

# **Summary Report: TransformDairyNet online workshop focused on established Cow-Calf Contact Schemes and Labels: Sharing Knowledge & Experience**

## **Introduction**

On February 27<sup>th</sup> 2025, an online workshop was held to discuss Cow-Calf Contact (CCC) criteria in existing labels and management systems. The workshop brought together representatives from Europe as well as emerging markets such as New Zealand. The main objectives were to identify key criteria in CCC systems, share challenges and barriers to the adoption and implementation of these criteria in labels and management schemes, and discuss possibilities for an auditing process.

## **Workshop Structure and Participants**

The workshop took place from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. CET and consisted of a structured agenda with individual presentations from different label and management scheme representatives, a presentation about an initiative adopting EU quality schemes to implement CCC guidelines in organic dairy farms, and an extensive discussion session on challenges, barriers and compliance strategies. Participants included representatives from various labels and organizations, farmers as well as experts in dairy farming and animal welfare such as [IG Kuh und Kalb](#) (Germany), [Thise Dairy](#) (Denmark), [Dyrevernmerket](#) (Norway), CowPassion/[MuKa](#) (Switzerland), [The Ethical Dairy](#) (United Kingdom), [Beter Leven](#) (the Netherlands) and [Happy Cow Milk](#) (New Zealand) participated in the discussions. The workshop was hosted by FOUR PAWS International and the Norwegian Veterinary Institute.

## **Key Discussions and Findings**

The discussions highlighted the current state of CCC in various labels and management schemes, and identified challenges and opportunities for integrating CCC criteria into label and management scheme standards.

### **1. Current Approaches to CCC**

- Many participants had already implemented cow-calf contact - mainly dam calf contact systems without feeding additionally supplemental milk to the calves.

- Time of contact between cow and calf was frequently seen as one of the most important criteria.
- Gradual weaning beyond one month of age was widely supported, although the optimal timing of weaning remained uncertain.
- Some of the attendees have 3<sup>rd</sup>-party audits in place.

## **2. Challenges & Barriers to Inclusion and Implementation of CCC Criteria and Auditing Process**

- Economic factors, such as additional costs associated with CCC labelling/management schemes e.g. marketing male calves.
- Consumer expectations and other farmers' prejudices about CCC
- Regulatory requirements, e.g. permits.
- Ensuring both animal welfare and farm efficiency.
- There are many ways of managing cows and calves together, and some of these practices do not improve animal welfare
- Label criteria should be simple, yet also ensure that animal welfare is accounted for, and consumer expectations are met. Simple messaging will ease communication and adoption by farmers.
- Extra cost and time with certification can represent additional complications for farmers.

## **3. Solutions/Recommendations for future Labels and Management Schemes**

- The importance of farm-specific flexibility in implementing CCC.
- Creating knowledge-sharing platforms for farmers and stakeholders.
- A clear and simple definition of CCC is necessary for labelling.
- Continuous dialogue to build trust with consumers is crucial.

## **Conclusion and Future Outlook**

The workshop highlighted the growing interest in CCC systems. Although there are challenges and barriers, in the future, CCC systems are expected to become more mainstream, with increasing consumer demand and innovative solutions to ensure product availability.

Participants agreed that building a sustainability narrative for the industry and society at large will be essential to the long-term success of CCC in labels and management schemes. The workshop concluded on an optimistic note, emphasizing collaboration, transparency, trust, and continuous improvement as key drivers for progress.