G20 agricultural research systems address food security

Held on 12 and 13 September in Montpellier (Agropolis International) at the initiative of the French Presidency of the G20 and under the food security pillar of the development action plan, the first meeting of the G20 Development group on Agricultural Research for Development (ARD) was devoted to the promotion of scientific partnerships for food security.

The conference received financial support from the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon, Agreennium, CIRAD and IRD, and was organized by the French ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) and Agropolis International.

High-level representation

The conference was attended by over one hundred participants from the G20 countries, guest countries (Spain, Ethiopia, Singapore) and seven international organizations: the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), the World Bank (WB), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the International Foundation for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

David Nabarro, the Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition of the Secretary-General, of the United Nations, attended both days of the conference.

The French Minister for Cooperation, Henri de Raincourt, closed the G20 conference on Agricultural Research for Development by pointing out that food security would be an even more pressing issue in the future in the light of current demographic trends. Food security is currently one of the priorities of the French G20 Presidency, and the Montpellier conference was part of that agenda.

Promising results

The meeting agenda and concept note, which presented the four sessions and the issues under discussion, were prepared by a steering committee chaired by France (MAEE) comprising Brazil, Canada, Japan and four international organizations (CGIAR, FAO, GFAR and WB).

The key points on which progress was made at the conference, as presented by Bérengère Quincy, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of France to FAO, IFAD and WFP (the World Food Programme), are as follows:

- **The G20 needs to be part of the dynamic of cooperation implemented pursuant to the GCARD* conference held every two years by GFAR and CGIAR.**
- Since its reform, CGIAR has been playing a decisive role in the development and implementation of global research programmes to meet the major challenges posed by global issues on food security, fight against rural poverty, and sustainable management of natural resources.
- There is a need to develop innovative partnerships, such as triangular cooperation and public-private partnerships (PPI), based on the G20 countries’ voluntary commitment.
- The implementation of the following platforms was proposed and has been widely supported:
  - a neutral platform to discuss global foresight exercises under the responsability of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR),
  - a platform on tropical agriculture to provide capacity building for stakeholders in the South and serve as a tool for distance learning and information sharing.

The Minister for Cooperation said that the concrete results of this conference would also appear in the recommendations of the first G20 ministerial meeting on development, to be held 23 September, and in the late 2011 Cannes declaration.

The holding of this conference in Montpellier has meant that G20 delegations were received in the city chosen to host the headquarters of the CGIAR Consortium.

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For further information:


**CGIAR Consortium becomes an international Organization**

At this conference, the French Minister for Cooperation, along with the Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to France, signed the agreement, prepared by the MAEE, establishing the CGIAR Consortium as an international Organization.

He was glad that France has been hosting the CGIAR Consortium headquarters since March 2011, thanks to synergies developed between the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon and the State.

The agreement, of which France is the depositary, is now open for signature in Paris.

For further information:


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**G20 agricultural research to work with CGIAR to address global challenges**

The French Commission for International Agricultural Research (CRAI), together with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), has signed a declaration seeking to better coordinate the efforts of the different organizations concerning research and partnerships.

On the occasion of the G20 Intergovernmental Conference on Agricultural Research for Development held in Montpellier on 12 and 13 September 2011 (see opposite), the CRAI and the CGIAR Consortium signed a declaration of common intent at Agropolis International.

By signing the declaration, the research organizations involved in CRAI and CGIAR Consortium commit themselves to better coordinate their efforts to meet global challenges such as poverty reduction, food security and the management of natural resources. This coordination will take place at the level of research projects, partnerships, and each partner’s frameworks and strategic visions. It will tend towards an orchestration of global agricultural research to promote effective development.

For further information:


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**New director for Agropolis International**

Paul Luu, 48, formerly chief engineer in the bridges, water and forests administration, holds an agronomy engineer degree and a doctorate in the biology of individuals and populations.

He began his career in research and development positions at the international level, and subsequently exercised ministerial responsibilities relating to cooperation with foreign countries and French overseas territories.

