
FEFAC VISION ON SUSTAINABILITY

A responsible and resource-efficient feed industry

The nutritional knowledge provided by the feed industry is an asset for sustainable livestock¹ production.

Defining mainstream sustainable production for the future requires a common approach within the livestock chain as well as harmonized measurement rules and tools. This is the roadmap defined by FEFAC, in order to enable a consistent identification of local priorities.

FEFAC vision on animal feed industry:

A knowledge driven, reliable partner of a competitive livestock sector

FEFAC vision on feed safety management:

Sharing responsibility for feed safety along the chain

FEFAC vision on animal nutrition:

A multifunctional science, delivering solutions to a sustainable livestock sector

FEFAC vision on sustainability:

A responsible and resource-efficient feed industry

¹ Livestock is meant here for food producing land & aquatic animals

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Context

Animal feed is an intermediate product in the food chain, but it nevertheless forms a key component in the road towards more sustainable livestock production in the EU. In most livestock farming systems, animal feeding carries a significant share of the farmer's costs as well as the environmental footprint of the end-product; however this only emphasises the feed industry's role in finding solutions. In the pursuit of improved sustainability in economic, environmental and societal sense, all livestock production systems allow for improvements at this stage. There is no doubt animal products will remain part of the average European consumer diet and the clear expectation is that the demand will in fact increase in parts of the world where the disposable income is rising. In a world with increasing demand and limited resources, livestock production must be sustainable.

FEFAC's vision of sustainability is comprehensive, entailing a competitive, resource-efficient and responsible feed industry supplying safe feed to a competitive EU livestock sector. Most importantly, FEFAC is convinced a profitable business environment is a precondition to striving for more sustainability. The EU feed industry is transparently developing and presenting the tools that allow for improved sustainability. The EU strategic policies to stimulate a resource-efficient Europe, circular economies and a single market for green products build on the feed industry's core principles. It is thanks to the advanced knowledge in the field of animal nutrition and animal feed materials that the feed industry is able to make the most sustainable use of resources resulting from other primary processes, allowing for resource-efficiency in both the feed and food chain. Another element in fostering sustainable livestock production systems is assuring the feed materials were produced responsibly.

Challenges / complexity / trade-offs

Increased demand for land resources globally for all the different purposes has put pressure on agricultural production for human consumption, making the need to strive for increased feed efficiency and decreased reliance on primary products nothing less than a necessity. In addition, the effects of climate change will continue to challenge the way sustainable, economically viable livestock production can prosper. It's a challenge where animal nutrition and feed manufacturing can provide solutions, remembering though food chain sustainability will always be assessed at the level of finished animal products.

Unlike "safe feed", defining a "sustainable livestock industry" is a much more complex matter, which needs to take into account specificities related to respective markets and countries and ultimately, improvements and achievements should be reported in common metrics. FEFAC believes the efforts that are put into increasing EU supply chain sustainability should also be viewed in the light of overall improvements at farm level in exporting countries. Creating an EU-specific, high-end sustainability segment in a fragmented market will not bring solutions to the issue of global resource depletion and may set the level of ambition too high for many agricultural producers to be an appealing incentive. Already there are wide differences both up and down the supply chain and geographically. FEFAC therefore favours, and strives to achieve, a gradual and continuous improvement of agricultural standards in a global perspective which maintains natural capital and long-term capacity of production. In addition, FEFAC considers new applications developed through innovation and scientific advancements to only help to stimulation of sustainability.

Sustainability is by definition a dynamic concept and will change as societal demands evolve. This means the food chain's approach towards sustainability will also change over time, as new insights are gained. Societal demands for example can cause trade-offs in the light of

feed efficiency, as consumer demand for slower growing animals has increased. Similarly its targets will evolve as greater clarity and understanding is achieved of what is possible.

There are also limits to sustainability. The push to reduce waste accumulation in other processing industries should never come at the expense of feed and food safety. Besides legal principles, it needs to be accepted from a sustainable livestock sector that only feed ingredients that qualify with high safety standards are eligible for valorisation.

Focus areas

FEFAC's commitment to sustainability is currently embodied in its objective to develop and publicise the tools that will allow the feed and food chain to assess and improve its performance. When claims are made in the field of delivering solutions, it is important they are the result of common metrics, fair competition and a level playing field. To allow for a transparent and independent approach in the development of these measurement tools, FEFAC searches for an external dimension by directly involving credible institutions such as the FAO, the ITC (International Trade Center) and the European Commission. FEFAC has three focus areas to underpin the sustainability contribution of a responsible and resource-efficient feed industry across all different types of livestock production systems.

