This Newsletter is the summary of the last ECAF activities. By reading it you can see the most important achievements made throughout ECAF and its National Associations related to Conservation Agriculture communication in Europe.

**LATEST EVENTS**

Written Declaration at the European Parliament

Marrakech November 7th, COP 22

Clara Aguilera and Nicola Caputo appealing for the written Declaration on CA at European Parliament.

**UP-COMING EVENTS**

In Albacete (Spain)

Next ECAF General Assembly 2017

**ECAF ACHIEVEMENTS**

SolACE project
“Solutions for improving Agroecosystem and Crop Efficiency for water and nutrient use”.

New member of ECAF 2017
We welcome the Turkish Conservation Agriculture Association.

**PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE**

LIFE + Climagri
ECAF is about to start the compilation of a new set of indicators data within this second season, that will allow farmers to have comparatives for decision making purposes.
ECAF organised a training course on cultivating Productive Soil and Clean Water for Syngenta in May 10th-12th in Cordoba (Spain). Best management practices for Conservation Agriculture were approached in a useful forum composed up by technicians from the agrochemical sector. It was an excellent opportunity to get in touch with key professional from the agrochemical sector who are willing to share their knowledge and experience towards a more sustainable soil management approach.

Marrakech
November 7th, COP 22. Some members of ECAF jointly with FAO took part in the COP 22 side event named “Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Food Security with Conservation Agriculture in Africa and the Mediterranean Region”. Mitigating the impact of Climate Change and Ecosystem Services were the subjects tackled on behalf of ECAF. Likewise, in November 17th, COP 22. Some other members of ECAF had the chance jointly with the Spanish Association for Conservation Agriculture (AEAC.SV) to exchange insights with the Spanish Minister on Agriculture, Ms García-Tejerina, on the manifold benefits to mitigate climate change CA could offer within the 4 per 1000 initiative in Spain. Agriculture and climate change are closely linked, since agricultural activity can positively or negatively affect global warming.

ECAF participated in the panel on “Innovation in practices – adding value and better use of resources”, which jointly with other panels about financing innovation and how to respond to farmers’ needs for innovation over the session named “Farmers leading Innovation” took place in October 5th in Athens (Greece) in the framework on the last Congress of European Farmers 2016 – COPA COGECA.
Following the motion on Conservation Agriculture posed by MEP Nicola Caputo last 2015 at the European Parliament, a Written Declaration was tabled at the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI) on February 4th 2016 after having gathered the signatures of 13 MEPs from several political parties. Within ECAF, an effort on compiling the needed signatures to push further with Conservation Agriculture towards the European Commission, but unfortunately just 139 signatures out of 751 were achieved in due time.

Nevertheless all these efforts were not in vain. This was an excellent opportunity to briefly explain MEPs and their assistances the concept of Conservation Agriculture and the relevant environmental benefits this type of agriculture provides.

ECAF actively contributed in **public hearing on the role of Conservation Agriculture in enhancing agricultural productivity and ecosystem services** last November 7th at the European Parliament, Brussels. Over this event, Conservation Agriculture was seeing as a response to soil degradation which is caused by tillage, in particular. Its methods aim at supporting productive agricultural systems capable of delivering maximum yields and ecosystem services while being resource efficient and resilient.


ECAF presented the possibilities and constraints for No-till practices in Bulgaria within the framework of the theme “Future of our Agriculture” at the **sixth national Agro Seminar held in Plodiv (Bulgaria)** last December 1st-2nd.
On January 13th 2016, an important seminar named “Making Sustainable Agriculture Real” was held in the European Parliament, which can be defined as historic for professionals who have spent more than two decades dedicating to implement and disseminate the conservation agriculture techniques. Two members of the Committee of Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament hosted the event and supported these sustainable techniques, in which farmers across Europe had the opportunity to talk about its multiple benefits. In this sense, Clara Aguilera, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (COMAGRI), asked for the full integration of these practices in the future CAP. Whereas Nicola Caputo, member of the COMAGRI and co-chair of the LIFE working group of the European Parliament reminded everyone of the need to facilitate the implementation of these conservation agriculture principles in practice.

ECAF is participating in the SolACE project “Solutions for improving Agroecosystem and Crop Efficiency for water and nutrient use” that has been recently selected in the framework of H2020-SFS-2016 - jointly with other 23 partners from European Research organisations; Industrial companies and Small-medium enterprises. ECAF will share its long-lasting expertise as European stakeholder on sustainable agriculture in general, and on the promotion of conservation agriculture.

ECAF is committing with ECAF is a partner of the Global Conservation Agriculture Network (GCAN) recently composed by 17 members including farming organisations, researchers and policymakers from all the world. GCAN aims to provide solutions which help meet the current farming challenge and which ensures that agriculture is more resilient, while still guaranteeing greater food security and sustainability in all climatic conditions.

ECAF was required to make some inputs on the “Effort Sharing Decision” (ESD) from the European Commission. The ESD sets binding annual greenhouse gas emission targets for Member States for the period 2021–2030 of the economy sectors which are not regulated under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), such as agriculture, in order to ensure the achievement of the commitments established by the European Union and its Member States under the Paris Agreement on climate change. ECAF contributed providing some tools for Member States to meet their national targets in agriculture sector.

The Committee responsible of this issue at the European Parliament is the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (COMENVI). Although some other Committees are also appointed for opinion. In this case ECAF is working with the rapporteur of the COMAGRI, trying to better positioning of conservation agriculture as a great tool to mitigate climate change.

