

Press release, 15 January, 2020

Indian ministry plants Gandhi tree at VikingGenetics

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, representatives from the Indian government visited VikingGenetics in Denmark on Wednesday, 15 January, 2020.

The delegation planted an oak tree during a ceremony in front of the company's headquarters and learned more about sustainable dairy production, genetic selection and animal welfare within Nordic cattle breeding.

VikingGenetics was selected as the host of the ceremony due to its position as one of the leading cattle breeders in the world. Last year, the Ambassador of India to Denmark, H. E. Mr Ajit Gupte, personally called VikingGenetics to enquire if the company would host the ceremony. In addition to the tree, a post was placed with an engraved plaque in honour of the Indian freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi.

The memorial ceremony was part of the official program of the Indian visit organized in collaboration with the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food. The Indian Ambassador personally participated alongside Mr. Atui Charturvedi, Secretary at the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), who is part of the Indian Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, a delegation of other government representatives as well as a representative for Agriculture and Food in Denmark participated together with the Mayor of Randers Torben Hansen.

After the ceremony, the Indian delegation learned more about VikingGenetics' record-low use of antibiotics, low methane emissions programs and other sustainable breeding practices.

"In the Nordic region, we have the world's healthiest animals and the lowest consumption of antibiotics in cattle breeding thanks to our skilled farmers. Together with some of the world's best researchers, we have been focusing on breeding healthy animals for over 40 years. We only use 7 milligrams of antibiotics per animal on average, while in Europe the average is 38 milligrams and in the US 240 milligrams per animal," says Sara Petersson, Chief Sales Officer, VikingGenetics.

"Denmark has a good name in India because Danida started sending Jersey cows and genetics out to India back in the 1970s. Indian schoolchildren learn about Denmark and the Danish Jersey in their history lessons, and we have a fantastic reputation for quality in dairy products."

According to Sara Petersson, the Jersey cow is the most suitable breed for India in imported cattle. As one of the smallest cattle breeds, the Jersey cow is the most feed efficient cow, and thus has the lowest climate footprint. The Jersey cow is also a breed that adapts well to the hot and humid climate of India.

In India, cattle are mainly used for the production of dairy products. Cows are still considered sacred, especially bulls.

"India is the world's largest dairy producer, so it is an honour to host this ceremony and share our best practices with the delegation," Sara Petersson said.

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