LEGumes for the Agriculture of TOMorrow (LEGATO project)

The FP7 European project LEGATO (Legumes for the Agriculture of Tomorrow) will be launched in Dijon, France, on March 4th-5th 2014.

LEGATO is aimed at improving the competitiveness of legumes in European agriculture. Grain legumes represent less than 2% of cultivated arable land in Europe, in contrast to >10% in China and the Americas. Despite this, legumes offer major environmental advantages due to their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen. Thus legumes offer major economies of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer, the incumbent energy cost and greenhouse gas production. Used in a cropping rotation, they supply nitrogen fertilizer to the following crop, increase biodiversity, and can reduce pest and disease transmission. Finally they are an important source of protein for food and feed that can increase Europe’s protein autonomy. Animal feed composition is currently dependent on imported soybeans, a commodity showing a steady increase in world market prices.

The LEGATO (LEGumes for the Agriculture of TOMorrow) project brings together 17 research institutions and 10 companies or professional associations from 12 European states to focus on breeding and management methods for the principal grain legumes or pulses grown in Europe, the pea and faba bean. Among the actions proposed will be the use of advanced breeding methods taking advantage of recent genomics data, exploitation of genetic resource collections, techniques of high-throughput phenotyping including non-destructive root imaging, legume-based cropping systems including intercropping, and exploration of new food products incorporating legume flours.

Project Web site: http://www.legato-fp7.eu

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