

>WHAT'S ON IN MONTPELLIER?

The CGIAR Consortium Office is now hosted at Agropolis International

An interview with Lloyd Le Page, Chief Executive Officer, and Anne-Marie Izac, Chief Scientific Officer



Left to right: Enrica Porcari, Anne-Marie Izac, Françoise de Chevigny, Lloyd Le Page, Susan Faure, Elise Perset

■ **The Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers was established in 2010 to coordinate and support the development of research programs at the 15 CGIAR centers. Montpellier was selected to host its headquarters, which have been set up in the Agropolis International building for a month pending the construction of the new building funded by Languedoc-Roussillon Region (France).**

■ **Agropolis International Newsletter (AI): The Consortium Office has been set up in the Agropolis International building in Montpellier for a month now. What is your feeling?**

Lloyd Le Page (LLP) & Anne-Marie Izac (AMI): We received an overwhelmingly warm reception from the Agropolis International team and Languedoc-Roussillon Region, which we have certainly appreciated.

The French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has also reiterated its full support for the Consortium's initiative to acquire an international organization status. The offices that we have been given are highly suitable and we are very pleased to be situated at the core of the regional scientific community.

We are very grateful to the Agropolis International team for facilitating our move, which has enabled us to keep up our activities through this transition period.

■ **AI: How many people are on the Consortium team?**

LLP & AMI: We currently have 7 staff. We think that it will increase to 12-15 by midyear.

■ **AI: What was the basis of the choice of Montpellier to host the Consortium?**

LLP & AMI: In June 2010, the CGIAR Consortium Board drew up a document stipulating the conditions required for hosting the Consortium Office. Bids were submitted by five candidate cities* and, following a transparent and rigorous selection procedure, the French bid was accepted in October 2010.

Technically, Montpellier more convincingly fulfilled the different conditions in the bid proposal: independent facilities, rational costs, efficient infrastructures (especially in the fields of health and education), and a major asset is the highly renowned agroenvironmental academic and scientific platforms. The Montpellier candidacy benefitted from top level political support since Carlos Perez del Castillo, the Consortium Board Chair, had received several letters of commitment from the President of the French Republic, as well as from the French Ministers of Foreign and European Affairs, and Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Finally, the proposal of the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council to finance the construction of a new building to host the Consortium was especially appreciated. Montpellier was chosen on the basis of all of these combined features, and thus making Montpellier a world capital for agricultural research.

The Consortium is also grateful to France for accepting to be the depositary of the treaty granting it an International Organization status.

■ **AI: What are the Consortium's current links with the Montpellier scientific community and its expectations with respect to this community?**

LLP & AMI: The Consortium has yet to establish very close ties with the regional scientific community, but we hope that setting up our headquarters at Agropolis International will facilitate tight links with this community, whose objectives match ours.

We actually share a mandate and concerns with research institutions like CIRAD and IRD, such as seeking appropriate solutions—along with developing countries—to international agriculture and development issues, as well as an institutional approach with Agreenium an institution which, like us, aims to pool, coordinate and promote synergy among various but related initiatives and approaches.

We are delighted to collaborate with colleagues of different cultures with mutual objectives—finding sustainable solutions to the challenges which the international agricultural research has to face.

■ **AI: What are the Consortium's key focus of interest?**

LLP & AMI: CGIAR is striving to reduce poverty and hunger, improve human health and nutrition, and enhance ecosystem resilience through high quality international agricultural research and partnerships.

The Consortium is in particular devoted to fostering scientific synergies and the efficiency of CGIAR research programs (see box).

* Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Nairobi (Kenya), New Delhi (India), Rome (Italy) and Montpellier (France)



CGIAR in brief

- Founded in 1971
- A membership of 64 public and private stakeholders
- Cosponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and World Bank (WB)

- Supporting 15 international research centers
- More than 8 500 researchers and staff
- Present in over 100 countries
- Annual budget of around US\$600 million

The new CGIAR since 2010

- Two complementary core pillars set up:
 - The CGIAR Fund harmonizes donors' financial contributions
 - The Consortium Office is a separate legal entity uniting the 15 research centers
- Development of the Strategy and Results Framework (SRF) and 15 CGIAR Research Programmes (CRPs):

□ Sustainable management of natural resources base:

- Climate change, agriculture and food security
- Forests, trees and agroforestry—livelihoods, landscapes and governance
- Water, land and ecosystems

□ Improving production systems:

- Integrated agricultural production systems for the poor and vulnerable in dry areas
- Harnessing the development potential of aquatic agricultural systems for the poor and vulnerable
- Integrated systems for the humid tropics

□ Improving nutrition and diets:

- Agriculture for improved nutrition and health

□ Improving policy and market environment:

- Policies, institutions, markets to strengthen food security and incomes for the poor

□ Improving productivity:

