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For immediate use

Legislation across Europe must be changed if we want to allow insects to contribute to the sustainable production of livestock

The EU-funded project PROteINSECT¹ co-ordinated in the UK by FERA (The Food and Environment Research Agency)² with partners in China and Africa as well as mainland Europe is working to drive changes to current legislation

There is growing global interest in the use of insects as an alternative source of protein in animal feed. However, current European legislation represents a barrier to the development of large-scale production processes.

Food security concerns have highlighted a need to find more sustainable sources of protein for use in animal feed. Insects are increasingly being recognised as an excellent alternative. Many species are highly nutritious and the production of insects has less environmental impact compared with traditional sources of animal feed protein.

Additional major advantages of insects as a protein source are that they can be reared successfully and quickly on a range of organic waste materials, such as vegetable, domestic and organic waste, reducing the volume of that waste in the process by up to 60%. The residue can also be recycled as fertilizer.

At present, EU law prohibits the inclusion of protein derived from insects in animal feed, with the exception of feed intended for fish or shellfish. As evidence of efficacy and safety of insect protein increases, through research delivered by the EU-funded PROteINSECT and other research projects, it is hoped that insect protein will also be permitted in pig and poultry feed in the future, particularly as these animals already consume insects as part of their natural diet.

Elaine Fitches, Co-ordinator of the PROteINSECT project at FERA says:

“To enable protein from insects to become a significant component of animal feed, European legislation must be changed if we want to allow it to be fed to pigs and poultry as well as fish. Our work in PROteINSECT is establishing the evidence base that this is a sustainable, safe and economic source of protein, delivering quality food for human consumption as well as significant environmental benefits.”

Attention will also need to be paid to legislation covering the safe use of substrates, such as vegetable and domestic waste and manure, on which insects can be reared most economically.

Elaine Fitches continues: “The views of the public about the production and use of insect protein for animal feed are of great interest to our project. A short survey is available now on our website and I do urge everyone to please complete it.”

ENDS/ Contacts & Notes follow

¹ PROteINSECT www.proteinsect.eu

² FERA The Food and Environment Research Agency www.fera.defra.gov.uk

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Interviews available with Elaine Fitches, PROteINSECT Co-ordinator/FERA

Notes for Editors:

1. PROteINSECT survey on production and use of insect protein for animal feed can be accessed here <http://www.proteinsect.eu/index.php?id=2>
2. PROteINSECT's summary report on current European legislation concerning insect protein and animal feed is available to view and download from the project website <http://www.proteinsect.eu/index.php?id=3>
3. Partners in the PROteINSECT project are:
 - FERA - Food & Environment Research Agency, UK Tel +44-1904-462564
Dr. Elaine FITCHES - Coordinator, expertise in entomology and food safety
 - CAB International UK - Expertise in entomology
 - Nutrition Sciences NV Belgium -Global producer of feed concepts and functional feed ingredients (FFIs)
 - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Belgium - Expertise in Life Cycle Analysis (LCA)
 - Minerva Communications Ltd, UK - Expertise in Food Policy and Science Communication
 - Eutema Technology Management GmbH & Co KG Austria - Expertise in Science Communication
 - Grantbait Ltd UK -Maggot Farmer
 - Guangdong Entomology Institute China -Expertise in Entomology, especially rearing of insects
 - Huazhong Agricultural University China -Expertise in Entomology, expertise in fly rearing and prepupae collection
 - Fish for Africa - Ghana Limited by Guarantee Ghana -NGO promoting sustainable Aquaculture in Africa
 - Institut D'Economie Rurale Mali - Expertise in sustainable Agriculture in Africa
 - The University of Stirling UK - Expertise in Entomology and Fish feeding trials

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