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PPILOW Newsletter - Issue 9

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PPILOW

Poultry and Pig Low-input and Organic
production systems' Welfare



PPILOW, a European project dedicated to Welfare in Poultry and Pig Low-input outdoor and Organic production systems (2019-2024)

Newsletter - Issue 9

April 2024



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Summary

Editorial - by Anne Collin (INRAE)	2
Attend the seminar on early poultry management levers on the 21st of May! – by Roos Molenaar (WUR)	3
PPILOW – Eurogroup for Animals meeting - by Anne Collin (INRAE)	3
PPILOW Workshop at the 28th International Poultry Conference – Helen Pluschke, Daniela Werner (Thuenen)	3
PPILOW poster by Helen Pluschke awarded prize! – Daniela Werner (Thuenen)	5
Great success for the webinar on non-castrated male pigs in France! – by Sarah Lombard (ITAB)	5
PPILOW stakeholder workshop examined business opportunities – by Jarkko Niemi, Minna Väre (LUKE), Petra Thobe (Thuenen) and Anne Collin (INRAE)	6
Webinar on on-farm hatching – by Angélique Travel, Yann Guyot (ACTA/ITAVI) and Anne Collin (INRAE)	7
New people in the PPILOW project: Marine Perard, Koen Riep, Jeroen Imholz	8
Coming and past events	9

Editorial - by Anne Collin (INRAE)

Poultry and Pig welfare is more than ever in the scope of societal interest at the beginning of 2024, yet in the European context of the last 2-year marketing issues due to inflation representing a heavy burden for organic and low-input livestock productions. Among the latest events related to Animal Welfare, January saw the birth of a new European Commission co-funded initiative, the European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare (EUPAHW)* led by Ghent University. The objective of this partnership is to control infectious animal diseases, and to promote animal welfare in animal production in a One Health and One Welfare approach for full societal impact. Recently, the PPILOW consortium triggered the dissemination of its activities and results towards stakeholders through various events: the EU-New-Zealand online meeting (7 February), the ClearFarm project final event in Brussels (14 February), the EU Organic ambassadors meeting (19 March), the Bioland Conference (28 February). A specific meeting with Eurogroup for Animals on the 22nd of February also allowed to share the project findings with the representatives of the Animal Welfare European Associations. Furthermore, the partners involved in the construction of PPILOW business models worked together with representatives of practitioners, NGOs and policy makers in a specific workshop in Brussels held on the 7th of March. Within this Newsletter, you will find more information about several of these meetings, the PPILOW webinars built-up by PPILOW partners on on-farm hatching and on non-castrated male pigs, as well as presentations of the PPILOW new collaborators we had the pleasure to welcome within the last months. At last, you will find here the announcement of the coming PPILOW events where you can learn more about PPILOW innovations for low-input outdoor and organic pigs and poultry!

*The European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare has been co-funded by the European Commission

Attend the seminar on early poultry management levers on the 21st of May! – by Roos Molenaar (WUR)

To transfer the knowledge gained and solutions found within the PPILOW project, a seminar will be organized about the studies performed on early life strategies and management in laying hens and slow-growing broilers to improve animal health, welfare and resilience. Presentations will be amongst others about green light and thermal manipulation during incubation, on-farm hatching, early life strategies and free-range enrichment. The moderator during this interesting day is Prof. Dr. Bas Rodenburg from the UU, the Netherlands. The seminar will be organized at the Wageningen Campus, the Netherlands, on Tuesday May 21 from 1:00 till 5:30 pm. You can register [via this link](#). For more details read the [flyer](#).

