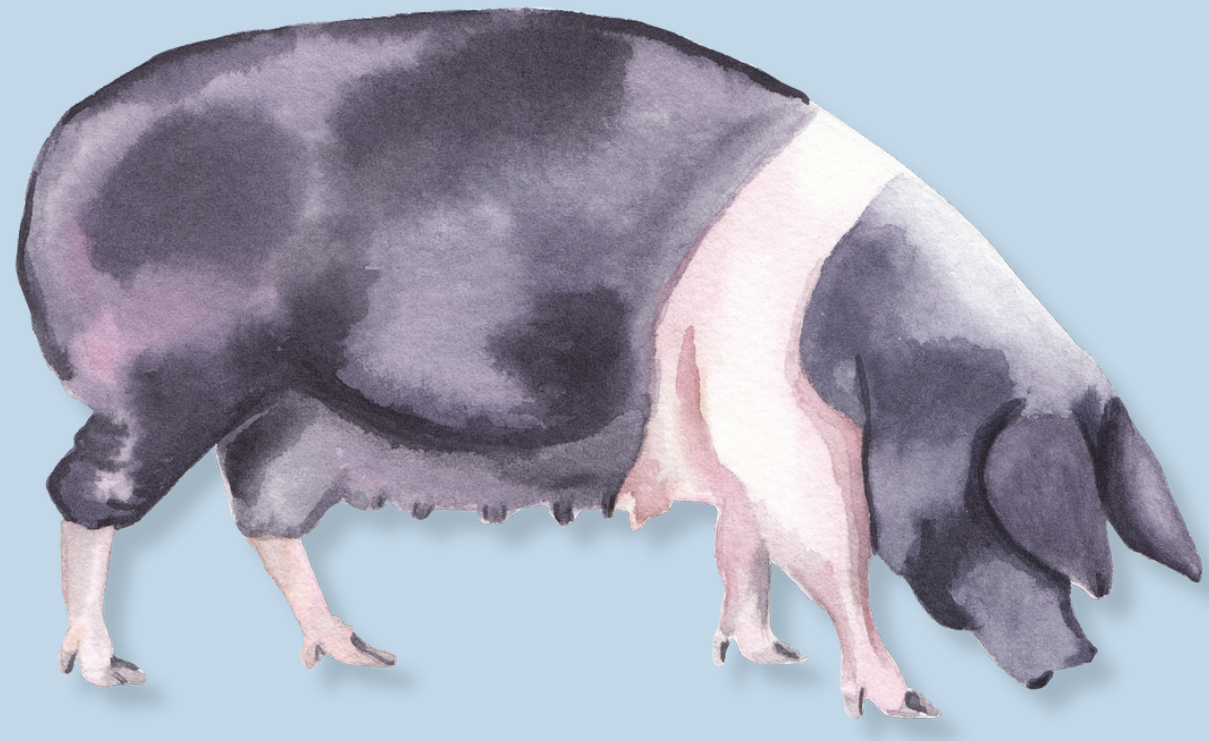


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STUDY GATHERS INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

A survey to assess selection possibilities
in local pig and chicken breeds



GEroNIMO aims to provide breeders with innovative approaches to select pigs and chickens. Its ambition is to develop efficient livestock production using both local and cosmopolitan breeds while preserving genetic diversity. Local breeds are well adapted to diverse and rustic rearing conditions and constitute a genetic reservoir. Many of them are known for the high quality of their products or the originality of their attributes. Most often selected solely on external characteristics such as coat colour or plumage, these breeds often have low growth and low feed efficiency.

