

*14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Italian Association of Agricultural and Applied Economics (AIEEA)*

**Reconciling competitiveness and sustainability in the agrifood system: the role of  
knowledge and innovation**

**Call for Papers**

The European farmers' protests in 2023 and early 2024, even if triggered by countries-specific issues, have in common the unsolved trade-off between complying with environmental restrictions the EU imposes on farmers and competing in a context where non-EU producers are not subject to the same environmental and food safety regulations. Indeed, farmers, on one side, face a demand for more sustainable production models; on the other side, they experience deep competition in the global market in a context of fast, sometimes radical, changes in technologies. At the same time, society plays a crucial role, being more aware of the environmental risks of agricultural activities and the potential food waste and advocating for a more sustainable food chain.

The Commission's answers to the wave of protests, the proposed amendments to CAP regulations and the weakening of some environmental initiatives, represent only a temporary solution. If farmers and their representatives consider them a "success", the position of consumers and environmentalists is diametrically opposed.

To address these trade-offs in the agrifood system and potentially solve the related conflicts in our society, reconciling competitiveness and sustainability in the agrifood system becomes a priority. That requires deepening the relationships between these two concepts and carefully analysing factors that can affect them.

In 2015, the AIEEA Conference "Innovation, productivity and growth: towards agrifood production" dealt with the themes of sustainability and innovation. However, the questions and the issues that inspired the scientific debate then were rather different. At that time, the main concern was the relationship between innovation and productivity, productivity and growth, sustainable agricultural innovations, and long-term patterns of food production. Since then, the international scenario has profoundly and unpredictably changed. First, the pandemic, then the wars, the rethinking of globalisation and multilateral relationships, the role of some emerging actors like China, India, and Brazil, the extremisation of climate events and global warming, the advance in

the digital and ecological transformations, all these external factors have contributed to new dynamics and unprecedented thinking.

In light of all these new critical factors, the 2025 AIEEA Conference intends to investigate the links between sustainability and competitiveness, ideally bridging the work of ten years ago and moving forward in the research and discussion.

Both sustainability and competitiveness are broad concepts, and the relationship between them, as well as the factors that influence this relationship, may depend on the territorial scale - whether the focus is on the national, regional, or farm level - on the time perspective (short-run and long-run), on the general development level, and on the perspectives of different actors involved. Knowledge and innovation can play a relevant role in bridging these two concepts. However, their drivers, generation and diffusion processes, and characteristics can differ according to the analysis scale and perspective.

Innovation is one of the principal strategies for reconciling competitiveness and sustainability in the agrifood system by encompassing several different areas:

- technological advancements, such as 4.0 agriculture and over, sustainable intensification, and precision agriculture;
- management strategies, such as sustainable management practices, that can adapt to environmental pressures without compromising productivity;
- investment policies, which are crucial for maintaining competitiveness in an uncertain environment, including protecting agricultural firms from a range of risks (natural risks, market risks, etc.).

It is of the utmost importance to comprehend how agricultural economics and associated disciplines can facilitate the delineation of transformation pathways, transcending the anachronistic zero-sum paradigm. That will enable the generation of mutually advantageous win-win scenarios that augment environmental and societal value, while concomitantly reinforcing organisational competitiveness.

The XIV AIEEA Conference aims to deepen this analysis and puts knowledge and innovation at the core of the scientific and cultural debate on reconciling agrifood system competitiveness and

sustainability goals in terms of development trajectories and policies. We invite scientists, academics, public officers and stakeholders in the field of agrifood system to discuss this relevant topic and intend to contribute to the current debate on how to find a reliable and viable way to rethink the role of knowledge and innovation in the contemporary agrifood system. AIEEA welcomes contributions based on methodological and conceptual approaches, policy analyses, empirical models, and case study presentations.

Specific issues to be addressed include:

- Assessing coherence and trade-offs between economic, social, and environmental sustainability in the agrifood system
- Sustainable and/or competitive agrifood systems models
- Adoption and diffusion of innovations
- Knowledge share, access, exchange and use in the context of Agricultural Innovation Systems
- New policies and new approaches to support innovation in the agrifood systems
- Social innovation and new governance of agrifood systems
- Digital and ecological transitions for sustainable agrifood systems
- Innovation to improve resilience in agrifood systems
- Policies, analysis and tools to help agrifood businesses adapt and manage income risks

AIEEA welcomes the submission of contributions on the topics above. However, the submission of contributions on other agricultural and applied economics topics is also encouraged.

