



THE 7TH CONFERENCE OF GCHERA

Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences: entrepreneurs for sustainable rural development

June 27 to 29, 2011

hosted by the Institut Polytechnique LaSalle Beauvais, France

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTED PAPERS, & REGISTRATION OF INTEREST

Conference focus

Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences are ever more challenged in delivering high quality outcomes in their core missions of education, research and innovation in support of sustainable development in the rural economy. Here the phrase “University of Agriculture” is taken in the broadest sense to include, for instance, such disciplines as Forestry, Food Science and Technology, and Water Resource Management.

Through their various disciplines the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences provide the main actors for the rural areas worldwide with the expertise to address the new economic, societal and environmental challenges with regard to sustainable rural development: technological innovation, economic development, food security, food safety, rural depopulation, bio-renewable resource use, climate change, biodiversity, and the protection of natural resources.

The universities’ mission, in part, is to educate and train their graduates to have the expertise to become the strategic actors of development in their areas of influence. They are the future entrepreneurs who will drive innovation in the rural environment.

Universities should pro-actively contribute towards creating a better future in the rural economy. They can be major players in long term innovation initiatives through partnerships

between the Universities and the rural economy. These partnerships aid the transfer of knowledge and technology, and implement relevant research and innovation programmes that promote added value in the rural environment to address societal expectations.

Such partnerships are most likely to develop where a university responds to local challenges. This approach is valuable regardless of the country's level of development. All universities worldwide need to act in support of the challenges and opportunities in their immediate rural economy. By concentrating on those aspects, the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences will surely ensure that the next generations of leaders and entrepreneurs in their disciplines have the expertise and motivation to respond to the challenges of change in the rural economies.

This conference will address experience of innovative developments taking place in universities worldwide and path-breaking critiques, in both developing and developed economies, with regard to the:

- roles of Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences in sustainable rural development at **scientific, educational, societal and economic levels,**
- **development of new partnerships** between the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences **at the local level** in relation to local economic development, and with regional and global organisations which support sustainable rural development, and
- positioning, organisation and management of Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences in achieving these roles, at **local, regional and global levels.**

Conference theme

The enhancement of the strategic role of Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences as a driving force in sustainable rural development at the local level in areas worldwide, and in contributing to global initiatives.

Sub theme A: Education for Sustainable Rural Development

Contemporary rural societies need to balance the generation of a thriving local economy producing safe and healthy food, and bio-renewable resources with the need to address issues such as maintaining biodiversity, environmental management, resource use and global warming. A successful local rural economy will combat the threats imposed by rural depopulation and the consequent trend towards excessive urbanisation.

Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences thus face the dual educational challenges for their students of promoting entrepreneurship and of developing the skills needed in achieving a sustainable rural environment.

1. What competences do graduates need at the start of their careers to support the development of a sustainable rural environment?
2. How have universities involved stakeholders, who are working to develop a sustainable rural environment, in the design of degree programmes that are fit for purpose in meeting the expectations for sustainable rural development?
3. What original concepts and approaches have Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences implemented to develop graduates with the skills and holistic thinking to support the development of sustainable rural environments?

4. How do Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences promote a spirit of entrepreneurship and the sense of responsibility towards sustainable development in rural areas among their staff and students?
5. What examples or original perspectives are there of innovative educational programs developed by Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences in order to promote the value-added chains in food and non food uses in the rural economy?
6. How have universities involved stakeholders in the development of continuing professional development (life long learning) initiatives to support the updating and re-skilling of graduates working to promote sustainable rural development?

Sub theme B: Research and Innovation Strategies

Achieving research and innovation strategies at Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences whose outcomes result in knowledge and technology transfer that enhances the prosperity of local enterprises.

7. How to address the conflict between the push by universities for world wide university ranking through publication in high index publications with the desire to favour within universities the path from pure to applied research and innovative ventures in support of local sustainable rural development?
8. What models are there that demonstrate the successful role of the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences in facilitating knowledge and technology transfer to support the development of the local economy by developing technological parks and platforms, clusters, incubators, or through other tools?
9. What type of links between the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences and local enterprises should be favoured in research and innovation activities?
10. How can Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences efficiently develop research activities in sustainable rural development that effectively address and fulfil the real needs of local enterprises and society?

Sub theme C: Partnership Strategies with Local Stakeholders, and Strategic Positioning

Collaboration between Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences and their local stakeholders to encourage and support the development of successful new partnerships for local economic development in the rural environment.

