



Press release – 23 February 2020

Alternatives to Chemical Pesticides: 24 European Research Institutes Undertake an Ambitious Roadmap

A strong demand from public authorities, agriculture professionals, and society in general, all over Europe, has spurred collaborative research in order to accelerate the agroecological transition. To face a challenge of this magnitude the joint declaration of intent “Towards a Chemical Pesticide-free Agriculture” aims to rethink the way research is carried out and develop new common research and experimentation strategies, not just at a national level, but throughout the whole continent. This declaration was signed today by 24 research organisations from 16 European countries. Driven by the French Institute INRAE and its German counterparts ZALF and JKI, this unprecedented endeavour has brought the European research community together around this ambitious vision of an agriculture free of chemical pesticides*. The declaration, formalised on 23 February at the Paris International Agricultural Show, with the support of the French Agriculture and Research Ministries in presence of Amélie de Montchalin the French State Secretary of EU Affairs, establishes a European research alliance, aiming to build a scientific roadmap that will soon be presented to the European Commission, as a contribution to the European Green Deal.

For almost 18 months, INRAE and its German partners from the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF) and the German Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants (JKI) have been building a dialogue among European researchers and stakeholders with the purpose of setting a common research strategy. Their objective was ambitious: to define a new transdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder research strategy that will allow them to offer solutions for the transition towards a chemical* pesticide-free agriculture all around the continent. Today, 24 European research institutes signed a declaration of intent to share this bold vision. This agreement echoes the European Green Deal for a sustainable ecological transition in Europe, which was announced by the European Commission in December 2019 to encourage the adoption of ambitious measures. The measures announced involve multiple sectors—agriculture, food, and the environment—with the objective of developing a sustainable agriculture and producing healthy food, while maintaining productive and economically sound agri-food systems.

Through their network, the 24 signatory organisations have already drawn up multiple common research avenues, such as establishing a better use of agro-ecological principles to develop disease resistant production systems, exploiting the high potential of plant selection, developing the use of new technologies and agro-equipments, and understanding the levers and obstacles of the socio-economic transition, among others. The roadmap being devised calls into question the current research methods by integrating systemic and multidisciplinary approaches. The new methods must reinforce the links between the production of knowledge and the experimentation process, both in the lab and in the field. The goal is an open science system, where researchers work closely together with the world of agriculture to implement changes promptly, sharing their work and its results all over the continent, including all types of agriculture, and integrating the variety of climates and soils in order to test the alternative solutions at a bigger scale.

These 24 research institutions decided to act together to find alternatives to the use of chemical pesticides in Europe and to support national and European public policies.

The signatories

1. Aarhus University, Denmark
2. Agricultural Academy, Bulgaria
3. Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
4. Agroscope, Switzerland
5. Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italia
6. Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement, France
7. Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italia
8. Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Hungary
9. French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment– INRAE, France
10. Institute of Agriculture and Food Biotechnology – IBPRS, Poland
11. Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) – Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants, Germany
12. Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia
13. Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research – ZALF, Germany
14. National Agriculture Research and Innovation Centre – NAIK, Hungary
15. Natural Resources Institute Finland – Luke, Finland
16. Rzeszow University of Technology, Poland
17. Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, Italia
18. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences – SLU, Sweden
19. Szent István University, Hungary
20. Teagasc - Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Ireland
21. University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - USAMV – Bucharest, Romania
22. University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Poland
23. Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy, Lithuania
24. Zagreb University, Faculty of Agriculture, Croatia

References

Memorandum of understanding / joint declaration of intent – between the partners of the European Alliance ‘Towards a Chemical Pesticide-free Agriculture »

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*Synthetic pesticides and other substances harmful to the environment and human health such as copper.

Created on January 1, 2020, the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE) is a major player in research and innovation. INRAE carries out targeted research and resulted from the

merger of INRA and IRSTEA. It is a community of 12,000 people with 268 research, experimental research, and support units located in 18 regional centres throughout France. Internationally, INRAE is among the top research organisations in the agricultural and food sciences as well as in the plant and animal sciences. It also ranks 11th globally in ecology and environmental science. It is the world's leading research organisation specialising in agriculture, food, and the environment. INRAE's main goal is to be a key player in the transitions necessary to address major global challenges. Faced with a growing world population, climate change, resource scarcity, and declining biodiversity, the institute is developing solutions that involve multiperformance agriculture, high-quality food, and the sustainable management of resources and ecosystems.