

An Argentinian LabIntex set up at Agropolis International

Agropolis International signed a technical partnership agreement with the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA) in late March 2012 at Buenos Aires (Argentina) to set up its first LabIntex (Virtual Laboratories of INTA Abroad) in Montpellier (France)—it is modeled on EMBRAPA's Brazilian Labex and is supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). For the purposes of this Dossier d'Agropolis devoted to EMBRAPA's Labex-Europe, we asked the President of INTA the three following questions:

► **How is INTA currently structured and what are its priorities?**

INTA is a government organization associated with the Argentinian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Production and Fisheries and has agencies throughout the country. It includes 15 regional centers, 6 research centers, 50 research stations, 20 institutes and 350 technical support units. Its priorities include research (organized in 13 national

programs) and technological innovation in industries, regions and territories, with the aim of improving competitiveness, preserving environmental quality and ensuring social equity. Its subsidiary INTEA S.A. deals with marketing the technologies, seeds, seeders, registered trademarks, patent licenses and other derivative products of research. It also has a foundation (*Fundación ArgenINTA*) that finances the development of its research and technical support activities and collaborations with private companies*.

► **What are the main objectives of LabIntex?**

LabIntex intends to carry out advanced research with the aim of developing innovations, and also to identify and develop scientific cooperations by forming innovation networks between organizations in Argentina, France and other European countries. By being positioned on research fronts, LabIntex will thus be able to contribute to boosting the competitiveness and sustainability of Argentinian agricultural production.



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► **How do you view the interaction between LabIntex, Labex-Europe and Agropolis International?**

The strategic presence of EMBRAPA's Labex-Europe and INTA's LabIntex in France will enable Brazil and Argentina to be involved in top-notch research by cooperating with their European partners. Agropolis International, as a cooperation platform, facilitates interactions between these two laboratories with stakeholders of the European scientific community.

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▲ Agreement signed by **Carlos Casamiquela**, President of INTA (left) and **Bernard Hubert**, President of Agropolis International (right), in the presence of **Lorenzo Basso**, Secretario de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca / Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca (center) and **Damian Bergel**, Export Adviser at the Mission économique/French Embassy in Argentina (not in the photo).

Prospects of the EMBRAPA Labex Program

As the 40th anniversary of its founding approaches—which will be celebrated in April 2013—EMBRAPA has reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable agricultural development. Its Secretariat for International Affairs is also strengthening the Labex Programme in order to enhance its effectiveness as an instrument for promoting international research networks.

EMBRAPA proposes to partially integrate international bilateral mechanisms for funding research projects into the Labex Program. These will be linked to scientific training programmes organized by EMBRAPA or other Brazilian agencies. One example is the strengthened partnership between EMBRAPA, Agropolis International and Agropolis Fondation on the plant improvement theme via the International Advanced Biology Consortium (CIBA).

Through partnerships managed by Labex in Europe and the United States concerning the priority topics of this program, professionals from EMBRAPA or other Brazilian research institutions who have been selected for postdoctoral scholarships or sabbatical leaves could collaborate in activities proposed by Labex researchers. The so-called 'researcher clusters' created in this way will enhance synergy between Brazilian research networks and their correspondents within Europe by benefiting from institutional anchorage and infrastructures.

Concerning the selection of thematic areas developed under the Labex Program, EMBRAPA has created conditions to streamline them with the priorities of the

EMBRAPA Management System (EMS). The creation of research project portfolios and other mechanisms in the EMS will contribute to this streamlining process, thus strengthening partnerships between Brazilian networks and excellence research teams from other parts of the world.

Finally, in the coming years, the EMBRAPA Executive Directorate is encouraging interactions between Labex teams via researchers working on the same research theme. Such interactions, associated with the above-described mechanisms, will ensure a seamless dialogue between Labex teams.

In the climate change scenario projected for the near future, agriculture must be sustainable and ensure the preservation of natural resources while feeding the global population with healthy nutritional foods. The Labex Program will thus act as a strategic tool to complement the international activities of EMBRAPA, which has a growing responsibility to demonstrate the usefulness of agriculture as a solution to those global challenges, by generating knowledge and by developing innovative agricultural technologies.

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