



Council of the
European Union

061368/EU XXVI. GP
Eingelangt am 10/04/19

Brussels, 10 April 2019
(OR. en)

8360/19

AGRI 204
AGRISTR 31
RECH 218

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Research and agriculture
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find in the Annex a Presidency paper on the high-level conference on "Agricultural Research and Innovation – a basis for the development of European agriculture, rural areas and bioeconomy" held in Bucharest on 5 April 2019, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 15 April 2019.



MINISTERUL AGRICULTURII ȘI DEZVOLTĂRII RURALE



AOB
AGRIFISH Council 15th of April
Debrief on the high-level conference on research and bioeconomy
held in Bucharest

The Romanian Presidency has established bioeconomy as one of its priorities and intends to debate it at various meetings and levels in order to identify solutions to increase the participation of agriculture in the bioeconomy.

In this respect, the Presidency, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, organized in Bucharest, on the 5th of April 2019, the **High Level Conference on "Agricultural Research and Innovation - a basis for the development of European agriculture, rural areas and bioeconomy"** with the following main objectives:

- identifying solutions to enable broad integration of agriculture into the bioeconomy and circular economy;
- setting agricultural research priorities to meet new bioeconomy and circular economy requirements;
- finding solutions for the wider participation of Eastern European countries in the EU's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program;
- identifying the challenges and debating the ways and means of implementing the updated Bioeconomy Strategy at European level, with the wide participation of the Member States.

The conference benefited from the active presence of the European Commission, namely representatives of DG AGRI, DG Research and Innovation, of the representatives from the Bio-Based Industries Joint Undertaking, COPA - COGECA representatives, and personalities from academia and research centers, ministries and other governmental agents from most of the Member States.

As for the structure of the conference, it was designed to have 4 debating sessions, dealing with themes such as 1. **Bottlenecks in the implementation of innovations in sustainable agriculture: Enhancing AKIS**, 2. **Bioeconomy as a vehicle for rural**



development, 3. *Challenges for Research and Innovation in Agriculture and Bioeconomy in Central and Eastern Europe* and 4. *Governance and strategies for the development of the bioeconomy*. The closure of the conference consisted in presenting some recommendations for the next steps we must undertake.

In a nutshell, the presentations and the debates within the discussion panels have:

- approached issues concerning the **obstacles in the implementation of innovations for a sustainable agriculture**, allowing us to set the framework for solution-oriented discussions for **enhancing AKIS in the context of the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability**,
- addressed concerns related to the **bioeconomy, seen as a vehicle for rural development**, which gave us the opportunity to find out that there is an intense concern for developing bioeconomy, with different degrees of undertakings, which proves that the bioeconomy has succeeded in some Member States to get the political traction needed for its development. We are all aware that some of the member states must recover some steps that others have already done in strengthening research or implementing a national policy aiming at developing the concept of bioeconomy,
- discussed solutions to **promote innovation and strengthen research in Central and Eastern Europe**. The debate focused on the manner the needs of the Eastern states could be better supported so as not to remain in the shadow of more developed countries and on how investments in agricultural research and innovation could be more efficiently accessed. The emphasis was put on the need of alignment of national research and innovation agendas and on the role of joint partnerships initiatives and cooperation among member states.
- tried to extract valuable lessons from the experience of other Member States, and improve the way we can effectively cooperate for a better **governance and for designing efficient national strategies** given the regional aspects of



the bioeconomy and the smart specialization strategies of each Member State. The regional intergovernmental collaboration platform, like BIOEAST Initiative, is an evidence for working together for a coherent development of the bioeconomy and offers the leadership we need in coordinating European initiatives for not wasting opportunities any longer.

The main conclusions and points for further political decisions are reflected in some key messages resulted from our conference:

Bioeconomy is a relevant policy with major implications on the achievement of the SDGs and in rural development. SDG challenges need to be addressed through cooperation in research and the Standing Committee on Agriculture Research with its various working groups, the Joint Programming Initiatives are instruments to integrate and promote the member states research priorities.

Future CAP Strategic Plans will strengthen the bioeconomy and all countries need to be supported to take the necessary steps towards bioeconomy strategies - nobody should be left behind.

There are challenges in defining an implementation plan for bioeconomy, but in response to the specific needs of the Central and Eastern European Countries, domestic bioeconomy strategies will help make more visible the bottlenecks and the national specific priorities.

Bioeconomy strategies need to be developed so as to identify the next direction for the R&I activities and ensure that capacity gaps are filled through capacity-building by acquiring the necessary expertise.

Knowledge needs to be presented in a usable form to farmers and modernization in the new CAP should be focused on building a workable AKIS system in the context of the EIP-AGRI. In this respect, SCAR has made specific recommendations on the role of the advisor in knowledge transfer.



Transferring research into innovation is hampered by multiple factors: stakeholders have different understanding of the problem, access to finance, access to knowledge, societal acceptance, etc.

New business models and supply chains need to be developed so that we can take full advantage of the bioeconomy. Funding is available for up-scaling bioeconomy projects in guaranteed loans. The problem is the capacity of the financial institutions to understand the specificities of agriculture.

The Romanian Presidency thanks everyone for bringing their expertise and experience and for engaging in such fruitful, constructive and open exchanges throughout the plenary meeting of the conference (21 government delegations and 9 organisations and international entities). Special thanks to the speakers, for their input and for the high quality of the debate.

We call on the European Council, European Parliament and the European Commission to take in consideration the conclusions of this Conference.