



Practice-led innovation supported by science and market-driven actors in the laying hen and other livestock sectors
HORIZON 2020 ISIB-02-2014 project, Grant no. 652638

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The HENNOVATION project was the first thematic networks funded under the topic ISIB 2 'Closing the research and innovation divide: the crucial role of innovation support services and knowledge exchange' of the Horizon 2020 EU Research and Innovation programme; implemented from January 2015 to August 2017.

Using the laying hen sector as a case study, the Hennovation project demonstrated the potential of innovation led by farmers and industry practices in two areas of concern, Injurious Pecking and End-of-Lay, during transport and at the abattoir. This was realised through the establishment of in total 19 innovation networks at different levels of the production chain, local, national and European level in five countries (United Kingdom, Sweden, The Netherlands, Spain and The Czech Republic). These networks proactively searched for and utilized new ideas to make their business more efficient and sustainable. These networks were supported by science driven-actors, such as veterinary surgeons, farm advisors and scientific researchers, and market-driven actors, such as those that buy eggs e.g. retailers, packers, food processors, and those certifying egg production (farm assurance, certification schemes). The overarching aim of these networks was to develop and disseminate innovations based on practice, and supported with economic and scientific information, to increase sustainability of the laying hen sector.

The research work carried out as part of this project revealed that the practice-led approach promoted by the project can be a great stimulus for innovation. Alongside product or technical (e.g. new type of litter material to reduce stress and encourage natural behaviour or the use of alpacas in organic systems to reduce predation), a variety of often less expected and sometimes unintended 'soft' innovations also emerged through these networks. These were related to protocol or process (e.g. a new way of monitoring Poultry Red Mite infestation and new relationships between value chain actors, for example the pullet rearer).

A variety of materials were developed for the support actors engaged with the networks. These included existing (scientific) as well as newly co-generated knowledge such as extension manuals on Feather Pecking and the End-of Lay, an online training course, 38 Practice Abstracts and five Technical notes. Guidelines for network facilitation and a Hennovation video, explaining the practice-led approach, were also developed to support network facilitators. All these materials can be found on this website.

The work done by the project suggests that successful multi-actor, practice-led innovation networks depend upon **active participation** from all involved, **professional facilitation**, **moderate resource support** and **access to relevant expertise**. From the research works done it is also clear that opportunities and advantages exist for the development of a more facilitative and practice-led model of innovation with sustainable agricultural systems. And that recognising the value of this type of innovation as 'science' and its product as 'innovation' is a significant step in resolving the longstanding and enduring 'science/innovation gap'.