ECAF is committed with the 4pour1000 initiative as contribution to COP21 in Paris. Conservation Agriculture can contribute most to enhance carbon sequestration, and to reduce fossil fuel and agrochemical use, in line with the goal of 4pour1000.

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ECAF projects in the pipeline

INSPIA

INSPIA project 2017-2019 seems to continue along three more years! The purpose of this project “European Index for Sustainable Productive Agriculture” is more and more at the hand not only farmers but also European decision makers who are verifying the real existence of a sustainable and productive agricultural model.

LIFE + Climagri

“Best agricultural practices for Climate Change: integrating strategies for mitigation and mitigation”. In the framework of this project, ECAF is coordinating the monitoring of the European Network of Demo Farms. ECAF has also developed a GIS platform through which farmers can calculate the value of the indicators of Climagri for their farms and get recommendations to improve the management of the farm.

15 INSPIA Best Management Practices.

Sustainability outcome graph (INSPIA).

Geographical Information System LIFE + Climagri project.

Up-coming events

Next ECAF General Assembly 2017

Next ECAF General Assembly will take place in Albacete (Spain) in March 8th and 9th, 2017.

On the second day (March 9th), members of ECAF National Associations, farmers and other stakeholders will be able to discuss and exchange insights and knowledge about the Conservation Agriculture techniques that Miguel Barnuevo (Spanish Landowner) has been implementing in his farm over the last 20 years.
National Associations Activities

AEAC.SV - Spain

The Spanish Association for Conservation Agriculture-Living Soils (AEAC.SV) participated in the International Agriculture Machinery Fair (FIMA) 2016, held in Zaragoza (Spain), in February 16th-20th, in which different fertilizations strategies were shown.

With the participation of more than 1,800 farmers, the AEAC.SV held the international field day on Conservation Agriculture in Barruelo del Valle (Valladolid-Spain) last September 22nd. This event has been a success not only because of the large number of participants, and the impact on the media (TV, radio and press), but also because of the effective advocacy for the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food and Environment and other key administrations. Policy makers openly supported conservation agriculture as the basis for the new reform of the CAP 2020.

The AEAC.SV has prepared a study for the Spanish Office of Climate Change, which will serve as a support for the future drafting of the Climate Change Law, where it is expected that the techniques of Conservation Agriculture have a relevant role in the future.

CA IRELAND - Ireland

The ECAF National representative for Ireland, John Geraghty, was one of the keynote speakers in a session entitled ‘Soil Saviours’ at the recent Oxford Farmers Conference in the UK. You can see his contribution here:

https://www.ofc.org.uk/video/john-geraghty

PROCORE-Republic of Moldova

Long term field experiments on Conservation Agriculture with different crop rotations have been undertaken in Balti, Republic of Moldova jointly with some researches at Selectia Research Institute of Field Crops.
APAD - France

APAD was invited by the Minister of Agriculture to participate in the Night of Agroecology in the gardens of Ministry of Agriculture, June 23rd, in the presence of President of the Republic, François Hollande.

The objective of this Night of Agroecology was to open dialogue with civil society on the benefits of agro-ecology, including the Soil Conservation Agriculture. APAD’s farmers are mobilized to animate a stand but also through a panel with recognized scientists.

The French National Association for Conservation Agriculture (APAD) held a round table named “Agrofourniture and agro-ecology: what partnerships to develop Soil Conservation Agriculture?” within the framework of the Festival “Innov-agri” in Outarville -Loiret (France) in September 6th-8th. Some members of APAD Perche and APAD Sud Bassin Parisien also contributed to this event setting a stand on Soil Conservation Agriculture, Agro-ecological space.

APOSOLO - Portugal

Some farmers form the Portuguese Association for Conservation Agriculture (APOSOLO) participate actively in the International Field day organised in Spain. A specific thematic station for demonstrating and showing the experiences and expertise of No-Till farmers drew the attention of other stakeholders in soil management techniques.

AIGACoS - Italy

Last January 20th 2017, the Italian Association for soil conservation AIGACoS, held a seminar named “La Nuova Via Italiana dell’Agricoltura Conservativa” in Osimo (Italy).

Speakers such as Giuseppe Elias; AIGACoS President, and Michele Pisante, University of Teramo and ECAF Italian representative reached to explain the set of environmental benefits, Conservation Agriculture provide to society. They highlighted Conservation Agriculture helps achieving the environmental objectives of the new CAP, especially in terms of reduction in soil erosion and mitigating climate change.

FICA – Finland

More than 50 farmers showed interest in direct seeding machines over the last general assembly of the Finnish Conservation Agriculture Association held in 9th April 2016.
On 27th of May 2016 SNCT organized the excursion of its field experiment which is focused on various conservation technologies. There was a discussion with the students regarding the pros and cons of conventional vs. conservation technologies.

SNCT was invited to participate in education activities during the Slovak Field Day on 7th and 8th June 2016. It is one of the biggest exhibitions if field of agriculture in Slovakia with many visitors from the country and also from abroad.

At the end of year SNCT helped to organize the international scientific conference “Growing technologies and its contribution to the practise”. The conference took a place in National Agricultural and Food Centre – Research Institute of Plant Production in Piešťany on 1st December 2016. Members of SNCT presented the results from field experiments.