

Press release – 18 November 2024

The 5th INRAE Awards: Disruptive research – a source of solutions for agriculture, food and the environment

On 18 November 2024, the INRAE Awards ceremony showcased the careers of the women and men who support INRAE's research programmes at the highest international level. The evening was hosted by Philippe Mauguin, CEO of the Institute, in the presence of Patrick Hetzel, Minister of Higher Education and Research and with the support of Annie Genevard, Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. The Awards are an opportunity to honour the exceptional work of researchers as well as the technical and administrative staff who work for the service of the common good. Six awards are attributed by an international jury in recognition of essential scientific progress at the highest international level that contributes to meeting challenges in agriculture, food and the environment.

A special international jury (*see list of members below*) evaluated the winning profiles using a specific set of criteria: the impact of the research carried out in that field, creativity, cross-disciplinary collaboration and the practical application of findings. This year's six awards go to experts from a variety of disciplines on subjects that promote sustainability: the power of microbial ecology and nature-based solutions for resilient agriculture; efficiency in animal nutrition; adapting AOP cheese production in response to climate change; protecting pollinator health; the contributions of environmental mapping; and protecting aquatic biodiversity.

Lifetime Achievement Award > **Xavier Le Roux** is a microbial ecology specialist at INRAE Lyon-Grenoble-Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes. He wins the lifetime achievement award for his entire body of research, which has allowed us to understand the complex interactions between plants, soil and microorganisms. His research has proven how microorganisms influence soil fertility, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and can reduce soil pollution. Widely recognized internationally, he is a co-founder of the concept of nature-based solutions and its implementation in France. His scientifically rigorous and pragmatic work supports a more environmentally, economically socially resilient agriculture.

Team – Science with an Impact Award > **The Joint Research Unit on Cheese** at INRAE Clermont-Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes has earned recognition for the extensive research it has carried out since 1973 with significant benefits for regions, livestock breeders and the entire cheese industry. Research at the unit has produced tangible solutions to guarantee the safety of raw-milk cheeses and ensure their sensory appeal. The team is currently conducting experimental research to understand the role of microbiological flora in milk in AOP cheese quality and the sustainability of this type of cheese production in the face of climate change.

Innovation Award > **Jaap van Milgen** is a modeller specialised in monogastric livestock animal nutrition in Rennes at INRAE Bretagne-Normandie. He develops mathematical models to calculate food portions to optimise animal growth. He developed InraPorc, a decision-making tool that simulates the growth and nutritional needs of pigs which is widely used in the animal nutrition sector today. He plays an active role in European projects. His research aims to

improve the efficiency and sustainability of pig, poultry and rabbit farming systems and transfer progress to industrial applications.

Promising Research Award – Two winners

> **Fanny Mondet**, a researcher at the Bee and Environment unit of INRAE Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, is specialised in domestic bee health. Her research focuses on understanding the individual and collective behaviour of bees in the presence of the predator mite *Varroa*, a major cause of colony loss worldwide. She is currently conducting research, supported by European funding and eagerly anticipated by the beekeeping industry, to develop new control strategies to protect the health of hives.

> **Léa Tardieu**, an environmental economics researcher at INRAE Occitanie-Montpellier, is specialised in spatial mapping. Her research has contributed to the design of spatial indicators that include the environmental and socioeconomic components of the ecosystemic services used in the field of land-use planning, for which she developed a methodological guide. In the field of environmental justice, her work helped establish an inequality indicator based on eight criteria related to well-being. She also conducts assessments of public policies on the environment and biodiversity.

Scientific Breakthrough Award > **Thibault Datry** is an ecologist and specialist in aquatic biodiversity at INRAE Lyon-Grenoble-Auvergne-Rhône Alpes. He has explored a new frontier in science focused on the importance of intermittent or 'drying' rivers, which only run part of the year and must be protected at all costs to ensure the balance between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. He has developed international cooperation networks and piloted the citizen science-driven DRYvER project, which maps drying rivers in Europe and aims to raise awareness at the European Union about the management of these rivers. More broadly, he has helped promote initiatives to manage water as a common good, notably as co-director of the national OneWater programme with the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the French Geological Survey (BRGM).

Research Support Award > **Sandra Fuentes** is the communications manager at INRAE Occitanie-Toulouse. This award honours her vital contribution in leading the scientific and institutional communications strategy of a regional centre with over 1,200 scientists at ten different sites. Her expertise has helped promote the visibility of research programmes at one of the Institute's 18 regional centres, covering disciplines studied at 13 of INRAE's 14 scientific divisions.

Press contact:

INRAE Press Office: 01 42 75 91 86 – presse@inrae.fr

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