PPILOW – Eurogroup for Animals meeting - by Anne Collin (INRAE)

The PPILOW consortium was proactive to facilitate the transfer of scientific-based knowledge to NGOs through a specific online meeting held on the 22nd of February in the afternoon. A plenary session aimed at presenting the PPILOW project and its multiactor approach with a communication prepared by Anne Collin (INRAE) and Monica Coletta (AIAB), followed by a presentation on the issues and levers for welfare improvements in low-input outdoor and organic pig and poultry productions by J. Niemi (Luke). Then several PPILOW results were presented during a technical session:

- “PIGLOW and EBENE: Development and on farm testing of apps for animal welfare self-assessments” by Evelien Graat (ILVO)
- “How to avoid feather pecking in non-beak-trimmed hens?” by Bas Rodenburg (Utrecht University)
- “Evaluation of performance and economy of dual-purpose genotypes as an alternative to the elimination of one-day old male layer chicks” by Maxime Reverchon (SYSAAF) and Petra Thobe (Thuenen Institute)
- “Improving the robustness of laying hens and piglets against parasitic and bacterial infections” by Marina Spinu (USAMV Cluj Napoca)

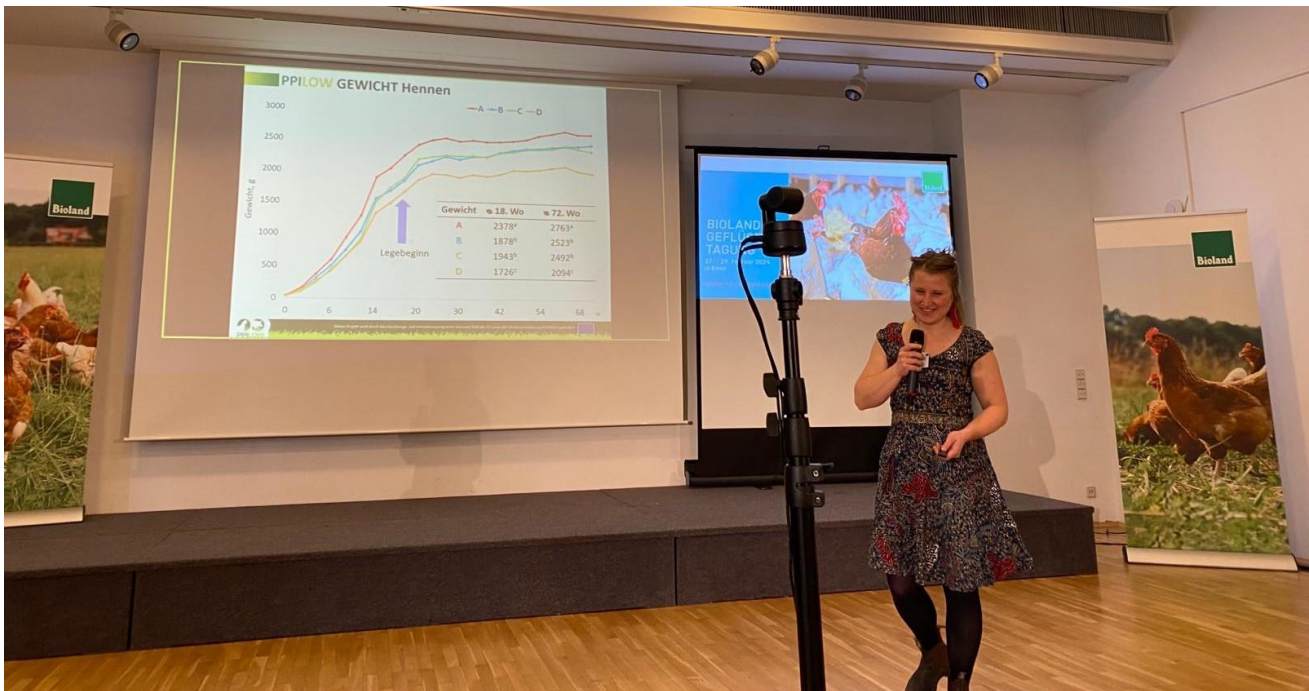
Discussions between PPILOW partners and the representatives of European Animal Welfare NGOs followed the presentations and particularly focussed on the accessibility of the cited scientific articles and tools, the potential synergies of PPILOW with other European projects, among which the recently-launched EUPAHW, and the potential of dual-purpose breeds in Europe as an alternative to the elimination of layer male chicks.

