

“Ossiach Declaration on the uptake of ICT for Agriculture, Forestry, Rural Viability and Environmental Management”

The “Club of Ossiach”, a group of agriculturists, agribusiness managers, agriculture technologists and agricultural ICT specialists from around the world, met at Ossiach between 17-19 June 2013 at the “[AgriFuture Days](#)” Conference. They reviewed current trends and possible discontinuities resulting from political, social, environmental and technological changes, potentially impacting on the future of agriculture, farming, rural viability, food and nutrition worldwide.

1. The Club of Ossiach recognized that:

- Almost a third of the world’s population is vulnerable to poverty and malnutrition, respectively is marginal in its current food and nutritional security, has concerns of its food safety and reliability of its supply.
- The resource poor small holder farmers of the world are the poorest and the bottom of the heap of the hungry.
- The world today faces severe environmental changes and damages. In addition it cannot continue to exploit natural resources in the current unsustainable manner.
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials and space technology among many other technological innovations, individually and jointly, are essentially unsynchronized. This negatively influences human progress and development including agriculture, food security and rural viability. We have to create a bio-based economy (accepting the sustainability rules of nature) transforming industry, business and services.
- The potential to feed the world, to use natural resources and safeguard the environment depends on judicious change and use of technology.
- However, the poorest of the world not only suffer the most but may miss from benefitting from this economic and technological transformation.

2. The Club of Ossiach focus on ICTs identified the following key points in adoption of ICT in agriculture

- Agricultural contribution to rural communities is not limited to agrotechnology and production efficiencies. To a large extent it is the result of ICT innovations and their implementation.

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- ICT adoption for agriculture impacts on rural community sustainability and an unlimited variety of products, economic benefits, technical improvements and social enhancement.
- ICT will be most effective as an incentive and agent of change when used at points of stakeholder cooperation. Stakeholders can be expected to be a major motivating factor for adopting ICT supported agricultural production and rural sustainability.
- Stakeholders participation in ICT development and implementation of innovative initiatives must include farmers, extension, scientists, agricultural and social services, students, rural residents and sector supporting entities. This “Bottom –Up” inclusion complements the now conventional “Top Down” model.

3. The Club of Ossiach, recognized that these technologies:

- Create promising choices including the change of the nature of information. This will make it easier to distribute, share and utilize data, information and knowledge.
- Contribute to implementation of opportunities, addressing discontinuities and new options;
- Are most effectual as a means of change when effectively integrated at the points of collaboration between the various stakeholders. They enhance development by introducing new elements of flexibility in production, development of innovations and facilitating their implementation.
- Dictate caution and care in access and use of ICT supported knowledge especially during introductory stages. The knowledge must be focused on people, sustainability, equity, welfare and “happiness”. “Sustainability” in this context must be understood as furthering economical development, lifelong learning, social justice and environmental integrity.
- ICT produces ruptures through creative technological breakthroughs: from “constructive destruction to destructive construction”. It enables the transformation of concurrent practices driven by tradition, ulterior external interests and obsolete technologies. ICT can support individuals in motivating, integrating and sustaining change in communities. With this understanding ICT will contribute to create choices and processes of change especially through partnerships and co-leadership.
- The Club of Ossiach recognized further that by creative cooperation sustainable and responsible agriculture can be attained. This will demonstrate the feasibility of future evolution of Earth’s ecosystems. They will enhance health and well-being globally in addition to attaining more effective distribution of the food produced and minimizing food waste.
- The Club of Ossiach considered it as a responsibility to pursue technological change within agriculture.

4. Recommended/expected ICT Adoption priorities and their potential benefits for future agricultural communities:

- Innovation adoption
- Know-how transfer
- Technology integration
- New business models
- Stimulating innovations – technical, environmental, social and more.....

- Cooperation at the various production and social levels
- Universal benefit for all chain members
- Support a “European Innovation Partnership (EIP): Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability” initiative.

The Club of Ossiach will meet regularly, to jointly consider the future of agriculture, farming, food and nutrition and rural viability. The meetings will include documenting the process, its progress and regular publication of its findings.

5. A possible business-model

A new business model for a country-wide Agro-ICT-adoption was introduced and reviewed at the conference. The model was titled an “Agro-ICT-Infrastructure concept”. It is designed to be initiated by the government or a public-private consortium within a country. It will collate and integrate basic data like ortho-images, agro-meteorological data and ICT-technologies accessible to the country’s agro-community. This community will include farmers, smallholders, their suppliers, customers, advisors, supporting science, education bodies and other public authorities. They all represent the food-, feed-, biomass- or log-production chain and are linked together with applications supporting their information needs.

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