

**MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT OF COOPERATION  
(MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING)**

**OF THE**

**BEAN-QUORUM NETWORK**

**“Building a Euro-Asian Network for Quality, Organic and Unique food Marketing”**

The BEAN-QUORUM Network is aimed at putting together Asian and European higher education institutions (HEIs) that are interested in marketing quality food products and develop links among HEIs, governmental bodies and industry operators and practitioners that can ultimately lead to Asia/EU economic co-operation and sustainable development.

Quality food products are defined as food products and fresh produce that possess special features suitable to satisfy specific needs or requirements of customers or consumers, thus requiring a specific value-enhancement and quality signalling strategy, such as organic food, food with geographical indications, functional food, fair trade products, quality branded food, *et cetera*.

The network is specifically aimed at mutually improving teaching capacities, learning options, professional skills, research activities and to foster the linkages with quality food industry operators in the field of quality food marketing.

Since marketing is multidisciplinary in nature, the network fosters the collaboration among scholars and institutions both from the social and natural applied sciences, like agronomists, economists, sociologists, psychologists, statisticians, political scientists, law and regulation scholars, food technologists, soil scientists, life scientists, etc. The common ground is the interest for food quality and its value-enhancement, paying attention to the related economic, technological, social, and environmental implications.

The network is composed by two type of members:

- Academic Partners (Higher Education and Research Institutions)
- Associates (Governmental Bodies, Non-governmental Organisations, Producers Associations, other industry operators)

The following Higher Education Institutions:

- the Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna (Italy), represented by its Rector, hereinafter referred to as UNIBO
- the Faculty of Science and Technology of the Thammasat University of Bangkok (Thailand), represented by its Dean, hereinafter referred to as THAM
- the Xinjiang Agricultural University (P.R. of China), represented by its Vice-President, hereinafter referred to as XJAU
- the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna (Austria), represented by its President, hereinafter referred to as BOKU
- the Macaulay Institute (United Kingdom), represented by its Chief Executive, hereinafter referred to as MACAULAY

and the Institutions and Establishments listed in the Annex 1, hereinafter referred to as Partner Institutions

agree to the following:

**ARTICLE 1**

This agreement is made by the Partner Institutions in order to facilitate and to enhance the academic cooperation in any field related to the marketing of quality, unique, and organic food products

aimed at achieving value-enhancement, quality assurance, consumer welfare, customer satisfaction, environmental sustainability and rural development objectives.

This agreement has the value of a bilateral memorandum of understanding between all the Partner Institutions of the network.

## **ARTICLE 2**

Coherently with the objectives mentioned above, co-operation between the Academic Partners may include:

- a) realization of research projects of mutual interest;
- b) exchange of faculty staff and researchers to carry out research and consultations with colleagues;
- c) capacity building activities and training of scientific/technical/administrative personnel;
- d) organization of joint seminars, symposia, conferences, meetings and discussions;
- e) exchange of scholarly publications and information in areas of mutual interest to faculty in the partner institutions;
- f) promotion of the discussion on common curriculum development strategies and setting up of joint degree programs both at masters and doctoral level;
- g) organisation of teaching and training activities of mutual interest, promoting the use of both conventional, distance, and blended-learning tools,
- h) exchange of students, with preference with those enrolled into master and doctoral programs;
- i) cooperation for joint supervision of theses and dissertations both at masters and doctoral level;
- j) definition of common procedures for the accumulation of credits to the students/trainees, through arrangements among the Partner Institutions for study point transfer, such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer System);
- k) promotion of cooperation and fostering of internships opportunities for exchange students and researchers by public and private institutions associated to the network.
- l) fostering of research cooperation activities through the joint participation to calls for proposals both in European and Asian Programmes for research funding;
- m) mutual involvement of young scientists and researchers in study/research activities concerning the specific marketing issues related to quality food products;
- n) information and dissemination of results related to joint research and teaching initiatives to the network stakeholders.

## **ARTICLE 3**

The visits, exchanges, and missions of faculty staff and researchers foreseen in this agreement need to be preceded by a written agreement between the faculty staff promoting the exchange, who are responsible to ensure the appropriate arrangements and availability of funds for an adequate coverage of costs. The Partner Institutions agree that each sending Institution will plan to provide their own staff with travel funds while the host Institution will cover the board and lodging cost, except in case of different written agreements between the staff promoting the exchange.

The faculty staff and the researchers participating in said exchange, during their period at the hosting University to carry out the above-mentioned activities, will be considered as staff “on a mission” abroad.