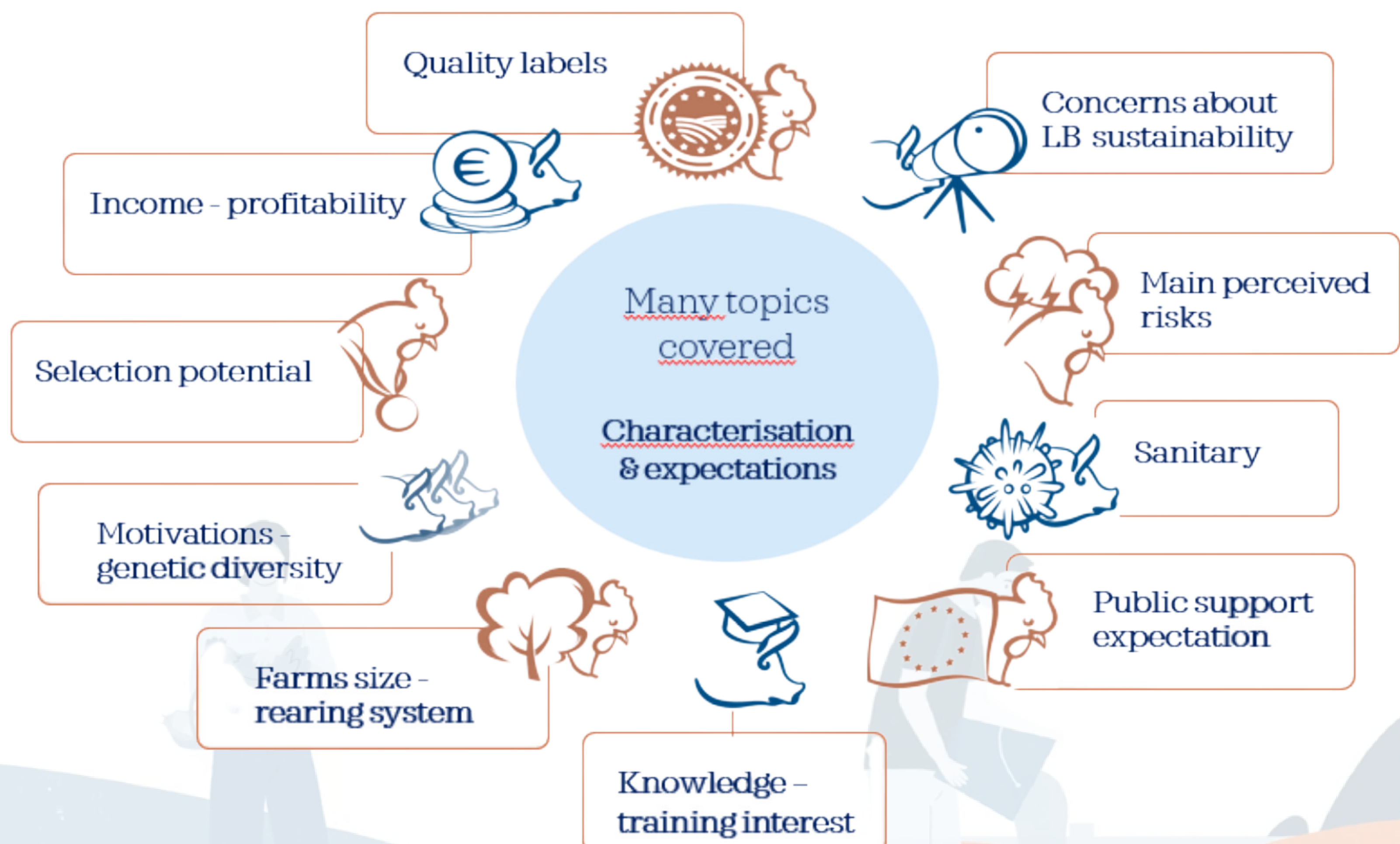
Objectives

The main objective of the study was to involve the stakeholders of pig and chicken local breeds in the project. They were asked to describe their farms and conservation programs and express their interest in selection programs to better target the results of the project for transfer. The study also gathered the stakeholders' concerns about their local breeds and their expectations from public policies.



Methods

Two large surveys, one targeting the local pig and the other local chicken breeds, were translated into seven languages. The surveys were conducted both online and face-to-face. Questions for the stakeholders of local pig and chicken breeds were similar and covered many topics from farm and preservation program characteristics to the perception of the breeds' sustainability. The data were collected between October 2021 and January 2022.



