



Integrating innovative **TECH**nologies along the value Chain
to improve small ruminant welf**ARE** management

Press release 9

The TechCare project goes South in Spain!

TechCare is a European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation project (grant no. 802050), involving nine countries – from Scandinavia to the Middle East –aiming to revolutionise the use of precision technologies in sheep and goat farming. Led by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), TechCare is the biggest study of its kind for small ruminants and is focusing on improving management of welfare using digital technologies.

TechCare (innovative **TECH**nologies along the value Chain to improve small ruminant welfare management) held its annual meeting in Toro, Spain, over 2 days, followed by 2 more days of visits of sheep farms.

TechCare is an innovative action project financed by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme, grant no. 862050). Up to 50 people from the 19 consortium partners all met in Toro (Spain) on the 19th and 20th February 2024. Over the two days, partners from the UK (MRI, Breedr), France (IDELE, CNBL, INRAe, Agdatahub), Italy (AGRIS, EAAP, Abinsula), Israel (ARO, Spark), Norway (NIBIO), Spain (UAB, Oviaragon), Greece (ELGO-DIMITRA), Ireland (Teagasc) and Romania (BUAS), led by SRUC (UK), discussed the progress of the project over the last 3 years, and the future plans for the next 2 years. Four advisory members (from Spain and the UK) also joined in the discussion (three of them via Zoom) and gave their feedback to the project team. The annual meeting had been organised locally by the Spanish partners from UAB. The project is progressing well, with the welfare issues in small ruminant systems having been prioritised by stakeholders at the start of the project, followed by an inventory of potential precision livestock farming (PLF) tools that could help monitor or manage these welfare issues. Trials and prototyping of some of the identified PLF tools are near completion on pilot farms and on experimental farms, and data exchanges and manipulation, to develop early warning systems, are now ongoing. Deployment and further testing of the retained tools are being set up on commercial farms in Europe (Ireland, France, Romania, Greece and Spain). Discussions and feedback were essential at this stage, and it was extremely beneficial to meet once again in person to ensure the whole consortium is ready for the final steps of the project, due to finish in August 2025.

Following the annual meeting, some of the consortium also had the opportunity to visit 3 of the Spanish commercial farms involved in the deployment of the tested tools: HCM dairy sheep farm in Villavendiamo, with 800 ewes, FGG dairy sheep farm in Villafranca de Duero, with 1500 ewes and





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Oviaragon large lamb feedlot in Terror, to see in-situ the stage of advancement of the trials, how the tools had been installed, and how welfare assessments could be conducted. This also led to many practical discussions between the farmers and the consortium partners. Overall, a very fruitful meeting for the project in a very sunny Spain, and the wonderful hospitality of our Spanish colleagues!

Dr Claire Morgan-Davies, SRUC, TechCare coordinator

Website: www.techcare-project.eu

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TechCare partners in Toro



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Some of the TechCare partners during the visit to FGG ovino dairy farm