During the past six years, he was director of the Office de développement de l’économie agricole d’outre-mer (ODDEADM).

Mr. Luu has set himself the goal of enhancing the clarity and positioning of the Montpellier agro-environment cluster at the international level, in research and training alike. His international experience, both in foreign countries and French overseas territories, is a real asset in his new duties.
The Department of Hérault and the chilean Region Coquimbo pursue their cooperation

The major cooperation fields are currently water and environment management, aquaculture, biotechnology, viti-viniculture and oenotourism.

This has allowed so far 57 crossed missions of French and Chilean teams, 25 exchange of trainees, 12 training periods for Chilean researchers in France, recruitment of 3 French post-docs or researchers in Chile, 7 common projects for international applications, 25 participations to French-Chilean study trips and workshops co-organised in Chile.

This delegation included 13 persons representing the Regional Government of Coquimbo (Gobierno Regional de Coquimbo), the Faculty of Medicine of the Northern Catholic University (UCN), the Conseil général of Coquimbo, the Coquimbo government, the Sernatur (Tourism National Service) and the Conseil général de l’Hérault.

In specific meetings and field trips, the visitors have met several members of Agropolis International (INRA, Montpellier SupAgro, IRD, IPEMER, Cerema, CNRS, Université Montpellier 2), the Regional Academic Hospital Centre of Montpellier-Nîmes (CHRU), as well as different structures related to water governance (VERSeau Développement, Eau, Pôle de compétitivité EAU, Syndicat Mixte de la Vallée du Lez, Observatoire Départemental de l’Eau et de l’Environnement, Syndicat des Etangs Littoraux, Conservatoire des Espaces Naturels Lacustres, Site de l’Etag de Thau).

They also met Paul Lui, Director of Agropolis International in order to assess the contribution of Agropolis International to this agreement.

This mission was followed by a visit of Professor Mario Edding, Director of CIDTA (UCN), who met several regional scientific entities with the aim of developing between Hérault and UCN both scientific cooperation (oceanography and marine sciences, biotechnology and technological platforms, exploitation of seaweeds) and academic cooperation (teachers and students mobility, exchange of experience on training courses and on the structure of the scientific community in Coquimbo and Montpellier).

The session was attended by some 100 people whose responsibility it is to manage the arrival of a foreign PhD student, professor or researcher at a research or higher education institution belonging to the scientific community of Montpellier and environs.

The purpose was to take stock of the regulations in effect and to let participants know where to find the information they need to handle the requisite administrative procedures for international researchers to stay in France (more than 50 different nationalities every year).

For further information: www.agropolis.org/practical/scientists.php

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International mobility for researchers

At the initiative of Montpellier SupAgro, a number of Agropolis International members are banding together to endow a World Food Systems (ADM) chair in Montpellier. Officially approved by UNESCO in May 2011, the chair should begin its activities as of autumn 2011 with financial support from Agropolis Foundation.

Montpellier now has thirty training groups and research laboratories working in the field of food. The UNESCO World Food System chair will be part of a UNITWIN network bringing together a dozen foreign universities.

The project, entrusted to Jean-Louis Rastoin, emeritus professor at Montpellier SupAgro, was developed by a multidisciplinary working group made up of lecturers and scientists at several Agropolis International member establishments (CIRAD, IAME, IAMM, CEMAGREF, INRA, IRD, Montpellier SupAgro and the three Montpellier universities).

The ADM chair’s activities will revolve around three concepts: the right to food, food security and food sovereignty. The chair’s purpose is to contribute to the construction of more sustainable food systems worldwide. Hence, it will develop a knowledge base by mobilising the research of biotechnological and social science laboratories belonging to its UNITWIN network. Some of the chair’s potential projects are: the establishment of ECTS-based learning paths at Montpellier SupAgro and at French and foreign institutions belonging to the UNITWIN network; the launch of a mobile continuous training module on food security; the organisation of an annual international seminar on a topic related to world food supply; and of course the creation of a website.

