

## **Sustainable Weed Management in Agriculture with Laser-Based Autonomous Tools**

### **MINUTES OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> STAKEHOLDER EVENT**

**July 26th, 2023**

The fifth Stakeholder Event was organised by COAG in the facilities of the Centre for Automation and Robotics (CAR-CSIC), Arganda del Rey (Madrid, Spain). The agenda of the event is included in Annex 1. The slides of the presentations have already been collected and distributed to the attendees. The list of attendees is included in Annex 2. The meeting started at 14:30 p.m. and finished at 17.15 p.m. Interpretation (English – Spanish – English) was provided to ensure a proper participation of Spanish attendees, specially of farmers and final users.

The main objective of this Stakeholder Event was to address the implications of the future Regulation on the sustainable use of plant protection products, as well as on future alternatives in crop protection products. Experts from European institutions, national authorities, NGOs, crop protection industry and farmers associations provided their visions. Interaction with stakeholders took place.

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#### **Regulation on the sustainable use of plant protection products – Implications for EU production**

The facilitator, Manuel Linares from COAG, welcomed the participants and enhances the importance for the European production of the EU Regulation on the sustainable use of plant protection products (SUD Regulation), currently under discussion in the EU policy institutions.

The main conclusions of the speakers' interventions were (more detailed conclusions are included in Annex 3):

- ❖ SUD proposal has helped raising awareness and achieving a more rational and sustainable use of pesticides.
- ❖ Transition should include real and cost-effective alternatives for farmers, like new technologies and improving the funding on R&D.
- ❖ Some critics were raised against the SUD proposal: excessive ambition, lack of scientific basis and agronomic balance, difficult implementation in sensitive areas, or not including socio-economic sustainability.

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#### **Plant protection products – Future and alternatives**

The facilitator, Janusz Krupanek, IETU, highlights the relevance of developing alternatives for conventional and chemical plant protection products, according to the guidelines for future farming in the UE.

The main conclusions of the speakers' interventions were (more detailed conclusions are included in Annex 3):

- ❖ Today chemical control is the most used and cost-effective measure for a lot of farming problems.
- ❖ Promoting a sustainable use of herbicides and developing viable alternatives, like organic or non-chemical methods, for farmers is really important.
- ❖ Developing and financing public research and innovation for conventional and alternative methods is a key element for the future of farmers and of the European agriculture.

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#### **Closure**

Álvaro ARETA

The event organizer thanked for the fruitful event and closed the meeting.



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with Laser-Based Autonomous Tools**

**AGENDA OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> STAKEHOLDER EVENT**

**July 26th, 2023**

**Address:** CENTRE FOR AUTOMATION AND ROBOTICS (CAR-CSIC), Ctra. De Campo Real KM 0,200 (28500) Arganda del Rey. Madrid (Spain) <https://www.car.upm-csic.es/contact/>

**STAKEHOLDER EVENT**

**14:30 – 15:30 REGULATION ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS – IMPLICATIONS FOR EU PRODUCTION**

José Manuel Roche, *European Economic and Social Committee.*  
Patricia de Almandoz, *COPA-COGECA.*  
Carlos Romero, *Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.*

*Facilitator:* Manuel Linares, COAG.

**15:30 – 17:00 PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS – FUTURE AND ALTERNATIVES**

Evelyne Alcázar, *IFOAM.*  
Carlos Palomares, *CROPLIFE EUROPE.*  
Andrés Góngora, *COAG.*