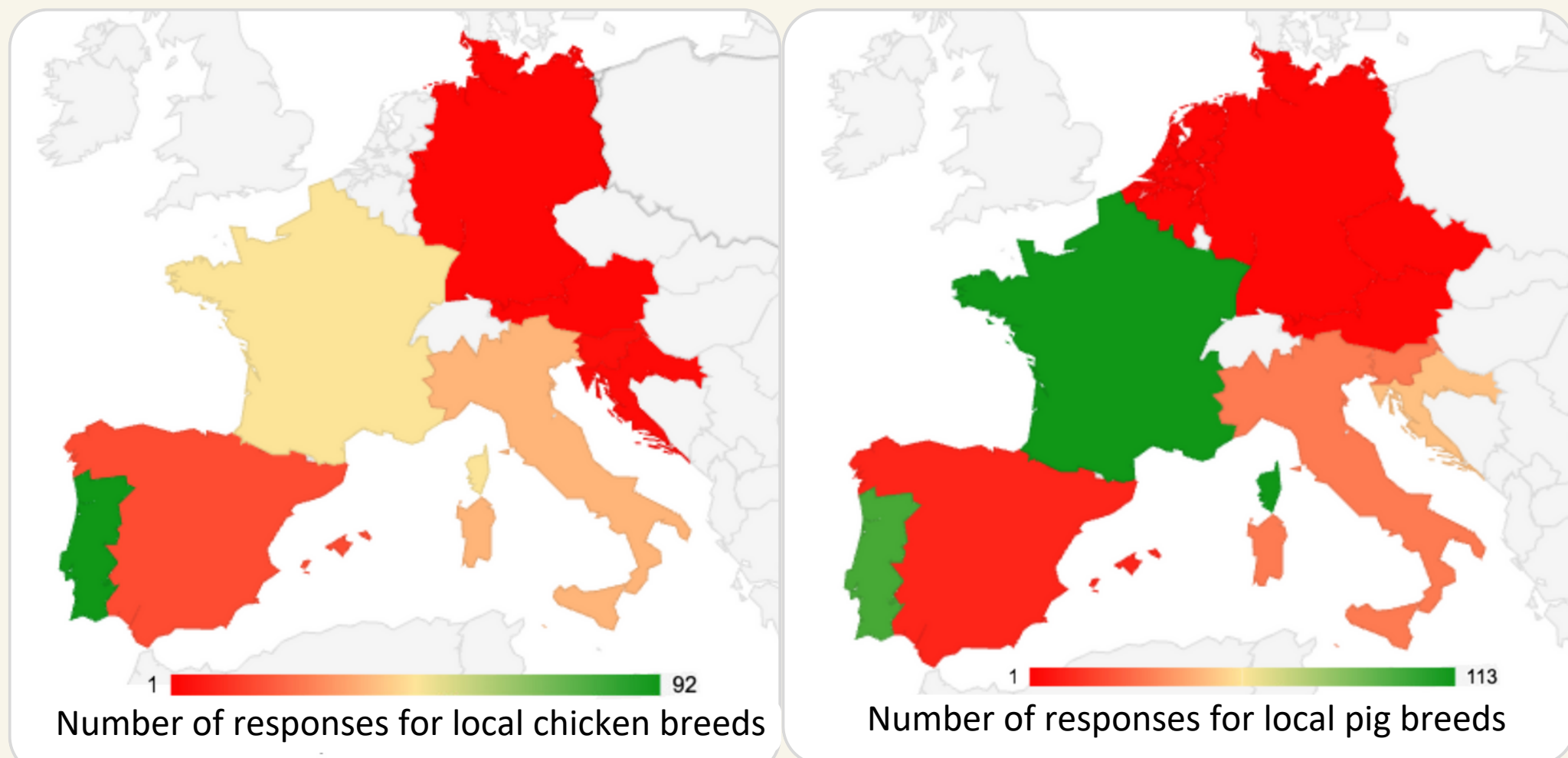
The GEroNIMO project has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under Grant Agreement No 101000236.

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RESULTS AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Data were collected from about 550 participants (339 for pigs, 203 for chicken), who were primarily breeders but also breed managers. The participants were unevenly distributed across the countries (see maps) and represented 125 local pigs and chicken breeds (31 pigs, 94 chickens). The primary driving force behind their activity was the conservation of genetic diversity. Secondly, the economic activity was associated with pig breeding, whereas chicken farming was mainly described as a leisure activity.



Origin and intensity of survey participants (left: chicken survey, right: pig survey). The colour intensity is proportional to the number of responses collected.

The study confirmed common rearing practices, with local breed animals being mainly reared purebred and outdoors. Over 80% of respondents were in favour of selection, focusing on production or reproduction traits, while less than 5% were opposed to selection due to resource constraints.

