Moving towards Swine Cluster 3
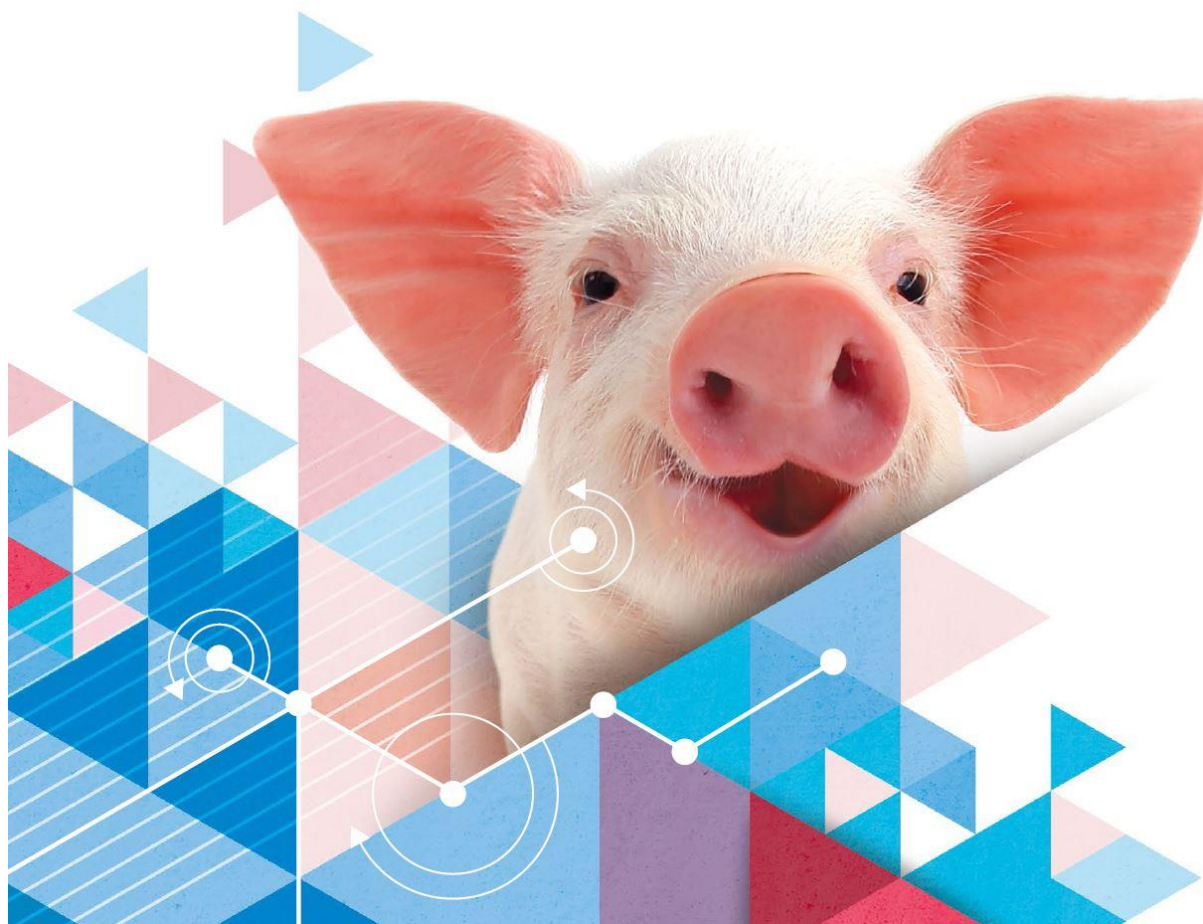
Swine **Innovation** Porc

Introduction

Swine Innovation Porc is a not-for-profit corporation committed to facilitating research in the Canadian swine sector. Our main objective is to enhance the profitability and sustainability of the pork industry by supporting the development of the most innovative technologies that will benefit the pork value chain. Swine Innovation Porc's role includes:

- Determining national swine research priorities
- Developing multi-institution and multi-disciplinary R&D programs
- Acting as coordinator for the research community and industry partners
- Delivering timely and effective knowledge transfer programs
- Encouraging the development of highly qualified professionals in research as well as research skills in general
- Leveraging producer and industry dollars to increase the overall amount of research dollars available

One of our organization's principle activities is to develop and implement the Swine Cluster research programs, which are part of the Canadian Agri-Science Clusters Initiative of AAFC's[1] Growing Forward Policy Framework. The research programs Swine Cluster 1 (2010-2013) and Swine Cluster 2 (2013-2018) were built to support industry-driven research activities and deliver results to end users through communication and on-farm demonstration activities. Several important steps need to be followed in order to best respond to the industry's needs and all of this and is started off by first identifying and setting research priorities.

