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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Working Party on Research

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Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the updated Bioeconomy Strategy "A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment"

With a view to the examination in the Research Working Party on 19 September 2019, delegations will find attached a Presidency draft on the above subject.

Delegations are invited to coordinate their position with relevant stakeholders, in particular colleagues responsible for the Common Agriculture Policy.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE UPDATED BIOECONOMY STRATEGY "A SUSTAINABLE BIOECONOMY FOR EUROPE: STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT"

The Council of the European Union:

1. RECALLING:

- The European Council conclusions of March 2019, which underlined a strong economic base as of key importance for Europe's prosperity and competitiveness, and in view of a globally integrated sustainable and competitive industrial base, invited the Commission to present by the end of 2019 a long term vision for the EU's industrial future, touching upon all relevant policy areas¹;
- the European Council on 20 June 2019, where the European Council invited the Council and the European Commission to advance work on conditions, the initiatives and the enabling framework to put in place so as to ensure a transition to a climate neutral EU in line with the Paris agreement²;
- The ‘*Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*’ of the President-elect Ursula von der Leyen, in particular the ‘*European Green Deal*’³;
- The exchange of views at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 19 February 2018 on the revision of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and the role of the agricultural sector in it, which highlighted that primary producers should be enabled to capture a fair share of the Bioeconomy's value added ;

¹ EUCO 1/19

² EUCO 9/19

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/interim>

- The exchange of views at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 17-18 December 2018 on the role of agriculture and forestry in the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy, which reaffirmed the capacity of the Bioeconomy to support the achievement of EU environmental goals through sustainability and circularity;
- The exchange of views at the "Agriculture and Fisheries Council" on 18 March 2019 on an effective and speedy EU-wide implementation of the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy, which highlighted the key role that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) can play in the deployment of the potential of the Bioeconomy;
- The exchange of views on Research in Agriculture and Bioeconomy at the informal meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Member States of the European Union in Bucharest on 3-4 July 2019, organised in the context of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union;
- The Bioeconomy Conference "European Bioeconomy Scene" on 9-10 July 2019, organised under Finland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union to contribute to achieving an inclusive and sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe ;[the outcome of the conference was presented at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on xx October 2019];
- [Finland's Presidency conclusions on “vision for a long-term strategy on sustainable growth”)

- The Commission’s Communications on "Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy⁴" and the Council conclusions thereon⁵, "A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy⁶", "On a monitoring framework for the circular economy⁷", and "On the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan⁸"; the Report from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan, [the Council conclusions on Circular economy adopted in October 2019]

2. TAKING NOTE OF:

- The Commission Communication of 28 November 2018 on 'A Clean Planet for all. A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy'; The Commission’s Reflection Paper of 30 January 2019 "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030"⁹ ;
- The Commission Communication of 23 July 2019 on "Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World’s Forests"¹⁰;
- [The European Committee of Regions opinion of 11-12 May 2017 on ‘The local and regional dimension of Bioeconomy and the role of regions and cities’ (SEDEC-VI-022);
- The European Committee of Regions opinion of 26-27 June 2019 on ‘A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment’ (SEDEC-VI-048);
- The exploratory opinion of the European Social and Economic Committee of 19 September 2018 on ‘Bioeconomy – contributing to achieving the EU’s climate and energy goals and the UN’s sustainable development goals’ (NAT/739);

4 14972/15
5 10518/16
6 5477/18
7 5478/19
8 7128/19
9 5953/19
10 11449/19

- The opinion of the European Social and Economic Committee of 12 December 2018 on ‘Sustainable and inclusive bio-economy – new opportunities for European economy’ (CCMI-160);
- The opinion of the European Social and Economic Committee of 15 May 2018 on the ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: Strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment’
- [The opinion of the European Social and Economic Committee of X X 2019 on Blue bioeconomy]

3. ACKNOWLEDGING:

- The global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES);
- The United Nations First Global Integrated Marine Assessment: “World Ocean Assessment I”;

4. WELCOMES the Commission Communication ‘A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe: Strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment’¹¹ published on 11 October 2018 (hereinafter referred to as "*updated Bioeconomy Strategy*"), which aims at accelerating the deployment of a sustainable European Bioeconomy with a view to maximising its contribution towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed therein, as well as the Paris Agreement;

5. SUPPORTS the three main areas of action identified by the updated Bioeconomy Strategy: i) strengthen and scale-up the bio-based sectors, unlock investments and markets; ii) deploy rapidly Bioeconomies across the whole of Europe; iii) understand the ecological boundaries of the Bioeconomy. CALLS for Member States to implement the updated Bioeconomy Strategy without delay and the Commission to provide the necessary support both in the elaboration and in the implementation of the strategy. STRESSES the importance of follow-up of the action plan;

