

Report of the ZELS Myanmar Pig Partnership Annual Meeting, 2017

The historic city of Bagan was the backdrop for our [ZELS-funded Myanmar Pig Partnership](#) annual meeting. Hosted by the Myanmar Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD), the meeting gathered scientists from the universities of Sussex and Cambridge and the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) in Vietnam together with an advisory board of industry experts.

The purpose of the two-day meeting: to evaluate the progress of the project and discuss how to move forward in 2017-18.

The meeting opened with warm greetings from Dr Yu Te Win, Director General of LBVD. He praised the project's scope and welcomed research and development in the country's rapidly expanding pork industry. The farming landscape in Myanmar is a diverse mix of backyard, smallholder and commercial farms – each generally operating with scarce resources. Low biosecurity, unbalanced diets and poor productivity explain why pig production and pork prices are higher in Myanmar than Europe.

The social science team from Sussex presented early data from their surveys of Myanmar farmers. This work has seen the main socio-economic features of the sector characterised, and technical aspects, such as antimicrobial use, detailed. The social science team performed a large number of surveys in order to assess strengths and weaknesses within the sector. Importantly, this was also to identify possible opportunities for implementing actions based on the Partnership's research findings, with the aim of introducing healthier, more productive pig farming.

Other themes discussed at the meeting illustrated the multidisciplinary nature of the Myanmar Pig Partnership. They included control of the [PRRS virus](#), which plays a key role in pig disease, pig-to human disease transmission, food safety legislation and farming economics.

Capacity building is a key objective for the Partnership and day two of the meeting saw the LBVD team showing off their new-look laboratory, which has been completely refurbished as part of the project. The OUCRU team collaborated with LBVD to train technicians to increase LBVD's diagnostic capabilities and these developments will contribute to growing improvements in Myanmar's animal health and food safety.

Yangon is a rapidly expanding metropolis of 7 million and the meeting allowed time for partners and members of the advisory board to visit some of the backyard pig farms in Yangon's peripheral suburbs. These play a key role in supplying pork to the city and belong to poor families who rely on the sale of perhaps only a dozen pigs a year as an additional – and indispensable – source of income.

There was also time for a training session with LBVD field vets in pig health management. LBVD field vets and farmers are the cornerstone of animal health and food safety in Myanmar. Their engagement, skills and good practice are indispensable to ensure the success of interventions guided by the results of our project in 2020.

Juan Hernandez and Alan Clarke

