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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Antonino Galati received his PhD in Agricultural Economic and Policy in 2007 from the University of Palermo, Italy. Currently, he is a researcher of agricultural economics and valuation and a Professor in the Fundamentals of Economics and Environmental Economics and Policy at the University of Palermo, Italy. His research interests include market competitiveness, agribusiness, marketing strategies, management, logistics and market analysis. He is also a co-chair of the Research Interest Committee in Agribusiness of the EuroMed Research Business Institute (EMRBI).

Eugenio Pomarici is an Associate Professor at the University of Padova, Italy. He has carried out researches concerning: quantitative tools for policy analysis; structure and performance of the world wine industry; and sustainable development in the food context. His scientific activity resulted in more than 100 scientific works. He offers undergraduate courses about agri-food market economy, wine policy, agri-food firm management and post graduate seminars about the analysis of international wine market and policy. He is currently the Vice-President of the OIV Economy and Law Scientific Commission and member of OIV Scientific Committee.

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The interest in the sustainability of agricultural and food systems can be traced on one hand, to several incidents of contaminated food (e.g., dioxin and BSE) and the need to build and maintain the consumer's trust as well, and, on the other hand to the escalating environment deterioration, such as increasing level of pollution, diminishing raw material resources, overflowing waste sites and global warming (Prajogo et al., 2012; Lai et al., 2010; Fulponi, 2006). Because of this process, the world food system has experienced significant transformations. In particular, production, trade and distribution systems of food products have changed and have determined an increasing emphasis of public and private organisation, at national and international level, on quality and safety control, on traceability of food products and on environmental issues (Giacomarra et al., 2015). The topic of sustainability has become, indeed, a buzzword among businesses operating in the

agricultural and food sector. However, regardless of the broad consensus on its importance, a high degree of variability can be observed in both how sustainability in agriculture is defined (Hansen, 1996; Lewandowski et al., 1999; Sands and Podmore, 2000; Heller and Keoleian, 2003) and how it is pursued in practice in the policy-making process. Moreover, the public in developed countries tends to associate sustainable agriculture with a large set of values underpinned by conservation of the environment, safe food, animal welfare and economic support for small and family farmers (van Loon et al., 2005). Indeed, agribusiness companies face many incentives as well as pressures and challenges for pursuing sustainability, through the adoption of more sustainable management practices, coming both from the marketplace where consumers demand agricultural goods and in the supply chain where organisations demand growing efficiency and effective communication (Rankin et al., 2011). Thus, agribusinesses today must balance a wide and continually evolving array of demands and challenges deriving from environmental and social concerns. The initial focus on conserving the natural resource base upon which agricultural activities depended has broadened to include a wide amount of priority areas. Ranging from the impact of pesticides and fertilisers in the fields, to the release of particulate matter, odours and greenhouse gases in all the steps of the production and distribution processes, to several social issues related to workers rights, local development, community welfare and so on. Therefore, achieving the goal of long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability in the agriculture and agri-food sector has become a more pressing and increasingly complex challenge.

All of this has motivated the Research Committee in Agribusiness of the EuroMed Research Business Institute (EMRBI) to promote a special issue on ‘Agribusiness and sustainability’ of *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business* in order to explore the role of the sustainability in the agricultural and food system. We have selected for publication eight papers that do not cover all of the relevant issues related to the sustainability in the agribusiness but reveal interesting aspects related to the role of sustainability in supply and demand.

Specifically, some papers analyse the perception of specific issues and the implementation of management strategies oriented towards sustainability by cooperatives’ managers predominantly operating in the Spanish agricultural sector (Duarte Alonso) and by the managers of producer organisations operating in the Italian fruits and vegetables sector (Coppola and Iannuario). On the consumption side, emerges the key role of information in affecting the purchasing process of sustainable food products in relation to the influence that knowledge of consumer preferences has for better strategic and tactical marketing decisions (Vecchio, Annunziata, Krystallis and Pomarici). Other studies focus on the importance of the integration of sustainable strategies in order to increase the competitiveness in the domestic and global market. With specific reference to certain strategic sectors such as the Italian wine industry (Amatucci, Pascale and Serluca), the fishery and aquaculture sector in Spain and Italy (Galati, Pastor, Crescimanno, Giaimo and Giacomarra) and in the rural tourism in southern Italian regions (Iaffaldano). The issue of sustainability is further explored on a global scale in the Asia Pacific region through a detailed analysis of the economic literature on the socio-economic and environmental importance of the adoption of sustainable farming practices, particularly for organic farming in this area (Nair). Finally, the current gaps and bottlenecks of statistics are underlined, which do not allow a detailed analysis of the issues related to sustainability, and some ideas for the optimisation of the use of agro-environmental statistics are provided (Fiore, Monasterolo, Jones and Contò).

In conclusion, the papers presented in this special issue confirm an increasing interest for sustainability of the agricultural and food system and related sectors. Highlighting, however, the need for a shared commitment by all the stakeholders in order to ensure a truly sustainable development.

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