

## Introduction

### Dimitris Damianos

- I have the great honor to chair this session and introduce three distinguished speakers in the context of Plenary Session Number Three. In this plenary, we will treat issues related to the “*Financial Crisis and Adjustment Policies in Agriculture*”. My thanks to the Scientific Committee of the Congress, the Society’s Governing Board and Professor Kasimis, in particular, for trusting me to carry out this duty. My name is Dimitris Damianos and I am on the faculty of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development of the Agricultural University of Athens. I hope you all have enjoyed your stay in Chania , so far, and enjoyed the sessions at our host institution, the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute, which does not only have excellent facilities that we can all see and use, but has also an excellent record of high academic achievements under the leadership of its Director Alkinoos Nikolaidis.
- All our three speakers, who I have known for many years are very experienced, knowledgeable and engaging. So have confidence .....! In accordance with the Scientific Committee’s guidelines, we will let each speaker have 25 minutes followed by a 10 – 15 minute discussion after each presentation. It is already past 11:30 thus we have slightly less than two hours before the lunch break at 13:30.
- In planning its Congresses, it is a custom for the European Society of Rural Sociology to make room for a presentation on issues of interest concerning the host country. At present times, and in the case of Greece, I am sure you don’t want to hear about Greece being the home of Plato and Aristotle nor about the country’s role in European evolution, its struggle for independence, its resistance to the Nazis. Neither do you want to hear about how Greece, contributed, along with Spain and Portugal to the transformation of the European Union from an entity of Western European nations into an integrated democratic continent that extends far to the South and the East. Nowadays, we are all preoccupied with the country’s public debt problem, the crisis management policies in Europe, the architecture and character of European institutions and the sustainability of the common currency. It is thus more likely that you would rather be more interested to hear about how Greece is again in the “forefront of the fight for the future” as the historian, Mark Mazower of Columbia University, points out.
- Our first speaker, Professor George Stathakis, of the Department of Economics of the University of Crete, is going to be talking about the macro-economy and the financial situation in general, thus preparing the ground for the next two speakers who will report on some of the other sorts of pressures and challenges agriculture and rural areas are facing. By mere coincidence, George has studied in depth (and has even published a book) on how American resources were committed to rebuild Europe, and Greece in particular, back in the 50’s. The policy implemented then, is known as “*The Marshal Plan*”.

Stathakis presentation 11:35 – 12:00

Stathakis discussion 12:00 – 12:15

- Let us be certain that, in the next 15 – 20 years, Greece will rebuild an optimistic and sound economy and society. No doubt, the countries of the periphery are currently paying the cost of their carelessness and the false policies they have been implementing. However, one should not underestimate the inequalities and imbalances that stem from the gap in development between the European North and the European South. (The issue of inequality falls within the general theme of this Congress). Coping with this gap requires Community support. It is beyond saying that any rehabilitation plan does not release Greece from all its responsibilities. The effort toward dynamic progress must be fundamental and continuous.

- Our next speaker is the Director of Economic Analysis, Perspectives and Evaluations of the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission. Over the next 25 minutes, Dr. Tassos Haniotis will talk about what he would see as some of the real short and longer term major issues that are driving European agriculture and rural areas as a whole. Tassos is the proper person to brief the Congress on the economic crisis and European agriculture. For quite some time now he has been deeply involved in high policy making as he has taken part in the design of Commissioner Fischler's proposal that led to the European Union's implementing the most radical reform in the history of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Currently, Tassos Haniotis and his colleagues are working out the details of the Commission's proposal for the new reform, which is due sometime in the fall. So, his briefing will be up to date I am sure!

Haniotis presentation 12:15 – 12:40

Haniotis discussion 12:40 – 12:55

- It seems the economic crisis does have certain direct effects on European agriculture. Such direct effects come from changes within the European economy. The crisis will also have some indirect effects that stem from its impact on foreign income, trade and world energy prices.

- This discussion takes us to the next and last presentation for this plenary. This presentation will treat the issue of sustainability challenges agriculture is facing. It seems

that such challenges will increase with growing population, climate change, and limited fresh water and rising energy costs. The ongoing economic crisis makes the need for a greener model of growth even more urgent than before. The emphasis of this last presentation will be on proper policies for creating an adaptive system that can best address all these challenges. Is the “business as usual” model outdated? How prepared are we to implement another strategy?

- Dr. Dimitris Diakosavvas, Chief Economist in the Directorate for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Policy and Environmental Division of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development will present his views on a “*green growth strategy for food and agriculture and will discuss its implications for rural areas* “

Diakosavvas presentation 12:55 – 13:20

Diakosavvas Discussion 13:20 – 13:35

- Sustainable development depends on getting the balance right between economic growth, agricultural output and resource availability. In the case of Greece, given the national circumstances, agriculture will have to be a major participant in the changing structure of the economy.

- As we are approaching lunch time let me add just a few relaxing remarks in a way of ..... wishful thinking ..!. The Ministry of Agriculture has come up with some suggestions as to what farmers ought to produce in each one of the administrative regions of the country. (Crete, for one is a region out of 13 regions). It has even given a name for this initiative; it calls it the regional “*basket*” of products. I, however, have a feeling that many farmers in Greece just as everywhere else, are beginning to realize that, in spite the Ministry’s guidelines, the most important products are those with the highest number of page views on the internet each time of the year, or, if we want to be more conventional, farmers are realizing that it is easy for them to assume that the products of interest to them should be the ones piled up on benches surrounded by many buyers at the local markets. Furthermore, it seems to me, the direct dialogue between farmer and consumer is gaining momentum. It is education, skills and training that is badly needed. The Ministry could assist in improving the employment situation in the rural areas as well as in stabilizing local economies if it searched out the examples of good work and encouraged the development of local and regional food systems.

- Let us note that there are bright spots on the agricultural landscape. We might come across some of them on the educational tours this afternoon....!
- Our time is up! On behalf of our speakers, I would like to thank you for your attention and active participation. Enjoy your lunch!