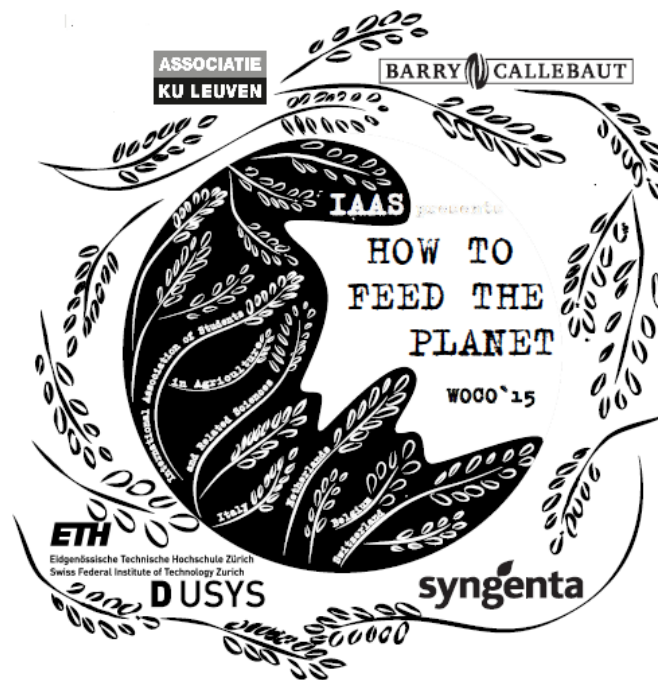


WOCO '15

How to Feed the Planet



Report

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IAAS 58th World Congress: Report

From the North Sea over the Alps into Lombardy - The 58th world Congress of the International Association of Students in Agricultural and Related Sciences (IAAS) took place this summer with over 80 students from 24 countries around the world. The annual IAAS World Congress (WoCo) held by IAAS International is our largest and most important event of the year.



Fig.1 Visit at the European Commission.

This year's event was organized by the IAAS committees of Belgium and Switzerland under the guise of the designated theme "How to feed the planet". From July 6th to 27th, the Congress visited the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy in a diverse and intense adventure looking for answers to the challenge of feeding 9 billion people by 2050 in a sustainable way.

"Discovering new things is always exciting but we want to make sure that at the same time we develop a

profound understanding for the topic. That is why we will need further discussions. [...] Practicing how to transform an idea through teamwork into a project and an action plan, that is what'll bring the necessary changes to all the regions of active IAAS members" said Damien Tschopp, the International Co-ordinator of WoCo, outlining this year's Congress objectives.

WoCo started in the Netherlands with a visit of the beautiful island Texel in the North Sea. Texel is famous for its farming systems in high-salinity soil as well as the Seaweed Centre of the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ) (**Fig.2**). With limited arable lands for farming activity, soil degradation and rapid



Fig.2 Visit at NIOZ, Seaweed Centre.

climate change, new solutions are needed to prevent a global food crisis; the research on Texel provides



many new perspectives for agriculture on saline soils.

At the research laboratory, the Congress learned about seaweed and its double quality as realistic potential future source of energy and nutritional proteins. Seeking more information on this topic, the Congress also visited the Wageningen University **(Fig.3)** and Research Center with a focus on seaweed production and latest technologies in greenhouses.



Fig.3 Visit to Wageningen University

On July 8th, the Congress travelled to Leuven in Belgium, where the headquarters of IAAS international are located. At the official opening ceremony, representatives of the KU Leuven, of our partner organizations EGEA, IROICA and ICA, of the Flemish Government, of our sponsor Barry Callebaut as well many IAAS Alumni gave us a warm welcome. In the first days of our General Assembly (GA) we discussed internal affairs and of

IAAS World. The visit of the European Commission in Brussels **(Fig.1)** gave the participants a good insight into the dynamics of the European agricultural policy. At a symposium about genetic modified organisms (GMO), the topic “What are GMOs exactly and how can we put it in today’s context?” was discussed by Dr. ir. Wim Gerundwald, an expert agrobiotechnology, and Prof G. Gheysen from Ghent University.

Chocolate and beer lovers were then able to improve their knowledge of their favourite goods with a visit to Barry Callebaut and Haacht Brewery, while more technology-affine fans got to know Imec in Belgium: Imec is a world-leading research centre in nano- and microelectronics which delivers industry relevant technology solutions, also for agriculture. The Haacht brewery is a family-run brewery which has been running for over 110 years, representing true Belgian craftsmanship. The Barry Callebaut factory in Weize is the largest chocolate factory in the world. As a world’s leading manufacturer of high-quality chocolate and cocoa, Barry Callebaut is a major player on the international cocoa market. Furthermore, the dean of the Bioscience faculty of the KU Leuven, Nadine Buys, introduced the participants to the famous Belgian Blues. Beside general information, genetics and disease



management was explained, followed by a farm visit. **(Fig.4)**



Fig.4 Visit to Belgian Blue farm

On Wednesday, July 15, the Congress arrived at ETH Zurich in Switzerland, the home of the IAAS Switzerland Committee. We were welcomed by Dr. Nina Buchmann, the Deputy Head of the Department of Environmental Systems Science and Chair of the World Food System Center, and Dr. Alain Gaume, Head Seed Care Research Biology from Syngenta Crop Protection. We were introduced to the ETH's agricultural study programs as well as to Syngenta's contribution to the global agricultural system. During the subsequent Company Fair, we were able to personally meet our sponsors, partners and other new innovative start-ups from the region. In parallel, lectures from professors and PhD students were held in order give us an insight into current ETH research relevant to our theme "How to feed the planet".

