

China becoming aware of on-farm health and hygiene

China is slowly waking up to the notion that investing and growing alone is not enough to be successful in pig production. More needs to be done to eradicate disease and achieve better production figures. The eleventh CAHE showed exactly that.



By Vincent ter Beek

Tales from China are always a little bit ambivalent. On one hand, they tell a story of cities growing at an astonishing pace, of a booming market demand for quality meat products and of a rapidly growing number of professional farms. On the other, however, an image emerges of backyard farming, a very high disease pressure and relatively modest pig growth performance figures. Only a quick look at some major livestock-related news in 2013 may confirm that – there were reports on dead pigs in the Huangpu river through Shanghai, and recent outbreaks of Avian Influenza in this same area caused an acute shortage to poultry meat due to transmission fears.

No wonder then, that the theme of health and hygiene could be found everywhere at the eleventh edition of the China Animal Husbandry Exhibition (CAHE), held in Wuhan, Hubei province, from 18-20 May.

Mindset

It is a mentality matter, explained Jan Cortenbach, chief technical officer for the joint-venture between Dutch animal nutrition company De Heus with Chinese feed giant Wellhope. He said a lot still needs to be done about the mindset of many Chinese swine producers: “At the basis, results are quite good. However, diseases are still a major problem in China, with biosecurity being the major problem. Producers wonder – nice concept, biosecurity, but what do I need to do for that? In practice, what happens is that many producers may be able access good feed and clean water at their well, etcetera – but what if there is that one weak link in the total farm set up that is still missing? That is something that needs improving, step by step.”

The joint-venture Wellhope-De Heus was set up in 2008 and has always focused on becoming more than just a feed supplier – both companies wanted to help their customers in the long-term by also assisting in giving knowledge in classes and backup services. To fill the gap in hygiene issues, a third party was especially introduced. It came Dutch equipment and services company MS Schippers, which signed a joint-venture with Wellhope-De Heus in 2011, especially focusing on these hygiene issues. The company Schippers (Beijing) Technology and Trade was officially founded earlier this year.

At CAHE, MS Schippers showed MS Topfoam, a cleaning foam, which could even be tested on-site. Gerton van Hagen, export director, said: “Using this product, the contact time with the dirty surface is longer than usual – so the quality will be improved. A clean pig house secures a good start for the animals. For now, we have sold mainly in the broiler business, where developments are going a little quicker and where the concept of ‘all-in, all-out’ (AIAO) has been known better. In the swine sector, we have started to promote using concepts like AIAO as a management system – to achieve better hygiene. Modern swine farms, including Wellhope, are now starting to use these methods as well. People do listen to our advice, but change is sometimes not going as quickly as we’d all wish to see.”

Domestic initiatives

The notion that producers sometimes need some additional education is known inside the Chinese market as well, explained Xue Peng, senior technical assistant at Boen, a premix manufacturer headquartered in Guangzhou, southern China.

The company, employing 800 people, and currently having four plants in southern China with two more planned, has a special notion for concepts like sustainability environment. “We have a focus on the future,” Xue said. “We would like to make a change in Chinese pig production. Many pig producers, however, do not want that. Backyard producers are usually just interested in earning some money – not to invest it. And if business is bad, well, then they simply do something else. That is not a healthy industry in my view – and still creates a lot of pollution. Ideally, sow farms should perhaps have roughly 1,000 sows.

This way you can gather a lot of data and we will also be able to help them improve.”

One of the ways, Boen aims to set an example, is by constructing a model breeding farm in 2014, housing 600 sows and introducing various state-of-the-art management concepts from Europe, like modern ventilation systems and potentially even air washers or a biogas installation. The farm should be stocked with superior also European genetics. Demonstrating how modern farming is done shall be one of the test farm’s main goals, Xue added, together with the testing of new concepts and training of new staff.

Danish genetics

Making sure breeding animals are guaranteed free of diseases is one way to improve a health situation – ask the Danish about that! No wonder then that DanAvl, organising Danish pig breeders, has a strong presence at CAHE. The Danish plan to expand strongly in China, explained Jørgen Lindberg, who has been CEO and COO for a year now, for three interrelated Danish breeding companies in China, all related to DanAvl.

“Lianyungang Scandinavian Farms Pig Industries was set up to build a commercial production, a complete chain with 2,500 sows until slaughter pigs. Growth aims are conform to the Chinese market – in four years time there have to be 20,000 sows and half a million slaughter pigs, as well as four feed mills.

Lianyungan Dan Yu Pig Breeding Technology aims to provide breeding animals for the Chinese market and for that purpose has a nucleus of 600 sows. This summer, another 1,000 animals will be added to this total. The goal is to produce crossbreed (Landrace/Duroc/Yorkshire) gilts, about 15,000 per year. About 10,000 will be used by themselves – and 5,000 per year will be sold. Lastly, Lindberg is also involved in Dan Yu Trading, selling breeding pigs directly from Denmark.”

The breeding facilities are located at about 250 km south of Qingdao, on the east coast. A location very close to the seaside was chosen on purpose, Lindberg said. “That was because of biosecurity. In the neighbourhood there are only lagoons for salt winning from the sea. There are no pigs at all. And 70% of the time, the wind is blowing from the sea as well.”

The breeding facility has been populated with Specific Pathogen Free breeding pigs from Denmark. The only difference with Danish breeding pigs is that these animals had to be vaccinated for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever (CSF) and Aujeszky's Disease (pseudorabies), which is mandatory for importing pigs into China. In addition, in China, the pigs are vaccinated against PRRS in China.

Lindberg sums up the advantages of Danish genetics, touching on the number of live born piglets – as well as those still living after five days; feed conversion rate; high lean meat percentages; and the fostering qualities of Danish sows.

Doing business in China is more than just a matter of delivering genetics to farms – it is also about giving advice, Lindberg explained. “We have hired a Danish expert who will go to farms that purchased our genetics and make sure the facility is prepared correctly long before the pigs arrive. She will continue to visit every second month to give advice – e.g. about correct feeding and nutrition programmes.”

The Danish insights may take a long time to fully sink in, Lindberg continues, “A lot of the lower performance levels is a matter of biosecurity,” he concluded. “Often, when we visit Chinese farms and explain about biosecurity, producers are interested and want to apply it. But as soon as there is a little setback, they let it go, they don’t continue.”

CAHE: Over 1,400 exhibitors

The eleventh edition of the China Animal Husbandry Exhibition (CAHE), held 18-20 May in Wuhan, Hubei province showcased a record 1,426 exhibitors. In total, 152 booths came from foreign companies. The show is a professional event, focused on the Chinese market and directed at all kinds of animal husbandry – pigs, poultry, beef cattle, sheep – even camels. The main focus however, was pigs.

The organising China Animal Agriculture Association (CAAA) said that the first and most important day of the show attracted 33,597 visitors – of which 3,506 were international visitors. Frequent countries of origin were the Netherlands and the US.

Due to the vastness of the country, and to be able to offer both visitors as well as exhibitors throughout the country an opportunity to attend CAHE, the annual show is held in a different city every year. Next year’s show is at the same dates (18-20 May), but the location is still to be decided.

by [Vincent ter Beek](#) Jun 21, 2013

Pig Progress