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## PRESS RELEASE #3

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### **IntercropVALUES partners met in Louvain-La-Neuve to discuss the achievements of the last two years and share their vision, and plans for the next year.**

Last week, members of the 25 entities involved in the project IntercropVALUES met in Louvain-La-Neuve (Belgium) for their second annual consortium meeting. Their goal was, on the one hand, to discuss all the work done since the project started, two years ago. In various working sessions, partners presented their results, highlighting the milestones achieved, and the obstacles they encountered in the process. On the other hand, the group outlined the plan for the coming year, sharing their strategy to overcome barriers and continue advancing towards the goals of the project.

The project aims to exploit the advantages of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable and environmentally friendly cropping systems that are acceptable to farmers and agri-food chain actors. This ambitious objective is being pursued by 13 co-innovation case studies (CICS) from the EU (9), UK (1), Serbia (1), Switzerland (1) and Mozambique (1). The leaders of the CICS, representing both conventional and organic farming, as well as short and long value-chains, have set their own objectives and agenda during this first year to have a close coordinated start of activities.

After two years of activities, the project is now on its equator. With two more years ahead and some of the expected results already available, this is a crucial time to adjust the course and ensure that the established objectives are successfully achieved. Throughout the meeting, members worked collaboratively to align approaches and continue making solid progress toward the expected results.

The three-day event was hosted by the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), one of the partners of the project and leader of work package six, focused on identifying barriers and lock-ins that hinder the implementation of intercropping practices across Europe. Their team also works on identifying potential levers that can drive change, helping to create opportunities for widespread adoption. By analyzing both obstacles and catalysts for transition, UCLouvain contributes to shaping strategies that support the sustainable integration of intercropping into agricultural systems.

The consortium, coordinated by the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), brings together research teams from national or regional universities and technology institutes, development agencies, cooperatives, SMEs and rural networks. The diversity of participants responds to the need of taking a multi-disciplinary, multi-actor approach to address the challenges faced by intercropping at the value chain level.

On the first day, the partners responsible for communication, dissemination, and exploitation strategies provided an overview of the current situation and outlined how each partner can contribute to promoting the project's results. These results, along with the 10 available practice abstracts, were presented in a separate session later that day. In the final session, attendees



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heard from representatives of the China Agricultural University, a project partner, who detailed their intercropping approach and shared insights into the techniques and machinery they have developed.

On the morning of the second day, the team held talks over various subjects including, modeling, protocols for cost-benefit analyses, and the importance of adapting machinery to fit the needs of intercropping practices. The afternoon was devoted to collaborative sessions between members of the different work packages. The day ended with a visit to a local farm where participants had a chance to have a close look at some of the more practical aspects related to intercropping.

The third and last day, the team focused on policy, and the changes needed at all administrative levels to create a regulatory context that favors the adoption of intercropping as an effective tool to achieve the strategic goals of the European Union. With this goal in mind, the team introduced the first policy brief, a key document identifying major barriers to intercropping in Europe and proposing policy changes to support its adoption. Among the attendees was IntercropVALUES's project officer who shared positive remarks on the status of the project and the work done by the consortium.

With all thirteen Co-Innovation Case Studies (CICS) progressing well, new research results are expected to emerge over the next year. These findings will be consolidated at the next annual consortium meeting, for which the location is yet to be determined. This upcoming meeting will provide a clearer understanding of key aspects of intercropping practices and outline the path forward to making their implementation a sustainable reality in Europe.

IntercropVALUES, funded by the European Commission through the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Program, has a project website ([www.intercropvalues.eu](http://www.intercropvalues.eu)) and several social media channels where interested parties will be able to find more information about its activities and results in the coming years. A calendar with events, a section for scientific publications, and news are already available on the site. The project is also planning two summer/winter courses for postgraduates, webinars for the processing and machinery industry, training courses for farmers and advisors, and two multi-actor conferences.

