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UEAA 10TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY Florence – Italy – 22 November 2018

Report from the UEAA President : Professor Michel Thibier

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to report here before you on the activities undertaken since our last General Assembly 2 years ago.

Before going any further let me share my sad thoughts with you on Professor Maracchi who very sadly passed away just a few weeks before he was due to chair this European Agricultural Academies Union. I have known him only a little time starting really when we prepared the 9th General Assembly in Paris. He was happy to get involved in this endeavor for many reasons and in particular due to the fact that UEAA all started with the Italians and the French some 18 years ago with the most significant input from Professor Scaramuzzi from the Accademia dei Georgofili and J M Boussard from the French Academy of Agriculture. We together were keen on trying to make UEAA a great European Institution and he was very instrumental in helping me. The last time we met it was indeed in Brussels at our famous meeting on 28 September 2017. We were again to meet together in Paris in late winter 2017 - 2018 but destiny did not let us work that way. Thanks Gianpiero for your warm friendship.

And also, let me address my sincere thanks to my two predecessors who helped the UEAA to go along smoothly and also helped me a lot in taking over this chairmanship. Thanks Kerstin, thanks Vilem.

Those two years, to me at least, appeared very rich and I now will report on some of those points.

Let me start to recall the plan of action that I presented to the GA in Paris and I quote:

President M Thibier indicated the main axes of the French Presidency:

- Maintenance and improvement of the new UEAA web site
- Organization if possible of a UEAA meeting in 2017 in Brussels
- Creation of a UEAA commission "technical agricultural education" with networking

across Europe through the UEAA member countries under the idea and with the assistance of J P Bastié from the Académie d'Agriculture de France.

Consequently, my report will include the four main following points:

- 1) The 2016 Scientific meeting at the 9th General Assembly in Paris
- 2) The 2017 meeting in Brussels which did happen
- 3) The activities of the Technical Agricultural Education Commission
- 4) And finally, the development of the new UEAA web site.

1. The 2016 scientific meeting in Paris

The Académie agriculture de France hosting as President the 2016 G A was keen on setting up a high-level symposium. I think it was a success. The meeting was very well attended close to 100 people both from the various members of UEAA and from France.

The speakers were from various member countries: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom and the European Union also participated.

Its title was “Science in Agriculture: historical perspectives and prospective insights”.

The overall idea was to make the claim that:

- Agriculture, as a generic subject including all disciplines under its umbrella (animal production, forestry etc..), needs innovation more than ever, for many reasons, but in particular in relation to the extraordinary increase of the human population on our beloved planet,
- The only way to progress is to stimulate sound science-based research and development, so as to put “science” in the heart of innovation in Agriculture in our contemporary world.

So how can the Academies of Agriculture or related bodies demonstrate to Society as a whole that there is no alternative to meeting the considerable challenges in:

- Feeding a world population that will soon be 9 billion people, respecting the whole environment of humankind
- and ensuring that the people involved in producing food – farmers and breeders, wherever they are in the world – can make a decent living out of doing so.

So, to translate those ideas into practice, this Colloquium was divided into three sessions:

- the first began with some historical perspectives thanks to our “agrarian historian colleagues”, followed by some current perspectives on the impact of climatic change, and finally to the EU Commission’s plans for research and innovation in the next few years.
- the second session will be devoted to present and future challenges for land and soil management, with some practical applications in one case study, that of Latvia in the Baltic area.
- The third will also include a case study, from Romania, and will then be more oriented to the future, with reference to biotechnology and genomics research for sustainable innovation in agriculture. We shall end with an interesting reflection on the way the younger generation envisages agriculture in the future,

In addition, as we will see below, a UEAA commission was created dealing with Agricultural education. Also, of importance was the discussion carried on the note on the regulation of the targeted mutagenesis that Agnès Ricroch (France) had distributed. The motion on the “Position” of the UEAA” (on the web site) was approved by all members but one abstention.

2. The 2017 meeting in Brussels

To be frank with you, it was a real challenge but I will make my story short... Ultimately and in accordance with what had been decided in Paris we obtained an appointment with the Agriculture European Commissioner Mr. Phil Hogan on the 28 September 2017. The topic to be discussed with him was selected as the “the 2020 CAP’ more than topical...

