

Newsletter n°3

Association Tea Grown in Europe (EuT)

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<http://tea-grown-in-europe.eu>

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New Member: Chá Camélia from Portugal

A new tea grower colleague has joined the Association: Chá Camélia, a Portuguese tea garden jointly run by Nina Gruntkowski and her husband Dirk Niepoort. In 2011, Dirk, an acknowledged wine maker of the Douro region, and his wife Nina have decided to launch a tea plantation project in a land inherited from Dirk's family in the Minho region, situated north of Porto, near the village of Fornelo. This land is of granitic and acid nature, with a marine influence providing a mild and humid climate, with no frost and annual rainfall of around 1,400mm, conditions which appear perfect for growing *Camellia sinensis*. It is also known locally as the "Land of camellias", due to the many varieties of camellias that have been flourishing in the area for centuries, following the "Great Discoveries" and the opening of new maritime routes between Europe and Asia during the 16th century.



Nina, who runs the day to day work at the tea Plantation, was born in Frankfurt and has been from her younger years attracted by tea; when she was a teen ager, she was always looking for the nice tea shops in Germany, and, when choosing a destination for travelling, always tried to find a place relating with tea! She has worked as a radio journalist in Cologne during 12 years, and decided to move to Portugal in 2007, where she continued her journalist work as correspondent of a German radio. Then, after a few years, she has decided to leave her journalist position and dedicate her time to the tea project.

Nina and Dirk have started to grow tea plants in 2011, starting with a first batch of 200 cuttings provided by Peter Oppliger, owner of the Monte Verità tea garden, situated in the Ticino canton on the Swiss side of the Lago Maggiore.

Then propagation has been conducted with both seeds and cuttings; the garden currently includes around 6,500 plants. The Minho climate and soils appears extremely favourable the growth of *Camellia sinensis*: 3-4 years bushes appear already enough developed to start plucking.



This year was a bit uncommon with very little rainfall along the summer season, so watering was needed during the recent months. The plantation also includes an interesting part dedicated to *Camellia taliensis*, interesting specie, botanically separated from *Camellia sinensis*, used in the Dali area (China, Yunnan province) to make tea; this is probably the largest collection of *Camellia taliensis* ever seen in Europe!



Nina and Dirk are convinced that organic farming is the future. Therefore, right from the beginning, they started the organic certification process and should be officially certified by mid of next year. Their intend is to work the land as naturally and sustainably as possible, almost without outside agricultural inputs, making their own compost with local organic manure and other organic material from the farm. The Chá Camélia teagarden also relies on biodynamic techniques, in order to preserve a healthy environment around the tea plants.



The land was initially used as an orchard, with mainly apples, pears kiwis and grapes. Also there is a great selection of old trees, which is preserved to keep a greater biodiversity. Although tea is intentionally gaining over other cultures, rows of fruit trees are still flourishing between the plots of

tea. Indeed, this is an interesting topic to be investigated in relation with tea production in Europe: we are already aware of mixed cultivation in some areas in China, where nashis, mulberries, or even mandarin oranges are grown among tea plantations. More generally, the agro-forestry approaches appear to be relevant in relation with tea cultivation. The Chá Camélia teagarden provides a model that could be implemented in different areas of Europe.



In view of a future production of tea based on its own plants, Chá Camélia currently experiments different processes, including steaming, pan roasting and rolling. We have tasted the green tea produced this year, it appeared to us extremely refreshing, with both grassy and maritime flavours; indeed a great tea, not inferior to the high grade Chinese or Japanese green teas that we know! We could also identify specific flavours, different that those of green tea grown in Brittany or in Rhine-Westphalia, for sure linked to the specific soil and climate of the Minho region. This strengthens our conviction that the different terroirs where tea is grown in Europe provide different flavours, all of them being extremely interesting and enjoyable!



Nina and Dirk's project appears already very successful, near to commercial production (in a 1-2 years frame). In the meantime, Chá Camélia distributes in Portugal and Spain different kinds of high grade Japanese green tea, all coming from family run plantations. This contributes to enhance the

awareness of green tea in southern Europe and to prepare the ground for the commercialisation of the future tea grown at the Chá Camélia plantation.

Another product relies on Dirk's experience in making Port wine: a batch of high grade Chinese wulong tea was perfumed by Port wine lees in a vintage barrel with wine lees. The result is exiting, indeed a new kind of high grade tea.

We are enthusiastic about the Tea project run by Nina and Dirk; Chá Camélia is the first Member of our Association coming from southern Europe. We address them a warm welcome and wish them all the best for a bright future!

See Chá Camélia website: <http://chacamelia.com/en>

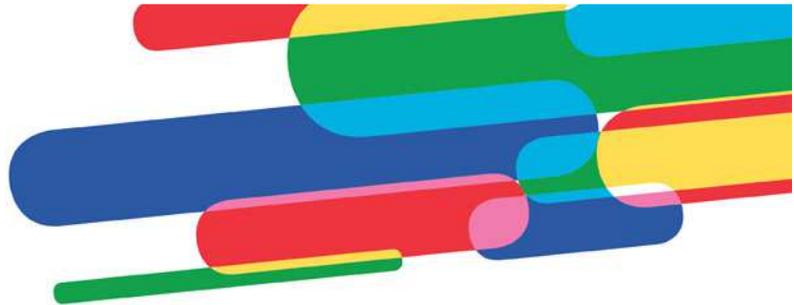
Event: Expert meeting organised by Photonics21 on Smart Farming & Food Production (Frankfurt, 5th September 2017)

An expert meeting on “Smart Farming & Food Production” was organised by the Association Photonics21 in Frankfurt on 5th September 2017.

Its main purpose was to discuss about a common vision on the research, development and innovation directions relevant to this domain, and write a “Vision Paper” to be handed out in the following weeks to the European Commission, namely to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, Digital Economy and Society, in view of preparing the content of the 9th European Research & Innovation Framework Programme (2021-2027).



Photonics
A Key Enabling Technology
for Europe



Photonics technology was identified as an important technology to address future challenges relating to smart farming and food production, e.g.:

- empowering consumers and farmers,
- establishing a sustainable value chain from farm to fork,
- producing safe, healthy and affordable food.

Our Association believes that Photonics can contribute to make European tea competitive: as a technology providing a wide range of sensing and imaging systems, it can offer efficient solutions, not only for robotised tea plucking, but also for high temperature treatment, process monitoring etc. This is why our Association is keen on participating actively in such event.

See Photonics21 website: <http://www.photonics21.org/>