*Facilitator:* Janusz Krupanek, IETU

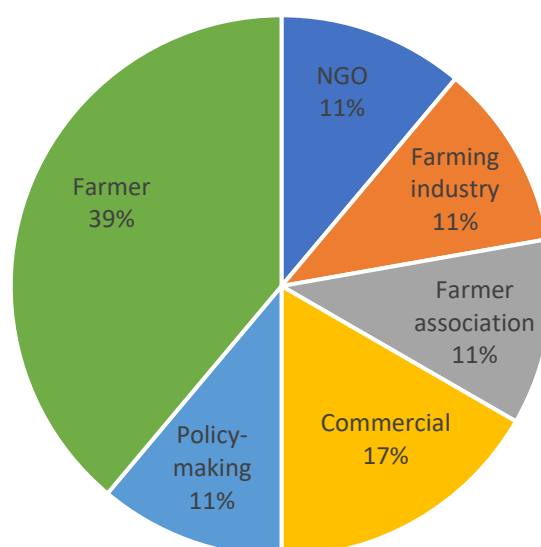
**17:00 End of meeting**

## Annex 2 – List of attendees

### Participants

Switzerland	Iseppi Frutta	Michele Pasini	Stakeholder
Poland	The Institute of Precision Agriculture	Damian Kacperek	Stakeholder
Belgium	INAGRO	Joran Barbry	Stakeholder
The Netherlands	Weed Control	Lambertus Van Loon	Stakeholder
Spain	ACOR	Luís López	Stakeholder
Spain	ACOR	Joaquín Ortiz	Stakeholder
Spain	Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Aragón	Esther Ciria	Stakeholder
Spain	Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Aragón	Joaquín Castellón	Stakeholder
Spain	Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Aragón	Pablo Franco	Stakeholder
Spain	Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Aragón	Ricardo Guillén	Stakeholder
Spain	Asociación de Ganaderos Independientes de Madrid	Ivanna Martínez	Stakeholder
Spain	Asociación de Ganaderos Independientes de Madrid	Pablo Anido	Stakeholder
Spain	COAG	Andrés Góngora	Stakeholder & Speaker
Spain	MAPA	Carlos Romero	Stakeholder & Speaker
EU Level	IFOAM	Evelyne Alcázar	Stakeholder & Speaker
EU Level	CROPLIFE EUROPE	Carlos Palomares	Stakeholder & Speaker
EU Level	COPA-COGECA	Patricia de Almandoz	Stakeholder & Speaker
EU Level	European Economic and Social Committee	Jose Manuel Roche	Stakeholder & Speaker

### Stakeholder attendance by professional competence



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**WeLASER Consortium**

Roemi Fernández	CSIC
Luis Emmi	CSIC
Pablo Gonzalez-de-Santos	CSIC
Pedro M. Martín	CSIC
Ruth Córdova	CSIC
Eloisa Cortiñas	CSIC
Manuel Linares	COAG
Mari Carmen García	COAG
Cristina Sanz	COAG
Álvaro Areta	COAG
Juan Yuri	COAG
Hendrik Sandmann	LZH
Malte Worzischek	LZH
Merve Wollweber	LZH
Janusz Krupanek	IETU
Paul Van Zoggel	VDBP
Paul Colleague	VDBP
Marco Arru	UNIBO
Matteo Golfarelli	UNIBO
Guiliano Vitali	UNIBO
Karsten Scholle	FUTONICS

### **Annex 3 – Detailed conclusions of the round tables**

The fifth stakeholders event began with the round table "Future implications of the EU Regulation on the sustainable use of products for the protection of plants". Facilitated by **Manuel Linares from COAG** and with the participation of Jose Manuel Roche, member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Patricia de Almandoz, representing the European farmers and cooperatives organization COPA-COGECA, and Carlos Romero from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA).

**Jose Manuel Roche (EESC)** was born in Teruel, Spain. He is a professional farmer with specialized experience in environment, forestry and agriculture. He owns a family farm in Lechago (Teruel), where he manages a family cereal farm. He is General Secretary of UPA in Aragón, as well as Head of International Affairs in UPA. He is also member at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) where he has been actively involved for more than 10 years, participating as rapporteur of opinions related to agriculture, food security and environment.

He exposed the implications of the Regulation, commonly called the SUR Regulation. He explained that the EESC agreed on a report analysing it. It was concluded that the SUD has helped raising awareness and achieving a more rational and sustainable use of pesticides. The EESC report does not oppose the proposed regulation and its objective, however it is considered that the transition is carried out without real alternatives for farmers. Farmers need access to new alternative products. Flexibility should be given to ensure that "no one is left behind". There is a need to improve availability and cost-effectiveness of alternatives, new technologies, and the funding on R&D. Science and innovation should be considered as a guide for moving towards a model based on reduced use of plant protection products. There are also concerns with imports from third countries if don't comply with EU rules on plant protection. It is stated the need of promoting a fair trade and strengthen controls in the EU common market. It is also emphasized two conflicting points in the proposal: sensitive areas and the differentiation of characteristics between different countries.

**Patricia de Almandoz (COPA-COGECA)** is an Agricultural Engineer and Responsible of Plant Protection products in Cooperativas Agroalimentarias de España. She has been Vice-president of the COPA-COGECA Working Group of Phytosanitary Questions.

