

Press release

Ancenis, May 2018

Over 60 researchers from 11 European countries gathered in Ancenis (France) at the TERRENA cooperative for the 1st annual meeting of the European project ReMIX.

Researchers met from 15th to the 17th May 2018 at the TERRENA cooperative premises in Ancenis (France) for taking stock of the activities carried out in the frame of ReMIX during its first year and for planning the year ahead.

The ReMIX project, funded with 5 million € by the EU in the frame of the Horizon 2020 programme, will allow overcoming the barriers for the adoption of species mixtures in European agricultural systems, through a 4-year collaborative research project that will produce scientifically credible, but also economically and socially valuable new knowledge, both for conventional and organic agricultural systems.

After the first year of intense collaborative work, the complete ReMIX partnership gathered at TERRENA for exchanging on the current status of the different tasks, discussing the preliminary results already obtained as well as planning the second year of activities.

Faithful to its multi-actor approach, the scientific sessions of ReMIX were complemented with practical work at the multi-actor level, through different workshops scattered across the three day meeting. Different actors of the TERRENA cooperative value chain, such as farmers, advisors, processors, industrial partners and the cooperative CEO were interviewed, allowing ReMIX scientific partners to get an overview of the existing lock-ins in the system that prevent a wider uptake of species mixtures. "The innovative set-up of the annual meeting favoured the creation of a mutual learning framework in which ReMIX partners were able to exchange on concrete aspects of species mixtures with the actors in the value chain, sharing their knowledge and getting direct insight into actors' needs at the grassroots level", said Eric Justes, scientific coordinator of ReMIX, currently at CIRAD (France).

Species mixtures, also known as intercroops, crop associations or 'plant teams', are well known for their ability to enhance resource use efficiency, improve the control of pests, diseases and weeds and increase crop productivity and resilience in variable climatic conditions, in particular in low input and organic farming systems. However, a number of practical challenges hinder their widespread adoption in Europe. Hurdles relate to the absence of specific adapted varieties for mixes, the lack of locally adapted management practices as well as local, regional, national and international logistics and trading lock-ins, among others.

ReMIX tackles the main aspects related to the introduction of species mixtures in European agricultural systems, by addressing the agricultural value chain as a whole. The project conducts basic and applied research, covering a wide range of scientific areas, such as the study of the mechanisms underlying the benefits of species mixtures and their adaptability to different pedo-climatic conditions. It also tackles the production of new genetic resources and identification of varieties suited for use in species mixtures and the simulation of the effects of species choice, management practices and pedo-climatic conditions on species mixtures performance. ReMIX will also develop optimised technical settings for existing agricultural machinery in order to facilitate species mixtures harvest and grain separation for increasing their profitability.

The ReMIX partnership encompasses public research and higher education organisations, private research institutions, advisory services, farmers' cooperatives, agricultural equipment industries and SMEs. The partnership includes 24 partners in 11 EU countries, plus Switzerland and China and is coordinated by INRA – Toulouse and CIRAD – Montpellier (France). The project started in May 2017 and will end in April 2021.

For more information, visit our website: www.remix-intercrops.eu and follow us on Twitter and Facebook (@RemixIntercrops).

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