**CONAF XVII Congresso Nazionale - Matera 7-9 Novembre 2019**

**Saluti delle Autorita – CEDIA**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me, to address you on behalf of CEDIA, at your National Congress here in Matera. I would like to thank your President, Sabrina Diamanti and your Council for giving me this opportunity.

1. Introduction to CEDIA

For those not familiar with CEDIA I would like to give you a brief introduction. CEDIA is the European Network which links the Associations of Agricultural Engineers and Scientists from various European countries. Its origins go back to members of our profession attached to the EU Institutions in Brussels, almost 40 years ago now. The main purpose of the Network is the promotion of the profession and its interests, and the support of members, and member Associations. It is listed in Belgium as a voluntary organisation and registered on the European Transparency Register.

1. New Challenges for the profession

The role and competencies of our profession have evolved over the years. New challenges continue to arise which must be embraced and the opportunities they provide must willingly be grasped.

With respect to our profession such challenges include:

* The provision of smart sustainable solutions for feeding an ever-growing world population. Sustainable productivity was never more important.
* Mitigation of climate change arising from activities within the agricultural and food industries must be addressed by new and innovative methods and technologies supported by appropriate research. Agriculture must not be regarded as the problem but as part of the solution. Land management, soils, farming practises must be further appraised in the context of their possible contribution to emission reduction and carbon sequestration.
* Improving human health and nutrition by enhancing the nutritional value and safety of farm produce and foods. A recent example being the marketing of Omega 3 enriched poultry meat and eggs, arising from new developments in the nutrition and management of poultry, successfully addressing a deficiency which is often found in human nutrition and in the diets of many persons.
* Delivering on the broader UN Sustainable Development Goals; which is a key focus of this conference; will present further challenges which I have no doubt which will give rise to further proactive and impartial professional response, our profession will play its part.

1. Education, Training and Professional Ethics

* We are the only profession operating in the specific space from “Soil to Society”, with the responsibility of harnessing natural resources in a sustainable way, integrating the whole chain, producing food and natural materials, adding value, with resilience providing solutions for human benefit.
* Our professional Education together with its excellent training standards and continuous professional development, can largely be attributed to the high regard and support for our profession in society and the close cooperation between Universities and our professional bodies.
* At European level CEDIA and ICA (European Association of Life Science Universities) collaborate to ensure that curriculum and courses provide the skills, education and training necessary to satisfy ongoing professional needs and requirements.
* Among the attributes required of graduates are problem solving and critical thinking. At professional level the degree of autonomy and right of entry differentiates the professional fields. In the Scientific and Engineering community entry to the profession is based on Education at University level while the right to remain is associated with the quality of work, which must be original and innovative, and which helps society to progress.
* The professional charter for the Agronomist, compiled by CONAF and adopted by the WAA (World Association of Agronomists) is fully supported by CEDIA and sets the standards by which we operate.

1. Improved Communication

* Better communication to ensure that Policy makers are fully informed and better understand Scientific developments so that timely and relevant policies might follow for the benefit of society. This is a professional responsibility.
* A gap often exists, between research findings which inform the position of professionals, and the understanding of policy makers, often giving rise to confusion as to what may be best for society, with consequential failure or delays in either the withdrawal or adoption of policies and regulation providing for a better way.
* The gap between professionals and policy makers arises more often in relation to scientific matters, e.g. currently, farming and climate change issues.
* The profession must ensure that such gaps are addressed and minimised by being more proactive in their areas of professional competence. However, the professional in providing advice must ensure that their opinion is based on scientifically verified research, which is repeatable and measurable.
* The CEDIA network is available to provide coordination and support for any such initiatives at EU level.

I would like to compliment your President and Council for an excellent programme ( <https://congresso17.conaf.it>).

I look forward to your discussion and debate.

Thank you for your attention

Sean Gaule

President of CEDIA