Our latest priority setting process occurred throughout 2015 and 2016. This process, as well as the other steps taken in building the next five-year program, is outlined in this report.

Step 1: Determining national swine research priorities

Over the past months, Swine Innovation Porc has been consulting representatives from industry and the research community to establish what priorities should drive the future research agenda. The identified priorities were drafted to focus research initiatives on projects which will make the sector more competitive, sustainable and therefore more profitable, taking into account both short and long term needs. This priority-setting process is described in more detail below.

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[1] Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Research Priority Committee

A subcommittee of the board of directors was created in late 2014 to work on this initiative. This group worked with the management team to develop ideas about research priorities in December 2014, which was used as a starting draft when consulting other representatives. The committee also presented the priorities to Swine Innovation Porc's board of directors for input and comments on multiple occasions.
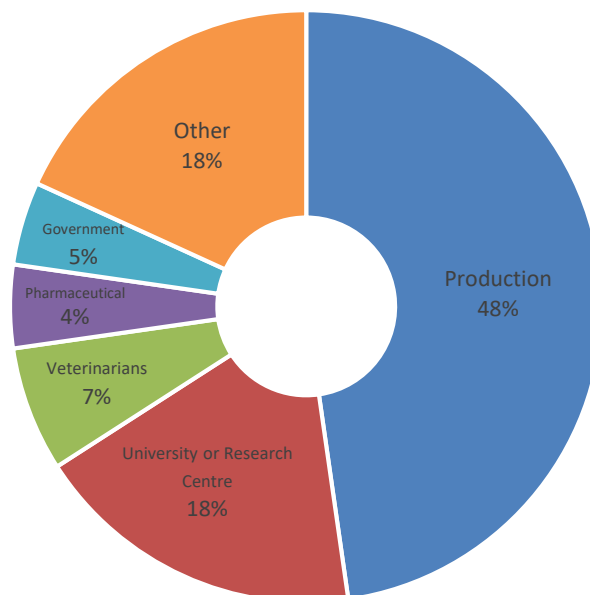
Consultations with a working group of industry representatives

In July 2015, a group of seven industry representatives from seven different companies met with the committee to discuss and develop research priorities that would most answer the industry's needs. This group were asked 1) what their views were on current and long term priorities and 2) what they thought of Swine Innovation Porc's originally drafted list. The outcome of this session was the production of a merged list of industry-led priorities and long term needs. We followed up with this group over the course of the priority-setting process in order to ensure the resulting priorities were timely and pertinent to the needs of the pork value chain.

Survey on priorities

During the Banff Pork Seminar in January 2016, Swine Innovation Porc surveyed seminar participants about their thoughts on short, medium and long term priorities. There were 44 respondents to the survey. Diagram 1 breaks down respondents' representative area of the pork value chain.
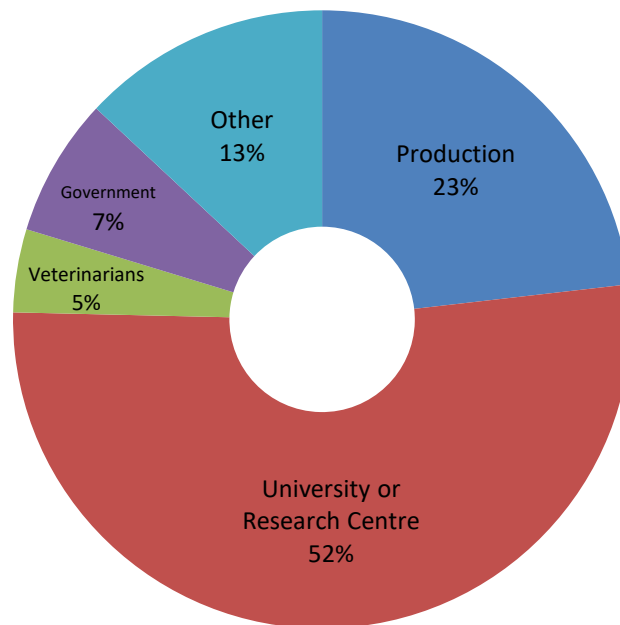
Diagram 1: Survey respondents by section of pork value chain

