

# Higher agricultural education and international co-operation: role and strategies of universities

## International seminar

### Agropolis, Montpellier, 27-29 September 2006

### The Flagship programme 'Education for rural people' (ERP)

This international seminar on higher agricultural education institutions and international co-operation is one of the activities implemented jointly by UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the FAO as part of the flagship programme on 'Education for rural people'.

An EFA flagship initiative is a structured set of activities carried out by voluntary partners, under the leadership of one or more United Nations specialized agencies and NGOs, that seeks to address specific challenges in achieving the EFA goals.

The 'Education for rural people' flagship was launched by the Directors-General of FAO and UNESCO during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (September 2002). Its aim is to build awareness of the importance of education for rural people as a crucial step in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the EFA goals, and to contribute to reducing the urban-rural education gap.

At the international level, this programme seeks to promote advocacy and to mobilize partnerships for the education of rural people. It supports the exchange of good practices and knowledge in this field.

The 'Education for rural people' flagship currently includes 270 partners.

Photos: Hispano Durón



Higher education plays an important role in sustainable development, including for agricultural and rural development. In many countries, universities or faculties of agriculture provide direct support. They promote research, agricultural extension services and contribute to regional development and lifelong learning.

And yet, within a higher education sector often in difficulty, agricultural universities tend to be a particularly weak component. Higher agricultural education is suffering from an identity crisis due to the declining economic importance of agriculture and the deterioration of its image in a world that associates modernity with urban activities and urban areas. Furthermore, far-reaching technological changes are creating the need for new skills, notably in the food industry.

To cope with these sector-specific issues, institutions of higher agricultural education in many countries have introduced extensive reforms, in particular by updating programmes and shifting the boundaries of the various fields of study and research to reflect changes in scientific knowledge and the labour market.

Despite these efforts, much remains to be done and international co-operation is a vital lever for the change process. It can contribute to consolidating systems of higher agricultural education and help them adapt to new constraints arising from globalization. In addition to the provision of technical assistance, international co-operation seeks to build capacity through partnerships, for development to be truly sustainable.

It is timely to encourage the exchange of experiences and ideas among the partners involved in such co-operation: higher agricultural education institutions, university networks, co-operation agencies and international organizations. This seminar will bear on three fundamental missions of higher agricultural education: training, research and support to rural development.

## Objectives

- To identify the new challenges in international co-operation for higher agricultural education institutions and their strategies.
- To help guide policies for supporting the international co-operation of agricultural universities.
- To strengthen the existing ties among universities and to foster new partnerships.

## Organization

The seminar will combine general presentations on the issues and context of international co-operation for institutions of higher agricultural education with case studies on experiences that are considered innovative and/or successful. Workshops will enable participants to explore specific issues and experiences in greater depth and to compare the viewpoints of different stakeholders.

The programme will last two and a half days, combining plenary sessions, small group sessions and study visits.

The proceedings will be conducted in French and English with simultaneous interpretation.

## Participants

The seminar will be attended by some 50 participants from various countries:

- representatives of higher agricultural education institutions involved in international co-operation programmes;
- representatives of associations and networks of higher agricultural education institutions;
- representatives of bilateral co-operation agencies;
- representatives of international organizations.

Participation is upon invitation.

## Venue

The seminar will take place at Agropolis International:  
Avenue Agropolis  
34394 Montpellier Cedex 5, France  
Tel: 33 4 67 04 75 75, Fax: 33 4 67 04 75 99  
E-mail: [agropolis@agropolis.fr](mailto:agropolis@agropolis.fr)  
[www.agropolis.fr](http://www.agropolis.fr)

## Accommodation, meals and transport

Accommodation will be provided in hotels in Montpellier. Accommodation for sponsored participants will be offered from 26 to 28 September. A shuttle service will operate between the selected hotels and Agropolis.

Lunches on 27 and 28 September will be provided to all participants and a welcome dinner will be offered on 27 September. Transport costs and other related expenditures, including insurance, remain the responsibility of participants.

Participants requiring a visa to enter France are invited to initiate the necessary procedure as soon as possible with the relevant consular office.

## Contact persons

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## Provisional programme

### WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

#### Context

- Developments in higher agricultural education.
- International aid to the sector.
- Universities and international co-operation.

#### Stakeholders

- Recent changes.
- Issues.
- Strategies.

### THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

#### Practices (working groups)

- International co-operation and higher education.
- Open and distance learning.
- Support to university-based research.

#### Capitalization and sustainability mechanisms

- Inter-university networks.
- The structure of the co-operation function within universities.
- Structural effects of international co-operation programmes.

### FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER (a.m.)

Study visits to institutions at the Agropolis site (meetings with international co-operation departments).