

UEAA NEWSLETTER

2022, No. 8

Nitra, 28 October 2022

LATEST NEWS

Short report from UEAA General Assembly 2022

On 6 October 2022, the General Assembly of the Union of European Academies of Agricultural Sciences took place in Bratislava (Slovak Republic) at the premises of the State Veterinary and Food Administration. The General Assembly was held in a hybrid form and was attended by 40 guests representing the Union's Steering Committee, representatives of the European academies and guests from national sectorial institutions.

The meeting was opened by the President of the UEAA prof. Aleksidze Guram (Georgia) and prof. Ing. Jozef. Golian, PhD., vice-president of the Slovak Academy of Agricultural Sciences. This was followed by speeches of representatives of the sectorial institutions, among whom the first speaker was RNDr. Slávka Křížová, Director of the Department of Agri-food Markets and Analyses, who addressed the priorities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the current period. The Director of the National Agriculture and Food Centre, Ing. Martin Polovka, PhD., greeted the participants and awarded a **commemorative medal** to the President of the Union **prof. Aleksidze Guram** and to the former President and active member of the Steering Committee, who is **prof. Michel Thibier**, representing in the same time the French Academy of Agriculture. A greeting speech was delivered also by vice-rector for science and research of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, assoc. prof. Ing. Drahoslav Lančarič, PhD.

The working programme of the general assembly included the election of the President and members of the Steering Committee, according to the UEAA Statutes. In the election, **Dr.h.c. prof. Dr. Ing. Elena Horská**, the current Vice President of the Union, **was elected as a president**. Her election, according to the statutes of the UEAA, transferred the **presidency of the Union to Slovakia and to the Slovak Academy of Agricultural Sciences**, for a period of two years, 2022 - 2024.

The Steering Committee was elected and countries **Lithuania, Latvia, France, Italy, Sweden, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Georgia** are represented. **Observers** from **Portugal, Spain, UK** and a new observer from the **Albanian Academy of Sciences** were also confirmed by election. The representative of the Romanian Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, **Dr Ioan Jeleu** was elected UEAA vice - President. Congratulations to him.

Professor **Elena Horská** as a new UEAA President presented the **priorities** for the next period. She declared to **continue** with already started activities and highlighted a new priority topic - **sustainability in the agriculture and food industry** in relation to current policies, but also to unforeseen situations and geopolitical crises. Among the priorities there was declared also the topic of **strengthening communication** of agri-food topics at the national and European level as well as strengthening **the awareness of young science and its promotion in the European area**.

The UEAA General Assembly is held every two years in the presiding country and it is linked to the organisation of international scientific events. In the case of Slovakia, it was linked to the organisation of the **international scientific symposium** held at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra entitled as **“Sustainable, resilient and fair food systems in the EU and globally.”**



Photos from the General Assembly UEAA 2022 in Slovak Republic

Challenges for Sustainable Food System Research

Building on a definition by FAO (2018), food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and food industries, and the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. The EU food system consists of many highly diverse food subsystems and is intertwined with other food systems beyond the EU, as well as with energy, water, and health systems. There is no universally agreed definition of what a sustainable food system is. Definitions differ in scale, change over time and are dependent on context, reflecting different views and interests of the numerous actors in the food system.

Food systems are in a continuous state of change and adaptation and they are already undergoing major transformations that will affect sustainability. Existing food systems were designed primarily to boost productivity in providing a sufficient dietary energy supply to avoid famines in the face of human population growth. They succeeded fabulously in that goal. But tomorrow's needs are different. The sustainable food system for People, Planet & Climate shall ensure coherence across the food chain and an increased engagement at the consumer level to support the transition. There is increasing recognition that a major change is needed that would make the agricultural sector more sustainable, resilient and responsive to societal and policy demands. This is highlighted in a large number of policy documents and initiatives, ranging from the EU Environment Action Programme to 2030, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the ambitious European Green Deal and the underlying strategies - Farm to Fork and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), among others. This will require greater use of science based knowledge-sharing and innovation that can be

addressed through agroecology, which is an approach that builds on natural and biological interactions while using state-of-the-art science and technology, and innovation based on farmers' knowledge and tested best practices. The reform provides an opportunity to bring agroecology principles to the fore in helping to guide the formulation of research questions, innovation and partnerships. The integration of agroecology into food systems research points out particularly following subtopics in particular: characterizing products of agroecological systems, consumer behavior and willingness to support agroecological products, organization of markets, standards and public policies, and the effects of territorial and international organization of markets for agroecological products. These questions call for methodological work on (i) data acquisition, management, and analysis from the microscale to macroscale; (ii) modeling agri-food systems to estimate their environmental impacts throughout the entire chain and understand repercussions of local changes on large regions; and (iii) case studies to fully understand the diversity of food systems and their constraints.

Prepared by Danka Moravčíková according to: Gascuel-Oudoux, C. et al. A research agenda for scaling up agroecology in European countries. Agron. Sustain. Dev. 42, 53 (2022); and The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the candidate European partnership "Accelerating Farming Systems Transition: Agroecology Living Labs and Research Infrastructures" (draft version July 2022).



Photos from the international scientific symposium in Nitra (October 2022) "Sustainable, resilient and fair food systems in the EU and globally."