PPILOW Workshop at the 28th International Poultry Conference – Helen Pluschke, Daniela Werner (Thuenen)



Bioland is the biggest organic farming association in Germany. Founded in the 1970`s, it has nearly 8.700 members and 1.400 partners in production, trade and gastronomy. Consulting and knowledge transfer are one of their key activities including annual conferences focusing on specific farm animal species. This year`s International Poultry Conference was held from the 27th to the 29th of February in Bonn and was organized in cooperation with the Thuenen-Institute for Organic Farming. About 80 participants from farmers, advisors, breeding, feeding and meat processing companies as well as researchers came together under the motto "Turning appreciation back into

added value". The programme included lecture blocks, best-practice reports and discussion panels covering themes from recent research on dual-purpose chicken, circular economy and animal welfare. Field trips to Bioland member farms, a hatchery and an online retailer of poultry supplies were also part of the three-day conference. A field trip to the pits of Europe's formerly largest brown coal mine Hambach (which is no longer in operation) left a lasting impression on the participants. The second day of the conference was divided into parallel presentation sessions. The PPILOW workshop block started with Helen Pluschke and Petra Thobe presenting results of an on-station trial, the practical application and the economic evaluation of certain dual-purpose chickens.



During the discussion it became clear that creative ways to do economic analysis of dual-purpose poultry are needed and the optimization of the feeding regime of dual-purpose poultry should be the focus of future research. Claire Bonnefous presented results on the improvement of range use in broilers from the PPILOW project. This was followed by the presentation of results on range use and predator losses in broilers from a Thuenen-Institute project by Severin Hübner. The two presentations shed light on this topic from two different project perspectives. Saskia Kliphuis (Utrecht University) presented results from the PPILOW concerning different lighting regimes during incubation and feeding of insect larvae and their influence on fearfulness and feather pecking in the rearing period of laying hens. During the discussion it became clear that some of the tested lighting regimes in this study would not be applicable for Bioland certified hatcheries and/or farmers as the applicable regulations are more detailed here (e.g. daylight during incubation). Rikke Brodsgaard Kjaerup (University of Aarhus) closed the session with her presentation on the use of alternative plants for deworming laying hens which especially found interest in feed manufacturers, who wanted to know which plant extracts could be used in the production of ready-mixed compound feed. Overall, the feedback concerning the PPILOW block was positive as it highlighted the importance of collaborative research and gave the audience insights into the current focus of European research in the organic poultry sector. With guest speakers from France, Denmark and the Netherlands, the international part of the conference, which had become somewhat stagnant in recent years, was successfully revived. A video recap of the conference can be found [here!](#)



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PPILOW poster by Helen Pluschke awarded prize! – Daniela Werner (Thuenen)



Helen Pluschke received the prize for pioneering research for her PPILOW-Poster on dual-purpose poultry presented at the 17th Scientific Conference on Organic Farming in Giessen, Germany. The poster presented the concept of NPGs within the PPILOW project and the results of on-farm trials of fattening males of a novel dual-purpose genotype conducted in Germany and France. The results presented were a collaboration between ITAB and Thuenen Institute. The Scientific Conference on Organic Farming (WITA) is the leading German conference on organic farming research and was held at the Justus Liebig University of Giessen from 5-8 March.

Great success for the webinar on non-castrated male pigs in France! – by Sarah Lombard (ITAB)

On the 11th of March, a webinar on rearing non-castrated male pigs and valorizing the meat from boar-tainted carcasses was organized in France in collaboration with the European project PPILOW and the French project FARINELLI. Six presentations were achieved during the webinar. The first one focused on the context of organic pig production and on the reasons for focusing on rearing non-castrated pigs. Then, the technical and economic issues for valorizing the meat from non-castrated male pigs and the associated perspectives were presented. The results from a sensory analysis of products including varying amounts of fat from boar-tainted carcasses were also shown. Some good farming practices for non-castrated males in organic farming related to breeding, feeding, age at slaughter, straw management... were assessed in the project. Their effects on the technical

performances of the pigs and on the composition and quality of carcasses (weight, lean meat percentage) and pork, including boar taint and sensory traits, were described. To conclude, the feedback from a farmer and the manager of the “Porganic” INRAE experimental facility for organic, non-castrated pigs was provided to the participants to sum up the main recommendations to consider for rearing non-castrated male pigs. Around 80 people were connected during the webinar. Participants were mainly farmers (22%), advisors (20%), researchers (14%), students, suppliers, vets, ... Participants were interested in the subject and active in the chat. Conclusions are that more research is needed on this topic, as some questions such as how to rear non-castrated male pigs from local or rustic breeds have not been considered yet. This webinar will soon be available in replay with English subtitles on this website : [Alternatives à la castration des porcs bio - Projet CASDAR Farinelli \(produire-bio.fr\)](https://produire-bio.fr).

