



Clermont-Ferrand, March 1, 2016

The Minister of Agriculture announces his support for the Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne expressed during the announcement of the “Agriculture-Innovation 2025” plan

On February 29, while at the Agriculture-Innovation meeting organized by INRA and IRSTEA at the Paris International Agricultural Show, the French Minister for Agriculture, Stéphane Le Foll, announced his support for a pilot project for the “living lab devoted to agro-ecology for field crops in Auvergne”. Farmers, companies, researchers, university partners and development and training players involved in this project are all delighted with this announcement, and will answer this call for projects by proposing the creation of a Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne. The support of the Ministries for Agriculture, Research and the Economy will make it possible to speed up the roll-out of this ambitious project which aims to make the Limagne Val d'Allier region an area of agricultural excellence at the heart of the new Auvergne Rhône Alpes region.

The Regional Innovation Laboratory (RIL) for field crops in Auvergne is an operational translation of the agro-ecology vision developed in the "Agriculture-Innovation 2025" report - presented in October 2015 to the ministers responsible for Agriculture, Higher Education and Research and Digital Technology. This report recommended, in particular, developing regional innovation "living labs", collaborative platforms for open innovation, like the one in Auvergne. The RIL for field crops in Auvergne is also in line with the Strategy for Smart Specialization deployed in the Auvergne Rhône Alpes region, through the Strategic Innovation Domain "Sustainable agricultural systems".

This project originated with an ambition: to move agriculture forward **by making all of Limagne Val d'Allier a connected region with creativity, experimentation and the observation** of new production systems for field crops. It involves developing **innovative approaches by including farmers right from the design stage as co-builders and by mobilizing all players in the region**. Working topics will focus especially on reducing the use of chemical products (biocontrol, plant breeding, precision farming, robotics, etc.), and on better management of soil quality, by most notably reviewing farming techniques and related material. Developing new integrated chains and improving the environmental impact, at both farm and regional levels, will also be primary subjects.

The RIL will benefit all stakeholders. The farmers of Limagne Val d'Allier will improve their economic, social and environmental performance thanks to the rapid implementation of innovative solutions (tools, practices and growing systems); research players will develop new knowledge emerging from a multi-level approach extending from plot level to that of the region, and will put it to the test on farms; training and development players will have a new tool available for teaching and demonstrations; companies, especially start-ups, thanks to on-site experimentation, will be able to accelerate the development of innovations and access to new markets; the Limagne Val d'Allier region will benefit from an additional attractiveness vector and will connect citizens with the challenges of agriculture.

In order to guarantee the implementation of best practices, the Regional Innovation Laboratory will seek to be recognized by France Living Lab and ENoLL (European Net Work of Living Labs).

For **Sébastien Vidal, farmer and board member of the Limagrain Cooperative** which is leading the RIL project: *"The Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne will enable the Cooperative to actively prepare for its future in a collective, partnership approach. We, the farmers of the Limagrain Cooperative, will work with all those who want to move agriculture and the Limagne Val d'Allier region forward. On our farms, we are experimenting with new practices, new products, new technologies and new services. This Regional Innovation Laboratory is our way of practicing open, shared innovation for sustainable performance on our farms.*

Auvergne has what it takes to make this project a success and to position itself as a region of agricultural excellence within the new region and in France."

For **Grégoire Berthe, General Manager of the Céréales Vallée competitiveness cluster**, RIL coordinator: *"We thank the Ministries for their support for this major structuring project for our region. This announcement upholds the ambition our competitiveness cluster has promoted for 10 years: to move agriculture forward by bringing together large companies, start-ups, players in private and public research and those involved in training, for innovative collaborative projects. Today, we are very happy to be able to offer to our partners an infrastructure that is unparalleled in the agricultural world. Thanks to this tool, the players involved in the "Agriculture Innovation 2025" dynamic will be able to share their skills and know-how and thus bring innovative solutions to the market faster. "*

