

Title: The H2020 TechCare project (2020-2024) has started!

A €5.7 million research project involving nine countries – from Scandinavia to the Middle East – is aiming to revolutionise the use of precision technology in sheep and goat farming for welfare management.

Led by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) in Scotland, it will be the biggest study of its kind for small ruminants and will focus on improving management of welfare as well as performance.

The four-year project, which started on 1st September 2020, has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and will assess the usefulness of different Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) approaches for sheep and goats welfare management by, as a first step, running workshops and discussion groups with members of the industry, including farmers, transporters, abattoirs, as well as consumers and welfare associations.

A selection of innovative technologies, which could include wearable sensors and virtual fencing, will be tested on demonstration farms in Scotland, Norway, France, Italy, and Israel, before being deployed on commercial farms in Ireland, Spain, Greece, France and Romania, to ultimately create welfare alerting systems for sheep and goats farmers.

Dr Claire Morgan-Davies, who is leading the project, said: "Many of the challenges to the welfare of sheep and goats in Europe – including a lack of supervision, provision of feed, risk of predation, and long-distance transport to slaughter – arise from the constraints imposed by the harsh climatic and geographic conditions in which they are often reared.

"However, a PLF approach could help to improve welfare management and so mitigate the impact of these welfare risks for the benefit of sheep and goat farmers around the world."

In addition to SRUC, 18 other partners from eight other countries – Ireland, Norway, Spain, Italy, France, Romania, Greece and Israel – are involved, covering meat sheep, dairy sheep and dairy goat production.

The small ruminant population (sheep and goats) of the EU in 2015 was approximately 98 million animals, of which 87 per cent were sheep, while there are approximately 2.4 million and 670,000 additional animals in Norway and Israel respectively. Small ruminants represent 30% of all livestock reared in Europe.

The project team held its first consortium meeting online at the end of September, to comply with the current restrictions. The first stakeholders' workshops in the project are scheduled to take place this winter in the different partners' countries, so do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to take part.

To find out more, contact the coordinator Dr Claire Morgan-Davies (Claire.morgan-davies@sruc.ac.uk) or visit the [cordis website](#). A project website and social media accounts will be set up soon.