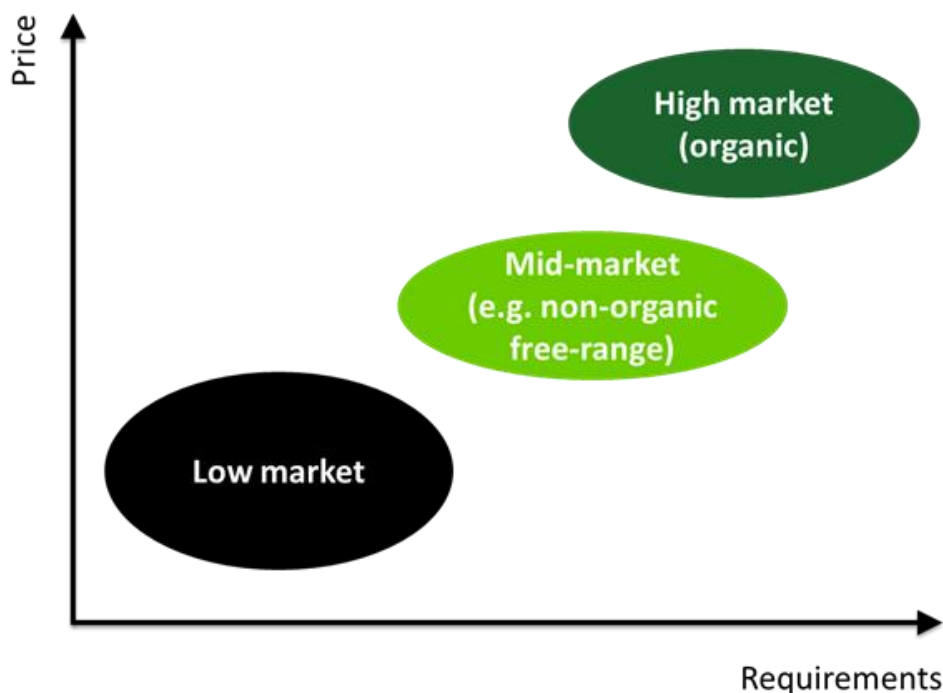


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PPILOW stakeholder workshop examined business opportunities – by Jarkko Niemi, Minna Väre (LUKE), Petra Thobe (Thuenen) and Anne Collin (INRAE)

When pig and poultry farmers are considering to improve animal welfare, it is essential that the planned improvements are economically viable. Low-input outdoor and organic farming systems are so-called mid-market and high market systems, which enable farmers to receive a price premium for their production. Hence, the PPILOW project has been developing business models that could be used to valorize high welfare in low-input outdoor and organic farming systems. A PPILOW stakeholder workshop was organized in Brussels at the beginning of March. The aim of the workshop was to examine the most critical features of value chains and the most urgent actions needed to strengthen low-input outdoor and organic pig and poultry production in Europe. The participants discussed how animal welfare could be turned into business value and what policy and market actions would be critical to enable welfare improvements. The workshop focused on practices such as rearing entire male pigs and dual-purpose poultry breeds that have been experimented in PPILOW. The workshop identified measures that are pertinent to promote high welfare low-input outdoor and organic farming systems. It was considered important to ensure a level playing field across Europe. As low-input

outdoor and organic farms are few in number and the businesses are often small scale, it was considered important to ensure that the markets operate transparently and that unfair trading practices and excessive price margins in the value chain are prevented, for example through regulation. The participants also called for public awareness-raising and promotion measures among consumers. One of the examples was communication with restaurants to promote organic products. The group also discussed animal welfare assessments, the possibility of introducing a harmonized animal welfare label in the European market and sharing animal welfare information to consumers. These could be tools to valorize animal welfare improvements in consumer segments that are willing to pay for premium products, thus making the animal welfare improvements financially more attractive to farmers. Funding of welfare improvements on farms was also found to be an important issue. The common agricultural policy of the European Union Common agricultural policy could be an instrument to support local and small-scale high animal welfare farms to enter the markets.



