



## European-Latin American Project on Co-innovation of Agro-ecoSystems

# EULACIAS

Breaking the spiral of unsustainability in arid and semi-arid areas in  
Latin America using an ecosystems approach for co-innovation of  
farm livelihoods

Specific targeted research project under FP6 International Cooperation – Developing Countries.  
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### Items in this Newsletter

- Local workshops in the case studies
- Changes in WP 6
- Internal communication: portal and Google discussion group
- Yearly progress report is imminent
- PhD candidates and their background

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### 1. Third Newsletter and second internal Newsletter

This newsletter is the last of 2007, the year in which EULACIAS started. We can look back on two fruitful full project meetings and lots of activities in the case studies aimed at better understanding of production, farm management and the institutional environment. Activities benefit from efforts of the case study teams and of inputs from researchers outside the case studies. The PhD projects are taking shape and will be completed during visits of the students to Wageningen, early next year. Plans for a EULACIAS course are under discussion and will take shape in 2008. All in all, we see the contours of our co-innovation approach emerging. Needless to say that we still have much to do.

We have collated a number of items on which we think that information sharing is useful. In the month of February we will have local workshops in each case study. These are meant to take stock of activities, see whether the case studies targets are met and to what extent changes in activities need to be made. This is a critical component of the co-innovation approach (item 2). The leadership of WP6 Dissemination is under discussion as Max has indicated that he is overburdened with activities (item 3). We are intensifying internal communication (item 4). The yearly progress reports are under construction. This is important to secure funding for next year (item 5). Last but not least we would like to provide the opportunity to our PhD students to introduce themselves (item 6).

We wish you a very happy Holiday Season and a sparkling 2008, both in your personal life and professionally and look forward to meeting you in the New Year.

### 2. Local case study reflection workshops planned for early 2008

Co-innovation is the way that EULACIAS seeks to carry out research for development. It involves case study staff working with key stakeholders to co-construct knowledge and technologies, the use of which will help achieve EULACIAS' goals. The three case studies will hold local workshops in February and March 2008 to evaluate how co-innovation is working in their contexts, in other words, their particular co-innovation dynamics. They will do this by reflecting on progress along impact pathways identified in workshops held in the first half of 2007. The preparation for these reflection workshops is underway and involves WP2 contacts in each case filling out worksheets that describe a series of impact hypotheses for each case. These are stated in the form of: 1) the actor or group of actors that need to change for the case to achieve its vision; 2) the changes in practice required; 3) the changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice needed to underpin the change; and 4) case strategies to bring these outcomes about. Another worksheet seeks to set outcome targets for the outcomes the case has some control over, while a third describes milestones measuring progress towards achieving them. Participants in the reflection

workshops will critically assess whether the first set of milestones has been achieved and whether the impact hypotheses remain valid. They will do this based on data from ongoing studies and the collection of significant change stories. The workshops are an opportunity for the case teams and key stakeholders to reflect on what has been learned and based on this, set new milestones. Attempting to achieve the new set of milestones will begin another experiential learning cycle that will be completed in the next reflection workshop. The process of setting milestones, reflection and adjustment of impact hypotheses constitutes the action research on co-innovation dynamics being carried out by WP2 and EULACIAS.

Workshops will be held as follows:

- Chapingo University, México, end of March-early April (tentative date and place)
- Montevideo Uruguay, 14-15 February (Confirmed)
- Sarmiento, South Patagonia Argentina, 18-19 February (confirmed).

For further information, please contact Diana Córdoba ([d.cordoba@cgiar.org](mailto:d.cordoba@cgiar.org)) and team leaders.

### 3. Changes in WP 6

Dr Max Huerta has indicated that his other duties have come increasingly in the way of effective leadership of the important Dissemination workpackage. Since WP6 is the responsibility of the University of Chapingo, Ricardo, together with Walter and the Management Team are looking at solutions. For the moment WU has assumed responsibility for the Newsletter and the Portal. We are looking to transfer responsibilities for Newsletter and the websites, and for internal and external contacts back to the University of Chapingo as fast as possible. Also, the WP6 leader will need to put energy in defining our co-innovation course, together with potential clientele in the case study countries.

Previous newsletters were an internal newsletter in March 2007 and an external newsletter in August 2007, released October 2007. The external newsletter will be translated in Spanish – this process has been delayed. For the moment the Newsletter is made in Wageningen. We will keep you informed on developments.



### 4. Internal communication: portal and Google discussion group

The website [www.eulacias.org](http://www.eulacias.org) is our link to the outside world. We use it to make known what the purpose of the project is, where and how we do our research and, in time, what the results are.

For our internal communication we have two means: the portal and since recently also a Google discussion group. The portal is accessible with a password only. All of you should have received an account and password (if not: contact [office.eulacias@wur.nl](mailto:office.eulacias@wur.nl)). The portal <https://portal.wur.nl/sites/eulacias/default.aspx>

contains announcements, events, contact details of the project members, documents and pictures. Announcements include currently e.g. the dates of the next full project meeting; events refer to deadlines (e.g. of deliverables) and to happenings mainly within the project (such as local workshops or international visits), in a kind of calendar style. In the contact details you can find email addresses, Skype names, phone numbers and affiliations of the project members. Documents are stored per WP. You can work on a document jointly with a colleague on the other side of the world, since the system keeps track of this. Pictures are stored in folders; currently we have folders with the contents of the three workshops that we have organized. Recently, we added a number of discussion groups, which aim to continue discussion on the topics of the open space sessions that we engaged in during the San José de Gracia workshop.

