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in

Romagosa I. (ed.), Navarro M. (ed.), Heath S. (ed.), López-Francos A. (ed.). Agricultural higher education in the 21st century : a global challenge in knowledge transfer to meet world demands for food security and sustainability

Zaragoza : CIHEAM
Options Méditerranéennes : Série A. Séminaires Méditerranéens; n. 113

2015
pages 95-96

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I – Introduction

2015 is the target year of the United Nations Millenium Development Goals and the launching of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). As two of the MDG were to eradicate hunger and to ensure environmental sustainability, SDG look for a world development based on-sustainability. World agriculture must face the challenge to feed an increasing world population, to produce a higher diet quality, to develop renewable sources of energy and changing weather patterns and, all that, respecting environment security.

All these challenges need a high number of graduates, with deep knowledge of Agriculture, Food Technology, Forestry, Environment, Biotechnology, Bioeconomy…, deep knowledge in Life Sciences. This is a challenge for universities of Agriculture and Life Sciences which have to face developing curricula in providing graduates with good competences and skills related to the needs of industry, government and society in the 21st century.

At the same time, during the last decade, the number of students in life sciences of Southern Europe universities, and especially in Spain, has been decreasing seriously. Where are all these students? Why aren't they interested in agricultural studies?

Simultaneously, new degrees related to environment, food technology, biotechnology or rural development have been offered by different higher education institutions. Often these universities lack an agricultural background. These education possibilities are actually more attractive for young people, who have interesting abilities and aptitudes and who look for an education related with life sciences. For the moment, these graduates have no problems of employment opportunities, often related with new needs of industry or society.

Some other reasons, related with the Spanish university system organisation, would probably also explain the present situation. The world and the technology changing rapidly, curricula need to be continuously modernized, adapted to new social challenges and to students' interests and abilities. The content and the title of the degrees would need as well to be renamed and, probably, the name of the faculties too. Escuelas de Ingeniería Agronómica and degrees in Agricultural o Agronomic Engineer are still present all around the country and have not been changed in Life Sciences Faculties or Life Sciences degrees as other European universities did 10-15 years ago.

Finally, in twenty years, the number of universities offering agronomic studies has been multiplied, responding to different social and political interests. A similar number of total agricultural students are distributed in many universities and faculties where research results may be excellent, but with a low number of agricultural students. Then, these faculties have often enlarged their education offer with degrees in food technology, forestry, environmental sciences or biotechnology.

This decreasing interest in agricultural studies tendency was observed also in Northern or Central European countries, some years before Spain. As statistics are actually showing an increasing new interest in agricultural studies in those countries, it is likely that this tendency arrives in Spain and that Spanish universities will be able again to recruit future graduates in Agriculture, as well as in other specialised branches of Life Sciences. A degree education related with agriculture, with a large overview, completed with a master degree in a specialisation in any field within life sciences or collaboration of professionals in different areas of life sciences would probably face agricultural challenges better in 21st century.