

Digital Technology and Mediterranean Agriculture Challenges and Impact

Press Release

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SIA2017, Round table CIHEAM/AGREENIUM, Stand INRA



A round table was held at the “Salon International de l’Agriculture” in Paris, on the 28 of February 2017, on the occasion of the launch of the 38th CIHEAM Watch Letter co-published with Agreenium and that provides a Mediterranean overview of rural and digital innovations at work. In presence of Mr Cosimo Lacirignola, Secretary General of the CIHEAM and Mrs Marion Guillou, President of the Governing Board of the Agreenium, the discussions allowed to identify levers for actions and perspectives in this region that is faced with several challenges such as producing more (due to demographic growth) with less due to the scarcity of resources and better respecting environmental and social requirements especially in rural territories that are sometimes fragile.

During the round table, Cosimo Lacirignola, SG of the CIHEAM, stressed that the expansion of digital technologies is a particularly strategic issue as it is facilitating the emergence of more competitive and responsible agriculture from a social, environmental and economic perspective. Focusing his speech on youth training and employment, he noted that inequalities between countries and within rural territories still remain where several young people benefit very little from the positive spin-offs of innovation. He emphasises the importance of thinking and building an ecosystem revolving around innovation where farmers, public authorities, research and training centres are involved...

Marion Guillou, President of the Governing Board of Agreenium, stated that “smart rural areas” also exist in the Mediterranean and lead to new entrepreneurial forms combining social and digital innovation. She recalled that the projects conducted by the members of AGREENIUM, that is, research centres and higher education institutions, are aimed at making digital technologies a powerful lever for the improvement of economic, environmental and social performance of agriculture in the Mediterranean.

Christophe Guizard (IRSTEA Montpellier) mentioned the federative actions in France conducted for the development of digital innovation in the agricultural sector. He stressed on the necessary collective effort in order to speed up its dissemination. He also noted that farmers of both Mediterranean shores are faced with the same challenges and they also aspire to the same progress especially the reduction of difficult working conditions or improved yields.



Christian Germain (Bordeaux Sciences agro), who contributed to the Watch Letter, stressed the importance of existing partnerships in digital education between Mediterranean countries, noting that the use of digital technology by the community of teachers and researchers is a crucial factor in the dissemination of knowledge at the service of an efficient agriculture.

Pascal Bergeret, Director of the CIHEAM Agronomic Institute CIHEAM based in Montpellier, provided some insights on agricultural research and agronomic higher education in the Mediterranean and emphasised the need to invest in infrastructure to enable the widespread use of digital technology. His speech was also aimed at recalling that today data is mostly provided by farmers in real situations and no longer mainly by experimental devices in a controlled environment. He believes that farmers are at the centre of the game as data providers but also as the holders of knowledge that is necessary for the validation of their results and analyses.

Etienne SAUR, Director of International Relations of Agreenium, concluded by highlighting the importance of the partnership with the CIHEAM that was made tangible by this joint publication bringing hope for the proper use of the digital revolution to meet the challenge of agricultural transformation for a more inclusive and sustainable development of all territories. He stressed the virtues of dialogue that has led to such a success, dialogue between scientific domains, dialogue between research, training and innovation for development, dialogue between teachers, researchers and civil society, farmers, students and decision-makers. He hopes that this model could irrigate new projects for Agreenium on other grounds and with other multilateral partners.

Download Watch Letter n°38 "[Rural Innovation and Digital Revolution in Agriculture](#)" on the website of the CIHEAM.

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