

1st Workshop PRESS RELEASE

The CAPSELLA Project, launched on January 1st 2016 under Horizon 2020, will establish a Collective Awareness Platform for Environmentally-sound Land Management based on Data Technologies & Agrobiodiversity

22 February 2016: With over 77% of the European territory classified as rural (47% farmland and 30% forest) and around 12 million full-time farmers, agriculture is a vibrant and important sector of the EU economy and welfare. Agriculture and agri-food account for 6% of the EU's GDP, comprising 15 million businesses and 46 million jobs.

The European Commission has hugely invested in a Common Agricultural Policy designed to support farming, ensure food quality and safety and promote sustainable and balanced development across all EU rural areas. EU farmers have to face multiple challenges to meet increasing demands from consumers and the civil society. Besides their traditional role of food, feed and fiber producers, farmers are nowadays requested to provide other ecosystem services, such as the production of renewable energy, the conservation of the environment, landscape and rural cultural heritage, and the mitigation of climate change. There is increasing awareness that all these demands can be met by the conservation and wise use of agricultural biodiversity, or 'agrobiodiversity'.

To meet the present goals of EU agricultural and agri-food systems and to foster knowledge on the importance of agrobiodiversity among EU stakeholders and actors, the use of novel ICT solutions is key. Targeted ICT-based solutions can promote innovative, knowledge-intensive farming systems and methods based on the optimization of local natural resources and on reduced use of external inputs. On top of this, ICT can greatly contribute to closing the digital divide between urban and rural areas, thus creating a more inclusive society.

In this light, CAPSELLA is organizing its first workshop, on 30-31 May 2016 in Volterra (Pisa), Italy, aiming at bringing together Northern and Southern EU farmers to collect and understand their ICT needs and requirements. The event will try to answer and provide solutions to them, exchange best practices and use cases and pave the way to exchange knowledge and future collaborations around the theme of agrobiodiversity.

The event's vibrant environment will be a stage where farming communities with different background (such as conventional and organic) but sharing the interest in agrobiodiversity, will openly discuss and compare their points of view, where existing ICT tools will be presented to expose their benefits to farmers communities, and where the goals and activities of CAPSELLA will be presented. The workshop includes outdoor (in field) and indoor sessions, aimed to break the ice among participants and build a collaborative spirit.

Focus groups moderated by a facilitator will ensure a concrete exchange of opinions, knowledge and experiences, the effective collection of requirements by the networks and communities involved, and awareness raising on the importance of collecting and sharing open data and knowledge on agrobiodiversity, the benefits of co-designing ICT tools and of new products such as a cloud platform delivered by the CAPSELLA consortium at the end of the project.

The agenda is available on the CAPSELLA website (www.capsella.eu)

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