

February 24th, 2020

Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF)

Towards a Chemical Pesticide-free Agriculture: **20 European Research Institutes Undertake an Ambitious Roadmap**

Page | 1

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 yesterday by 20 research organizations from 16 European countries. Driven by the French Institute INRAE and its German counterparts ZALF and JKI, this unprecedented endeavor has brought the European research community together around this ambitious vision of an agriculture free of chemical pesticides.

The declaration, formalized on 23 February at the Paris International Agricultural Show, and attended by the French minister of agriculture Didier Guillaume, 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, 20 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 20 signatory organizations 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-equipment, 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 20 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:

- Aarhus University, Denmark
- Agricultural Academy, Bulgaria
- Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
- Agroscope, Switzerland
- Department of Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry, University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Poland
- Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Hungary
- French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment–INRAE, France
- Institute of Agroecosystems and Soil Sciences of Vytautas Magnus University Agriculture Academy, Lithuania
- Institute of Agriculture and Food Biotechnology – IBPRS, Poland
- Julius Kühn-Institute – JKI, Germany
- Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia
- Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research – ZALF, Germany
- National Agriculture Research and Innovation Centre – NAIK, Hungary
- Natural Resources Institute Finland – Luke, Finland

- Rzeszow University of Technology, Poland
- Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, Italia
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences – SLU, Sweden
- Teagasc - Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Ireland
- University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine - USAMV – Bucharest, Romania
- 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”:
<https://www.inrae.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/MoU.pdf>



The signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding in Paris on 23.02.2020 | Source: © INRAE - Christophe MAITRE | Image source in color and print quality: <http://www.zalf.de/de/aktuelles>

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About the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF) in Muencheberg, one of the institutes of the Leibniz Association:

Mission of ZALF is to deliver solutions for an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable agriculture – together with society.

As a contribution to overcoming global challenges such as climate change, food security, biodiversity conservation and resource scarcity, we develop and design crop systems, integrated in their landscape contexts, that combine food security with sustainability. Therefore we process complex landscape data with a unique set of experimental methods, new technologies and models as well as socio-economic approaches.

ZALF research is integrated systems research: starting from processes in soils and plants to causal relationships on the field and landscape level up to global impacts and complex interactions between landscapes, society and economy. www.zalf.de