- Maize – global alliance for improving food security and livelihoods of the resource poor in the developing world
- Wheat - global alliance for improving food security and livelihoods of the resource poor in the developing world
- More meat, milk and fish by and for the poor
- Roots, tubers and bananas for food security and income
- Grain legumes: enhanced food security, nutritional balance, economic growth and soil health for smallholders farmers
- Dryland cereals: food security and growth for the world's most vulnerable
- Global rice science partnership (GRISP), cf. p. 2

>A FEW WORDS FROM PRESIDENT OF AGROPOLIS INTERNATIONAL



As President of Agropolis International, I am especially pleased that Montpellier was selected to host the Consortium. This outcome is in some ways the shared success of everyone who has worked both locally in Montpellier, since the founding of Agropolis International 25 years ago and during its reinforcement a few years ago, and nationally by focusing French agricultural research expertise in Montpellier. This has given rise to a research cluster of European

and global distinction, attracting colleagues from throughout the world, especially now with the presence of CGIAR, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year!

However, we cannot simply sit back and rest on our laurels. We now have to take advantage of this recognition and maintain our collective momentum by broadening our usual scope to encompass environmental, nutritional and human health issues, as well as others pertaining to the development of human societies. Agriculture is now central to global social challenges, well beyond

the usual questions that concern agriculture.

It is up to us to address these concerns by enhancing interactions between different disciplines and complementary topics. We must also further develop our international scientific collaborations, by organizing our training programme at all levels and focusing our research on social change and innovation dynamics as well. The challenge is to help solve serious problems that are bound to arise over the next 50 years—improving food security for poor people, balancing the diets of

the expected future global population of 9 billion people, managing climate change and preserving the ecological functions that ensure the survival of all life on Earth.

Although the Montpellier scientific community is dealing with these challenges, we should not overlook the fact that it is essential to collaborate directly with other French and European organisations—after all, we are not alone in this task or top experts in everything!

Bernard Hubert,
President of Agropolis International

At Agropolis International: next Consortium Board Meeting—May 5-6 and meeting of the Board chairs and directors of the international research centers—May 3-4



Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon
World centre for agricultural,
food and environmental sciences

www.agropolis.org

>TRAINING

A new engineering specialisation oriented towards agricultural and agrifood innovation occupations

■ In September 2011, Montpellier SupAgro, in partnership with CIRAD, will be offering a new engineering science specialisation entitled 'Innovations in agricultural and agrifood systems in the world' (ISAM). This course targets Engineering graduates (M.Eng) in Life Sciences, i.e. Agronomy, Agriculture, Agrifood Science, etc.



This course will enhance students' knowledge on agricultural and agrifood systems, enable them to acquire analytical skills and expertise so as to be able to prepare and make strategic decisions on organizational and technological innovations, and to advise private and public decision-makers (companies, professional organizations, local authorities, States, international organizations, etc.). It will pave the way to senior staff jobs. Seven months of this 12-month course will be devoted to theoretical training and group studies, followed by 5 months to prepare and undertake a professional assignment.

The syllabus was designed to address major agricultural issues that mobilize public and private stakeholders in industrialized and developing countries—sustainably feeding populations and ensuring their access to food of sufficient quality and quantity, minimizing the ecological footprint of commodity subsectors and ensuring a fair income for farmers.

>ZOOM

The Center for Biology and Management of Populations (CBGP)—a joint research unit



■ Developing research in the fields of systematics, genetics, ecology and evolution of populations and communities of organisms that are important for agriculture, human health and biodiversity in a global change setting..

The Center for Biology and Management of Populations (CBGP), a joint research unit involving CIRAD, INRA, IRD and Montpellier SupAgro, has 75 permanent staff members, including 36 scientists and 16 PhD candidates. The unit is located on one of the research campuses of the Agropolis International scientific community at Baillarguet .

Research conducted by CBGP is focused on the biology of populations and communities of organisms that require management as they are a major challenge for agriculture, forests, human health or biodiversity conservation.

CBGP aims to characterize this biodiversity and gain insight into the structure and factors that modify it so as to be able to predict its evolution.

Various biological models are studied: arthropods, nematodes and rodents, as well as communities of potentially associated organisms. The unit studies population structures within species, species complexes and communities interacting (host/parasite, prey/predator) in response to environmental (bioinva-

sions, climate change) and human (evolution of agricultural practices, GMOs, habitat fragmentation) pressure. The research is geared towards the development of conceptual, theoretical and technical tools required for the identification, monitoring and management of these interacting organisms and communities.

This primarily involves identifying and determining the biological entities and assessing diversity through the development of molecular biology and computer tools to facilitate and enhance taxonomy and systematics research.

CBGP has expertise in systematics and maintains large collections—over a million specimens of around 60 000 insect species, 15 000 osteological specimens, and 30 000 rodent tissue samples, 15 000 nematode slide samples, and 20 000 mite slide samples.

