PPILOW WP 8: Workshop

Organizers: CRAW (Chloé Fivet, Virginie Decruyenaere) and Bioforum (Laura Van Vooren)

Date: 21.12.2022
Location: Dorinne

Participants from Flanders: 7 farmers, 1 feed company, 1 researcher, 1 NPG facilitator
Participants from Wallonia: 1 farmer (visited farmer), 2 technical advisors, 1 feed company, 2 researchers, 2 NPG facilitators

Workshop thematics

The workshop consisted of a farm visit in the morning, a shared lunch and an interactive discussion in the afternoon.

In the morning, a farm in Dorinne was visited. The farm was special in the sense that the sows with piglets stay permanently in the pasture (summer and winter). This system is rare in Flanders. The Flemish participants all came from the organic sector and have a special interest in keeping the animals outside, with an eye to animal welfare.

The central theme of the afternoon discussions was castration. The Walloon and Flemish legislation was presented, as well as the results of the research that took place in the PPILOW project and two new projects that are about to start on genetics and management practices.

Workshop report

10u30 Welcome

10u45 Introduction of the Walloon pig sector (Chloé Fivet)

11u00 Presentation of the farm

11u15 Visit of the farm and discussion among participants
Topics of discussion:

- Sows with piglets permanently (all year round) in the pasture
- Housing: cabins of 4m long, 2m wide. Not very high. No heating, sow produces enough body heat
- Not organic at the moment
- so sows have a nose ring. This prevents them from rooting.
- The piglets can initially pass under the wire to the other sows, but this rarely happens. Probably because the sows are quite far from each other
- Piglets leave when they weigh 20 kg
- No problems with N pollution
- Sow has a lot of straw available in the hut to make a nest
- Single fence. The fence around the company is seen as a second fence and is sufficient against ASF
- From 2023 onwards, the conversion to organic will start, at the request of the customer. This will bring challenges: sows currently have a nose ring, weed control under the electric wire is with herbicides, 100% organic feed for the sows
- Sows that will be inseminated are indoors in small groups
- Labor for the inspection and care of the animals in the pasture: about two hours a day. Feed is administered manually.
- Rarely problems with aggression
- No problems with worm infections

12u30 Lunch

13u30 Presentation of legislation on castration and current practices in Wallonia (Pierre Vandaele)

13u45 Castration in the organic sector (Laura Van Vooren)

- Legislation
- Presentation of a new research project on best practices for keeping intact males
- Discussion:
  - effect of feed on boar taint (e.g. taintstop)
  - management of groups: males and females mixed or separated
  - feed conversion
  - feasibility depends on the chain: slaughterhouses and retailers need to accept the carcasses and meat of intact boars
  - for communication and for the image of the sector, it would be better to stop castration

14u20 PPILOW research on castration (Bénédicte Lebret (INRAE)

- Genetics
- Effect of slaughter weight
- Management of intact boars

15u30 CRAW research on genetics (Alice Markey)

- Genomic selection of "Pietrain" boar for limiting the boar taint risk
- To study the hereditary characteristics of individuals, their transmission through generations and their variations
- Breeding of intact boars for meat production (Pietrain boar x Landrace sow)
- Estimation of breeding values

15u50 Presentation of new research on iron injection

- Current practices: in organic farming, iron injections for piglets are allowed but under discussion.
- With outdoor pig production, there is no iron injection because of soil intake by piglets
- In organic farming, the goal is to have as few interventions as possible, and to raise the animals in natural conditions. Therefore, it is preferable to avoid iron injections
- In the project, alternatives for iron injections will be identified and tested. The focus will be on materials that will be taken up orally by the piglet after rooting

16u10 Closure and drink