

7. General Conclusions

The IDEA large-scale project has been conducted for four years with the participation of ten contractors from six EU countries. Each of the subprojects has dedicated a large effort to contribute to the overall objectives of the project. Many difficulties were encountered in the execution of the different subprojects, because the IDEA project has introduced a number of detailed standardised procedures with which all the projects had to comply. The proper understanding and application of these procedures on the choice of devices, application and control readings and data management and transfer has been very educating and this experience will be of great benefit for the future improvement of a livestock identification, registration and management system.

The IDEA project has put very much in evidence that the above-mentioned improvement is not limited to the introduction of electronic identification. It embraces also the introduction or adaptation of an advanced registration and data management system.

The results of the IDEA project have been very positive and allow us to draw conclusions on the feasibility and the performances of an electronic identification system in ruminants (first objective of IDEA project). The IDEA project has also been able to provide some recommendations on the different functions and tasks of an organisational structure for any eventual future implementation of an electronic identification system (second objective of the IDEA project).

It has to be pointed out that the JRC will continue the analysis of the data produced by the IDEA subprojects, in order to improve the knowledge of some parameters, which may influence on the performance of the electronic identification system. These points should provide some technical input for future decision making.

The recommendations presented in section 6 of this report are responding to most of the basic, general and specific requirements defined by the IDEA participants of the IDEA project. It is expected that the next step is the full implementation of an electronic identification system. This means, in practice to proceed from a large-scale project, comprising nearly one million animals in six EU countries towards approximately 200 million animals in 15 EU countries. Nine of these countries did not participate to the IDEA project and will have to gain the experience in this area. An important effort will have to be dedicated to the transfer of know-how to these countries and in a later stage also to the Enlargement Countries.

The introduction of an electronic identification system is a major effort for the individual Member States and the Community as a whole, involving many Authorities and operators. A very important harmonisation effort will be required as has been pointed out in the previous sections

If a Council decision is made to proceed with the full implementation of an electronic identification system, it will be necessary to elaborate with the Member States an "Implementation master plan", which elaborates the details of each of the steps to be made, their time schedule, responsibilities and cost.

In the meantime it is highly recommended that no major implementation exercises are conducted in Member States to avoid future difficulties to adapt to final decisions made at Council level for the implementation of the improved identification system.