Workshops on national swine research priorities

Two national workshops were held in 2016 to allow for in-depth discussions on what research was needed to address challenges faced by the pork industry. For each workshop, which were held in Ottawa and Winnipeg respectively, presentations were made by invited guests to help kick-start discussions. This was followed by a session where participants were grouped by research area and each group was then given the opportunity to present their thoughts on what the priorities were according to a given area. In total, there were 69 participants, representing various areas of the pork value chain (refer to Diagram 2 for more details).

Diagram 2: Workshop participants by section of pork value chain

Outcomes from the national consultations

Consulting all levels of the pork value chain nation-wide has produced valuable feedback regarding the needs of the industry as well as the pertinent research questions to be asked in order to address these needs. The resulting list of identified priorities for the next possible cluster program, Swine Cluster 3, may be found on here our website.

Swine Innovation Porc considers that the identification of research priorities is an ongoing and adaptable process. While the identified priorities will help drive the research agenda for the next five years, the priorities will change and will be updated and communicated as the needs of the pork industry evolves.

Step 2: Call for letters of intent for Swine Cluster 3

The research priorities resulting from the consultations have already been used in guidelines for a recent call for letters of intent that was launched by Swine Innovation Porc in anticipation of another possible cluster program (Swine Cluster 3). This call for proposals, which closed on January 20, 2017, gave the research community the opportunity to write a brief overview of the research they would like to do, show the anticipated impact of their research on the swine industry, as well as to demonstrate how their research ideas correspond with the identified research priorities.

Evaluation of Letters of Intent

Once letters of intent have been submitted, Swine Innovation Porc's Board of Directors reviews and evaluates each proposal. This first stage of evaluations is mainly oriented towards determining the most valuable and relevant research ideas that would respond to short, medium and long term needs for Canadian swine industry. Although many proposals would be of great interest, only those classified as high on the list at the end of this prioritizing process would be retained to submit a detailed proposal.

Step 3: Call for detailed proposals

The authors of retained letters of intent are then invited to submit a detailed full proposal. At this stage, researchers will have the opportunity to provide more details on background information related to the research project and to fully describe the experimental design that would be implemented in order to satisfy the objectives and deliverables.

Evaluation of detailed proposals

The detailed proposals, in turn, will be evaluated on their scientific merit. This is a two-stage process including a peer review and an evaluation by the Science Advisory Body.

In general, a minimum of three external reviewers will perform the peer review of each proposal. Among other criteria, they will be asked to give their objective evaluation on the appropriateness of the experimental design and the proposed methods. Also, members of the Science Advisory Body will evaluate the detailed proposals following the same approach and will provide their advice and recommendations, which are based on their own evaluations and the peer review reports, to the Board of Directors regarding the detailed proposals.

Portfolio of research

Swine Innovation Porc's Board of Directors will then determine which proposals would be retained to be part of a possible Swine Cluster 3 program. In certain cases, only parts of submitted proposals would be retained while others could be completely withdrawn. In the end, the overall program budget will be considered and only those proposals that are deemed to be the most scientifically robust and have demonstrable impacts for the Canadian swine industry will be included in the request for funding for AAFC.

Conclusion

We believe that the process outlined in this report demonstrates a fair and transparent way to ensure that Canadian swine research is focused on results to improve the competitiveness of the industry, as well as to equitably support the research base throughout Canada. Encouraging collaboration between research institutions is one of our primary goals and this national coordination of research has helped to avoid duplication of research efforts. Indeed, this process has been built to benefit the entire value chain. In the end, having a focus on developing industry-driven research while taking into account the importance of the transfer of knowledge to the end user, all leads to the success of the overall industry and research base. We hope that this report helps you to better understand our approach to building research programs. Please refer to our website for more information about Swine Innovation Porc and our activities.