

## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** George Vlontzos is an Associate Professor and Director of the Laboratory of Agricultural Economics and Consumer Behavior. His research interests focus on, among others, economic and environmental efficiency assessment, and on consumer behaviour characteristics for agricultural inputs and foodstuff. For this various models are being implemented like data envelopment analysis, stochastic frontier, artificial neural networks, the theory of planned behaviour, the health belief model, etc. He has published several papers in journals under double blind peer review evaluation and participated in international congresses and seminars. Finally, he has participated, in competitive projects co-financed by the EU, national funding as well as private funding projects. He teaches Agricultural Economics and Consumer Behaviour at the University of Thessaly, Greece.

Georgios Tsantopoulos is a Professor at the Department of Forestry and Management of the Environment and Natural Resources, School of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Democritus University of Thrace, Orestiada, Greece. He received his PhD from the Department of Forestry and Natural Environment of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in 2000. His research interests are forest extension, environmental communication and public relations. Since 2006, he teaches in the Postgraduate Program of Studies 'Sustainable Management of Environment and Natural Resources' and since 2015 in Postgraduate Program of Studies 'Environmental Education and Communication' of the Democritus University of Thrace. He has written more than 160 papers in international journals, chapters in books, proceedings of international and national conferences, etc. He has also participated in 23 research programs financed by the European Union and National Funds.

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We are at a crucial moment, when economic uncertainty continues while developments in technology may be characterised as revolutionary. Improved access to data and information, enhanced communication, awareness about environmental issues and developments in transport are sectors which experienced strong development over the

past years and led to new, unprecedented changes in farming both in our country and internationally, affecting rural development policies at the same time.

While the interest in the development of the agricultural sector and rural areas in general consists a common objective for those involved in agricultural economy and policy and while the planning processes for the next common agricultural policy (CAP) framework on both national and EU level face new challenges, the Hellenic Association of Agricultural Economists (ETAGRO) and its conferences have an important role to play. The conferences have the ambition to be one of the forums wherein new scientific outcomes on the development of the primary sector are presented. Moreover, they focus on contributing to the development and promotion of science in agricultural economics as well as studying and facilitating the exchange and dissemination of scientific knowledge and best practices of agricultural economics in Greece.

The present special issue of the *International Journal of Sustainable Agricultural Management and Informatics (IJSAMI)* includes papers which provide new insights on these issues, being updated and extended versions of the papers presented in the 15th Panhellenic Conference on Agricultural Economics (ETAGRO 2018) that was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 1–2 November 2018. The selection of the studies included in this special issue was based on their relevance to the scope of *IJSAMI* and the final approval for publication given after the double-blind peer review process by the Scientific Committee of the ETAGRO Conference.

The aim of this special issue is to present and describe the impact of new technologies on agricultural production and rural development in both operational and economic terms. The potential of new technologies in various aspects of crop production will be discussed while analysing their utility in preserving the rural environment. The content of the special issue involves case studies presentations, new methodological approaches for assessing optimisation issues for both production and processing of agricultural products, as well as evaluating the impact of new technologies on reducing the production costs, enhancing quality and reducing the negative impact of agricultural production on the environment.

The special issue consists of eight articles and includes the following reviewed papers:

- Aikaterini Paltaki and Anastasios Michailidis: ‘Students’ training needs towards precision agriculture’
- Christos Karelakis, Georgios Lampiris and Efstratios Loizou: ‘Assessment of the impact of Pillar I and II policy measures on the local economy: the case of the Central Macedonia region’
- Evropi-Sofia Dalampira and Stefanos Nastis: ‘Back to the future: simplifying Sustainable Development Goals based on three pillars of sustainability’
- Dimitra Lazaridou, Anastasios Michailidis and Marios Trigkas: ‘Cost recovery and water pricing: the influence of current charging of irrigation water on users’ willingness to pay’
- Epistimi Amerani and Maria Partalidou: ‘The construction of the rural through social media: an imaged-based methodology to understand perceptions for the Greek countryside’

- Georgios Kosifakis, Athanasios Kampas and Christos Papadas: ‘Economic complexity and the environment: some estimates on their links’
- Constantina Costopoulou, Sotiris Karetzos and Maria Ntaliani: ‘Investigating educational mobile apps for agriculture’
- Leonidas Sotirios Kyrgiakos, Christina Kleisiari and Spyros Niavis: ‘Assessing the high protein crops wider diffusion in the European agricultural sector. The role and prospects of legumes’.

We are grateful to many people for the successful completion of this special issue. First, we would like to express our gratitude to the authors for responding to our invitation and for submitting their papers to the special issue of *IJSAMI*. We would also like to extend special thanks to the editorial board for supporting this effort so wholeheartedly, and also those who contributed to the issue with their research works and reviewed submitted papers. As guest editors, we are certain that the *International Journal of Sustainable Agricultural Management and Informatics* will continue to promote the development of advanced intelligent systems for sustainable development applied to agriculture, energy, health and environment and also hope that the journal will sustain its critical role in the representation of ideas and research works in the specific scientific field. Finally, we are grateful to Professor Basil Manos, Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Sustainable Agricultural Management and Informatics*, for inviting us to serve as guest editors and supporting our work. We would also like to express our hope that this special issue will successfully promote the ETAGRO 2018 as well as contribute to the advancement of science and the advanced intelligent systems for sustainable development which are applied to the areas of agriculture, energy, health and environment.