Participant Information Sheet for BovReg Democs game

What do you think about use of genetic information in cattle breeding?

In recent years our knowledge of genetics has been playing an increasing role in the breeding of cattle for dairy products and meat. A European scientific research project called BovReg is seeking to understand the genetics of cattle to guide how breeding might be improved, not only for more productive animals but qualities like better animal health and reduced environmental impacts. As part of this project we want to gain a better understanding of what people in society think are the appropriate ways of using our increasingly sophisticated knowledge about genetics and apply it to breeding cattle.

We are doing this through a card 'game' called Democs, which you are invited to play. A Democs game aims to promote informed, open and balanced discussion in a group setting of 4-8 people, to enable people come to their own opinions and give their views about a topic, in this case about cattle breeding and genetics. Democs is a well-proven way of creating group discussion which uses sets of cards specially written to provide the necessary information. It needs no previous expertise: the 'expert' is the cards.

It begins with Story Cards which present imaginary stories about people involved in cattle breeding or affected by it, based on real situations or ones that might happen in future, with an ethical dilemma. Information Cards give basic facts and Issue Cards explore the ethical and social implications. The group selects which cards and aspects to discuss. All viewpoints are valid and welcome, but everyone should be prepared to listen to others' opinions too. After a while the person acting as 'dealer' will invite the group to crystallise their views into writing short statements about the issues, seeking consensus as much as possible, but also respecting differences of view. Finally each member of the group will be invited to write their individual opinion on applications or policies around cattle breeding, and give their reasons. The game should take up to two hours, or less if people have less time.

A feedback form will record the date and place of the game, and the age and gender of the participants. No personal data, like names or addresses will be taken. The group statements and individual votes will remain anonymous. They will be collected and analysed together with output from other similar games to understand better what people in society think about the use of genetic knowledge in cattle breeding. The combined data will be used to provide reports to the European Commission and academic publications, and will be made available for other researchers to analyse. If you simply wish to take part in the game but do not wish to contribute to the research, you are welcome to do so, but in that case, please do not record your individual votes.

This research is being conducted by researchers at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland and a consultancy company Edinethics Ltd., also based in Edinburgh.

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More about the EU BovReg project can be found at **www.bovreg.eu**