

Adisseo's €1 Million Grant Aims at Feed's Most Intractable Problems

JUNE 2021

It is almost a cliché to say that the challenges facing livestock producers are growing. There's the need to reduce waste and alleviate pressure on existing resources by better utilizing new feedstuffs. There's the requirement to reduce the use of antibiotics to preserve their efficacy. The need to reduce mortality and improve lifelong performance with improved early life nutrition. The need to adapt to increasingly warm conditions worldwide. And the need to minimize livestock's environmental footprint in terms of water consumption, nitrogen and phosphorus emissions, and various other sustainability metrics.

Adisseo recognized that taking on this intimidating list of challenges will require a vast mobilization of resources, both economic and intellectual. Its own answer is the Adisseo Research Grant: funding of EUR 1 million over three years, to be split between 2-3 collaborative research projects in swine and poultry, addressing the issues described above (which it refers to as the "five feed industry challenges"). The call for pre-proposal grant applications is currently underway and will remain open until the end of June 2021; an announcement of the short-listed research projects will be made at the end of July; and a full grant application dossier will have to be submitted by mid-September for the final selection by the scientific committee whose members are among the leading academic researchers and technical leaders of the industry.

As the period for pre-submission draws to a close, Feedinfo spoke with Jean François Rous, Adisseo's Executive VP for Innovation, to better understand the project's goals and how it maps onto Adisseo's own objectives for addressing these critical issues.



Jean-François Rous

Executive VP for Innovation, Adisseo

[Feedinfo] How does this program fit with the wider vision and ambitions of Adisseo R&I (research and innovation)?

[Jean-François Rous] First, we have to mention that Adisseo's R&I has a long history including both internal programs and external partnerships on specific research topics.

Our industry plays a key role in the global food value chain. Alongside the challenges specific to the livestock sector, Adisseo and its supply chain partners must constantly evolve in the face of global challenges such as adaptation to the consequences of climate change, and transformation of the regulatory framework. Given the large range of technologies addressed to the feed sector and the rapid development of solutions such as Precision Livestock Farming or the rise of big data in our sector, a truly open innovation approach is required to meet the market's needs.

Our willingness to develop such an "open innovation" approach within Adisseo's R&I department is demonstrated in projects such as Innov'l@b which was created in 2018. For all the reasons mentioned above, our Research Grant is perfectly aligned with our R&I team's vision, which is meant to deliver customer-driven innovation by driving science and technology to sustainably feed our future.

[Feedinfo] You administered the Rhodimet Research Grant for 10 years. What were the outcomes of that grant and how will the Adisseo Research grant be different?

[Jean-François Rous] From 2006 to 2016, Adisseo proposed a worldwide Rhodimet® Research Grant to the scientific community to investigate the topic of "sulphur amino acids beyond their role as building blocks". It generated lots of new ideas and research results, and fostered scientific exchanges around amino acids, in particular sulfur amino acids. 17 research programs were funded at research institutes worldwide, resulting in more than 20 publications in scientific journals and multiple oral communications and posters in international congresses, etc.

By contrast, the focus of the current Adisseo Research Grant is on the challenges faced by the feed industry, where we need collaboration between research teams worldwide to understand the basics of those challenges and to develop solutions to solve those issues. This grant is not designed around our product line but focused on broader feed industry challenges.

[Feedinfo] What outcomes do you expect from this grant program?

[Jean-François Rous] The complexity of the main industry challenges selected require collaborative scientific work between various universities, labs and scientists. Such collaborations should help to better understand the mechanisms and basics involved as well as suggest potential solutions to be developed.

In terms of more specific outcomes, while we do think that publication is the best way to promote the progress of research this will really depend on the specificities of the project, the progress made by the grantees, and the solution under investigation.

[Feedinfo] Who is the project aimed at? Are you primarily expecting projects pitched by 1-3 individuals, or larger groups? Is it mainly for researchers with a university affiliation, or not necessarily? Does it matter where the researchers are geographically based?

[Jean-François Rous] All applicants, from universities as well as from start-ups, technical centers, etc., can contribute to identifying the mechanisms involved in those challenges to allow the industry to develop solutions addressing those issues. The grant is open to any proposal from any country or region of the world. The scientific committee's members come from North and South

America, Europe, China, Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East—a deliberate attempt at fostering international collaboration on our end.

[Feedinfo] What does Adisseo mean when you say the projects should be collaborative? What are the specific requirements regarding “collaboration”?

[Jean-François Rous] We are particularly interested in collaborative projects because we believe it is a key factor to success. Indeed, whereas previously research programs were frequently conducted in isolated laboratories, it increasingly appears that in order to understand and solve those complex issues, various complementary angles of research need to be developed and worked at simultaneously, with experts from different disciplines and labs or institutions with different equipment or capabilities all contributing. Teams from the same university, or those whose members come from different universities or even different countries / regions are all welcome to propose a common project.

[Feedinfo] Other than the funds, is Adisseo offering any in-kind aid (like access to laboratory equipment, mentoring, etc.) to the winners of the grant?

Jean-François Rous] Mentoring. We have set up a scientific committee for this grant with well-known academic professors such as Professors Yuming Guo, Mike Kidd, Nilva Sakomura, Richard Ducatelle, Markus Rodehutschord and experts from the industry (both upstream and downstream) holding various positions including R&D directors and heads of technical support. Members of the scientific committee will support the selected projects.

This scientific committee will select the laureates of this 1st call for projects and will be involved in the follow-up of the selected research projects.

[Feedinfo] How will Adisseo continue to engage with these projects after this program has ended?

[Jean-François Rous] It is clear, as with the previous grant, that promising projects may need further support after having identified the basics of the issue, in order to develop the relevant solutions and support sustainable animal protein production which satisfies consumers' expectations. Scientific collaboration often does not stop after the end of such grants, and might be supported by further funding afterwards.

[Feedinfo] Why was it important to Adisseo to launch this grant?

[Jean-François Rous] There is lots of funding for research programs coming from national to regional or international organizations. However, we saw the opportunity to assert ourselves as a leader on these important issues facing producers and the industry, as it is uncommon to see a company in the animal protein production chain to invest such an amount to stimulate collaborative projects of this kind.

We considered it critical to insist on scientific collaboration to address those issues from a more global perspective. Through years of collaboration with international labs and universities, we have built a strong scientific network and we would like to further support the development of scientific knowledge. Adisseo believes in science, and through science we will develop the necessary solutions to solve current and future issues. This is a sentiment shared between Adisseo and its Chinese shareholder Bluestar, who believes very strongly in the motto "In Science We Trust."

You can find more information about how to apply for the grant [on this website](#).

Published in association with Adisseo