HatchTech selected as US Egg-Tech Prize Finalist

12 December 2023, The Netherlands HatchTech is selected as an Egg-Tech Prize Phase II finalist, which includes a $499,331 award to be used to further research and development in state-of-the-art sexing techniques in hatching eggs. The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) launched the Egg-Tech Prize research competition with Open Philanthropy to avoid the culling of day-old chicks by accurately and rapidly using sexing technologies in the early incubation period.

Male chickens of layer breeds have little economical value to the poultry industry as they cannot lay eggs, grow poorly, and have low meat quality. Male layer chicks are commonly culled immediately after hatching. This poses an ethical concern and compromises chick welfare. FFAR and Open Philanthropy challenged researchers to develop technology to determine the sex of the hatching egg early in the incubation process (in-ovo sexing). Male hatching eggs can be sorted out and used for feed production whereas only female chicks hatch on the 21st day of incubation.

With the Egg-Tech Prize project, HatchTech plans to improve their existing method of analysis. HatchTech's Research Manager Dr. Carla van der Pol: 'We are dedicated to further optimize and innovate the analysis of the sampled fluid by using spectroscopic methods, which would be fast, even more reliable, and purely optical. Our Research Team submitted this proposal to use spectroscopic methods in collaborating with experts from Wageningen University and Research's Adaptation Physiology Group and HatchTech's daughter company Respeggt.'

HatchTech has been developing and commercializing in-ovo sexing technologies since 2017. The current commercial machine, the Circuit, can operate on day 9 of incubation by using a DNA analysis (so called PCR test) with an accuracy of 99 %. The technology is being applied by Respeggt Group and Plantegg GmbH in Europe and is leading to over 1 million chicks "Free of Chick Culling" per month.

Phase II of the Egg-Tech Prize is the final stage of a $6 million program to develop technologies for accurate, high-speed and early-stage in-ovo sexing. Three finalists are receiving funding in Phase II to advance their research over 12 months, after which the Egg-Tech Steering Committee will evaluate their progress to determine the Phase II Prize winner, who will receive the remaining Prize investment. FFAR contributed a total of $745,138 to the three Phase II finalists, which Open Philanthropy matched for a total award of $1,490,276. The Egg-Tech Prize is also supported by $100,000 from USPOULTRY.

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