To prepare such a meeting, we held a steering committee meeting (which by rule has to meet every year) in the morning, well attended by almost all steering committee members, thanks to them. There in addition to deal with housekeeping business, we most essentially managed to take a clear UEAA position on the CAP 2020. This was a real Première and all members must be thanked and in particular Bernard Bourget who was the rapporteur and who managed to have

th position well printed before the afternoon meeting with the Commissioner. This position paper is posted on the UEAA web site.

Then the committee was well received by the Commissioner and in fact told us that it was quite fortunate that we met at the very right time in his reflection process. Here again I will not go into details that are reported on the web site just to say that we had a 90 minutes discussion that he listened to us carefully and responded quite clearly. To briefly summarize the highlights:

- As a general statement, he definitely indicated that his goal was to do more and better for the future CAP for the benefits of European farmers.
- He then roughly followed the list of the bullet points presented by the rapporteur of the UEAA meeting.
 - Re. the place of environment and climate change in the framework of the CAP, he said that it was his intention to strengthen the environmental and ecological aspects of the CAP and in particular by implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the 2015 Paris Agreement.
 - As the Rapporteur had mentioned the recent EU Task force on market report, he confirmed that he would be widely inspired by the ideas presented in this report. He particularly emphasized the facts that:
 - those markets should be more consumers oriented “the consumer is King”,
 - the markets should be made more transparent and accordingly establish some market observatories for all EU products.
 - the policy of market orientation should be continued, but by taking into account the volatility of prices. That is why it is necessary to maintain the direct payments as a "cushion", combined with other stabilization measures in link with the EU market observatories.
 - the capping and reduction of direct payments for big farms should be progressive ("soft landing") in order to permit their adaptation.

3. Creation of a UEAA commission "technical agricultural education"

The GA in Paris decided as you may all remember to create such a Commission and our French Colleague J P Bastié very kindly agreed in chairing this Commission. He had many exchanges through the EWG, the Electronic Working Group during these two past years. Unfortunately, Dr Bastié will not be with us to-day due to other commitments that he could not escape in relation with the changes of dates of the present meeting.

I will report on his behalf later in the day on the achievements of that group even though very much yet is to be done. Let me just recall here the rationale for setting up such a commission as presented in Paris:

- Faced with the significant changes that affect European agriculture (health crises, climate change, food price volatility, market deregulation, technological changes etc ...) farmers face an unprecedented crisis.
- Faced with such challenges, mobilization of agricultural technical schools and perhaps agricultural and veterinary higher education can, even more than today, become major players to support future agriculture (*sensu largo*).

To achieve such an objective, the networking of these institutions at a European level, can promote the exchange of practices and allow us to set up real European cooperation. The aim of such a cooperation would be to help to adjust agricultural training to share and exchange experiences whilst promoting territorial specificities.

4. The development of the new UEAA web site

This was initiated in 2014 thanks to K Niblaeus (Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry), then chair of UEAA. She very kindly provided the UEAA with a grant to support this new web site of UEAA. Then the Czech Presidency and V Podrasky very efficiently managed to contract with a Czech group called “e-fractal” to set this up with launching taking place in mid-2016. During the same time the Czech Republic Academy of Agriculture managed to update all addresses of all the members of UEAA with the result that we were all able to post on the web site the up-dated data.

Then it was my responsibility to update the site and post all information relevant to UEAA. It worked very well with the help of “e-fractal company” and in particular to the man in charge Marek Waldhauser who has always been available almost days and nights to help to solve the various problems that I was facing as being personally a lay man.

The UEAA web site is a simple one but obviously needs to be fed by all members. Maybe I have not been good enough to attract the active participation of UEAA members but some have been interacting regularly with the site. How many of us have had a look let us say just on the Home page? All who did may have noted the abundance of information from the UEAA members. Leaving the responsibility of the UEAA web site and leaving it to Professor Stanca, I can share with you the excellent cooperation with-fractal and I strongly recommend that it continues in the same way. They have all the technical tools to help UEAA and in addition are very cost effective.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it was my pleasure to chair this unique European Association. I think we have achieved quite a lot during those two years and this was only possible due to the collective input of all members and in particular to the steering committee members. Let me thank them all with all my heart and now wish all the best to Professor Michel Stanca

Thank you.