

**Report on the 60th Annual Meeting
of the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP)
Barcelona, Spain
August 24-28th, 2009**

1. The Congress

The annual meeting of the European Association for Animal Production (EAAP) is a major scientific meeting, attended by most large swine producing countries and breeding companies. Those attending include not only European representatives but also representatives of countries which are important markets for Canada (Eastern Europe, Japan, South America, and South Asia). Very often they include experts whose advice is sought by the importers in those countries. Canada had an opportunity to present some of its achievements in the science and innovation area in this forum, and to remain aware of new scientific developments which may be applicable to its programs. Canada is considered as a world leader in swine genetic improvement, and must participate in such technical venues to maintain its reputation.

The EAAP annual meeting gives the opportunity to present new scientific results and discuss their potential applicability in animal production practices. The general theme of the 2009 EAAP conference focused on: “Biodiversity and sustainable Animal Production Systems: economic, environmental and social aspects”.

A total of 1,413 abstracts from 61 countries were submitted to the 60th EAAP Annual Meeting. Finally, a total of 1,247 abstracts (497 theatre presentations and 750 posters) had been retained, including 13 from Canada. The book of abstracts is available on line at http://www.eaap.org/Barcelona/Book_Abstracts.pdf.

2. Highlights

The main reasons for attending the Congress were to gain scientific and other knowledge applicable to the Canadian context, to increase the awareness in other countries of Canadian achievements and to network with scientific and key individuals at the international level. A poster co-authored by Mohsen Jafarikia, Stefanie Wyss, Brian Sullivan and Laurence Maignel from CCSI, and Wim Van Berkel from WSTA, was presented during the poster session on August 25th. It was actually visible by all delegates during the whole week.

Scientific Program

The Congress lasted five days, with 55 sessions in total, covering various areas of animal production, including theatre presentations and many posters. Topics which were relevant to the pork industry and/or the pig breeding sector included the following themes:

- Local breeds: what future? 1-Selection
- Local breeds: what future? 2-Farming systems and products
- The impact of competition between food, feed and fuel on livestock industry
- Nutrition and production quality
- Indicators and analysis of risk factors in livestock welfare
- Practical strategies and tools for the genetic management of farm animal populations*
- Genetics of meat animals*
- Practical implementation of marker-assisted selection in pig and poultry breeding*
- Physiology and genetics of stress and behaviour*
- Genomic selection
- Animal genetics (methodology) free communications*
- Animal management and health free communications

- Pig production free communications*
- Health issues and immunocompetence in pig production*
- Molecular tools for disease resistance
- Incorporation of ethical considerations in professions in livestock industry*

* There were at least 5 sessions at the same time each day, so it was impossible for one person to attend everything related to pigs and/or genetics. The sessions above marked with an asterisk could be attended. For other sessions the abstracts are available on the congress website (and sometimes presentations too).

Plenary sessions were also held, giving status information about several on-going European projects. One example was the Sustainable farm animal breeding and technology platform (FABRE TP), which involves many research teams in animal breeding. In addition, a symposium devoted to Darwin theory was held, marking the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

The starting page for all the sessions is <http://www.eaap.org/Barcelona/index.html>

Showcasing recent developments in the Canadian swine improvement program

One poster was presented by CCSI:

“Use of IGF2 gene tests for carcass quality and sow productivity in Canadian pig populations”
M. Jafarikia, L. Maignel, S. Wyss, W. Van Berkel and B.P. Sullivan

There was also a lot of interest from other researchers regarding the recent work from CCSI and CDPQ on the measurement of intramuscular fat on live pigs, and advancements on selection for disease resistance. Documents prepared on these topics for past conferences in Canada were shared with our counterparts in other countries. Discussions occurred with scientists from Spain, France and Switzerland interested in these new applications and potentially open to future collaborations in this area, possibly using EU funds.

Discussions occurred with researchers from Belgium (Nadine Buys and co-workers) about an update on the use of IGF2 gene in Canadian pig populations and recent results on the effects of the gene on sow productivity traits. Dr Buys presented a paper during the conference on the use of IGF2 in MAS (Marker-Assisted Selection) and included some results from Canada in her presentation.

Networking

This congress gives a good opportunity to keep informed about recent work in animal production in European countries, especially in genetics and pig breeding.. Moreover, other countries are becoming more and more represented, especially the US, Australia, Japan, and countries in South America and African. There were several expressions of interest to have a larger participation from Canada in future EAAP conferences. Above all, EAAP is a good place to network with scientists and key individuals in similar genetic improvement and related research organizations around the world.

Several scientists from IFIP (Institut du Porc), and INRA France (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique) also attended the meeting and it was a good opportunity to provide some updates on areas of collaboration. Contacts with other similar organizations were made at the meeting (from Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, etc) and might lead to further research collaborations. There is also an increasing number of geneticists from national and international breeding companies who attend EAAP conferences. Collaborations on research projects were discussed, as well as potential gene exchanges with France, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal. Some follow-up will be needed on these aspects.