### **Submissions**

Contribution proposals should be submitted in English through the Conference management platform, Conftool, available from the Conference page on the AIEEA website ([www.aieea.org](http://www.aieea.org)).

There are three types of contributions: Contributed papers, Organized and Panel sessions, and Pitches. The submission must be made using the provided Templates.

*Contributed papers* - Participants intending to present a contributed paper are requested to submit an extended abstract (minimum 1,500 words; maximum 2,000 words) before **February 28th, 2025**.

Abstracts should include the following:

1. Introduction to the topic and objectives of the paper
2. Description of data and research methodology
3. Discussion of the expected theoretical and empirical results
4. Main conclusions and emphasis on the paper's potential for generating discussion during the Conference
5. A list of few essential references

All submitted abstracts will be subject to a blind peer review process. Authors will be notified of paper acceptance by **April 15th, 2025**.

The final version of accepted contributions (either a full paper or revised extended abstract) should be submitted by **May 31st, 2025**.

*Organised sessions and Panel sessions* - Participants are invited to propose organized and panel sessions primarily, but not exclusively, on topics relevant to the Conference themes. Organised sessions include several (papers) presentations around a given topic, while organised panel sessions include several experts discussing a specific topic. It is suggested that the proposed sessions include up to four presentations/panelists. Proposals should be submitted by **March 15th, 2025**. Proposals will be subject to a peer review process. Authors will be notified of acceptance by **April 15th, 2025**.

*Pitches* - AIEEA welcomes the submission of pitches (short presentations of a maximum 5 minutes and 3 slides). Accepted pitches will be presented and discussed in the parallel sessions. Participants should submit an abstract (max 500 words) by **March 15th, 2025**. Pitches proposals will be subject to a blind peer review process. Authors will be notified of acceptance by **April 15th, 2025**.

### **Young Researchers' Day**

AIEEA is pleased to inform you that the third Young Researchers' Day will be also hosted by the University of Pisa on 18th June 2025 from 1 pm.

This will be followed on 19-20 June by the 14th AIEEA Conference.

What is the purpose of the 2025 Young Researchers' Day?

It will address current research trends in applied and agricultural economics. The main objective is to raise our awareness on the sustainable transition of the agrifood systems, its challenges and opportunities.

Young researchers intending to participate are requested to register through the Conference management platform, Conftool, available from the Conference page on the AIEEA website ([www.aieea.org](http://www.aieea.org)).

Participants must register for the Conference before **May 31st, 2025**.

Registration is available upon to be an active 2025 AIEEA member.

### **Practical information**

*Presenting author's registration* - Authors presenting papers, pitches, organised or panel sessions must register for the Conference before **May 31st, 2025** (failing that, the papers/sessions/pitches will be withdrawn from the Conference program).

### **Ornella Maietta Best paper award**

The best paper award 2025, entitled to Ornella Maietta, will be selected among full papers accepted for presentation at the AIEEA 2025 Conference. The requirements for consideration for the best paper award are: a) the first author and presenter is below 40 years; b) the full paper is uploaded by **May 31st 2025**.

### **Important deadlines**

Abstract submission by authors: **February 28th, 2025**

Organised session/pitches submission: **March 15th, 2025**

Notification of acceptance to abstract authors: **April 15th, 2025**

Notification of acceptance to session/pitches authors: **April 15th, 2025**

Final contributions submission: **May 31st, 2025**

Authors' registration deadline: **May 31st, 2025**

### **Keynote speakers**

To be completed

### **Plenary panel session**

To be completed

### **Conference Schedule**

Wednesday, June 18, 2025: Afternoon	AIEEA pre-Conference  AIEEA – Young Researchers Day 2024 (see the specific Call for papers for deadlines and fees)
Thursday, June 19, 2025: all day	14th AIEEA Conference
Friday, June 20, 2025: all day	14th AIEEA Conference

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