For **Jean-Baptiste Coulon, Chairman of INRA's Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes station**: *"The Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne is a unique opportunity to bring together, for the long term and in a cohesive and proactive region, the various players in this region working in research, development and training in an approach for participatory innovation that will enhance its economic development and attractiveness. The Clermont site has all the trump cards for this approach to be successful: eager farmers, a higher education and research landscape that is recognized in this field, and economic players already working together through the Céréales Vallée competitiveness cluster."*

For **Emmanuel Hugo, General Manager of the Irstea Station of Clermont-Ferrand**: *"The Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne is a unique opportunity to compare our research to reality. Co-building research subjects with players and developing our results in constant collaboration with civil partnerships so that they are fully adopted by consumers and all citizens, contributing to the development of young, innovative companies, such is Irstea's ambition for the Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne."*

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Limagrain

Limagrain, an international cooperative group founded and managed by French farmers, moves agriculture forward to meet food challenges. As a creator and producer of plant varieties, the Group markets seeds and cereal products intended for farmers, growers and home gardeners, and for agri-food industrialists and consumers.

Limagrain is the fourth largest seed company in the world (field seeds and vegetable seeds), the European leader for functional flours, and the No. 1 French industrial baker, with strong brands on its markets.

Limagrain makes sales of almost 2.4 billion Euros and has more than 9,600 employees spread over 55 countries, including more than 2,100 working in research. The Limagrain Cooperative has almost 2,000 farmer members.

www.limagrain.com - #Limagrain

Céréales Vallée

Céréales Vallée contributes to the sustainable development of cereals through innovation in order to meet the food, non-food and environmental challenges of our society. Born in 2005, Céréales Vallée is the only competitiveness cluster involved in the cereals segment from seed to final product.

Located in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, and international in scope, Céréales Vallée brings together a unique combination of skills in regards to innovation in cereals, and unites more than 900 key players, public and private, involved in research, industry and training in cereal chains. In a context of strong global competitiveness, the Cluster facilitates the building and coordination of innovative collaborative projects around four themes: Sustainable Agricultural Cereal Production, Cereals for Animal Nutrition, Cereals for Human Nutrition and Cereals for Agro-materials.

www.cereales-vallee.org

Inra

Europe's top agricultural research institute with more than 8,000 researchers, engineers and technicians, and ranked 2nd in the world for its publications in agricultural sciences, INRA contributes to the production of knowledge and to innovation in food, agriculture and the environment.

INRA deploys its research strategy by mobilizing its 13 scientific departments, relying on a network which is unique in Europe with more than 200 research units and 50 experimental units located in 17 regional centers. The Institute's ambition is, from a global perspective, to help ensure a healthy and high-quality food supply, promote competitive and sustainable agriculture and protect and preserve the environment.

With 16 sites in the newly-created Region, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Center comprises 30 units and more than 900 agents. One of its main lines of research concerns the integrative biology of model and cultivated plants and their adaptation to their environment. It is the skills developed in this line of research which will be mobilized within the Regional Innovation Laboratory for field crops in Auvergne.

www.inra.fr

Irstea

Irstea, the National Research Institute of Science and Technology for Environment and Agriculture, is a Public Scientific and Technical Research Establishment falling within the purview of the ministries of research and agriculture.

Its multidisciplinary, action-oriented approach to research and expertise in support of public policy involves strong partnerships with French and European universities and research organizations, economic entities and public authorities.

The Institute is a founding member of AllEnvi, the National Alliance for Environmental Research, and the European PEER (Partnership for European Environmental Research) network. Irstea has the "Carnot Institute" label since 2006 and is partner of near 300 enterprises...

Its 2014 budget was 111 million euros including 27% own resources. It has 1.500 employees including more than 1.000 scientists.

Located on the University campus "Les Cézeaux" in Aubière (63) and on the test and research site of Montoldre (03), Irstea Clermont-Ferrand Centre has 130 employees and carries out researches in the area of technologies and information systems for agriculture and environment, in modeling of complex systems, including environmental and social ones and in territorial development.

www.irstea.fr/en