Some collections (e.g. Tenthredinoidea, Chalcidoidea, Agromyzidae) are larger, in terms of species, than collections hosted by the French *Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle*, Paris. CBGP thus maintains databases in the fields of entomology, acarology, nematology and mammalogy, pooling taxonomic biological and georeferenced information. CBGP is involved in international projects aimed at developing a barcode of living organisms to serve as a standard taxonomy tool (Consortium for the Barcode Of Life).

CBGP is also focused on determining the origin, history and spatiotemporal distribution of this diversity by studying: (i) the diversity of these organisms on different geographical scales, (ii) factors affecting the geographical distribution of the studied entities, and (iii) phylogenetic relationships between the different entities. It is now possible—thanks to the

Montpellier SupAgro organized an open discussion day on 'the development of sustainable food occupations' to mark the launching of this new subsector—this event was an astounding success.

More than 120 participants attended the conferences, workshops and a roundtable presided over by professionals (economists, sociologists, researchers, teachers, etc.) who came to discuss and offer their opinions on sustainable food issues and specific skills and expertise that should be developed to address this global challenge in the future.

For further information
www.supagro.fr/web/pages/?id=19&page=652
www.supagro.fr/web/pages/?id=19&page=658&id_page=2520

development of georeferenced databases—to explain the distribution of certain taxa according to factors such as climatic conditions and available resources, thus boosting insight into mechanisms underlying the formation of communities of organisms. These different approaches are essential for characterizing studied taxa and more accurately determining their evolutionary history, especially with respect to invasive species, pathogen reservoirs, and crop and stored produce pests.

CBGP has developed a broad network of collaborations and scientific partnerships.

■ In Montpellier (France), the unit is collaborating directly with other joint research units to develop research in the fields of evolutionary and ecological biology (AMAP, CEFE, ISEM, MIVEGEC)*.

■ Nationally, CBGP partnerships are formalized by French National Research Agency (ANR) projects which the unit coordinates (e.g. the GenoPheno project: genomic and phenological features of the pine processionary caterpillar, *Thaumetopoea pityocampa*) or



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GRiSP: Global Rice Scientific Partnership

■ 1st CRP launched in partnership with the Montpellier scientific community

Partners: Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice), International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), IRD, CIRAD and Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences.

Objective: to pool scientific knowledge and technical skills and expertise on rice in order to enhance productivity and nutritional quality, while reducing the environmental impact of production and fostering the performance of rice agroecosystems.

For further information
www.agropolis.org [Search "GRiSP"]



participates in (e.g. GenEvolSpe, on the genetics and evolution of specialization in phytophagous or predatorial mites; VirAphid, on sustainable rules for managing virus and aphid evolution through host plant resistance; CeroPath, on the community ecology of rodents and their pathogens in Southeast Asia).

■ Internationally, CBGP maintains a broad network of European collaborations (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK). This network is mainly the result of several European programmes (e.g. DAISIE, EDEN**).

■ Outside Europe especially as part of the R-Syst network***, the research unit collaborates with several American, Chinese, Australian and Brazilian laboratories. Many sustainable collaborations are also under way in developing countries. Several rodent research programmes involve partners from Southeast Asia (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia). However, a major share of the collaborations are with partners in Africa, especially Madagascar, and West and North Africa.

(*) UMR AMAP: Botany and Computational Plant Architecture - <http://amap.cirad.fr>
 CEFE: Centre of Evolutionary and Functional Ecology - www.cefe.cnrs.fr
 ISEM: Institut des Sciences de l'Evolution de Montpellier - www.isem.cnrs.fr/
 MIVEGEC: Infectious Diseases and Vectors: Ecology, Genetics, Evolution and Control www.mivegac.ird.fr

(**) DAISIE: Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe - www.europe-aliens.org
 EDEN: Emerging Diseases in a changing European eNvironment - www.eden-fp6project.net et EDENext : www.edenext.eu

(***) R-Syst: Systematic Network u3.pierroton.inra.fr/r-syst

For further information
www.montpellier.inra.fr/CBGP

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>REPORTS ON EVENTS

■ GlobalHort, the Global Horticulture Initiative, celebrated its 5th anniversary on 8 April 2011 at Agropolis International, Montpellier (France)

At this event, the Consortium reviewed its activities and outlined its objectives for the coming years. The anniversary presentations and videos are available on the Agropolis International website.

For further information
www.agropolis.org



QR Code (Video)

La Lettre internationale d'Agropolis

Director in chief: Bernard Hubert
 Chief editor: Michel Salas
 Coordinator: Nathalie Villeméjeanne
 Editorial board: Sylvie Albert, Fabien Boulter, Paula Dias, Éric Fargeas, Claudine Soudais, Michel Soutié
 English version: David Manley
 Layout and graphics: Agropolis Productions
 Printing: Offset2000 (France) - N°ISSN 2100-2398

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