ii) [EU best practice]

Workstream	Description	Lead Person(s)
(f) Adopting EU-wide best practice	Identify from readily available sources (eg Tulip's, Vion's, and BPA's members' presence in other EU countries) best practice for possible adoption in England; and feed results into workstreams (a) to (e) as appropriate.	Richard Lister (and Marcus Bates)

Sub-Group Objective (iii) [roll-out of regional pig health initiative]

Workstream	Description	Lead Person(s)
(g) Facilitating Efficient Roll-Out	Identify barriers and impediments to RDA engagement/support, and notify Defra (John Bourne) and/or develop solutions for submission to Defra/RDAs (eg definition of <i>Standard Farming Practice</i>).	[redacted] [name of consultant to BPEX redacted]