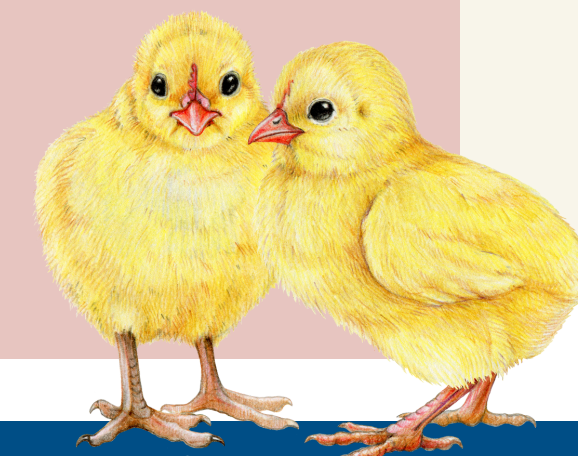
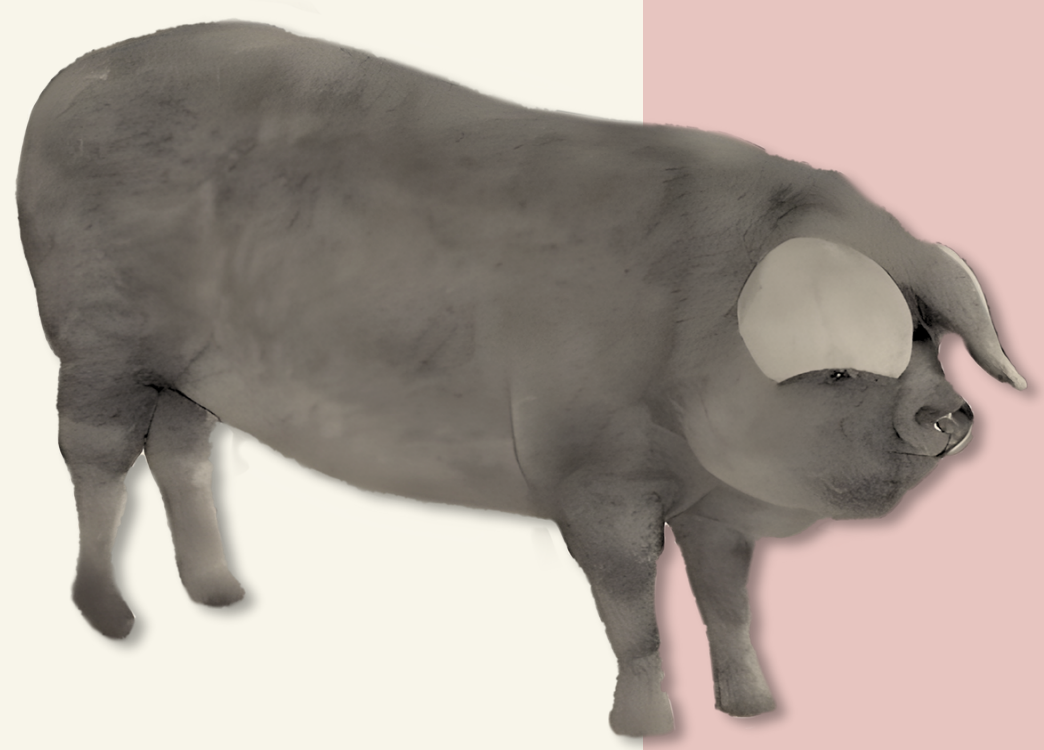
The study also highlighted obstacles to selection, such as the very small farm sizes (median 15 hens and 9 sows), variable environmental conditions, and incomplete data collection for genetic evaluation. More than two-thirds of the participants had concerns about the future of their breeds and expected more public support.

IMPLEMENTATION AND UTILIZATION

Participants also expressed interest in learning more about selection and epigenetics. Training sessions will be organized as part of the project.

ADDED VALUE AND BENEFITS TO END-USERS

Participants in both surveys and from several countries expressed similar fears for the future of the local breeds. The study, therefore, gives more weight to the stakeholder point of view. The main perceived risks are economic (primarily the lack of profitability or abusive use of the pig breed names) or regulatory (mainly health regulation).



CONCLUSION

The **GEroNIMO project** surveyed over 500 stakeholders involved in the conservation of 125 local breeds of pigs and chickens. Participants were mainly interested in conserving genetic diversity, but pig breeding was also motivated by economic factors, while chicken breeding was mostly considered a hobby. Although selection schemes are rare, there is interest in starting selection programs, but it is challenging to implement them. Training will be offered to help overcome obstacles to selection. The study also identified shared expectations by stakeholders, which can be used to inform public policies.