During the GA days in Zurich, the next Executive and Control Committee 2015-2016 was elected. The

president for the following year will be Josipa Arapovic from Croatia. **(Fig.8)**

Additionally, various new projects were kick-started with the support of invited specialised trainers. These projects will serve as a base for IAAS to foster the promotion and practice of agriculture as students. Amongst others, those projects included are two new Village Concept Project (VCP) in Nepal and Africa respectively, organising a global Earth Day Celebration, the design and realisation of a new IAAS promotion video and the establishment of a "Youth Awareness in Agriculture"-campaign. **(Fig.5)**

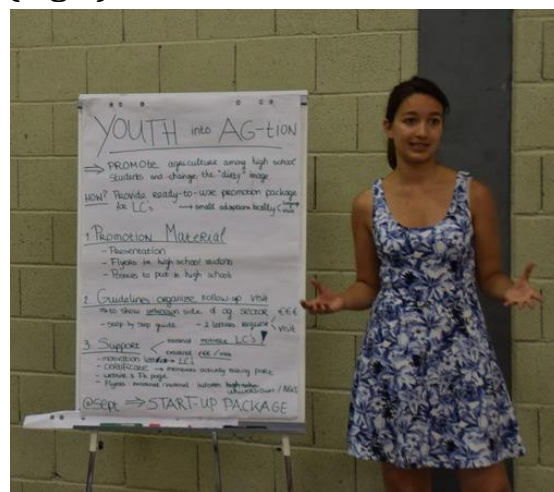


Fig.5 Presentation of one of the projects and practising soft skills, learned during the trainings.

After moving from productive weeks in Zurich to the peaceful Campra in the Swiss Alps, when honed our soft skills in training workshops while working on the new projects. Campra proved to be a perfect place for



inspiration, we hiked and explored nature. **(Fig.6)** Some participants even touched snow for the first time.



Fig.6 Hike in the Swiss Alp.

From there we headed to Malcantone, a region close to Lugano in the canton of Ticino, Switzerland. Accompanied by the almost Mediterranean sun, we toured the small village and visited Villa Orizzonte in Castelrotto. We enjoyed the landscape and learned about its history during a guided visit. Then, we visited a local vineyard **(Fig.7)** and were invited to taste their outstanding locally produced wine, meat and cheese. The Ticinese agriculture has a long history and a distinct taste to their products.



Fig.7 Visit to Malcantone.

For the last part of the Congress, we moved to Milan in Italy. On the first day, we visited the University of Milan. Various professors gave us lectures about automation and security in agriculture, environmental sustainability in agricultural practices and irrigation technologies. Milan is currently hosting the World Exhibition with the topic “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”. Therefore, visiting the Expo15 gave us an ideal opportunity to reflect upon all that we learned, discussed and experienced the past three weeks and compare it to the presented solutions aiming to reduce this grotesque absurdity of our world: that millions of people suffer from obesity, while simultaneously millions are dying from malnutrition a bit further away. One third of all foods produced is wasted every year. For these reasons, the world exhibition is a needed occasion to raise awareness and increase knowledge, to help making conscious political choices, to develop sustainable lifestyles, and optimize the technologies that handle availability and consumption of resources.

On July 26, after 21 days in 4 countries and a journey of over 1600km, we ended the congress in the pavilion of the World Association of Agronomists (WAA). We all headed home inspired by unforgettable moments, new friendships and reinvigorated purpose. The



organisation's committee is delighted about the success of this year's IAAS World Congress. We believe that new friendships are the fundament needed for the worldwide exchange of knowledge and ideas within the agricultural sector. This unites and empowers us to find common solutions for the challenges of the future.



Fig.8 Board of IAAS World '15-'16.

We would like to express our gratitude to all our sponsors. Such an event would never have been possible without their support.

Our thanks goes out to:

ETH Zürich

for great financial, infrastructural and administrative support throughout the year.

KU Leuven: Faculty of Bioscience Engineering

for their financial and infrastructural support beside hosting the IAAS headquarters.

Syngenta and Barry Callebaut

for financial support and a great collaboration.

Kirchgemeinde Unterstrass

for helping us out on very short notice in a moment of need.

Last but not least, the Organising Committee (OC) would like to thank all other Partners, Sponsors, Alumni's, IAAS'ers, Helpers, friends and family for their contribution and support toward the OC and the event to make it a success.



All of us students now will be professionals by 2050: We will be the ones facing world hunger and the consequences of the current environmental impacts of farming. Through this World Congress, we were explored agriculture from different perspectives, in line with the objectives of the congress: to provide us with knowledge about the development of agriculture in Europe, to gain more skills and experiences, and to open our eyes by traveling from country to country. We would like to thank all of our sponsors and partners, and the organizing committee from IAAS Switzerland and Belgium who have made this event possible.

