

## **PILOT PROJECT: “DAIRY SUSTAINABILITY TOOL”: IMPLEMENTATION AND FEASIBILITY OF A SECTOR-SPECIFIC CONCEPT FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF DAIRY PRODUCTION IN GERMANY**

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Sustainability is increasingly becoming a specific requirement for the production, processing and marketing of food. Internationally and nationally consumers, society, food retailers and food companies want to know from the German dairy industry: how sustainable is your milk produced? However, the integration of dairy farms in (dairy processor-specific) sustainability concepts poses particular challenges: on the one hand, a large number of dairy farms, some with very different production conditions, must be taken into account. Given the fact, that agriculture takes place “under the open sky”, external effects have to be considered. Therefore, on the other hand, a very broad range of indicators concerning economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as animal welfare have to be recorded at dairy farm level. The problem: so far there are scarcely any simple workable and cost-effective means to measure sustainability at dairy farm level in its entirety.

Against this background in an intensive multi-stakeholder dialogue, the so-called “Dairy Sustainability Tool” (DST) has been developed. The idea of the DST is to serve as a basic tool for an initial illustration of sustainability aspects at dairy farm level. It aims to initiate a dialogue within the supply chain and to stimulate stepwise improvement of sustainable dairy production in Germany. The tool consists of (a) a questionnaire for measuring more than 80 sustainability criteria, (b) factsheets with explanations (background and status-quo) of every sustainability criteria and their respective ratings and (c) a web-based questionnaire as well as (d) a database.

The overall objective of the pilot project is to put the DST in practice on a large scale for the first time, to check its feasibility and recognition at all stages of the value chain. Additionally, due to constantly new scientific findings and practical experiences, the tool will be continuously improved based on the knowledge gained. As a result there should be an outwardly transparent industry solution for the sustainable development of dairy production in Germany, which is suitable for a wider successful dissemination.

The pilot project started in February 2017 and will last until 2020. During this time, more than 30 German dairy processors are testing the DST. The resulting dataset is unique as it provides detailed information about relevant sustainability aspects of a large number of dairy farms. Within the first year, data concerning economic, environmental and social sustainability as well as animal welfare were collected on more than 4 500 dairy farms. The dairy processors are now starting an internal process to deal with the results of the status quo analysis: discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainability of the farms, formulating goals for the further development of sustainable dairy production and developing possible measures for implementation.

The concept, selected first results and future steps of the Dairy Sustainability Tool will be presented at the conference.