

## INTRODUCTION

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The papers included in these proceedings have been presented at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Italian Society of Agricultural Economics (SIDEA), held in Rome (Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters) and in Viterbo (Tuscia University) on September 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The theme of the Conference was "The value of food: internationalization, competition and local development in agro-food systems". In parallel with EXPO 2015, focused on "Feeding the planet, energy for life!", the choice of this theme for the Conference aimed to face with the double challenge of the internationalization and coordination of the agro-food systems. The first of these challenges was tackled in the institutional/international session held at FAO, the most influential international organization in the agro-food domain; the second was instead discussed during the conference sessions held at Tuscia University. On the first day of the Conference, about 190 participants took part in the discussion, including about 20 FAO staff members and 20 students. The next day, about 150 people contributed to the sessions held in Viterbo. The last day of the Conference was devoted to a field visit.

The first Conference session – a joint FAO and SIDEA initiative – was aimed at promoting and strengthening the policy dialogue among researchers, stakeholders and national and international organizations about the governance of the global food supply chain under the current challenges. Two keynote speakers – Mr. Kostas Stamoulis (FAO, Director ESA) and Mr. Shenggen Fan (CGIAR, Director general IFPRI) – opened the session setting food security and nutrition as the highest priorities in the political agenda at the global, regional and national levels. With the world population projected to rise to more than nine billion by 2050, FAO estimates that the overall global agricultural output needs to expand by about 60 per cent to meet global food requirements. This may translate into putting new land into cultivation, consequently increasing pressure on existing natural resources. The rise of global food prices, coupled with the global economic crisis and high energy prices had a negative impact on food security. The threat posed by climate change is expected to put the food security of millions more people at risk in the coming years. As agriculture and agro-food systems are becoming more science- and capital-intensive, new skills and knowledge are required from producers, processors, managers and workers as well as huge investments on research and development are needed. This widens the already large knowledge gap between industrialized and developing countries. Outdated and sometimes conflicting policies, uncertain government perception of the roles of public and private sectors, difficult access to financial services and weak infrastructures have hindered so far the attempts of

sustainable improvement of efficiency in the global, regional and national markets. In this frame, there is the need to improve the inclusiveness of food and agriculture systems; an effective and sustainable participation of smallholder producers in supply chains may enhance their involvement in the rapidly changing global, regional and national markets. Clearly, there is the need to improve governance of global food systems. The insights offered by Mr. Stamoulis and Mr. Fan were further discussed in a panel which was also attended by Mr. De Castro (EU Parliament), Mr. Ferto (EAAE Board) and Mr. La Via (EU Parliament). The panel was mainly focused on the three following topics:

- the role of the policy dialogue between research, institutions and policy makers in designing national and international agricultural and food policies;
- policy options, innovative approaches and opportunities for international organizations in combating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and enhancing the governance of global food systems;
- the potential contribution of agricultural economists to the harmonization of agricultural and food policies around the world.

The second day of the Conference was structured into a plenary session and several parallel sessions. The plenary session was focused on "Coordination and Competition in Agro-Food Supply Chain". Agro-food systems are at the center of relevant changes with important economic, social and environmental implications; among these changes, the increasing global instability of agricultural markets, the concentration at retailer's level, an increased asymmetry in market power distribution and conflicts among stakeholders should be noted. Recently, an intensification of these dynamics has been observed, due to various factors such as climatic change, economic crisis, fluctuations in energy markets and world trade relations. Furthermore, the demand for food and agricultural products is now more influenced than in the past by aspects such as food quality and safety, place of origin, environmental, social and ethical concerns, food waste reduction.

Agricultural policies have changed as well. The 2013 CAP reform completed the progressive dismantling of the price support system, in favor of less market-distortive agricultural policies (*decoupling*), and new instruments were introduced. Among the latter, instruments to foster supply concentration and organization can be mentioned, aimed at supporting and stabilizing farm-incomes.

Such changes in agricultural markets and policies influence the functioning mechanisms of the agro-food systems, the relations among stakeholders in the agro-food supply chains and their development strategies.

The 52<sup>nd</sup> SIDEA Annual Conference hosted the scientific debate on these topics also by means of the parallel sessions. They have been focused on several topics including: Supply concentration and vertical integration in food supply chain: tools and policies; Trade regulation and international market organization; Prices, competition and market power in the agro-food system; Quality, environment and local development; Policies for agricultural markets; Consumption and nutrition dynamics.

The last day of the Conference (September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015) was devoted to a field visit in



Castiglione in Teverina (Viterbo), with about 60 participants. The visit was organized with the support of the local LEADER Action Group. The activities realized by the Group in the last Rural Development Policy programming period were presented at the beginning of the visit, with a focus on achievements, impacts and participation to the actions, as well as on problems encountered during this period. Participants have posed questions in an alive and interactive environment, touching also the problems related to the application of the new Rural Development Policy. Participants have then visited the local Wine museum, and a wine testing session was organized at the end of the visit.

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual SIDEA Conference was jointly organized by the Italian Society of Agricultural Economists (SIDEA) and Tuscia University (Viterbo, Italy) under the patronage of EXPO. We would like to acknowledge Fondazione CARIVIT (Viterbo), ARSIAL (Rome) and Unindustria (Viterbo) for the support they provided to the organization of the Conference. We would also like to thank the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for hosting the first day of the Conference at its headquarters in Rome.

The papers presented here were selected for presentation on the basis of a peer review process developed by means of a double blind review of each submitted paper. The reviewing process has been realized through the EasyChair software that allowed to manage the contacts with the over 85 reviewers, that we would like to thank for their contribution. Comments and evaluations from the reviewers were sent to the Authors, inviting them to revise the papers according to the suggestions received. The final papers were sent back to the editors after the oral presentations. At the end of this process, the program committee and the editors checked and eventually accepted the final papers for publication on the proceedings.

A final deep acknowledgement is expressed for the many colleagues and collaborators from our University who have provided a qualified and professional support for developing the Conference.