

Food Fight - S1E12B - Spotlight Agriculus.mp3

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:00:06] Welcome to this bonus episode of the Food Fight podcast from EIT Food.

Matt Eastland [00:00:11] In these episodes, we want to shine a light on new projects and agrifood start-ups – and hear about their efforts to fight for a better food future. This week, we're handing over to Federica Bordoni to tell us about Agriculus, a start-up designing technologies to help farmers harness big data.

Federica Bordoni [00:00:36] Hi, everybody, good to be here. I'm the business developer of Agriculus – and Agriculus is a start-up inside the "Rising Food Stars" of EIT Food. We are here because we believe in food innovation, in sustainability, and also in providing a nice quality of food in the future.

[00:00:58] For us all of these things are really related to innovation and also to education. For that, we developed a platform that is called Agriculus. We have put together all the technologies for smart farming. For example, there's satellite data for monitoring the crops and the fields. We can map the fields of farm and we can understand with the satellite data if the crops are growing fine, or if there are some problems related to the crops or related to the soil.

[00:01:31] For us, it's important that the farmer believes in the data. Farmers believe in themselves to have experience, to go in the field and understand what's happening. It's also important that they continue to have their experience, but also put together the experience with the data, because the scientific data can support the farmer.

[00:01:59] Farmers today face lots of challenges because, for example, just imagine the climate changes. It's a very important challenge, because just in Italy, one day you have sun, and another day you have rain, and you don't know what to do in action in the field.

[00:02:15] Through our platform we also want to help them to understand when to do an activity or not. Another kind of challenge is, for example, the competition in the market, because lots of farmer stop their work because it's too competitive in the market and the revenues are very low, so they prefer to stop and change. So we want also to help them because with technology and innovation, they can reduce operational costs of the farm, so they can have a higher revenue so they can continue their work.

[00:02:53] We organise, and we offer through Italy and Northern Europe, our academy. And when we do the course – the training course about innovation for farmers – always we say to the farmer that "it's not so complex". Because sometimes they feel scared - and also like in a labyrinth and they don't know where to go. So we just say to them "is not so complex, it's simple" and they just start step by step.

[00:03:22] In Italy, we have differences between the generations. So for example when we go into school or university, the "future farmers" or "future agronomists" are all ready to use that – because they have lots of courses at school about these technologies. Instead when we do these kind of courses with the 'experts' [respectfully], so the [older] farmers or the agronomists, sometimes they don't know anything about that, but they are willing to use [try] them. So it's difficult to find someone that, at the end of their course, or at the end of our explanation doesn't want to use [the platform].

[00:04:03] We want to [grow to] be a little bit "big"! At the moment we are mainly focused in Italy. But already, for example, we are in different countries in Europe. And we want to expand also in Europe and we are in Turkey and Brazil. And one of our main goals is also to launch our [updated] version (because we have lots of version of our solution being used) to connect also to the machinery and the tractors. Because we have lots of projects that help to connect machinery to the platform, to send some information to the machinery... so that machinery can go, for example, in the field and do the harvest. This is one of our main goals during this year.

[00:04:49] With Agricolus, we joined EIT Food one year ago. It's a very important network for us because it helps us to have more contacts, and also meeting the other partners similar out to us. So, for example, we can be in contact with partners that are already working with the agritech like us – so we can create the network. Because for us, it's very important that farmers and agriculture in Europe will be supported by a network of solutions, not just one solution like us.

[00:05:24] We know that in the future, more and more people will use this kind of technology. But we are at the beginning of the "rush". So of our main challenge is to be ready when all the people would like to use this kind of technology. So for the moment, we need to understand that really all the needs of agriculture – and to elaborate in the technology.

Lukxmi Balathasan [00:05:54] Thanks for listening to this bonus episode of The Food Fight podcast.

Matt Eastland [00:05:58] To find out more and to learn how you can get involved in the fight for better food future, head over to EITFood.eu/podcast