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The rector defends Lleida as the agri-food capital to secure more research centres

■ Joan Viñas asks the Government not to base budget distribution on population numbers

The University of Lleida (UdL) aims to strengthen its position in the agri-food sector by establishing leading facilities on a European level. This was the main message of the UdL's rector at the traditional Christmas breakfast with the press. Joan Viñas urged the Government of Catalonia to promote these infrastructures in the Lleida region instead of creating new agri-food clusters in Barcelona, Santa Coloma, Castelldefels and other towns in Catalonia.

Along the same lines, the rector asked the Government of Catalonia to take regional balance into account when it distributed budgets, instead of

basing distribution on the number of inhabitants. Viñas gave the example of Scandinavian countries, which take into account the most disadvantaged areas in terms of climate. He said, "One of Finland's universities is in an area that is frozen over for six months, but it is international, takes in people from all over the world and receives major funding. The rector of the UdL added that 2010 would be an important year, as a new financing model will be decided on. He also highlighted that the Government would pay the University of Lleida seven million euros at the end of next year to cover additional funding for objectives.

Joan Viñas asks the Government of Catalonia to set up leading facilities on a European level and to refrain from creating science parks in the same field in other Catalan towns

With regard to future projects, the UdL hopes to start running degree courses in Psychology, Physiotherapy and Tourism next year. It will also adapt its courses in Agricultural Engineering for the Food Industry, Forest Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and Industrial Mechanical Engineering to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building work is also to be carried out on the

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Cappont, Agricultural and Health Sciences campuses to make them compliant with EHEA requirements. It is also planned to begin the new Cappont classroom complex and refurbish the roof on the rectorate building.

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