EXCELLENCE IN
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD RESEARCH

CODE OF ETHICS, RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND CONDUCT

2026

Adapted from the CERCA Institution Code of Ethics and Conduct (June 2025)

Approved by the Scientific Steering Management Committee on 2 November 2026.

1. Introduction

Agrotecnio, as a CERCA center of the Generalitat de Catalunya, is committed to promoting excellence in research with the ultimate goal of transferring knowledge to the agrifood sector and society. To achieve this, research must be founded from the outset on the following organizing principles:

- Respect for human rights
- Equal treatment and non-discrimination
- Gender perspective and intersectionality
- Scientific integrity and conduct
- Improvement of the quality of life for society

As part of the Catalan public sector, Agrotecnio holds itself to higher standards of self-criticism regarding its own conduct and compliance with ethical principles, ensuring societal advancement based on knowledge, science and respect for democratic principles.

This code is inspired by:

- The European Charter for Researchers
- The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (European Commission)
- Law 9/2022 of December 21 on Science (Generalitat de Catalunya)

2. Scope of application

This code is mandatory for all personnel and categories at Agrotecnio, including own personnel (personal propi), affiliated staff (personal adscrit), emeritus, visiting and collaborating staff, regardless of their role or professional field. Adherence to these obligations is formalized through the signature of adherence by the director of the centre and is understood to extend subsidiarily to all afore mentioned personnel.

3. Guiding principles (7 CERCA Commitments)

I. Defence and guarantee of human and democratic rights

Agrotecnio and its personnel commit to:

- Defend and guarantee human and democratic rights in the course of their work.
- Incorporate a cross-cutting perspective of guaranteeing these rights in all work tasks.
- Not discriminate based on place of birth, racial or ethnic origin, ideology, language, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, age, disability, socio-economic status or any other personal or social circumstance.
- Align conduct with democratic norms, showing maximum respect for difference and acceptance of disagreement in interpersonal relationships.
- Avoid discrimination, intolerance or obstacles to free debate within the centre.

II. Scientific integrity, good practices and ethics in research

Agrotecnio's primary objective is excellence in research and its impact on society. These objectives must never conflict with respect for rights and democratic principles. Research personnel will guarantee:

Reliability	Ensure quality in research design, methodology, analysis and resource use.
Honesty	Develop, conduct, review, present and communicate research transparently, fairly, completely, impartially.
Respect	For colleagues, research participants, research subjects, society, ecosystem, cultural heritage and the environment.
Responsibility	From idea to publication: management, organization, training, supervision, mentoring and broader social impacts.

Additionally:

- All research will strictly comply with applicable legislation on industrial and intellectual property.
- All directorial and research personnel will declare any conflict of interest that may influence research or directorial/management tasks.
- Any form of scientific malpractice (falsification, fabrication, plagiarism) will be avoided.

Agrotecnio will set up a Research Integrity Committee and appoint an ombudsperson to oversee all matters related to research conduct and misconduct, integrating this body into the centre's research-ethics and compliance framework, alongside institutional policies on data management, open science, and publication practices. See annex 2 for more details about this committee.

III. Equal treatment and non-discrimination

Agrotecnio will guarantee:

- Equal opportunities for all own and affiliated personnel
- Equity in treatment of people and distribution of resources
- A respectful workplace free from discrimination, free from abusive, hostile, or offensive conduct

No discrimination will be tolerated based on: race, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, political opinions, trade union membership, religion, or any other personal, physical, or social condition.

All professional malpractice in situations of abuse of power will be avoided.

Governing bodies will establish measures to ensure no discrimination and equal respect for the merits and competence of each member.

IV. Gender Equity and incorporation of the feminist perspective

Agrotecnio will work to ensure that its Gender Equality Plan (2025-2029) is implemented correctly. In particular, the centre will:

- Incorporate the feminist perspective in the exercise of functions and in relationships with all own and external personnel
- Promote actions and training aimed at fostering gender equity in the organization
- Guarantee health and safety in the workplace, offering safe and stable conditions
- Promote shared responsibility for care through work-life balance measures
- Establish rational working hours that favor personal-family life balance, with gender and feminist perspective (maternity/paternity/breastfeeding leave)

V. Guarantee of linguistic rights

As an integral part of the Public Sector of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Agrotecnio will promote the use of Catalan in the centre as a part of existing multilingualism, guaranteeing linguistic rights at all times, according to applicable legislation.

Agrotecnio will work to protect linguistic rights with the goal of democratizing access to scientific production in different languages and promoting dissemination of science.

Agrotecnio commits to:

- Know and fulfil the objectives of the **Plan for Strengthening the Catalan Language** in the university and research system of Catalunya.
- Comply with the **Guide for Developing Criteria for Multilingualism Management** in research centres.

