THE FEED PERSPECTIVE FOR A SUCCESSFUL EU PROTEIN PLAN

Securing the protein supply is a crucial element for the European livestock sector to be able to deliver high quality and competitive animal products. As a result to a chain of events in recent decades and an absence of protein-oriented policy making, the European compound feed industry relies heavily on imports for the protein sources that deliver the most appropriate protein quality for European farm animals, which is usually soybean meal. FEFAC therefore fully welcomes the initiative to develop a European Protein Plan to boost the quality and suitability potential of 'home-grown' vegetable protein to increase the options for animal nutritionists, bearing in mind the balance on GHG & phosphate emissions and the nutritional profile may be less performant compared to imported soybean meal. FEFAC underlines that a compound feed manufacturer's decision to incorporate one protein source or another has its foundation in animal nutrition science, which is about linking up protein source attributes and farm animal nutritional requirements, together with minimising environmental impacts.

Protein-oriented policy making

The 'protein supply dimension' needs to be a factor of importance in the decision making process of all EU policies that have an effect on the strategic EU protein supply. The Protein Plan should strive for coherence between the following EU policies;

- Common Agricultural Policy
- Renewable Energy Directive
- COP 21 implementation
- Plant breeding technology policy
- Crop protection legislation

Young Animals / Fish

Very high protein concentrations (>60%) containing highly digestible and balanced amino acids;
Very low levels of anti-nutrients.

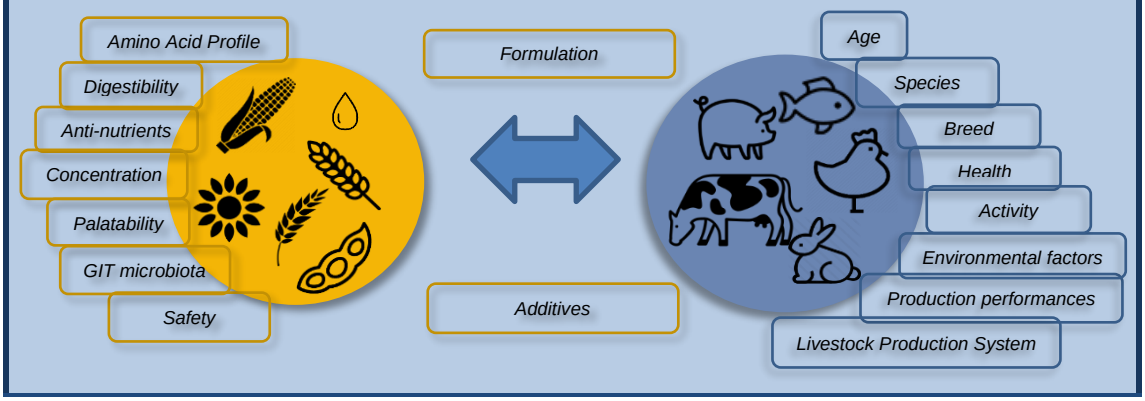
Ruminants

Moderate concentrations (27-44%) of ruminant specific digestible protein; Low levels of anti-nutrients.

Monogastric Adults

High-concentrations (30-48%) of monogastric specific digestible protein; Low levels of anti-nutrients.

PROTEIN SOURCE QUALITY VS FARM ANIMAL NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS



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THE ANIMAL NUTRITION DIMENSION IN SOURCING EUROPEAN PROTEIN

Recent evolutions in animal nutrition and feeding practices have already allowed for increased uptake of protein alternatives and improved efficiency in protein inclusion rates, also targeting a reduction in nitrogen excretion by livestock. For example, security margins to minimise the risk of nutrient deficiency in animals were reduced and new feeding systems (e.g. phase feeding) have allowed for feed composition to better correspond with the animal's development stage, particularly in pig production and dairy farming.

With the exception of ruminants (who can digest grass), animal nutrition requirements in protein are expressed in digestible essential amino acids. Protein sources are not universally interchangeable and for the different nutritional requirements different protein sources are needed. At the same time animal nutritionists consider all protein content in available feed materials of value, even when it's low (e.g. cereals). Synthetic amino acids can be used to off-set imperfections in the protein profile of these feed materials.

The European Protein Plan's success depends on the capacity to consider the animal nutrition potential of protein-containing feed materials and to foster research funding for innovation potential, regardless of whether the protein sources were intentionally 'created' for feed or whether they are valorised in feed as an initially 'unintended' co-product to another industrial process.

Out of the scope of the European Protein Plan

The European Protein Plan should remain focused on building close coordination between agricultural and animal nutrition science. The Protein Plan cannot deliver self-sufficiency, bring an end to imports of GM feed materials or reduce environmental impacts in soy-producing countries. FEFAC believes that misguided attempts to reshape the current supply and demand balance of protein sources through arbitrary policy and market management would adversely impact the access to raw materials available on the global market and the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU livestock sector.

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF PLANT BREEDING INNOVATION

Next to R&D in industrial processing to allow for the feed use of vegetable proteins, innovative plant breeding can have an important impact on reducing the European protein deficit. While European farmers will strongly benefit from improved protein yields, animal nutritionists would also be highly interested in (protein) crops with functional traits that improve the feed quality through improved nutritional profiles and reduced presence of anti-nutrients. In the 1980s, the breeding out of glucosinolates (a restricting anti-nutritional factor) from rapeseed meal was an essential factor to enable the feed use of rapeseed meal, which is now the most important European vegetable protein source. FEFAC calls on the legislators to develop a regulatory framework that provides legal certainty as well as the prospect of cost-efficient investments for the development of market solutions aimed at the animal nutrition sector.