



# Labex Europe: *what the French teams learned*

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**T**he quality and success of partnerships depend on the complementarity and interdependence of the respective contributions of the different partners. The investment required and the inherent difficulties of this type of operation encourage scientists to be conservative: they always work with the same people and only strong incentives (European funding for example) encourage teams to open up to new partners. The Labex has functioned as **a tool for broadening** to new synergies for the French teams. Indeed, the presence of experienced Brazilian researchers with good knowledge of the national research system in Brazil is a source of spontaneous, direct and above all high-quality information, meaning that French researchers do not have to 'look for' a partner. The Brazilian scientists hosted spontaneously suggest new projects, most of which turn out to be excellent contributions because these scientists have good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of those involved in both countries.

In the fields in which the teams already worked together on common questions for several years before the Labex was created, the latter has functioned as a tool **for the strengthening and diversification** of partnerships. The presence in Montpellier of a Brazilian scientist specialised in genetics and plant improvement has made it possible to increase the number of projects submitted jointly for external funding, as is the case of the projects selected by CGIAR's Generation Challenge Programme (GCP). The latter has made it possible to go more deeply into a particular area—genomics—and to cover a larger number of research subjects and various training components.

At a time of virtual communication, work in partnership, side by side in the same laboratory, creates links that cannot be forged on the internet. Seven years of experience with Embrapa is noteworthy as it forms a **complement to our usual cooperation tools**. The success of the endeavour is a clear invitation to try

it with others. International research in agriculture in the broadest sense of the term is far from taking place mainly in CGIAR international centres or in centres of excellence in the North such as that of Montpellier. Countries like Brazil, India, China, Mexico and South Africa among others have made substantial investments in research and in training scientists in the last decade or two. We share the same concerns with regard to the future of the planet. We have the same questions concerning the research to be undertaken to face the major challenges of the future. For both them and us, research is becoming increasingly a question of 'good' partnerships. The Brazilians brought us their idea, their model—the Labex—and we are very grateful to them. We have tested the idea and it has worked extremely well. We now hope that others will use it. And this is one of the ambitions of this Agropolis International Dossier: other Labexes with other partner countries!

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