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<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-press-and-journal-inverness-highlands-and-islands/20180120/282621738132531>

SRUC involved in three EU projects

We have a long history here at Kirkton & Auchtertyre of assessing the potential of technical improvements to improve the productivity and efficiency of hill farming systems. And as well as measuring the economic and performance benefits we also need to ensure that we assess the environmental impacts of any changes to management and any trade-offs there may be with other aspects of production on the farm.



This Scottish Government research (funded from the Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Services Division Strategic Research Programme) also provides us with a strong base from which to build other projects. And over the past year we have been very successful in winning three European projects, all with a focus on improving livestock system sustainability.

The first, called SheepNet which stands for Sharing Expertise and Experience towards sheep Productivity through NETworking, is an EU funded project led by Idele, the French Livestock Institute. There are 7 partners comprising the six main EU sheep producing countries (Spain, United Kingdom, Romania, Italy, France, Ireland) together with Turkey. SheepNet is about promoting the implementation and dissemination of innovative technologies and best practices for improving sheep productivity (especially in terms of the number of lambs reared per ewe). We are inputting to the project in association with SRUC animal welfare and sheep specialists.

The two other European projects are funded under the European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) Sustainable Animal Production Framework, with our funding being provided by Defra.

One, called SusSheP, is being led by the University of Limerick in Ireland, with additional Irish French and Norwegian partners together with ourselves here at Crianlarich and SRUC geneticists. The aim of the project is to look at increasing the sustainability and profitability of European sheep production, particularly with regard to ewe longevity, labour and carbon hoofprint on extensive sheep farms.

The other, called Animal Future, is led by INRA in France and involves partners from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, as well as ourselves and SRUC economists. This project is focussed on designing innovative strategies for assessing and enhancing the sustainability of animal production systems. We will conduct case studies of hill sheep systems here in Scotland to identify innovative opportunities to improve sustainability and ways to address any constraints to doing that.

Taken together, this cluster of projects helps set Scotland in a wider European context and highlights that SRUC is still – and will continue to be – very linked into Europe.

Just as importantly, increasing the sustainability of Scottish hill farming systems will be vital if they are to survive going forward. Our involvement in these projects will ensure that our work here at Kirkton & Auchtertyre continues to be at the cutting edge of highlighting how this can be achieved in practice.

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