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Last Annual Meeting of ReMIX project

For the second time, an annual meeting had to be held online due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. The agenda for days 25 and 26 of March showed a dense program designed to facilitate interaction among the 80 inscribed participants. The sessions, organized for work package teams to show their results, included 30 minutes of presentations, with a maximum length of 10 minutes per presentation, and 45 minutes of discussion, set up by Work Package leaders using different methodologies to collect contributions from participants from inside and outside the work package teams.

Jean-Noel Aubertot (French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment, INRAE) and Eric Justes (Agricultural Research Centre for International Development CIRAD), project coordinators, introduced the reunion, followed by Elodie Tan, (InraeTransfert) who explained to the audience the last steps, administrative and financial, towards the project conclusion. Sonia Olza (Iniciativas Innovadoras, INI) and Robin Walker (Scotland's Rural College, SRUC) followed to give an overview of Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer Activities, which at this moment of the project become particularly important and deserved a monographic workshop on day 2 of the annual meeting.

During the afternoon sessions, WP leaders took the audience through their project highlights. Henrik Haugaard-Nielsen (Roskilde University, RUC) connected with the 11 MultiActor Platforms leaders, allowing participants to travel through 10 European Countries to hear about intercropping combinations, barriers, and solutions coming from the demand-driven approach led by WP 1.

Georg Carlsson (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences-SLU), presented the main highlights of WP2, focusing on how benefits of intercropping can be achieved both in high-input and low-input agriculture, and showing pea/oat intercrops to have higher within-field yield stability than pea sole crops in fields with spatially heterogeneous soil conditions. Colleagues from the China Agricultural University CAU, Wageningen University, and the University of Hohenheim-UHOH supported SLU with this session, where participants were split into smaller groups to discuss in detail these findings.

WP4 leader Pierre Hofmann (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture-FiBL) introduced the last WP session of the day, focusing on the results after 4 years of activity under screening, breeding, and phenotyping methods for species mixtures. Researchers from INRAe, CREA- Council for Agricultural Research and Economics, and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki-AUTH have been co-leading this research and supported FiBL

presenting the highlights of the work carried out, leading to very interesting discussions and questions coming one after the other from participants.

In the evening, Prof. Miguel Altieri, invited keynote speaker, presented “Intercropping and Agroecology”, a delightful journey along years of investigation in countries all over the world but especially in America, showing examples of polycultures and the benefits that carried for farmers, not only from the environmental point of view but also with a strong economic and social impact.

Day 2 started with concentrated in the morning the presentations key results coming from WP 5, 3, and 6. WP 5 leader Wopke van der Werf ([Wageningen University-WU](#)) introduced his colleague Jochem Evers to present Functional plant traits in intercrops and how to use plant models; Lammert Bastiaans, also from WU, presented a model to predict weed suppression in intercrops; and Sebastian Munz (University of Hohenheim) presented “Modelling cereal-legume intercrops under climate change”.

WP3, led by Maria Finckh ([University of Kassel, KU](#)) dedicated the last for years to analyze the factors and management practices determining the efficiency of species mixtures to control insect pests, diseases, and weeds. She counted on the support of Tao Song and Chunfeng Gu (China Agricultural University), Delphine Moreau (INRAe) and Adnan Sisic (KU) to share the main highlights.

Finally, Christine Watson (Scotland’s Rural College) presented the “Grand tour of ReMIX Tools for Farmers” to highlight the achievement of WP6, which focuses on the management practices of species mixtures for farmers. A web and a Species Mixtures Management Toolbox (ReMIX Toolbox), the ReMIX Ecosystem Services tool, and an educational decision-support Serious Game (Interplay) were also presented: these tools are at the final stage of development and will soon be released.

The afternoon was dedicated to sharing ideas, in a brainstorming exercise, on how to boost dissemination of the project results once the project is officially finished. Policy Briefs, practice abstracts, scientific publications have been elaborated after these 4 years of intense work, and they now will be shared with the target audience all over Europe. For this, the consolidated multi-actor platforms and the online communities of “intercroppers” can be potential multipliers. There is a strong willingness of repeating the winter school on intercropping next year, and many other suggestions on ways to increase the impact of the project (through new projects, initiatives, and the tools already in place) came across the workshop.

The meeting finalized with a few words from the two project coordinators, thanking everyone for the hard work and calling for the last effort to finalize all the pending deliverables on time. The spirit during the meeting and the project period has been great: a lot of support, collaboration, teamwork, and understanding have been the rule. The last year has been impacted by the covid pandemic: two annual meetings, two final conferences, and the post-graduate school on intercropping had to go online. Still,

partners managed to meet the project goals. As Eric Justes recalled, to close the meeting, the project succeeded to put “another brick in the wall” for having more diversified and resilient agro-ecological arable cropping systems.

The ReMIX project, funded with €5 million by the EU under the Horizon 2020 programme, is a four-year collaborative research programme that has produced new scientifically reliable but also socially valuable knowledge for both conventional and ecological farming systems. The ReMIX consortium comprises public research and higher education organizations as well as 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 INRAE - 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)

