Press release
Montpellier, 23 May 2023

The scientific and agricultural communities are looking at sorghum as a way to address drought

The second Global Sorghum Conference, Sorghum in the 21st Century, will be held from 5 to 9 June 2023 in Montpellier (CORUM). More than 400 participants from the agricultural and scientific worlds are expected to attend. This event is organised by CIRAD, in partnership with the Kansas State University Global Collaboration on Sorghum and Millet, Sorghum ID, IRD and the Centre d'Etude pour l'Amélioration de l'Adaptation à la Sécheresse (CERAAS, Centre for research on improving drought adaptation).

The world's fifth most important cereal crop, sorghum is the staple food of 300 million rural poor in the semi-arid regions. Known for its production capacities in conditions with very little water and high temperatures, this crop is of growing interest to the agricultural world in a context of climate change. What role could it play in the future to help agriculture to address this challenge?

This is one of the questions the conference participants will attempt to answer. To do so, they will gather and compare the latest research findings on plant breeding and the sustainable management of production systems, with a focus on water and soil preservation, product conservation and processing, and market opportunities.

To address these issues, a **press briefing** will take place on 5 June **from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. at CORUM** (Sully1 seminar room), with:
- **Jean-François Rami**, CIRAD, geneticist and local coordinator for the global conference: sorghum, a multi-purpose crop, of interest for countries in the global South and North
- **Vincent Vadez**, IRD, ecophysiologist: sorghum crop adaptability and yield in a context of climate change
- **Timothy J. Dalton**, Kansas State University, Professor of agricultural development: how to support the development of sorghum in developing countries to combat malnutrition
- **Sine Bassirou**, CERAAS: potential for sorghum sector development in West Africa
- **Valérie Brochet**, Sorghum ID, delegate: potential for sorghum sector development in France and Europe

Sorghum in Europe and worldwide in figures

Sorghum is currently produced in Europe across an agricultural area of 309 000 hectares, for an annual tonnage of approximately 1 million. In 2021, Europe imported 160 000 tonnes of sorghum.

France is the second largest European producer, after Hungary. Globally, the main producer countries are in Africa: Nigeria, Ethiopia and Sudan, with an annual output of almost 30 million tonnes, followed by the United States, with approximately 10 million tonnes, India, Central and South America, China, then Australia.

Currently produced in Europe primarily for use as animal feed, sorghum nevertheless has interesting properties for human food: in particular, it is gluten-free and has a low glycemic index.

The conference is sponsored by Kansas State University and supported by several private sponsors (see the list of sponsors).

See the conference website and the programme
Press contacts: presse@cirad.fr; presse@ird.fr

About

CIRAD is the French agricultural research and international cooperation organization working for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions**.** It works with its partners to build knowledge and solutions for resilient farming systems in a more sustainable, inclusive world. It mobilizes science, innovation and training in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Its expertise supports the entire range of stakeholders, from producers to public policymakers, to foster biodiversity protection, agroecological transitions, food system sustainability, health (of plants, animals and ecosystems), sustainable development of rural territories, and their resilience to climate change. CIRAD works in some fifty countries on every continent, thanks to the expertise of its 1700 staff members, including 1140 scientists, backed by a global network of some 200 partners. It also supports French scientific diplomacy operations. https://www.cirad.fr/en

IRD (French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development) is a multidisciplinary French public research organization committed to equitable partnerships with countries in the Global South and in the French overseas territories for nearly 80 years. As a contributor to the achievement of the international development agenda, its priorities are aligned with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together, scientists and the Institute's partners propose concrete solutions to the global challenges facing societies and the planet. This win-win relationship makes science and innovation major levers for development. https://en.ird.fr/

The **European interprofessional sorghum organization SORGHUM ID** brings together some thirty organizations and companies representing different components of the European sector: production, research, food and industrial opportunities. Aiming to federate and mobilize all players to create a group dynamic, the association acts to develop European sorghum production and its hybrid genetics. SORGHUM ID also represents and defends sorghum's interests before European institutions and states, and at the same time carries out promotional activities demonstrating sorghum's technical and economic advantages in production, as well as its uses and opportunities. https://www.sorghum-id.com

The objective of the **Kansas State University Global Collaboration on Sorghum and Millet** (formerly the Feed the Future Innovation lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet) is to build a coalition of science and industry to develop the sorghum value chain by linking U.S. universities, international universities, and research organizations in a global collaborative network to build long-term local capacity and technology delivery in Ethiopia, Haiti, Niger, Burking Faso, Togo, Madagascar and Senegal. https://smil.k-state.edu/

Centre d'Etude pour l'Amélioration de l'Adaptation à la Sécheresse (CERAAS, Centre for research on improving drought adaptation) https://ceraas.org/