We have also started a discussion group outside the portal. It was felt by some that it would be easier to get other people involved if logon procedures would be standard, as e.g. in Google. For this reason, the CIAT team and particularly Sophie and Diana have made a big effort in starting up a Google group. To use it, make a Gmail account. Once you have that search for EULACIAS and you can apply for membership. Once that is also obtained through the wonders of internet, you can indicate you want to be alerted on new postings. The group seems to be

doing well: there are almost daily new postings and useful suggestions and discussions. And once you have a Gmail account, you may as well look at the Google Calendar of EULACIAS as well. Here you see the same information as on the portal, split out by WP. Ideal to see who is where at what time. Have a look and start to use it to your advantage.

### 5. Yearly progress report

The European Commission, our funding agency, require yearly reports on scientific progress (Periodic Activity Report) and on finances (Periodic Management Report), according to strict rules on format. The WU team has requested relevant information from both the WP leaders (on scientific progress) and from the team leaders (on finances) and will collate the information to arrive at feedback to the EC. We are reporting on the period of 1 February 2007 to 31 January 2008. This activity is coordinated by Johannes and Walter from Wageningen.

### 6. PhD candidates and their background

#### *Florencia Alliaume*

I am Florencia Alliaume Molfino, agronomist since 1998. In 2004 I obtained my MsAppIsc with a major on Natural Resource Management at Massey University, New Zealand. I have been working at the Soil and Water Department at the Agronomy Faculty in Montevideo as a research assistant since 1997. There I participated in soil surveys and soil suitability studies for viticulture; and at present, we are doing evaluations of the effect of organic amendments on soils for blueberry production, studying the soil variability in peach orchards, and teaching edaphology.

My contribution to the EULACIAS participatory project aimed at designing and evaluating sustainable farming is based on some considerations. As a consequence of decreasing economic benefits of vegetable crops production in Uruguay, these systems are in danger of being unsustainable. In this context, activities to improve soil quality are not been used. More research on quantitative understanding of the interactions between cropping systems and soil quality is an important issue to be addressed in order to achieve successful adoption of soil conservation technologies. My project will try to answer questions in relation to changes in nutrient availability and soil moisture supply capacity to crops under different soil management strategies. We aim to

adjust/improve a quantitative tool to evaluate/predict the effect of the crop rotation and organic amendments on soil moisture supply capacity and nutrient availability under Uruguayan conditions.

On a personal note, I have just become mum of a beautiful girl, Micaela.

#### *José Cortez Arriola*

I am José Cortez Arriola, agronomist since 1995. In 1998 I finished my MSc in animal production from Chapingo University, México with specialization in forage production. After that, I worked for 3.5 years with small farmers as adviser in grazing cattle production systems in Yucatán, México. Between 2001 and 2007, I was working in the Ministry of environment and natural resources, assessing environmental impact of touristic, forestry and other land use changes projects, including livestock and agricultural projects.

My role in the EULACIAS case study México consist of assessing the environmental impacts of the traditional dairy production systems in the northwestern region of Michoacán. We will assess nutrient flows, nutrient use efficiency, soil losses, and (loss of) ecological diversity by current crop and livestock production activities and management practices. We aim to propose alternative crop production and soil management strategies, with the objective to reduce the environment impacts.

As a hobby I practice extreme long distance running. Nowadays I can only run 3 or 4 time a week for shorter distances and during little time, but I hope to resume when there is more time.



#### *Belén Pugh*

I am Belén Pugh, agronomist since 1998. In 2006 I started an MBA in the Economics Faculty of San Juan Bosco University in Patagonia. I finished the coursework and now I am working on my thesis project.

I worked at the Fruticulture chair in the National University of La Plata as a teaching assistant from 1996 until 1997.

In 1998 I started to work in cherry production, first in orchard management and later in packing house management. Because of that I was hired by INTA Chubut to complement the Fruticulture Team working specifically with cherries.

My contribution to the EULACIAS participatory project is aimed at describing and analyzing the context of cherry production in South Patagonia so that the team can select the proper devices to involve farmers in the identification of the drivers of change of the possible future scenarios. The next step is to work on a projection of the impact that alternative future scenarios could have on key farming systems to obtain possible ways of intervention for improving sustainability of livelihoods.

#### *Claudia Mundet*

I'm an agricultural engineer who graduated 20 years ago at La Plata University in Buenos Aires and who has been working in South Patagonia Region almost since then. I was born here so that's why I'm especially involved in the problems and complexity of our production systems.

I've been working for the government for quite a long time and of course all my experience in the field of rural development comes from those days. I've been involved in this area during the 90s and especially since 1993, after attending a course dealing with Regional Planning and Formulation and Evaluation of projects. I've worked for the province within a corporation whose main purpose was rural development. From this post I had the possibility to work as an active agent and to achieve a lot of goals. I've worked for many programs conducted by the government in order to give financial and technical support to different groups of growers. I've worked with different methodologies concerning planning and evaluation of rural development projects. I've attended different courses and I've always been interested on this matter of rural development.

Since 2002 I've been especially working on fruit crops, mainly sweet cherries as a private advisor quite successfully. I'm actually working for a company in two different areas of South Patagonia (Sarmiento and Comodoro Rivadavia). During 2005 and 2006 I've gotten a contract to do a special task for the provincial government to do with rural development. Its aim was to write, coordinate and execute a program through participative methods of development in the agricultural field and within my region. I realized through this program that there is still a lot to be done. Our farmers are far from being successful farmers and one of the main problems they have

to face is the lack of real extension work on the fields.

It's quite challenging and stimulating for me to have the opportunity of joining this project and at the same time to be able to get into a PhD program. I'm grateful to the people who have suggested my name and of course quite honoured to have the chance to work with such a group of professionals. I hope to fulfill this program's requirements and of course to help growers develop successful agricultural activities in my region.

Introduction of *Abigail Castro* will follow in the next newsletter.





Pictures in this issue were taken during the Full Project Meeting in San José de Gracia, Mexico, September 2007.