The exchange of students is regulated by a separate bilateral agreement between the sending and hosting institutions.

## **ARTICLE 4**

Visiting staff will need a personal and third party insurance policy for appropriate accident and health insurance coverage during their stay.

## **ARTICLE 5**

Each Partner Institution appoints a teacher/researcher/officer responsible for the management of the network agreement. The managing board of the BEAN-QUORUM network is formed by all the responsible persons appointed by the partner institutions.

The coordinator of the Network is appointed by the managing board every three years. The appointment can be renewed to the same partner only once. The role of the network coordinator is primarily to ensure that all the partners maintain the commitment in carrying out the activities foreseen in the network agreement and communicate any relevant variation and initiative.

The coordinator of the network is also responsible for the maintenance and continuous improvement of the network communication tools (Web site, mailing list, Social network, and or any other tool that will be used for this purpose).

The network is officially settled by the Partner Institution where the coordinator is affiliated.

## **ARTICLE 6**

Any member of the network is entitled to provide resources for the activities comprised in the aims and scope of the network. The network fosters the cooperation of HEIs with the Associates, as well as with other governmental bodies, NGOs, and industry operators, which are encouraged to provide support, to exchange opinions and information, and to actively collaborate with the Academic Partners.

The possible tangible support of the actions foreseen by the network collaboration may be manifold, for instance:

- offering the opportunity for internships in HEIs/governmental bodies/companies/associations (or in linked companies abroad) to young graduates or young researchers of the network partners from Asia and Europe;
- funding a specific research on a topic of mutual interest (e.g., a market research on motivations and willingness to buy organic food in China or in Thailand, or purchase intentions of an Asian traditional food in Europe) to one or more of the research partners in the network;
- funding scholarships for research or study periods by the network partners in favour of HEI researches, company staff, or young students who can later find a placement in the organisation after their graduation;
- giving a monetary contribution to a partner for supporting the institutional research activity in the field of quality/organic/unique food products;
- *et cetera*.

Each Partner Institution commits itself to inform the network coordinator about relevant opportunities or initiatives. Upon communication by the partners, the network coordinator will inform through the network communication tools the other partners of any initiative undertaken in the framework of the network agreement and will promote the adoption of procedures that will ensure equal opportunities and reduce any kind of discrimination.

The network is normally not entitled to receive funds, any available funding source should be managed by the interested partners on the base of a specific written agreement with the sponsors or donors and among the interested partners. In special cases the network coordinator can administer funds assigned/donated/paid on behalf of the network to foster the network activities solely through the administration of her/his Department/School/Institution.

## **ARTICLE 7**

The HEIs willing to join the network are provisionally accepted as candidate partners. The Governmental Bodies, Non-governmental Organisations, Producers Associations, and other Industry operators willing to join the network are provisionally accepted as candidate associates. The candidate partner or associate can become a network member only after having filled and signed the Annex 2 to the network agreement. The network coordinator will give notice of the request to the network members through the usual network communication tools. The candidate can be accepted as a network member if after 60 days the partners do not raise objections.

Individual researchers/practitioners are not entitled to join the network, but can be included in the mailing lists and can use the communication tools in the framework of the network purposes. The complete list of the network members is attached to this agreement (Annex 1) and it will be updated regularly. The current official list of the network members is made available and maintained on the BEAN-QUORUM network web site.

**ARTICLE 7**

The resolution of possible controversies on the interpretation and the performance of such agreement will be devolved to an arbitration board made by a member of each interested Partner Institution and a further member chosen by mutual consent.

**ARTICLE 8**

The present agreement is valid for a period of three years, it is tacitly renewed year by year, meanwhile each party will be able to express its intentions to withdraw by giving a 6 months written notice to that effect before its expiration.

Date.....

The Vice-President of the  
Xinjiang Agricultural University  
People's Republic of China

.....  
Prof. Chen Tong

Date.....

The Director of the  
Macaulay Institute  
United Kingdom

.....  
Prof. Richard J. Aspinall

Date.....

The Dean of the  
Faculty of Science and Technology of the  
Thammasat University of Bangkok  
Thailand

.....  
Prof. Saitong Amornwicheit

Date.....

The Rector of the  
University of Natural Resources  
and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna  
Austria

.....  
DI Dr. Ingela Bruner

Date.....

The Rector of the  
Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna  
Italy

.....  
Prof. Pier Ugo Calzolari