

LETTER OF INTENT

PREAMBLE

In the 21st century, agricultural research in the V4 countries faces unprecedented challenges and must provide the maximum performance in totally different conditions like never before.

The universal, social and climatic challenges of the globalizing world all together resulted in a situation where the food demand of the Earth's still steadily growing population is constantly growing with specifically decreasing amount of natural resources. Actions must be taken against climate change and the hectic world market price fluctuations of the agricultural products which keep the producers in a constant uncertainty.

In this complex world, the thematic and international priorities of the agricultural research in the V4 countries or from a broader perspective in the Central-European countries must be set, placing the institutional network in agricultural research of the countries in such a way as to maximize the use of public funds in order to best serve the agriculture sector and to be able to provide for its secure future.

In the midst of global food and environmental challenges the world's research had to go beyond the constant race and a mutually beneficial cooperation, in many cases multidisciplinary, has become the leading task where the main driving force is the complementarity among partners.

Regional and global geopolitical realities, national political principles, natural conditions and global challenges, primarily climate change, as well as the strength and possible limitations of the agricultural research in each V4 country have to be considered when setting the priorities of the international cooperation for the V4 countries.

BASED ON THE ABOVE, THE SIGNATORIES

AGREE that the Visegrad countries must place a special emphasis on:

- research and participation in international cooperation platforms focusing on climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable agricultural production (e.g Biodiversa ERA-Net)
- strengthening the relationship with countries in the Mediterranean Sea region including co-operations with key intergovernmental and international organizations (CIHEAM, EMUNI) and

through this bridging the gap between the Mediterranean and Visegrad Group or in the broader sense among countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

- looking at the global challenges, it is evident that V4 countries should play a role as the donor countries in the development of agricultural research in which the international organizations like CGIAR or FAO-IFAD could be an excellent partner.
- furthermore, in the case of V4 countries where agriculture plays a prominent role in the national economy in general, V4 should play an active role in certain thematic international cooperative programs such as Wheat Initiative, as well.
- participation in the construction of the European research area and more effective launch of the Horizon 2020 tenders, as a result of our membership in the European Union.

DECLARE, considering the above, that the following areas are proposed to be priorities and in which they propose to combine their strengths and coordinate their work concerning:

- activities strongly supporting the requirements of sustainable agricultural research projects, including the maintenance of biological diversity as well as the protection of natural resources (water, soil, air) and the possible use of biological processes (e.g agroforestry);
- the struggle with climate change;
- improving the energy independence of farms by utilization of agricultural secondary products and/or by application of agrotechnical methods requiring little energy;
- reducing the energy dependence of each country and in general the Central-European area by environmental friendly utilization of organic materials produced by agriculture;
- technology development to improve the balance of animal husbandry and crop production, focusing on the increased ratio of animal derived organic matter to be used in crop production;
- development of nutritional quality of society by increasing freshwater fish production and through this fish consumption;
- promotion of quality food consumption of the society by developing high standards and functional foodstuffs.

SUPPORT, taking into account the regional geopolitical factors, actions:

- to strengthen the agricultural links with countries of the Mediterranean basin and through this forming a bridge between the Mediterranean and the Visegrad Group, in the broader sense between the Eastern and Central European countries, in order to increase the food security of the Euro-Mediterranean countries and with means of their own to contribute to strengthening the geopolitical stability, and
- to strengthen cooperation with Maghreb-countries and indirectly with Sub-Saharan countries and with international research centers having headquarters or regional centers in these countries (e.g ICARDA, ILRI, ICRAF, AfricaRice, Great Green Wall),

- to successfully operate the BioEast initiative with special attention to "Theme 1: Climate change challenges in the Continental and Pannonian Bio-geographical Regions.

INITIATE that, by the end of 2017, the signatories should designate the persons or organizational units responsible for the development of a virtual platform with primary objective to facilitate contacts and exchange of information among the signatories of the Letter of Intent.


AGREE that this letter of intent is open for signature for all research institutes of V4 and V4+4 countries that are able to identify with the goals and are ready to contribute to their implementation.

Done at Budapest, on the 9th of November 2017 in 6 original copies, in English only.

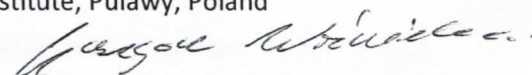

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