

WHITEPAPER



# Reaching your farm's potential.

What is the value of a benchmark for weaners?



**AgroVision**  
AGRICULTURAL SOFTWARE



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## 1. THE FUTURE IS NOW

With the availability of more and more digital channels, we are overloaded with information every day. We are increasingly mobile in terms of information collection and processing. This development has not stayed away in the barn either. More and more data is being collected and processed every day. But all this data, how do you use it?

As AgroVision, we like nothing more than data. Because data offers opportunities! And we would happily share those opportunities with you!

## 2. WORKING WITH DATA IS A PROCESS

Benchmarks and monitors can't be considered separately. A benchmark report is likely to raise more questions than answers. But those questions are precisely what we find so important. Don't jump to conclusions, but above all, ask questions! After all, a benchmark report shows you the potential of your company. It now becomes a process of questions, analyses, answers, setting goals, monitoring and adjusting! We like to describe the process with an example:



Pig farmer Frank receives our **Benchmark Monitor**. In this benchmark report, he can identify performance trends of his farm compared to a relevant reference. If these trends require attention, for example because they deviate from the top 25% of the benchmark, he can **analyse** and find **correlations** in the farm and in his data (e.g. in PigExpert). Frank sees in the Benchmark Monitor that his farm is performing in the top in terms of number of weaned piglets, but the number of piglets born alive in the second parity lags somewhat behind. Here is a potential for improvement! Based on analyses, it appears that many sows lose too much weight in the first lactation and wean too many piglets in relation to feed intake. Weaning weight also appears to be lower than the market average. Based on the Benchmark Monitor, Frank can now set realistic and **achievable goals**. He will monitor daily feed intake and, above all, take action on relevant deviations. He will also **monitor** the weight loss in the first farrowing period and the weaning weight of the piglets on a weekly basis from now on. When is it higher and when is it lower? When is there a **deviation**? Does a change in feed management have an effect? What influence does fostering have in the first cycle? Does a higher weaning weight decrease feed cost for piglets? Because Frank now consciously monitors specific farm factors that affect the number of piglets born and weaning weight, he can react quicker. Because he is observing closely, damage is prevented! Frank can **explain** and **improve** deviations a lot better and fact-based. He now continuously informs and trains his staff and adjusts the feeding strategy to achieve better results. In the coming weeks, he monitors whether the adjustments have actually been implemented and are having the desired effect and makes adjustments where necessary.

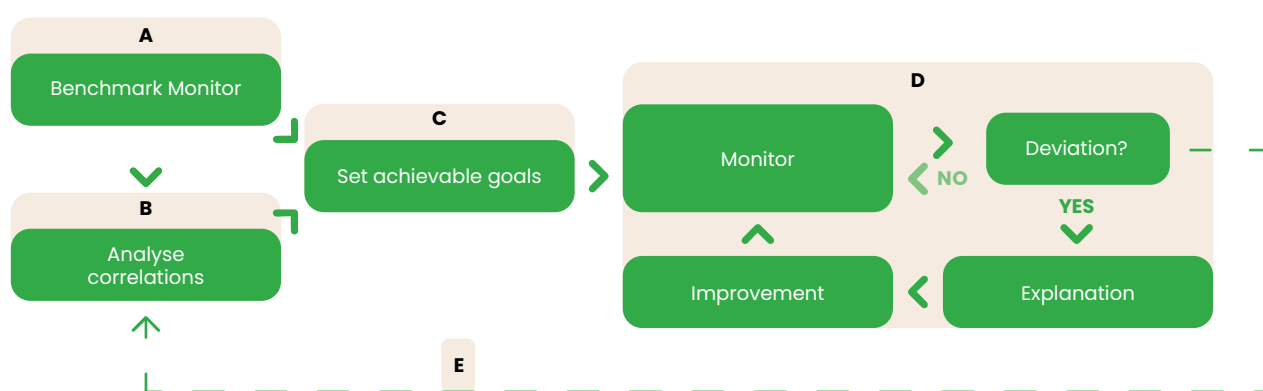


Figure 1: schematic representation of a data management process

As you can see, the data management process above is not a straight line, it is a cycle. There is a large, lower-frequency cycle (A-C) of benchmarking and analysis and a small, high-frequency cycle of production monitoring and adjustment (D).

## 3. STEPS OF THE DATA MANAGEMENT PROCESS (A-E)

### 3.1 Step A: Benchmark Monitor

The data management process starts with a benchmark report. We visualise opportunities compared to the top of the market in our Benchmark Monitor, which is sent out every quarter of a year. We receive the most up-to-date data from our customers worldwide on a daily basis. We aggregate these into various anonymous reference lines, also called benchmarks. For a meaningful and high-quality benchmark, **4 factors** are important:



#### 1. Relevance

In the Benchmark Monitor, we compare your company's Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) with a reference in the market that is relevant to you, or in other words with companies that are sufficiently comparable to your company. We can also give you insight into the choices we make in this respect.

