

Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Agri-Environment

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Agricultural and Environmental Information Systems with an extensive variety of highly valued pioneering services, applications and methodologies can serve the requirements and necessities of the modern citizens, society and business world in the agricultural and environmental sector.

The Special issue aims to merge and demonstrate innovative Information Systems applications and techniques in Agriculture, Forestry and Environment. It delivers as the medium for complete presentation of applicable modern advances in tools, methods and research in ICT for Agriculture, Forestry and Environment aiming to bring together scientists, professionals and experts working on ICT sector supporting rural development.

The 6 papers found in the special issue under the title “ICT for sustainable agri-environment” aim to provide various multi-discipline methodologies also addressing the sustainability factor, which is a must in contemporary research the last 20 years. The papers constitute an updated and extended version of papers presented in the 7th International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies in Agriculture HAICTA2015 that took place on 17th-20th September 2015 in Kavala, Greece. The international conference was organized by the Hellenic Association for Information and Communication Technologies in Agriculture Food and Environment (HAICTA) with the support of its Northern and Central Greece Branch and in cooperation with several associated Institutions. HAICTA is the Greek Branch of the European Federation for Information Technology in Agriculture (EFITA). HAICTA is a Non-Government Organization and it is the Greek Branch of European Federation for Information Technology in Agriculture (EFITA). The selection of the studies appearing in this special issue was based on the relevance subject to the scope of the *International Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Information Systems* and on the evaluation score of the full papers during the double blind peer review process.

Paper 1 studies integrated systems for Corporate Social Responsibility Activities in the Agri-Food Sector of Greece, which has a strong impact on the three sustainability pillars: environment, society and economy. Paper 2 explores the impact of tourism to the sustainable development of mountain regions, taking under consideration the implications of the climatic conditions. Paper 3 examines regional sustainability in National Parks using Information and Communication Technologies through e-government sites. Paper 4 focuses on consumers’ behaviour towards Fruits and Vegetables (FVs)

using advanced analysis techniques. Paper 5 studies the automation in maturation of tomatoes with the use of sensorial analysis and instrumented color determination. Paper 6 deals with environmental pollution detection, using modern technologies for the identification of heavy-metals in soil sector.

We believe that this special issue will continue the scientific discussion, stimulate advance research in these topics and will progress to new trends and solutions that can result in both theoretical and practical progress.

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Zacharoula Andreopoulou is an Associate Professor in Lab. of Forest Informatics, Sector of Planning and Development of Natural Resources, Dept of Forestry & Natural Environment, AUTH-Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her scientific interests include Forest & Environmental Informatics, Internet & Information Communication Technologies for environmental protection, green development & regional development, green technologies, green informatics and Energy sustainability. She has a BSc in Mathematics (AUTH), BSc in Forestry & Natural Environment (AUTH), PhD in Forest informatics (AUTH). Post-doc research (2004) at University of East London, UK, & (2013) at University of Napoli "Parthenope", Italy. She is Chair in HAICTA-Hellenic Association ICT in Agriculture, Food & Environment, for Branch of North and Central, Greece. She has been invited Speaker in environmental informatics and sustainability issues. She has been the Chair of Organizing (3) and Scientific (2) Committee of International Conferences, as well as Associate Editor, Guest Editor and member of EB of International journals. She is a member of Gender and Equality Committee of AUTH. She was awarded with the Prize of Excellence from AUTH & 1st prize award in International Environmental conference. She has published 4 international book titles: "Agricultural & Environmental Informatics, Governance & Management: Emerging research applications", "E-innovation for sustainable development of natural resources during global economic crisis", "Sostenibilitadellosvillupo e dimensioneterritoriale", "New media, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Tourism Development." She has published more than 200 papers in journals and Int. Conferences Proceedings, 17 book chapters, etc.

Vagis Samathrakakis has been Professor at the Department of Rural Development & Agribusiness Management at the Alexander Technological Educational Institute (ATEI) of Thessaloniki since 1998, and from October 2014 he has served as Professor at the Department of Accounting and Finance of the ATEI of Thessaloniki. He teaches Management, Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Management, Research Methodology, Portfolio Management and Business Economics. He is an external evaluator of European Community programs such as the Integrated Mediterranean Programs, the Regional Operational Programs, the LEADER, etc. Since 1998 he has worked on topics such as the Competitiveness of Food and Beverage Companies, the E-business in SMEs in the Food and Beverage Sector, the Adoption of Information and Communication Technologies in Greek Agriculture and the Internet use by Businesses and Organizations in Rural Areas, the Adoption-Diffusion of Precision Agriculture in Greek Regions, the Farm Management and the Innovation and Entrepreneurship. His scientific work has been published in scientific journals and presented at international conferences.

Professor Soulla Louca received her PhD in Computer Science in 1994 from Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Prior to that, she had received a BA in Computer Science and Mathematics as a Fulbright scholar, and an MSc in Computer Science from Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University respectively. She has participated and coordinated numerous projects including National Science Foundation (NSF- USA), Research Promotion Foundation (RPF-Cyprus) and European; has served as a reviewer for various international conferences/journals and has been invited several times as an evaluator for the Framework programs of the European Commission. In 2006, she was appointed by the Research Promotion Foundation-Cyprus to represent Cyprus in the Domain Committee for ICT for the European program COST (www.cost.eu) and in June 2008 she was elected the Chair of the Domain for the 36 Member States of COST. Her mandate ended successfully in September 2014. Main duties were the evaluation and monitoring of the ICT Actions which bring together more than 3000 researchers in areas like e-Society, Information Security, Networks, Nanotechnologies, etc. Furthermore, she was responsible for identifying trends, boosting pioneering research activities and help define strategies in science and technology through the organization and participation of strategic initiatives for promoting the ICT policy in Europe and beyond for the betterment and new digital experiences of European citizens. Even though her research interests for many years focused on information society (socio-economic aspects of ICT, e-learning, social integration and digital divide), due to her COST activities she had the opportunity to disperse her knowledge and work over a wide range of subjects such as personalized medicine, women in ICT, and open access. This enables her to integrate the knowledge she has gained over the years into a consistent world view with a wider division of labor for working towards raising the standard of living for the European citizens and beyond. She is currently a Professor in Management and MIS, the coordinator of the Blockchain Initiative which includes the online Master's degree program Digital Currency, as well as the Associate Dean of the School of Business at the University of Nicosia.