Establishment of a partnership as a means of transferring animal welfare standards into dairy farms in Chile

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In 2013 Chile launched a regulation on animal welfare during industrialized production, commercialization, and maintenance in other types of enclosures (Decreto Nº29). This regulation, based on the OIE welfare strategy, directly affects dairy farms, which due to the climatic and geographic conditions of Chile are diverse in terms of number of cows, production systems, and risk factors for animal welfare.

The same year the Chilean Dairy Consortium formed an animal welfare technical committee in order to provide a link between animal welfare researcher’s, the public sector (animal welfare authority), and producers. The committee is currently formed by academics from three Universities, a researcher from the public sector (INIA), a representative from the authority (SAG) and representatives from the Dairy Consortium. During the last three years this committee conducted an extension project that aimed to transfer knowledge, allowing introduction of the new regulation and reduction of welfare problems at dairy farms.

In first place a welfare assessment protocol, based on international indicators and local regulation, was developed and applied in order to diagnose the welfare situation of diverse dairy farms along the country. Afterwards, results were shared with producers in order to jointly define the main welfare issues, and establish the implementation of specific intervention strategies. The main welfare issues detected were udder health, lameness, pain associated to husbandry procedures, and thermal (heat) stress. Each issue was addressed through technical talks, development of material (bulletins, manuals and videos), practical demonstrations on farm, and capacity building of dairy farms advisers. At the end of the project the welfare assessment protocol was again applied, and an improvement in the welfare conditions was observed. The formation of a partnership between the academy, public sector and dairy producers through their consortium enabled the transference of animal welfare standards and sensitization of producer on this topic.

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