¹¹ 13229/18 + ADD1

6. REAFFIRMS the central role of the Bioeconomy, which covers agricultural production, food systems, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture and other aquatic resources, bio-energy and the bio-based industries, to achieve a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050, halt biodiversity loss, and deliver on sustainability. STRESSES that all sectors addressed through a sustainable Bioeconomy, including those having an impact on land use and water, have a substantial climate change mitigation and adaptation potential. WELCOMES that the updated Bioeconomy Strategy has sustainability and circularity at its core and UNDERLINES the Strategy's aim to balance: i) the exploitation of the economic potential of renewable natural resources, ii) the goal to provide for the needs of society and iii) the objectives of protection, maintenance and restoration of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems and biodiversity.
7. EMPHASISES the importance of continued discussion beyond sectoral boundaries in the Council and other fora, taking into account the coherence and synergies between the different EU policies which are relevant to the bioeconomy. NOTES that it is important to promote a holistic view in implementing the bioeconomy also in national discussion as the social, ecological and economic sustainability needs to be secured in the transition to climate neutral economy. ENCOURAGES the Commission and the Member States to take into account any social and economic effects of the transition and take appropriate measures to ensure a fair and inclusive transition for all;
8. RECALLING that several Member States have already developed a Bioeconomy strategy, while others are preparing their own strategies at national or regional level, CALLS on the Commission to provide the necessary support to further advance the deployment of regional and local Bioeconomies rapidly across the whole Europe. STRESSES that Bioeconomy strategies are relevant to support the sustainable economic potential in local communities and territories. CALLS upon the Member States to develop their national strategies on the bioeconomy, taking into consideration the Central and Eastern European initiative for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in the Bioeconomy ("BIOEAST Initiative") when relevant;
9. EMPHASISES the importance of promoting sustainable Bioeconomy, which could boost job creation and economic growth in a sustainable way. NOTES that all sectors related to land use have a substantial climate change mitigation and adaptation potential in Bioeconomy;

10. POINTS OUT that research, innovation and investments are key enablers and drivers in the transition towards a circular and sustainable Bioeconomy and a climate neutral economy in general. RECOMMENDS, in addition to the Horizon Europe cluster for "Food and Natural Resources", in particular with the Horizon Europe Strategic Planning Process, to look into potential future Horizon Europe partnerships and missions to deploy the Bioeconomy across Europe. WELCOMES the funding and investment instruments for Bioeconomy recognized in updated Bioeconomy strategy. UNDERLINES the importance of communication to increase the acceptability and appeal of bio- based materials, products and services, and to mainstream the potential of the bioeconomy. STRESSES the need to improve consumer awareness and confidence on Bioeconomy and its products and services and CONSIDERS more effort to be necessary at both Union and national level to exploit the opportunities offered by the Bioeconomy, particularly with regard to the possibility to boost economic and social development in rural areas and coastal regions;
11. With specific regard to the Commission Communication 'A Clean Planet for all', ACKNOWLEDGES the possibilities offered by the bioeconomy to tackle the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation. NOTES the “reviews” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Commission in this respect , in particular the special report on ‘Climate Change and Land’”
12. EMPHASISES that circular Bioeconomy can offer solutions for a sustainable replacement of fossil-based and other non-renewable primary resources by biomaterials, as well as solutions for resource-efficient use and reuse of biomaterials, for example combatting marine litter from plastics and micro-plastics. HIGHLIGHTS the potential of agroecological and industrial symbiosis in creating new solutions and maintaining products, biomaterials and resources in the economy to add value for as long as possible;
13. ACKNOWLEDGES that the “promotion of employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including bio-economy and sustainable forestry” is one out of the nine objectives of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) proposal for the years 2021 to 2027 and STRESSES that the bioeconomy has the potential to significantly contribute to that objective, given its capacity to create economic value and prosperity and taking into account that agriculture and forestry are among the main suppliers of biomass;

14. CONSIDERS that the CAP is key to deploy the potential of the Bioeconomy in the different Member States through several instruments, particularly in the field of rural development. In particular, the role of LEADER as a community-led local development strategy should be further explored to highlight how to effectively support the deployment of local bioeconomies in Member States and their territories.
 15. ACKNOWLEDGES the huge potential of the Bioeconomy for primary producers (including farmers, foresters and fishermen), as it can ensure food security while relying on circular and sustainable production systems, and it can provide growth and jobs in rural areas. STRESSES that primary producers need to be better integrated into the new bio-based value chains to enable them to capture a fair share of the created value added;
 16. NOTES that the operating space of the Bioeconomy is in constant change. INVITES the Commission to secure policy coherence between the Bioeconomy and other policies, especially the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, integrated maritime policy, energy and climate, research policy, industrial policy, internal market policies and policies related to circular economy;
 17. INVITES the Commission to analyze the state of the operating environment. RECOGNISES the need to assess the progress of the updated Bioeconomy Strategy as one essential enabler for achieving climate neutral economy and sustainable growth and CALLS upon the incoming Commission to deliver a progress report and if appropriate with update of the action plan and/or the strategy at the latest by 2022.
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