Official UNESCO approval for the World Food Systems chair came through the active support of the French National Commission for UNESCO and of Agropolis International members, foreign universities, the Agropolis Foundation, the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon, and civil society stakeholders.


La Lettre internationale d’Agropolis

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A visit to France by Elinor Ostrom, Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009

Invited to France for a tribute to all of her work, Elinor Ostrom, professor of political science at Indiana University (Bloomington, USA), and founding member of the Center for the Study of Institutional Diversity at the University of Arizona (Arizona State University, USA), was welcomed in Montpellier on 20 and 21 June 2011.

During her visit to Montpellier, Ms Ostrom gave a public lecture (Corum, Montpellier), "Towards a third way between the State and the market for collective and supportive management of the environment and resources", which attracted upwards of 600 people. She also held discussions with French and foreign PhD students and scientists in a master class and research school on the theme of "Collective Action: Epistemology, Theory, Methodology.” Agropolis International, CIRAD and Université Montpellier 1 were mandated to organise this event with the support of the Languedoc-Roussillon region.

For further information: www.agropolis.org/news/elinor-ostrom.php

On 12 October 2009, the Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to Elinor Ostrom, the first female recipient. Essentially, this great scientist’s work is concerned with the concept of “common pool resources”, she formulates in scientific terms the concept of collective governance of natural resources, in the North and the South alike, in the face of such major issues as global change, sustainable development and the knowledge economy. Moreover, Ms Ostrom concerns of collective action and self-organisation as a third way of action in human societies, between privatisation and State management.

The City of Montpellier, an Agropolis International community member, has been chosen as France’s “Biodiversity Capital” for 2011

The City of Montpellier has been chosen as France’s “Biodiversity Capital” for 2011 in a competition offering rewards for local authorities committed to preserving biodiversity. This year’s theme for the competition, organized by Natureparif (the regional agency for nature and biodiversity in Île-de-France), was “Biodiversity and Biodiversity Capital” for 2011: For 2011: Town Planning”, and its emphasis was on policies designed to protect both the natural world and the built environment. The competition is held under the auspices of the French environment ministry and is supported by numerous partner associations (LPO, OPIE, ONF, UNAF, WWF) and networks. It also enjoys support from the European Commission (Life+ programme) and is held simultaneously in five countries: Germany, Spain, France, Slovakia and Hungary.

For further information: www.montpellier.fr/3313-biodiversite.htm

Agropolis International is responsible for the secretariat of the European Society for Agronomy (ESA) for a two-year term*

First realisation: www.european-agronomy.org

Agropolis International’s coordination and hosting of an English website, which will be a platform for exchanges between ESA members…

The site has a twofold function:
- As an internal platform for ESA members designed as a forum for sharing knowledge and tools, open to researchers, teachers, development and business engineers, and students involved in crops, cropping systems and agro-ecology.
- As a tool for promoting ESA activities to raise the profile of European excellence in the field of agricultural research.

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* A decision recorded at Agro 2010, the Agro Paris International Week held in Montpellier in 2010 by Agropolis International in partnership with French research and agro-educational organisations and the French Association for Agronomy (ADA).

Agropolis International is an international non-profit association, created in 1990, is intended to:
- promote European research in agronomy and international agro-ecology links through biennial conferences and international symposiums,
- promote the dissemination of information by means of the European Journal of Agronomy, a newsletter and a website,
- strengthen links between agricultural researchers and European stakeholders and rural people as well as those with its partners in the South.

ESA has national representations in all 20 European countries.

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ESA has national representations in all 20 European countries.

This multi-stakeholder project, focusing on four broad themes (agriculture/food/health, energy demand, cultures and societies, space/resources/land), mobilized 136 experts from the northern, southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, belonging to some sixty organizations (research and training bodies, economic development players—competitiveness clusters, experts and enterprises), with strong involvement of scientists of the regional community.

ARP-PARME synthesis is available online in French, English and Arabic.