Webinar on on-farm hatching – by Angélique Travel, Yann Guyot (ACTA/ITAVI) and Anne Collin (INRAE)

Hatching chicks directly on the farm is a concept that respects animal welfare and is gaining ground in Europe. The principle is to transport the eggs 3 days before hatching, so that the chicks are born on the farm without human intervention and have access to water and feed as soon as they hatch. On-farm hatching systems currently available in the field differ in terms of equipment layout and degree of automation. This new approach to rearing poultry enables us to secure the health and performance of the birds, while ensuring their well-being. On November 30, 2023, ITAVI, LIT Ouesterel and INRAE organized, with the support of Carnot FE2 and the PPILOW project, an exclusive webinar entirely dedicated to the practice of on-farm hatching. Attended by over 120 participants, the conference enabled researchers to present the results of ground-breaking trials revealing the concrete advantages of the on-farm hatching technique, in both conventional and free-range or organic rearing. Farmers were then able to testify of their experience with different systems they use to hatch their chicks. [Watch the replay of the webinar in French](#) (1H30).

New people in the PPILOW project: Marine Perard, Koen Riep, Jeroen Imholz

Marine Perard (INRAE, Assistant coordinator)



Marine Perard studied environmental engineering at the French engineering school Ecole des Mines d'Alès. She spent the last year of her studies at Cranfield University (UK), and obtained a Master's Degree in Environmental Management for Business. Driven by her interest in agriculture and animals, she joined INRAE at the beginning of 2024, supporting the coordination of the action "Animal welfare and sustainability in livestock systems" of the recently European Union co-funded European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare led by Ghent University. She is now joining the PPILOW consortium to contribute to its coordination.

Koen Riep (Master student at Utrecht University veterinary medicine)

After having studied veterinary medicine (bachelor and masters) at Utrecht University for seven years, Koen started his final research project at the division of Animals in Science and Society at the veterinary faculty of Utrecht University. His thesis will be covering feather pecking behaviour in laying hens at four Herenboeren farms in the Netherlands. The aim of his study is to reduce feather pecking and so improving chicken welfare, by using straw as environmental enrichment. A parallel study at the same farms, focusing on other welfare aspects, will be done by Jeroen Imholz. His research project is supervised by Saskia Kliphuis, a PhD candidate in the PPILOW project. Results of his project regarding chicken welfare and conclusions about feather pecking behaviour will be communicated soon!



Jeroen Imholz (Master student at Utrecht University veterinary medicine)



Jeroen has been studying veterinary medicine for a couple of years and has now started at the DWM department (animal welfare) where he will be finishing his master degree researching the influence of using straw as ground coverage on the footpad lesions, egg production and fear behaviour in laying hens at four different Herenboeren farms in the Netherlands. He is doing a parallel research with his co-student, Koen Riep, who is studying the plumage in the same laying hens. Both of them are being supervised by Saskia Kliphuis who is currently doing a PhD inside PPILOW.

Coming and past events

List of the upcoming and past events with PPILOW project partners attendance.

Event 	Date 	Location 	Partners 
The 10th International Mediterranean Symposium on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants	25– 27 April 2024	Istanbul, Turkey	USAMV
Seminar "Poultry research at ILVO"	16 May 2024	Melle, Belgium	ILVO
Webinar on early management levers	21 May 2024	Wageningen Campus, the Netherlands	WUR, UU, ITAVI, ILVO, INRAE
XVI European Poultry Conference 2024	24 -28 June 2024	Valencia, Spain	INRAE, SYSAAF, JUNIA, UNIPG, WU, UU
WAFL 2024	30 – 31 August 2024	Florence, Italy	ILVO, INRAE, JUNIA
75th EAAP Annual Meeting	1 – 5 September 2024	Florence, Italy	INRAE, UNIPG



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