



Living lab in the Swiss organic pork sector



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Organic Pig sector

Organic pork

FiBL conducted a Living Lab (LL) with stakeholders in the Swiss organic pork sector to come up with ways to document and reduce antimicrobial use (AMU). Subsequently, a LL of 8 stakeholders representing organic pig breeders and finishers, delegates from the organic farmers association Bio Suisse (BS), vets, pig traders and animal welfare organization was set up. It was a new group, but the participants were well known to the LL coordinators. The LL meetings started in November 2021 and ended in January 2023. So far, there were three LL meetings. An Action Lab consisting of BS and the LL coordinators was initiated from the LL. Other actions were implemented by FiBL. All these actions were communicated and evaluated in the LL.

The strategy tested in the Living Lab

During the first LL meeting three domains of activities were decided: (a) monitor / document AMU on the piglet / pig farm, (b) What about AMU in organic pork in other countries? (c) collaboration of organic farmers with vets. Based on the domains of activities identified, we developed jointly a strategy to reduce AMU in the organic pork sector:

- (a) analyzing existing data about AMU with a focus on organic piglets / pigs – action performed by FiBL
- (b) discussing the potential of electric eartags to document AMU on the piglet / pig farm, the tool was already in use by one of the pig traders – action performed by FiBL
- (c) to interview organic pig producers across Europe on how they document AMU – action performed by FiBL
- (d) develop a training for vets about organic farming. Including the knowledge of farmers, FiBL and vets for a suiting syllabus – Action lab of BS and FiBL

The roadmap to implementation

During the process the following points were experienced:

- To establish the LL, the existing network of the organic advisors at FiBL was crucial. They were able to bring people from different contexts together
- There was a very clear task / challenge at the beginning of the LL process. The challenge has been widely discussed in the sector and a pressure to improve the situation, e. g. increase the transparency about AMU and collaboration between breeders and finishers in the Swiss organic pork sector
- Vets are missing knowledge about organic farming
- The LL brought together a group of motivated peoples, some with quite similar visions and perspectives.
- During the LL, animal welfare was a topic intensively discussed. It resulted in the invitation of a philosopher and ethicists to give a talk at the annual meeting of the association of the organic pig producers. The talk was about the societal discussion on animal husbandry, animal welfare and how this discussion affects farmers



The impact created by the Living Lab

AMU: The most important outcome of the Living Lab in Swiss organic pig farming is that there is a better understanding of where AMU takes place: the main leverage point to reduce AMU in organic pig production is the weaning period. Even though there are clear instruction on how to design this period in organic farming, the data revealed, that the implementation on the different farms is not done properly.

Animal health: Based on this result, FiBL, the organic farmers association and the Swiss organic pork producers will start with different activities to improve the piglet management during weaning, e.g. a technical leaflet, a learning video and farmer stable schools.

Furthermore, we inspired a cooperation between organic dairy and organic pig farmers with the aim to exchange about AMU based on data collection, monitoring but also dialog.

Establish the training for vets about the particularities of veterinary action on organic livestock farms will improve the collaboration between farmers and vet.

Costs and savings: Awareness have been created about the costs and savings related to implementing actions (e.g. increase of labour, time).



Challenges

- Organizing LL in a pandemic situation
- Maintain the motivation to participate in the LL during a challenging situation on the organic pork market.
- Selecting measures that can realistically be implemented, e.g. the electronic earmark to document AMU in real time was not ready to use during the course of the project.
- Get the attention of the pig producers, even though they face a big challenge of changing the feeding regime at the same time.

Successes

- Relevant tasks / questions as a starting point for the LL.
- The diversity of actors involved in the Living Lab and the different perspectives.
- The support of members in the Living Lab to conduct the training for vets.
- The access to data about AMU in the organic sector and the connected option to identify leverage points for the reduction.
- The cooperation in the LL was inspiring.

The Living Lab about the Swiss organic pork sector is an example of how the use of antimicrobials can be reduced through a combination of measures e.g. establish a knowledge base among the different stakeholders e.g. the identification of leverage points. Based on the learnings during roadmap, trainings for farmers and vets were designed.

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