We check the data we receive extensively for **accuracy** (also known as validation) and filter them into relevant reference lines. This also means that we filter out as much incorrect data as possible. Capturing results correctly is of course important to determine your true position in the market. To say something about the market, the number of participants in the **reference must also be large enough** to be relevant. Therefore, we look to find the optimum between size of the reference and comparability of participating companies.



#### 2. Consistency in calculations

The data we receive is raw data, from the management systems used by the participants. This system is not necessarily PigExpert. Raw data is fully validated, weighted and calculated on the basis of the Dutch standardisation agreements established by AgroConnect in cooperation with Wageningen University. So we do not collect farm results, but **raw data** that we fully and uniformly process, guaranteeing that farm results are equally calculated and comparable with each other.

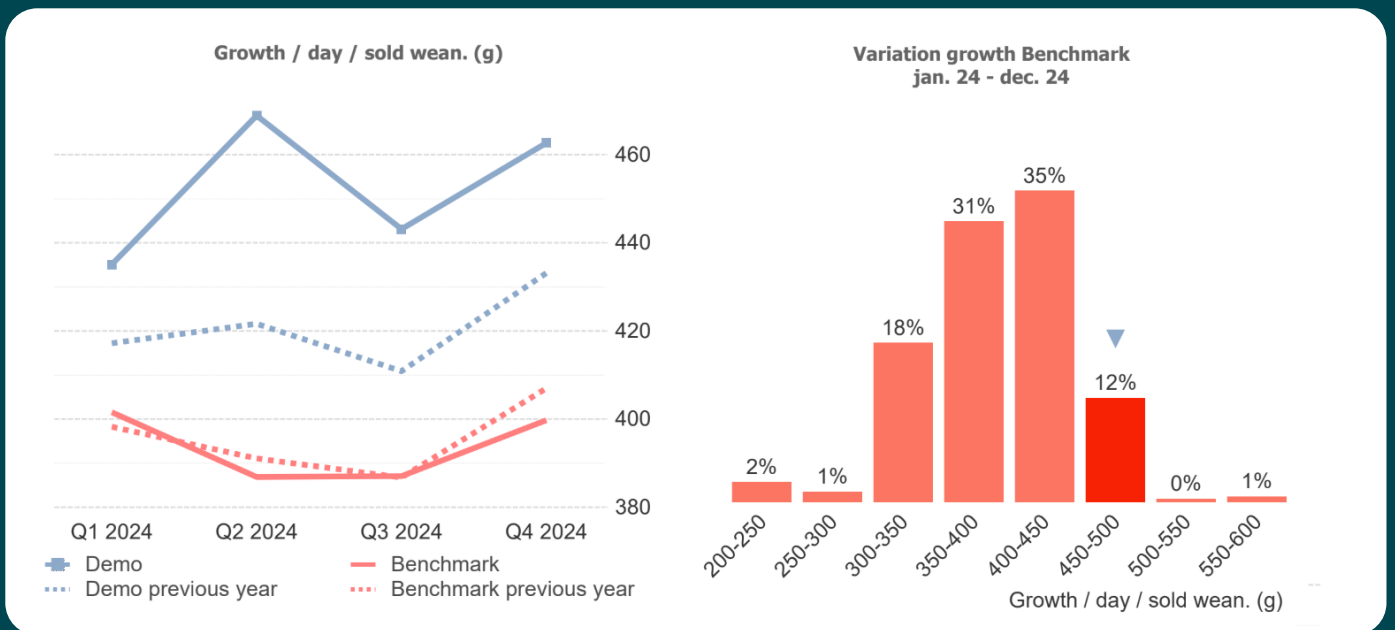


Figure 2: Demo Benchmark Monitor Weaners



### 3. Consistent over time

When we include companies in our benchmarks, we always include the **full history** of these companies. This means that a reference line over several years (see figure 2) is based on the same companies for each individual year. This ensures that you can actually compare the trend line of your results with the trend line of the market.



### 4. Impartial

AgroVision is a service provider on data. As such, we are committed to **accuracy and independency**. Our Benchmark Monitor is an impartial view on the results in the market, which we compare with your results. Sometimes you are influenced by stories about top results from others, or disappointing results are glossed over. Do other companies indeed suffer from seasonal fluctuations, and to the same extent? We substantiate for you whether said results are actually achieved in the market and how widespread they are.

## 3.2 Step B: Setting achievable goals

Now that we have determined good benchmarks, the question is how to use our Benchmark Monitor properly. From this report, you will learn more about your position in the market for productivity. Are you at the top of the market, or are some of your results rather average or somewhat below average?

