

Copernicus for Agriculture



(ESA)

Last Monday, along with about 250 others, I attended the EC organised [Copernicus for Agriculture workshop](#). It was a very good meeting with a lot of information exchanged on how Copernicus and Sentinel data is being used mainly to support agriculture policy.

It was billed as an industry workshop and at the entrance it was announced as “Copernicus / private sector”. Industry was strongly represented in the audience and the on-line survey conducted by the organisers suggested that around 45% of the attendees were from the private sector.

When it came to the speakers, the picture was rather different. Of the 28 who were on stage to present and/or to moderate sessions, only 3 came from the private sector. These were two established companies and one very new start-up less than 1 month old.

Ana Haas from Geoville gave a good overview of the services which can be provided by companies especially focused on serving international customers and particularly the International Financial Institutions. Heide Bakke from Vista talked about the products which they are offering in Germany. Vista has recently become 51% owned by BayWa a German commodities company which sees an opportunity to develop digital information services for the agriculture community. It would have also been interesting to have heard their perspective! Finally, Leon Hendricks from Bioscope talked about how data can be gathered and used for agriculture. Bioscope stems from several ESA projects and is targeted on serving potato farmers in Europe.

But the other 25 speakers were all from the public-sector and very much confirmed the picture we have. There is a great deal of research going on into the use of Copernicus to support CAP and national agriculture (and environmental) policies but very few real operational examples today. In the private sector it is rather the same when looking at public policy but very different in the area of precision farming. Here we know of many initiatives – Bioscope is a new one – which are focused on providing services to farmers. We shall publish a report touching on this in the next few days. This dynamism was not visible in last Monday’s workshop which was a shame. EARSC has some opportunities later this year to organise meetings which can consider the commercial market for agriculture services and we shall try to give a platform to these many start-ups which are emerging.

For future Copernicus focused workshops, EARSC would be pleased to help set-up and organise the agenda. Unfortunately, despite this being the case for earlier such workshops, it seems that the EC prefer to do this themselves and not draw upon the industry expertise. This feels like a lost opportunity for everyone.