

A Practical Model for Engaging Citizens in Farm Animal Breeding Decisions

SHORT SUMMARY FOR PRACTITIONERS:

The RUMIGEN project developed and tested a new model called “the Room of Acceptance” (RoA) to understand the values that define European citizens acceptance of new ruminant breeding technologies. The model was applied across nine EU countries (France, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Bulgaria), engaging 787 citizens in deliberative consultations.

The key finding for practitioners is that citizens do not simply say yes or no to new breeding technologies, but their acceptance is highly dependent on both the technology and its implementation: is animal welfare is respected, are environmental impacts minimised, are benefits fairly shared, and is governance transparent? The most sensitive issue was unforeseen consequences, where citizens showed reluctance to accept breeding approaches whose long-term risks were unclear or unmanaged.

For farmers and the breeding sector, this means that they can benefit from assessing their technologies against these criteria, and expect new technologies such as genomic selection, in vitro breeding, or genome editing to be more likely to gain public support when they demonstrably improve animal health and welfare, reduce environmental footprint, and distribute benefits broadly.

Practical takeaway: Early and open dialogue with the public about how and why new breeding tools are used can significantly improve trust and long-term acceptance, benefiting the entire supply chain from breeder to consumer.