You can use a Benchmark Monitor for the following purposes:



**1. Motivation and confidence:** You and your team can see in which areas your company is performing well or improving. This is obviously nice to see and gives you confidence about the future.



**2. Seizing growth opportunities:** You start looking for your best opportunities to grow. In which specific areas do you perform just above average or worse than the market? This is good news! Because these are often the points where you can improve your business results the fastest and most efficiently.

You use the Benchmark Monitor as a strength-weakness analysis and as a basis for an action plan for the coming months. Where are the best opportunities for improvement, where will you and your team focus on in the coming period?



**3. Setting achievable goals:** Only achievable goals are acceptable and motivating for the team that is working daily to improve your results. But what is achievable? What is realistic? For this, you don't just look at an average reference line, but also at the spread. Based on the spread in the market, you can set realistic goals you want to achieve in the coming months. So not arbitrary targets based on what is thought to be possible, but an actual look at what is achievable.

## 3.3 Step C: Analyse correlations

To achieve the set goals, you need to know where you might be able to make improvements. Some indicators may be found in the Benchmark Monitor. For example, you may see a possible relationship between the high number of weaned piglets in the first lactation and disappointing results in the second and third cycle in terms of the number of piglets born. You might also see a relationship between weaning weights, feed conversion and feed costs in piglets. However, the Benchmark Monitor is only a comparison of the most important Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). To discover, confirm or deny the real causes, you often need to go into the barns and dive deeper into your data.

You will look for deviating production factors that may influence your results negatively or positively, such as water and feed intake, climate, age and weight at first mating, weight loss in the farrowing house and so on. You can discover many of these relationships in cycle analyses in PigExpert or another management system.

## PigExpert

*We have developed PigExpert so that standard analyses are extremely flexible to adjust, allowing you to check all possible correlations. Our customer service would love to help you investigate your questions. In addition, we provide many training courses for pig farmers and consultants regarding the Benchmark Monitor and analysis.*

**Return on data!**

### 3.4 Step D: Monitor > deviation? > explanation > adjustment

Once you have your targets and influencing production factors clear, you start making adjustments based on facts. We help you easily monitor the data relevant to your goals using one of our Production Monitors for sows, piglets, fatteners, feed, growth, water and climate. **Today's data is much more valuable than yesterday's data**, let alone a month ago. After all, you don't read old newspapers!

Using these monitors, you can continuously track whether there may be deviations in the production factors that affect your results. By controlling these factors, you steer towards the goals you have set in relation to the Benchmark Monitor. Based on these goals, you have taken measures to ensure better results.

When monitoring, fortunately in most cases you will not see any deviation. That gives you peace of mind that you are doing well and you keep on monitoring. If there is a deviation, the cause is usually clear: because you are observing closely, you and the other parties involved can remember what may have gone wrong. You can then make timely adjustments based on facts. This allows you to make better choices **avoid losses and make results more predictable**. In case you cannot find an explanation, you re-analyse the possible causes and identify possible new production factors and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) you want to monitor.

### 3.5 Step E: Repeat cycle

The top performers in the market are constantly looking for opportunities to improve results. This means that the process mentioned above is not a one-off timeline. It is a cycle. So you go through all the steps again when you have achieved your key goals. This keeps you actively working on your growth opportunities and your position in relation to the market.

### 3.6 Efficient use of a Benchmark Monitor, analyses and monitoring.

Comparing to a meaningful benchmark two to four times a year gives you direction for the months ahead. High-frequent comparison of your results with a Benchmark Monitor may give you a good feeling, but is in fact not very useful. A production monitor that provides daily insight into the deviation of your processes all the more!

In addition, you assess on a weekly basis whether the adjustments also show the desired improvement of your results, namely in relation to your history and targets. You now react timely and correctly to deviations in processes and results.

## 4. Benchmark Monitor Weaners

Every quarter, we send out the Benchmark Monitor Piglet Rearing (approx. 7-25 kg). This is a unique benchmark and the only one in the market conducted at scale. The reference group consists of around 4.6 million piglets, from 120 farms, mainly in the Netherlands and Germany. You will receive this BenchmarkMonitor personally and only when you yourself capture and exchange relevant data with us. The results are confidential and may not be published.

We do not need to explain why a BenchmarkMonitor is important. But we are happy to explain why we have developed a monitor specifically for piglet rearing. Relatively little data is collected in this area, making it a blind spot for many companies. This while we see significant differences – and thus opportunities – in the results and underlying figures. Think for instance of weaning weights and their variation, or feed costs in relation to feed conversion and feed price. There are also plenty of growth opportunities in piglet rearing. With the right insights, you can seize them with both hands!





## Summary

Benchmarks are a good tool to determine your company's position in the market. By comparing with a meaningful benchmark, you recognise both the absolute growth and also the relative growth of your company. On which points do you perform below the top of the market, what is causing this and how can you improve? This way, you enable your business to grow continuously.

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