Press Release

SEEDING THE FUTURE SINCE 1856

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KWS expects certification of sustainable feeding concept for pigs

The federally funded 6-R concept[1] has provided scientific proof that providing rye-rich feed to pigs both promotes animal health and leads to a significant reduction in CO_2 emissions in livestock farming. KWS expects certification next year of the resulting sustainable feeding concept – a first with a signal effect for the entire industry.

Livestock farming that promotes animal welfare and health, and the sustainable production of food are a social requirement. The 6-R concept funded by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), which KWS supported as an industrial partner, demonstrated the positive contribution that a change in animal feed alone can make to both areas. "If you look at the areas of feed cultivation, livestock farming and slaughter, around 60 percent of harmful CO_2 emissions result from pork from feeding," says Jürgen Leitzke, Head of the Cereals Business Unit at KWS. "With the rye-rich feeding of pigs, KWS has developed a forward-looking concept for emission-reduced feeding together with the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover. This is unique in the industry." It has been proven scientifically that feeding pigs a rye-rich diet can reduce CO_2 emissions by around 20 to 30 percent up until slaughter. This is due to the resource-efficient agricultural properties of the crop. KWS expects official ISO 14064-2 certification of this feeding concept next year.

KWS is accompanied by partners: On the industry side by market leaders in the meat industry and by renowned feed producers[2]. Scientific data, analyses, and further development of the 6-R concept as part of the certification process are provided by the University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover (Prof. Christian Visscher) and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück (Prof. Heiner Westendarp). As a breeding company, KWS developed the procedure for the sought-after certification together with CarbonStack, and is responsible for driving the overall project forward. Farmers should receive certification for implementing the sustainable feeding with the aim that it will also pay off for them directly in the future through the collaboration with the industry.

"Sustainable agriculture has to offer real added value for farmers," says Dr. Peter Hofmann, Executive Board member at KWS and also responsible for the Cereals Business Unit. "We ensure that through our seed, which is becoming increasingly higher performing, efficient and healthy, but also by driving forward projects such as the certification of sustainable feeding concepts with the involvement of important industry partners. We thus improve transparency and provide the basis for accurate measurement of emission savings."

Stefan Büngener-Schröder from Futterallianz Nordwest also affirms that: "We are very interested in more sustainable agriculture and animal production, and see certification as an industry initiative that offers feasible solutions for the future. Farmers who rely on sustainable feeding concepts should also benefit directly from that in the future. That is also our goal."

Hybrid rye – potential for greater sustainability

The fact that rye – and oilseed rape as a source of protein – are regional products, and that farmers can use them to grow their own feedstuff significantly contributes to reducing emissions in animal feed. Another factor that contributes to conserving resources is that hybrid rye needs less water than other types of cereal, and requires significantly less fertilizer and pesticide since it generally exhibits good plant health. A sustainability study concludes that hybrid rye produces about 70 kg of CO_2 per ton of crop yield and hence about 20 percent less than, for example, wheat, which is otherwise used in pig feed. The 6-R concept and accompanying practical studies also show the positive effects of rye-rich feeding on animal health: The salmonella contamination at fattening farms can be lowered by up to 30 percent and the use of medication reduced, the pigs have improved gut health, and there is evidence that the fiber in rye leads to improved and calmer animal behavior.

The European Green Deal and the Farm-to-Fork strategy set clear environmental and climate protection targets for agriculture in Europe. Emission-reduced pig feeding makes an important contribution to safeguarding livestock farming in Germany and Europe, and to reducing the environmental footprint of food production. Supporting sustainable nutrition is part of the KWS 2030 Sustainability Ambition, in which the company has set ambitious, measurable targets for itself to deliver solutions for sustainable farming into the future.

[1]: 6-R: “Regionale Renaissance von Roggen und Raps zur Reduktion von Problemen in Pflanzenbau und Tierproduktion durch Reevaluation der Inhaltsstoffe und deren gezielte Nutzung zur Förderung des Umwelt-, Tier- und Verbraucherschutzes” (“Regional renaissance of rye and oilseed rape to reduce problems in crop and livestock production through the reevaluation of substances and their systematic use to support environmental, animal and consumer protection”). The 6-R concept was mainly developed by Prof. Josef Kamphues (University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover) and is now managed by the working group led by Prof. Christian Visscher, with Dr. Gickel and Dr. Wilke.

[2]: Futterallianz Nordwest (GS agri with Fleming & Wendeln); RAISA eG Raiffeisen Kraftfutterwerk Mittelweser Heide GmbH; Tönnies Lebensmittel GmbH & Co. KG; Brand Qualitätsfleisch GmbH & Co. KG, and others.

About KWS

KWS is one of the world's leading plant breeding companies. Over 5,000 employees* in more than 70 countries generated net sales of around $1,94 billion in the fiscal year 2022/2023. A company with a tradition of family ownership, KWS has operated independently for 165 years. It focuses on plant breeding and the production and sale of seed for corn, sugarbeet, cereals, vegetables, oilseed rape and sunflower. KWS uses leading-edge plant breeding methods to continuously improve yield for farmers and plants' resistance to diseases, pests and abiotic stress. To that end, the company invested more than $320 million last fiscal year in research and development.
*excl. seasonal workforce

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Contact:

Dr. Andreas von Felde
Lead Global Product Management Feed Cereal
Mobil +49-(0)151/18855322
andreas.vonfelde@kws.com

Dr. Imke Hering
Manager Strategic Projects
Mobil +49-(0)15120347360
imke.hering@kws.com

Press contact:

Britta Weiland
Corporate Communications
Mobil +49-151-18855950
britta.weiland@kws.com

KWS SAAT SE & Co. KGaA
www.kws.de