

'ProPIG'

Challenges and opportunities for on farm pig researchers:



How to collect sound scientific data on animal health, welfare, nutrition and environmental impact AND act as a facilitator to improve these aspects at the same time?

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CoreOrganicII - Project "ProPIG"

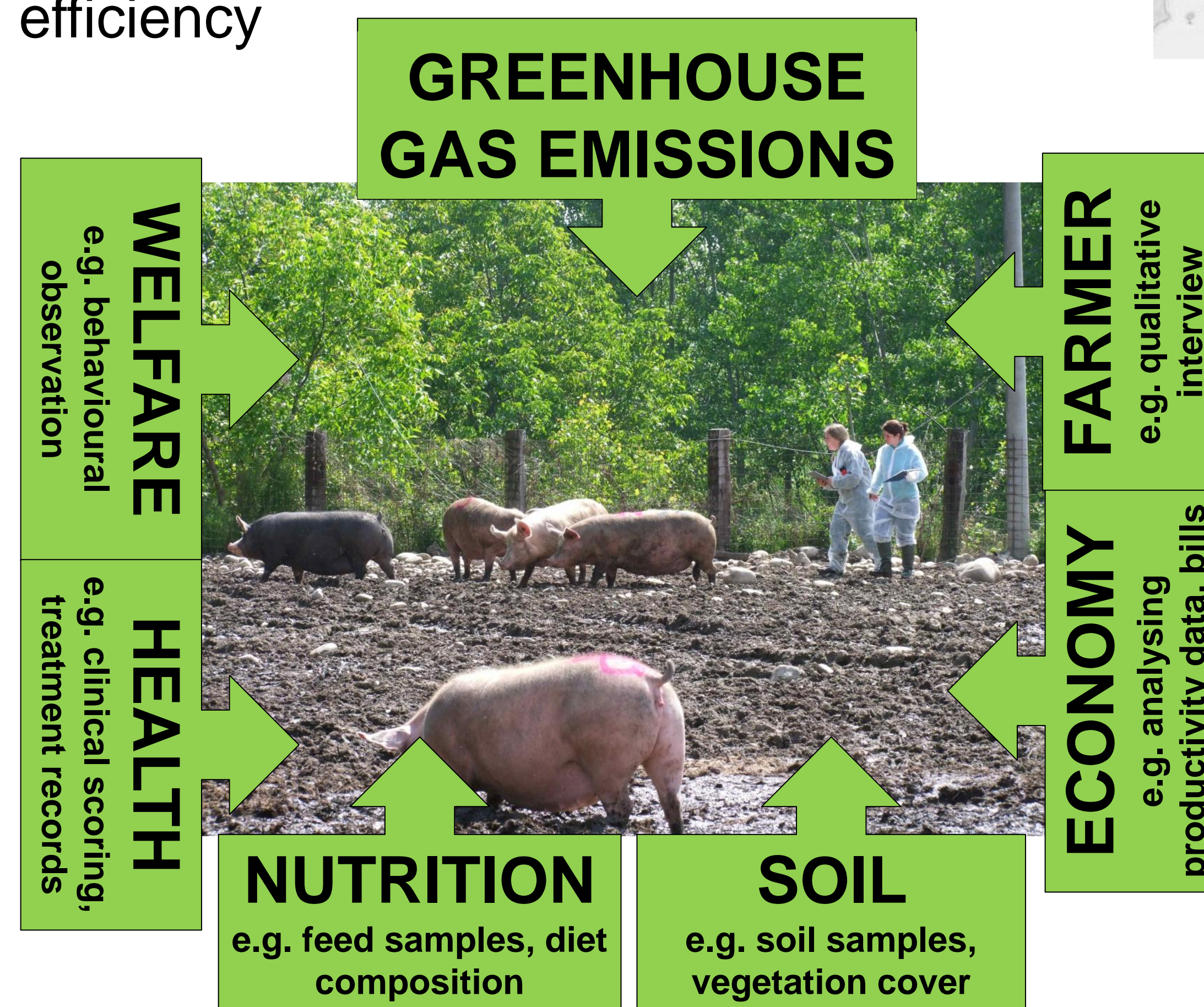
9 partners across 8 countries, 75 organic pig farms, 2011-2014

Robust and competitive organic pig production:

- low environmental impact & good animal health and welfare
- assumption that improving animal health and welfare reduces environmental impact e.g. through decreased medicine use, improved growth rates and feed conversion efficiency



3 types of organic pig systems: Indoor/partly outdoor/outdoor



Farm individual strategies

Challenges

Multi- and interdisciplinary expertise necessary

- new research areas become relevant (e.g. animal welfare scientists need to learn, how to collect and interpret soil samples)

Perform scientifically sound sampling strategies

- commonly one day visits to collect data for several disciplines
- balance representativeness and detailed description
- key parameters of all disciplines versus completeness of parameters in one discipline

Transdisciplinary approach

- In some cases/areas farmer knows more than researcher- researcher is no longer "the expert"
- new experience/role for researcher to act as facilitator to encourage farmers to improve

Conclusion

Transdisciplinary on-farm research requires from all involved parties:

- Understanding and willingness to learn from each other
- Acceptance, that own field of research is only a part of the whole "on farm picture"
- Sound scientific methods as well as technical tools for support (e.g. tablet PCs)
- Move from being/expecting "experts" towards "facilitation"

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Opportunities

Facilitating learning across disciplines/levels of experience

- various backgrounds: animal scientists, veterinarians, biologists, soil and LCA experts
- levels of experience: technicians, PhD- and MSc-students, professors, postdoc researchers

Application and communication on farm:

- direct feedback by farmer on relevance/applicability of methods
- new knowledge gained from farmers' experiments and opinions

Combination of data

- scientific facts and farmers' experience: comprehensive catalogue of improvement strategies
- Analysis of a „farming system“ from different perspectives

Cross-cutting topics:

- Assessment, evaluation and discussion across disciplines
- Identification of relationships and potential solutions: e.g. high proportion of thin sows: Impact and solutions on/ within animal welfare (hunger), health (lesions), nutrition (ration, feeding space), environmental impact (LCA), economy (reduced number of piglets).

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