



Project description and principles

The European Commission wished to implement a place for discussion to enhance the exchanges between the scientific community and stakeholders concerning arable crop competitiveness, in order to strengthen its analysis of research priorities.

EUROCROP aimed to define a common vision for the future of research and development related to arable crops and proposed a strategic research plan for the arable crop (AC) sector with a horizon of 2015. This plan is briefly explained below, and final recommendations are explained on the final report of the project available on the website : <http://www.eurocrop.cetiom.fr/>.

EUROCROP brought together concerned stakeholders and actors to develop a collective analysis of research needs in order to improve the competitiveness of European arable crops, and to propose appropriate action.

The EUROCROP partnership included organizations using research, including farmers' organizations, and organizations providing research, innovation and extension services. Stakeholders and representative organizations of civil society in the field of environment preservation and consumer advocacy are integrated in the partnership of the project, and provided input in particular as members of the Project Advisory Committee (PADCO). To meet its goals EUROCROP operated according to a cross-cutting approach, first by arable crop (cereals, oilseeds, sugar beets, fibre crops, potatoes, grain legumes and maize), where the crop chain vision is considered in its entirety (WP2), in order to identify specific bottlenecks for increasing crop chain competitiveness. This vertical approach was then completed in WP3 by horizontal

aspects of competitiveness including technical aspects at farming level, farm economics and production costs, outlets and markets, quality of agricultural products and environmental impacts, as well as social aspects.

These themes were addressed by specialists and invited experts in a series of workshops which mobilized the 26 partners' staff and 120 experts from approximately 100 institutions from different European countries.

What is arable crop competitiveness for EUROCROP?

This question was among the first subjects of debates during the July 2006 kick-off meeting in Brussels. The debates around competitiveness led to the consideration of a three-pronged approach:

- **markets**, and economical competitiveness as a key component
- **regulations dealing** with social, sustainability and other miscellaneous aspects. Meeting regulations has a cost or a value for crop chain actors
- **sustainability** or social issues, not yet transformed into regulations or immediate costs or values; require that crop chain practices are verified as being cross compliant.

For its works, EUROCROP distinguishes between two levels:

“Competitiveness C1”: Economic competitiveness and markets, with two sub entries:

- Economic competitiveness of arable crops at farm level in EU countries (one crop versus other crops, arable crops versus other land uses): focus on yield, production costs, net income, farm economics (assuming the respect of current regulations, when enforced)
- Economic competitiveness of EU arable crops in markets: meeting the demand of industries and consumers (quantity, quality, specifications, regularity of production, market prices...): focus on quality, cost per unit produced, market access costs. This first level is a more or less short/medium term approach.

“Competitiveness C2”: Sustainability and social issues, which need assessment through indicators.

EUROCROP examines the interactions between arable crop production and “external” factors of public interest, such as environmental issues and social issues (citizen demand, employment, rural life...), in a medium term/ long term approach.

EUROCROP – focus on two interactive levels

At the level of WP1 / PADCO + core group: a three-step strategic thinking process was developed, using basic retrospective and prospective approaches with 2015 as the horizon:

- Identification of the main challenges to guarantee AC competitiveness through to 2015:
 - Understanding and describing the European arable crop system (structure and dynamics)
 - Identifying potential changes and making hypotheses on the changes in the system and in its context
 - Identifying and analysing the strengths and weaknesses of AC
- Building scenarios for contexts
- Ranking research areas in terms of priorities and in coherence with the scenarios

At the scientific level (WP2 and WP3): the identification of priority areas was carried out through:

- preparatory work on the present status of research and knowledge, organized to take into consideration the main challenges and the weaknesses of AC
- identifying priority research areas and research challenges to fill the gap (expert groups)
- briefly describing the topics and deliverables expected in each research area.

The four scenarios (“WTO agreement and expensive energy”, “Europe of regions”, “High environmental performance, green Europe”, and “Challenge of global warming”) have been used to imagine research strategies answering each scenario, and to identify the research actions which appear to be necessary whatever the considered scenario, and which may be considered as major priorities.

EUROCROP OUPUTS

The main results of the 32 month coordination action are:

- a strategic research plan structured under 5 major stakes, 36 challenges and 105 research goals / main questions to research
- a set of 4 scenarios used to propose priorities
- a set of 73 research topics, proposals to be submitted to policy makers and planners
- a European network of experts, who will continue to work beyond the end of the project to set up RTD projects.

ARVALIS' participation

ARVALIS was a partner of Eurocrop in charge of the group on cereals and organised workshops to gather the vision of the sector.

To have more information on the results of this project, please consult the website on which you can find all EUROCCROP deliverables : <http://www.eurocrop.cetiom.fr/>

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EUROCCROP partners :

AEP European Association for grain Legumes Research
Agricultural Research Institute Kromeriz, Ltd
ART Agroscope Reckenholz-Tänikon Research Station
ARVALIS- Institut du Végétal
BPC: British Potato Council
CEFIC European Chemical Industry Council
CEMA European Committee of Associations of Manufacturers of Agricultural machinery
CEPM: Confederacion Europea de Productores de Maiz
CETIOM: Centre Technique Interprofessionnel des Oléagineux Métropolitains
CIAA Confederation of Food and Drink Industries in the EC
COPA-COGECA Comité des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles/ Confédération Générale de la Coopération Agricole
CSL: Central Science Laboratory
DEIAGRA: Università di Bologna, Dipartimento di Economia e Ingegneria Agrarie
EURAGRI European Agricultural Research Initiative
ECPA European Crop Protection Association
EFMA European Fertilizer Manufacturers Association
ESA European Seeds Association
VTI : Johann Heinrich von Thünen-Institut für Ländliche Räume, Wald und Fischerei
FEFAC European Feed Manufacturers Federation
GRUPPO 183 Associazione per la difesa del suolo e delle riserve idriche
IIRB: International Institute for Beet Research
INF Poznan: Institute of Natural Fibres
ITACYL: Instituto Tecnológico Agrario de Castilla y León
ORGECO: Organisation Générale des Consommateurs
UFOP: Union for the Promotion of Oil and Protein Plants