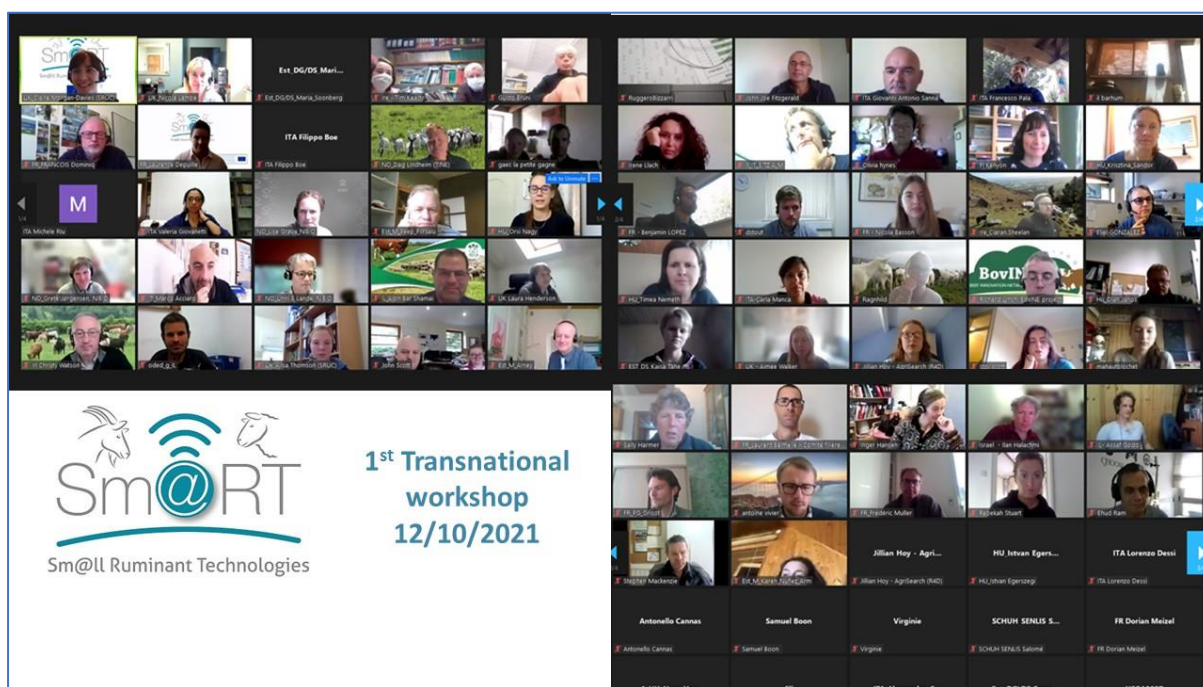




Sm@RT

Sm@ll Ruminant Technologies

Press Release 2 – January 2022



The Sm@RT project, a multinational project funded by the EU Horizon 2020 research programme, that aims to share knowledge and improve uptake of new digital technologies in small ruminant farming systems in Europe and beyond, just held its first online international workshop.

Sheep and goat farming is important to the rural economy of the UK, Europe and many other countries across the world, especially in areas that are unsuitable for other farming production systems. However, when it comes to the development and uptake of innovative digital technologies or Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) tools to improve farm efficiency, these systems lag other livestock sectors. The Sm@RT (Small Ruminant Technologies) project brings together a network of researchers from the UK, France, Ireland, Norway, Estonia, Hungary, Italy and Israel, to improve awareness amongst those working in the farming industry of newly available digital tools.

The first step in the project has been to carry out a survey to help the Sm@RT project team understand farmers and stakeholders' main challenges, needs and interests for PLF tools and digital technologies. In addition, each of the project partners held national workshops in September/October 2021 in their respective country, to gather farmers' needs in terms of tools and methods which could facilitate their farm working conditions.

This was followed by the organisation of an international online workshop on 12th October 2021. The international workshop took place virtually, with a multi-lingual plenary session to present the project and the identified needs, and a series of 12 breakout sessions by language and production type for further discussions. A total of 104 people participated in this first event, with farmers, advisers and researchers from France, the UK, Ireland, Hungary, Norway, Estonia, Israel and Italy. The aims of this workshop were for participants to understand the needs of other farmers compared to their own country's needs and to get the opportunity to share their own practical knowledge to help other farmers, in a peer-to-peer valuable knowledge exchange exercise.

Each country and production type had to propose solutions to the farmers' needs of 2 other countries, alongside 5 main themes: 1) feeding/grazing, 2) health/welfare, 3) reproduction, 4) flock/herd management and 5) fattening and milking.

Dr Claire Morgan-Davies, Project Coordinator for Sm@RT based at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) says: *"this bottom-up approach was well received by participants, and it was pleasing to see many innovative and PLF solutions being proposed by farmers for farmers. The next step in the project will be to formalise the solutions to the identified needs and propose guidelines and farmers' testimonies on how to implement them on farms"*.

For the UK, some of the main identified needs and solutions revolved around the issues of fencing, measuring grassland, early identification of unhealthy animals, identifying animals at a distance or automatically, and drafting lambs ready for slaughter.

Dr Fiona Kenyon from Moredun Research Institute says: *"This project uses a variety of methods to facilitate productive knowledge exchange and practical information from the 'digifarms' and commercial farmers involved in the project will be helpful to farmers throughout the UK and Europe."*

The next national workshop in the UK will be held on 10th February 2022, so if you are interested, please contact Ann McLaren (ann.mclaren@sruc.ac.uk) or Daniel Stout (daniel.stout@sac.co.uk) or register on EventBrite (<https://bit.ly/32O5VTn>).

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To keep up to date with Sm@RT, visit their website or social media accounts:

- **Website:** www.H2020-Smart.eu
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/H2020Smart/>
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