She made a complete review of the proposed SUR Regulation, stressing the implications of being a Regulation, not a Directive, and how this collided with the different rhythms in the use of phytosanitary products in European countries. Likewise, she pointed out, in reference to sensitive areas, that this concept not only cover areas within the Natura 2000 Network, but also ecologically rich areas, which comprised a large percentage of several Member States, like Spain, and even the whole territory of some countries. She also exposed other arguments against the proposal, such as: excessive ambition, lack of scientific and agronomic basis, not including socio-economic sustainability or opposition to CAP financing. Finally, she also believed that the approach should be global, not so focused on the reduction of phytosanitary products but on obtaining tools and alternatives.

**Carlos Romero (MAPA)** was born in Madrid, Spain. In the academic field, Carlos holds a doctorate in Agricultural Engineering, a degree in Environmental Sciences and a Master's degree in Food and Consumer Marketing, all from the Polytechnic University of Madrid. In 2007, after different positions in universities, companies and private entities, he joined the public servant force. During these years,

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he has held positions in different departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, and is currently the Deputy Assistant Director of the Sub-Directorate of Plant and Forestry Health and Hygiene at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

He explained that the proposal was not balanced, according to Spanish position, and this is shared by other EU member states. The intention is to find a proper balance of the regulation, to better include the agrarian perspective also. He explained that the current Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union wants take advantage of the opportunity to harmonize the SUR regulation. After the publication of the impact assessment report, he explained that it is possible to discuss the proposal in its entirety. Special emphasis would be placed on discussing modifications in terms of sensitive areas and reduction targets.

Finally, a round of interventions from the public was carried out: bureaucratic difficulty involved in registering phytosanitary products was exposed and how this reduces the obtaining of alternatives.

After a short debate, the round table "Plant protection products – Future and alternatives" took place. Facilitated by **Janusz Krupanek from IETU** and with the participation of Evelyne Alcázar, IFOAM (IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming), Carlos Palomares, from CROPLIFE EUROPE, representing the Europe's crop protection industry, and Andrés Góngora, from the Spanish farmers organization, COAG.

**Evelyne Alcázar (IFOAM)** is an agricultural engineer graduated. She is also a technician in quality management. She has more than 20 years of experience in the Spanish organic sector, in tasks related to certification, quality management, institutional relations, projects and development of standards. She has been working for 12 years in the field of international affairs, as well as in the management of international projects on different topics related to organic production. She is currently international director at ECOVALIA and Spanish members' representative in IFOAM Organics Europe since 2013.

She stresses the importance of the farming production methods for alleviating or exacerbating the multiple challenges that we are facing, ranging from increasing hunger, climate change, and biodiversity loss to farmers and food workers not earning a decent income. Organic agriculture try foster a truly sustainable agriculture, value chains, and consumption in line with the principles of this kind of agriculture.

**Carlos Palomares (CROPLIFE EUROPE)** is general director at AEPLA, he is agricultural engineer from the Polytechnic University of Madrid, and in 1990 he completed an MBA at the Instituto de Empresa. He has worked in several companies involved in the phytosanitary sector, and representing it from AEPLA for the last 16 years.

He presents the objectives and works of the association he represents. He exposes that there are bureaucratic difficulties in registering new products, specially in chemical methods. Finally, he enhances innovation in plant health as the solution to provide secure and enough quantity of food for Europeans in the future.

**Andrés Góngora (COAG)** is professional farmer in charge of a family farm (third generation) for 20 years of 1,8 ha vegetables greenhouse (tomato, watermelon, and other products). He is member of Cooperativa Agrícola San Isidro (CASI) for 16 years where he participates in innovation programmes. He is Regional Secretary of COAG in Almería (Southeast of Spain), National Fruit and Vegetable Responsible at COAG and member of the Executive Commission of COAG, where he is in charge of phytosanitary questions.

He exposed that there are several alternative methods to chemical control: preventive methods, physical methods, cultural methods, biological methods... However, the chemical control is the most used one and it is effective for a lot of problems. As most of the phytosanitary products will disappear, promoting the sustainable use of herbicides and developing viable alternatives for farmers is really important. Regarding to this developing and financing public research and innovation for conventional and alternative methods is a key element for the future of farmers and of the European agriculture. Finally, he enhanced the importance of harmonizing the different regulations for European and imported products, regarding the use of chemical substances in order to avoid unfair competence among farmers and to improve the transparency for consumers.