VI. Transparency, Open Science and improving society's quality of life

Agrotecnio is committed to improving the quality of life of Catalan society by promoting transparency and facilitating open, equitable access to knowledge, enabling citizens to act as contributors, participants, and beneficiaries of research. One of its core objectives is to ensure that research results are open, transparent, and accessible. In line with the open access model promoted by the European Commission, Agrotecnio makes data from its scientific articles, projects, and other publications available for public consultation and free reuse. Open access fosters better scientific practices, strengthens citizen engagement, and accelerates innovation. In this context, Agrotecnio adheres to the University of Lleida's Open Science Policy and actively promotes shared knowledge through its initiatives.

VII. Ethics in the use of AI use

Agrotecnio and all its personnel must:

- Comply with the Artificial Intelligence Regulation (RIA) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) on personal data protection, as well as any other future related EU regulation.
- Know, incorporate, and communicate the guiding principles of existing AI regulations:

Transparency and Explainability	AI decisions must be understandable
Justice and Equity	Without discriminatory biases
Safety and non-maleficence	Without foreseeable harm
Responsibility and Intellectual Property Protection	Clarity on Authorship and use
Accountability	Possibility to audit decisions

Privacy	Protection of personal data
Autonomy	Respect for human decision
Sustainability	Minimal environmental impact

4. Implementation and Compliance

1. **Signature of Adherence**: Agrotecnio's director will sign their adherence and that of the organization to the code once they begin their responsibilities.
2. **Dissemination**: The Communications Department will ensure that this Code of Ethics is widely communicated among the centre's staff. The Code will also be incorporated into Agrotecnio's onboarding processes for all personnel and affiliated members. In addition, the centre will periodically offer training on research integrity to promote awareness and compliance. Dissemination of other policies and strategies of Agrotecnio, such as the Gender and Equality Plan, will be ensured too.
3. **Monitoring Compliance**: Agrotecnio's governing body will ensure compliance with this Code of Ethics, supported by the Research Integrity Committee and the appointed ombudsperson, who will oversee adherence to the code and address any issues related to research conduct and misconduct within the centre's research-ethics and compliance framework.
4. **Periodic Review**: This code will be reviewed periodically to ensure its applicability and effectiveness, responding to current challenges and reality in Catalunya's research system.

Annex 1 – Adherence to the CERCA Code of Ethics and Conduct

Declaration of Adherence by Agrotecnio's Director/Manager

I, José Antonio Bonet Lledós, appointed Director of Agrotecnio on April 2023,

DECLARE that I know the content of the Agrotecnio Code of Ethics and Conduct (September 2026) and adhere to it in its entirety, committing to:

- Facilitate its application at Agrotecnio
- Review the center's internal regulations to ensure they do not contravene its principles
- Make this code known to all center personnel
- Ensure its compliance

Signed in Lleida,

Director of Agrotecnio

Annex 2 – Research Integrity committee

Agrotecnio's Research Integrity Committee is a body tasked with promoting and safeguarding the highest standards of research integrity across all activities carried out at the centre. This committee supports a culture of honesty, transparency and accountability in research and ensures that Agrotecnio fulfils its legal and ethical obligations in relation to research conduct.

The main responsibilities of the Research Integrity Committee include:

- Providing guidance and advice to researchers on matters of research integrity, authorship, data management, open science, and publication practices.
- Reviewing and assessing allegations of potential research misconduct in a fair, confidential, and timely manner, in line with Agrotecnio's internal procedures and applicable legislation.
- Overseeing the implementation of the Code of Ethics and related policies, including those on data management, open access, and research transparency.
- Promoting training and awareness-raising activities on research integrity for staff, doctoral candidates, and affiliated members.

The Committee is composed by 3 senior researchers and relevant administrative or legal officers and may include external members when appropriate to ensure impartiality and multidisciplinary perspective. The committee composition will be proposed by the director, once the Scientific Strategy and Management Committee (SSMC) has been consulted and will be ratified by Agrotecnio's Board of Trustees. The Research Integrity Committee will meet at request of the Agrotecnio's director and their performance will be aligned with the University of Lleida's Open Science and research-integrity policies.

Annex 3 – Ombudsperson

To support early-stage and confidential advice, a Research Integrity Ombudsperson will be appointed. The Ombudsperson will be proposed by the director, once the Scientific Strategy and Management Committee (SSMC) has been consulted and will be ratified by Agrotecnio's Board of Trustees.

The Ombudsperson will act as a first-point contact for researchers with questions or concerns about research conduct, before any formal complaint or investigation is initiated. This person shall act to resolve complex issues upon request by the director or in the event of a complaint received through Agrotecnio's / UdL "Canal de denuncia".

The Ombudsperson ensures that concerns are channelled appropriately to the Committee and that all parties are treated with fairness and respect.

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