

ScienceLounge: „Opportunities and risks of digitization in the agricultural sector“

A ScienceLounge with experts from research, business and politics, entitled “Digitization in Agriculture” was held in the Café 7gramm in Halle (Saale), Germany, on 6 March 2019.

The panel discussion was opened by Professor **Sebastian Lentz**, speaker of the Leibniz ScienceCampus EEGA, who presented a brief overview of the topic and the panel guests.

Guest of honour **Thomas Wünsch**, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economics, Science and Digitization in Saxony-Anhalt, explained that politics have a special influence on the development of digitization in agriculture. The state must create the basis for a functioning infrastructure in order to support the development of new technologies. Digitization will be able to compensate for changes in the labour market and in particular staff reduction, by creating new jobs.

IAMO researcher Dr. **Ivan Duric** spoke about the need to familiarise agricultural workers with new technologies. Employees should be made aware of the appropriate handling of digital innovations and the related data protection guidelines. Several research projects at IAMO are currently investigating the impact of political developments on digitization, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies in terms of food and job security.

During the panel discussion, **Matija Zulj**, CEO and Founder of Agrivi, discussed why it is also profitable for small and medium-sized agricultural companies to invest in digitalization. The software, its installation and maintenance as well as the associated costs are tailored specifically to the needs of each individual farm. For the companies, the use of new technologies not only increases crop yields, but also saves considerable labour time and costs in the future.

Oleksandr Verzhkykhovskiy, Chief Operating Officer of the agricultural company IMC, contributed expert knowledge on digitization in the Ukraine to the discussions. Large farms have recognized the benefits of digitization, they are already investing into this field. Such investments are only profitable, however, if they allow the company to make a profit. Another major problem in the Ukraine is the shortage of employees, who often immigrate to Western EU countries to work.

The Science Lounge was presented by **Ina Volkhardt** from the ScienceCampus Halle.

The science campuses EEGA (Eastern Europe - Global Area) and WCH (ScienceCampus Halle - Plant-based Bioeconomy) as well as the Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) jointly organised this event.

By Daniela Schimming (IAMO)