

Media Release  
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## **World Food System Center of ETH Zurich and fenaco launch research collaboration in the field of smart sustainable farming**

**The World Food System Center of ETH Zurich and the fenaco cooperative launch a joint research initiative at the interface of agriculture, sustainable production systems, robotics and artificial intelligence. With this initiative, fenaco is supporting the establishment of the Smart Sustainable Farming Research Cluster at the World Food System Center with a total of 1.2 million Swiss Francs over the next six years, thus enabling several interdisciplinary projects.**

Food systems and especially productive agriculture are facing major challenges in Switzerland and worldwide. The reasons for this include climate change, population growth, biodiversity loss and the scarcity of natural resources such as soil and water. At the same time, competition is forcing farmers to increase efficiency. To develop solutions to these challenges, the World Food System Center of ETH Zurich and the fenaco cooperative are launching a joint research initiative in the field of smart sustainable farming. The partners aim to contribute to sustainable, innovative and competitive agricultural production and increase transparency from agricultural production to consumers.

### **Research for the future of agriculture**

Since 2015, fenaco has supported the Professorship of Molecular Plant Breeding at ETH Zurich. With the cooperation in the field of smart sustainable farming, ETH Zurich and fenaco are significantly expanding their partnership. Martin Keller, Chairman of the Executive Board of fenaco, says: "We want to make a contribution to securing the long-term future of agricultural production in Switzerland. To this end, we support interdisciplinary, solution-oriented research approaches and promote close cooperation between companies, research and authorities."

The new research initiative focuses on the further development and application of digital technologies. Joël Mesot, President of ETH Zurich, states: "Through this new initiative, we are working together with the agricultural sector on very key challenges of our time. The projects will transfer findings from robotics and artificial intelligence into agricultural practice."

### **Establishing the Smart Sustainable Farming Research Cluster**

Starting in early 2022, the World Food System Center will identify the first research projects through a call for proposals. The first projects are expected to start in the third quarter of 2022 and will form the basis for the creation of the Smart Sustainable Farming Research Cluster. The focus will be on approaches at the interface of agriculture, sustainable production systems, robotics and artificial intelligence. Drawing on existing expertise in the fields of agronomy, agroecology, breeding, robotics, artificial intelligence, data

science, economics and politics, the World Food System Center and fenaco look forward to sharing the results with the agriculture sector, other research institutions, companies and the public.

fenaco is funding the establishment of the Smart Sustainable Farming Research Cluster over the next six years with a total contribution of 1.2 million Swiss Francs to the ETH Foundation. With this support, five to six projects are to be realized in a first phase. In the future, other industry partners may also participate in the research initiative.

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### **About the fenaco cooperative**

fenaco is a farming cooperative society based on a century-old concept. It is owned by 174 LANDIs and their approximately 43,000 members, including almost 23,000 active Swiss farmers. As a marketing partner for agricultural products, fenaco ensures that high-quality Swiss foodstuffs (fruit, vegetables, potatoes, cereals, meat and beverages) reach customers. As a supplier, fenaco also offers a wide range of products and services to ensure sustainable, efficient and market-oriented agriculture. Among the best-known fenaco brands is the beverage manufacturer RAMSEIER Suisse, the meat processor Ernst Sutter, the retailers Volg and LANDI, the fertilizer retailer LANDOR, the feed manufacturer UFA and the energy provider AGROLA. Headquartered in Bern, the fenaco cooperative employs over 11,000 people and achieved net sales of 7 billion Swiss Francs in 2020.

[www.fenaco.com](http://www.fenaco.com)

### **About World Food System Center**

The World Food System Center at ETH Zurich was established in 2011 to support new cross-disciplinary and solution-oriented research that addresses the key challenges facing our food system. It brings together 46 groups from different research areas at ETH, Eawag and Empa whose research and teaching contribute to sustainable agricultural and food systems. The Center uses a systemic approach that encompasses the entire food system and involves partners and stakeholders from various fields. The Center's multidisciplinary expertise and its diverse and long-standing experience in developing and implementing partnership approaches provide the ideal basis for long-term and successful collaboration.

[www.worldfoodsystem.ethz.ch](http://www.worldfoodsystem.ethz.ch)