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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Long-term strategy for agricultural research  
- *Presentation by the Commission*  
- *Exchange of views*

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In view of the debate at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 15 February, delegations will find attached a document provided by the Commission on the outcome of the conference on EU agricultural research, held in Brussels on 26-28 January 2016.

**Information note from Commissioner Hogan**

A strategic approach to EU agricultural research and innovation:

**Main outcomes of the conference 26 – 28 January 2016**

The DG AGRI conference held on 26 – 28 January served to discuss how to best **implement the strategic priorities for agricultural research** as outlined in its draft document.

Some first main outcomes can be summarised as follows:

1. The conference showcased a range of examples of successful **European and international research cooperation**. It provided a dynamic platform for consolidating these partnerships (such as the Joint Programming Initiative FACCE) and exploring new types of cooperation in the areas of climate and soil including the "4per1000" soil initiative as a follow up of COP 21 negotiations. The conference also served to launch the International Research Consortium on Animal Health: A new global initiative attracting over 1 bn euro of investment and continuously expanding. Discussions also helped to assess existing instruments for European research such as infrastructures and ERA-NETs. As shown by the example of European Network on Forest Genetic Resources (EUFORGEN), EU funding has often been at the origin of Member State cooperation and catalysed sustained actions. Discussions with partners from China and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) revealed a high degree of synchronicity in research priorities. These synergies will be exploited in the next Horizon 2020 programming period, in particular in the context of existing G20 and COP 21 commitments.
2. There was wide agreement that **societal engagement** should be the starting point for any research agenda setting to better grasp **societal needs** and deliver on what was presented as "acceptable innovations". Similarly, society should be given more opportunities to be engaged in research activities and be better informed about research outcomes.

As shown by an example from waste management research these links are not so easy to establish and maintain over time. It was considered that the area of agriculture would lend itself particularly well to create successful interfaces between science and society, the more since citizens are increasingly interested in food, food production and in engaging directly with farmers. This interest was seen as a sound basis for pursuing further efforts in this area.

3. Presentations illustrated the application of the concept of "**systems approaches**" at various scales (e.g. targeting the level of farms, landscapes, the agri-food chain) and in different farming systems. The words "complexity", "interdisciplinarity" and "multiactor approach" were often referred to when trying to characterize the science and management needed to understand and use the inherent benefits of more complex farming systems (e.g. mixed farming or agroforestry). While in the past this complexity was mostly seen as an obstacle to adoption, participants considered that sufficient tools were now in place to better capture, process and use information coming from various disciplines and levels.

4. There was huge interest in the **generation and governance of knowledge** and in particular in the potential of **open data** for spurring innovation. This potential became particularly evident when considering the "geographic disconnect" between the places in which research efforts are concentrated and those where research results are most urgently needed to increase productivity. This recognition led to a number of questions, e.g. on whether open science could lead to a more fluid circulation of ideas, information and good practices, regardless of where and by whom this knowledge has been created. Although no definitive answers were given, data management and knowledge sharing were raised as an area of top priority for future research investments. This was in line with the example coming from "Smart Farming" which served to illustrate how information from **various disciplines and levels** – (e.g. plants, soil, fields and space) could be coupled with advanced digital technologies to deliver new knowledge and applications such as in precision farming.

5. Participants concluded that **public-private partnerships** in various forms could be particularly useful a) to fill gaps where underpinning basic science could not be taken-up by industry without public/private cooperation or b) to produce public goods and to disseminate results. Discussions also addressed the question of how to deliver Open Access to non-participant stakeholders without compromising the private investments undertaken in Private Public Partnerships. Participants recommended that more attention should be paid to the participation of SMEs in Private Public Partnerships, in particular though the development of flexible instruments adapted to the reality and diversity of AgriFood SMEs.

6. On **interactive innovation** the concept of multiactor approach was widely supported. Participants encouraged more systematic uptake of the concept in Societal Challenge 2 to feed into research questions, project implementation and uptake of results. Examples from Europe and internationally were useful to show the various ways in which interactive innovation was implemented, originating from genuine partnerships between various sectors and stakeholders.