The possibility to establish permanent and strong relationships with their local stakeholders (either local or regional government, private companies, institutions, or other stakeholders such as consumer groups, other social networking groups, and individual citizens) at local and regional level is of tremendous importance for the success of the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences in their roles towards sustainable rural development.

11. How to build trust, how to create an atmosphere of exchange and mutual commitment between the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences and their stakeholders?
12. How to develop, within universities, competences and know-how that will foster actions strengthening relationships with external partners – capacity building?
13. How to create and encourage such initiatives in terms of new forms of partnership?

14. What new roles could Rectors and Deans endorse in the building of these new partnerships?
15. How to encourage a change from an academic to a corporate culture within a university?

Besides the above points the conference will reflect on the strategic choices that Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences have to make if they want to maintain and strengthen their position in supporting the greening of the global and local economy. Universities/Faculties of Agriculture and Life Sciences are indeed in competition with other university disciplines in supporting sustainable rural development, and it is necessary to better recognise their strengths and weaknesses within this context, at the local, regional and global levels. Keynote speakers and a round table discussion will therefore address the following issues:

- What are the strategic boundaries of the Universities/Faculties of Agriculture and Life Sciences in the challenge of the green economy vis à vis other university disciplines? In particular how do “agricultural and forestry departments”, as applied environmental sciences, share the continuum of the green economy with the more theoretical “environmental science departments”?
- How do the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences take advantage of their core competences in order to keep a strong position in the local, regional and global higher education landscape?
- How do Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences develop a global efficient network in order to better work together and develop strategic cooperation to address the issues facing the rural economies of developing and developed rural economies?
- What type of local/regional/global governance of networks of Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences should be encouraged in support of capacity building at the local level?

Key words

Entrepreneurship, Continuing Professional Development, Corporate Partnerships Programs, Technological Parks/Incubators, Cluster Approach, Competitiveness, Leadership, Rural Sustainable Development, Technology and Knowledge Transfer, Green Economy, Capacity Building, Mission and Culture of the University.

Expected outcomes

The goal of the conference is to learn from the shared experiences worldwide and critiques of how the Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences can provide leadership and proactively engage in supporting sustainable development in the local rural economy. The conference will provide innovative ideas, approaches and models for inclusion in university strategic plans.

The expected outcomes of the conference sessions will provide institutional managers with better insights into the challenges posed by the evolution of higher education worldwide in relation to principles of sustainable economic development in rural communities. Once implemented, these outcomes will enhance the accountability and impact of these institutions at a global level.

Target audience

The conference aims at gathering Rectors, Deans Directors of university research and innovation services, Directors of university educational services, Directors of research teams, Degree programme coordinators and Professors from Universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences worldwide.

Students and a broader audience are also encouraged to attend the conference.

Call for contributed papers

The language of the Conference will be English, there will be no simultaneous facilities.

You are invited to submit an abstract of 500 words for a paper presentation at the conference by **15 December 2010** to Prof. Loïc Sauvé, Chairman of the GCHERA International Programme Committee by email (lasalle-beauvais@gchera.com).

Your proposal should address **one of the critical issues** (bullet points 1 to 15) under one of the above themes A, B or C of the conference. Submissions can address the issues at a local, national or international level, and can be case studies or models that demonstrate success, opportunities and challenges. Please download the Abstract Template from the Conference website, www.gchera.com In the Template you are asked to identify the critical issue (bullet point number) that your paper will address.

You will be notified of acceptance of your Abstract by 28 February 2011. Once your Abstract has been accepted you will be invited to submit by 1 April 2011 a full Conference paper which will be printed in the Conference Proceedings to be available at the start of the Conference. No Abstracts will be printed in the Conference Proceedings.

Conference registration

Please register your interest for the conference on the Conference Website, www.gchera.com At the Conference website you will find full information about the Conference. If you have any queries please email gchera2011@lasalle-beauvais.fr

Conference promoters

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ICA is the **Association for European Life Science Universities**. ICA's vision is to enhance our members' success in the international market place, in Europe and globally, by providing a supportive environment to share experience, to cooperate in new ventures, and to benefit from the resulting synergy – www.ica-europe.info

AGRINATURA is the **European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development**. AGRINATURA will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and meeting the commitments in the Paris Declaration on Development and the Accra Agenda for Action. AGRINATURA is a Standing Committee of ICA - www.agrinatura.eu

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