MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

VER 2026

Periodic Assessment of Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities VER 2026

Final Report of the Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences Panel

Figures and facts of the PANEL of "Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences"

The most relevant results of the VER2026 evaluation within the Panel "Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences" are summarized here. The following data is related to the 5 applications evaluated in 2026 (3 universities and 2 research institutes), and considering 25 outputs per institution/university; thus, a total of 125 outputs were evaluated, together with:

- 10 world-class results: 8.0 % (e.g., compared to a 3.5 % in VER 2022);
- international excellent: 39.2 % (e.g., compared to a 15.3 % in VER 2022);
- international recognized: 34.4 % (e.g., compared to a 33.5 % in VER 2022);
- national recognized: 17.6 % (e.g., compared to a 34.2 % in VER 2022); and,
- below national recognized standards: 0.8 % (e.g., compared to a 13.5 % in VER 2022).

A significant increase in the percentage of outputs obtaining the highest two scores (47.2 % of the contributions in VER 2026, as compared to 18.8 % in VER 2022) was obtained together with a drastic decrease in the outputs obtaining the lowest two scores (18.4 % in 2026 as comparted with 47.7 % in 2022).

Current State of Science in Slovakia

Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences in Slovakia are improving as compared with the available previous reports. As detailed before, more activities under evaluation are

qualified as "world leading" and "internationally excellent". For example, 8 % of the scientific outputs evaluated in this research area were classified as "world leading" and almost 40 % as "International recognized". These figures clearly demonstrate that good health of this area of the science, and indicates that the research ecosystem (Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences) is in a positive evolution towards better year after year.

Research institutions have developed clear strategic directions and strategies towards their internationalization and are providing productive and supportive environments for researchers, including strong international collaborations, local partnerships (with private companies, legislators, etc.) and pathways to generate social, environmental and economic impacts.

A high number of works is being generated through collaboration with consortia from the European Union (EU), an encouraging sign of outward looking research perspectives and increased capacity to engage in support and lead research in important areas, such as climate change impacts, new sources of protein, zero wastes, pet food, and adaptation and effects of large-scale disturbances.

Perceived Strengths

Here are some of the main strengths (with a brief explanation for each one) perceived by the Panel member:

1. The figures revealed by this evaluation, VER 2026 clearly show **solid research in forestry and veterinary sciences**, and relevant work in agronomy, soil science, and plant production.
2. **Strength in traditional areas of research in areas** so important as forest and wood products research.

3. **A focus on local environments and ecosystem management challenges**. Strong local connections with environmental managers.
4. **Strong laboratory and analytical capacity**. A huge investment in providing the research ecosystem with state-of-the-art analytical equipment and pilot plants has been identified, and provides the ecosystem with the strength needed to compete with international research teams in gathering international funds and leading international research consortia.
5. **Growing international linkages**. The number of publications with international coauthors is increasing, clearly showing the involvement of Slovak researchers especially in EU projects and studies.

Perceived Weaknesses

Here are some of the main weaknesses (with a brief explanation for each one) perceived by the Sub-Panel and Panel members:

1. In some "minor" cases, **outdated methodologies** are still used, and this is a result of not enough investment on new equipment and facilities.
2. Institutions rely in several cases in **research articles**, which can be a good summary of the current state of the research topics, but a critical vision of the topics should be incorporated, and these reviews should only be the first step of future deep studies.
3. Research tends to focus on **narrow disciplinary topics**, description of **local issues, situations and processes** and narrowly framed hypotheses. Working with local topics is adequate to demonstrate the importance of the topic and the knowledge of the researchers involved in the studies, but to have a full impact on the international research community, Slovak researchers must clearly demonstrate that this case

studies can be of importance to other countries or societies; in this way, an international point of view will be introduced into their research lines and would make easier for them to apply for international calls and get important funds.

4. **Researchers are participants or minor collaborators in multi-country studies**, contributing data to extend the environmental space of investigation but generally not perceived to be leading the development of ideas and analysis. In any case, this is a first step towards having international experience and getting confidence to go beyond and start leading international consortia and getting strong funding for future proposals.
5. The **impact of the research** conducted is still not fully based on solid information or data (e.g., number of jobs created, number of companies created, etc.). Researchers must FULLY understand the serious need of clearly demonstrating the impact of their research and activities (social impact and creative environment activities) into specific social and economic aspects; this is, providing only general comments on the impact is not valid any longer, and researchers and institutions must provide specific information and solid data directly linked to the results reached during the projects conducted and implemented as how they affect the quality of life of the people.

Recommendations

The members of both the Panel and Sub-Panel on Agricultural, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences make the following recommendations based on all information they have read, discussed and evaluated:

1. Pursue rigorous empirical and analytical work that aims to advance broader scientific knowledge beyond the local environment. State-of-the-art equipment and facilities

are available, but researchers must give a step forward to go beyond their comfort zone and seeks for studies in the frontiers of knowledge.

2. Continue to build international linkages and collaboration. This essential to be able to properly fund their ideas/projects and to work on these ideas from a **multidisciplinary**, **international**, and **practical** perspectives and seeking for **excellence**.
3. Look for opportunities to lead collaborations and contribute more strongly to evidence-driven investigations that deepen understanding of key ecological and environmental processes, and formulas to produce safe and consumer-driven foods for a healthy world, but with enough food for everybody.
4. Build capacity cross-disciplinary investigations that can lead to new insights and modes of action to address global and local environmental challenges, such as the presence of more and more pets in the EU modern families, where there are more cats and dogs than kinds.
5. A way of stimulating the research environment and make it more attractive for young but excellent researchers could be a combination of programs to train them abroad but have them back to the Slovak research ecosystem by offering them their own laboratories and having a **performance-based incentive system**, in which the more active you are for the system (the more high-quality publications you get, the more funds you are able to attract, …) better salary you get.

Definition of Outputs with the Potential to Achieve a High Evaluation in VER

A research document has the potential to achieve a high evaluation in VER when it is conducted to solve a problem of international importance (e.g., it affects to people living in different countries), when it uses state-of-the-art equipment and facilities (if needed to

produce solid data, supporting the working hypothesis), it is conducted by a multidisciplinary team of highly recognized researchers (that will find a solid solution, with no holes or missing points), and which results and conclusions have a global and significant impact in the society and, if applicable, can be transformed into practical applications.

Panel member

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