

The usefulness of the CoQ for a local beef cattle breed: the case of Avileña-Negra Ibérica.

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The Avileña-Negra Ibérica is a local Spanish beef cattle breed, with a population of 47.453 dams under an extensive production system. The Avileña-Negra Ibérica Breed Association (RAEANI) has created an integrated system through different organizative structures that allow the control of animals from birth to the final product. We sell straight to consumers under an European Quality certificate (IGP Carne de Avila) which guarantees the traceability of the final product.

RAEANI has a breeding program running since 1992. Together with other seven beef cattle local breed associations we have participated in a project funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and coordinated by INIA-CSIC. The objective of the project was three fold; firstly to evaluate the status of breeding programs; secondly to evaluate the impact of incorporating genomic information in the existing breeding programs and finally, to identify new phenotypes to maximize the benefit of the investment on genomics. As part of the first face of the project, we applied for the ICAR certificate of quality (CoQ) as a tool to evaluate our working procedures in relation to an international standard.

The process of getting the ICAR CoQ started by filling in an extensive survey with questions related to animal identification, performance recording, herdbook recording, lineal conformation, data management and genetic evaluation. The analysis of the survey was followed by the visit of an auditor whose objective was to clarify aspects that were not enough clear in the questionnaire. RAEANI focused this process as an internal audit tool to identify weak and strong points of our working procedures. Both steps of getting the CoQ were enriching experiences for us. Filling in the questionnaire was an activity that pushed us to analyze our own activities. In addition, the ICAR auditor visit allowed us to identify aspects to be improved as well as to have a reference point to value the state of development of our breeding program. It is then when we realized that obtaining the CoQ had generated us several benefits; firstly to be able to obtain the CoQ in itself, to be able to identify areas of improvement and to have the satisfaction of being in the right path to help maximizing the incomes of our farmers.

The final balance was positive. We got the certificate for the 6 aspects evaluated. This certificate assesses the quality of our work to improve a local beef cattle breed. We hope to renew it in the future.