Resource efficiency

Resource efficiency lies at the basis of the feed industry and is essentially its reason of existence. The evolution of the strongly reduced feed conversion rate over the past decades, whilst maintaining production, illustrates that livestock farming has increasingly needed less input to achieve the same result. The feed conversion rate is therefore a key indicator of resource efficiency, however there is a need for common metrics that can help calculate a broader scope of resource efficiency indicators where local market and environmental conditions are taken into account. Depending on different factors, it can for example be argued that diets based on feed ingredients with low environmental footprints (e.g. co-products) are more sustainable than diets based on land-requiring feed ingredients (e.g. grains), even though the latter are more efficient from a nutritional perspective.

The development of more detailed resource efficiency indicators would allow for an approach that takes better into account the nutrient valorisation capacity of feed manufacturers. Throughout the food chain, the feed industry provides solutions for agricultural products resources that are not or no longer destined to human consumption. The feed industry valorises the barley and wheat with inadequate protein levels, the resulting co-products like sugarbeet pulp, oilseed meals and brewer's grains at primary processing level and the foodstuffs not meeting cosmetic standards ("former foodstuffs") at food manufacturing level. It is in this light that the animal feed solution to these types of resources is regarded as the most sustainable alternative after human consumption in the different types of food use pyramids, as well as a means to reduce food waste.

Responsible supply

To meet the demand for feed, the EU feed industry has needed to import feed materials from outside the EU, especially as regards protein-rich feed materials. Stakeholder scrutiny from the downstream part of the supply chain has increased the focus on delivering responsibly produced products, with soy as the first point of interest. The outright exclusion of feed ingredients like soy is not beneficial to a sustainable livestock sector. This will not contribute to the development of responsible production in exporting countries and is oblivious to the feed efficiency of soybean meal. However in order to bring transparency to a global commodity market, FEFAC has taken steps to provide a solution for the mainstream market delivery of responsible soy. In August 2015, FEFAC published the [Soy Sourcing Guidelines](#), a professional recommendation subject to voluntary uptake for operators who wish to handle responsible soy. The Guidelines define the baseline, entry-level requirements as regards the

feed industry's expectation of responsible soy. Existing responsible soy programmes can benchmark their standard against the FEFAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines via the customized ITC benchmark tool in order to verify their compliance.

The Guidelines are subject to volume-based continuous improvement, marking long term objectives. Cooperation from upstream and downstream partners will be very important to realise a mainstream market transition into physical trade of responsible soy.

After making significant advancements with hotspots like soy, FEFAC will move to a comprehensive approach towards responsible supply of other feed ingredients.

Environmental footprinting

To allow for feed solutions to objectively participate in the environmental footprint of animal products, a trustworthy and transparent reporting framework is required. FEFAC is involved in several projects to come to a harmonised methodology to calculate the life cycle assessment (LCA) performance of feed products. At global level, FEFAC is a member of the Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance partnership (LEAP), coordinated by the FAO, and contributed to the publication of the FAO/LEAP Feed LCA Guidelines in 2015. At EU level, FEFAC contributes to the Feed Pilot as part of the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) project. The PEF, launched by the European Commission, aims to stimulate the development of a single market of green products. This project can in its turn take advantage of a global database of feed ingredients provided by the Global Feed LCA Institute (GFLI), founded by FEFAC. As many feed ingredients are globally used and traded, it makes sense to take an international approach and base environmental footprinting on the same methodology and LCA calculations. In addition, the GFLI will enable benchmarking and stimulate market differentiation.

The science of environmental footprinting in the food chain is still going through a process of maturation, leading to complexities when it comes to communicating environmental footprint information. The gathered global expertise on LCA methodologies will help with filling scientific gaps and coming to robust calculations and conclusions valuable to both livestock supply chains and policy developers.

The road to 2030

The efforts made in the light of sustainability today are essentially aimed at the future. FEFAC will respond to societal demands and assist its members in accommodating market demand. FEFAC's initial role will be to provide, improve and communicate the tools which can be utilised by stakeholders and market players to increase sustainability, altogether making it easier to engage with livestock farmers and other downstream partners. Establishing a common chain vision will become a pre-requisite and FEFAC continues to support this by defining measurement rules and developing tools. The feed industry's innovative capacities to increase resource efficiency and minimise emissions will continue and more co-products will be made suitable for animal feed valorisation.

The future sustainability of livestock production will also depend on securing the strategic long term feed material supply. Critical mineral resources such as phosphates will receive increased attention from the food supply chain as their availability will decrease, which will leave the EU open to a risky geopolitical dimension that can threaten the economic sustainability of its livestock sector.

Within the European feed industry itself the topic of sustainability will be of dynamic nature. The focus areas are different depending on the local conditions. FEFAC will actively facilitate awareness raising, training and education on sustainability within its membership, while respecting their level of ambition reflecting regional priorities.

Today's sustainability objectives will inevitably evolve as the challenges are resolved and FEFAC's vision is to be constantly anticipating the next stage with solutions available.