A first pre-operational campaign for FARMSTAR Expert combining satellites & drones

15 000 hectares will be covered by the drones, out of the 800 000 hectares covered by the 2015-2016 campaign

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Airbus Defence and Space, Arvalis-Institut du Végétal, Terres Inovia and Delta Drone announce the launch of a pre-operational "FARMSTAR Expert Drone" campaign for the 2015-2016 season, covering an area of 15 000 hectares of wheat and rapeseed. This will constitute the first step in the development of drone use within the framework of FARMSTAR Expert.

Two years after the announcement of the first experiments, the commercial availability of this new service is now a reality. It is supported by the many tests carried out during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 campaigns, which made it possible to finalize both the technical and regulatory aspects of drone use.
From a technical standpoint, the main work concerned the qualification of the on-board sensors and the consistency of the processing of the data acquired by satellite and by drone.
As for regulations, the focus was on the preparation and management of drone missions. First, by prioritizing the safety of people and property, but also by ensuring that the various deadlines for the many authorizations required are compatible with the constraints applicable to farm operators. Indeed, the data acquisitions must be carried out on key dates corresponding to very specific stages in the crops' growth.

For this first pre-operational campaign, the partners' decision to limit their commercial scope to 15 000 hectares to be managed by drones (primarily wheat) is the result of a controlled growth strategy, particularly in view of the technical and logistic challenge of the volume of the data to be transferred and processed, in order to provide users with a top-quality service.

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