

It is time to work together - welcome to the bioeconomy web!

The Bioeconomy symposium was held on the 5 May 2010 at the European Parliament, Brussels, to develop a framework for co-operation with mutual benefits tackling the challenges of implementing “The Bioeconomy”. The symposium was organised by nine technology platforms and was coordinated by EPSO.



The focus of this successful meeting was to consolidate a long-term vision by presenting the current situation and developing the general concept of bioeconomy. The meeting was a key opportunity to discuss challenges such as food security, energy, sustainability, smart bioproducts and new concepts jointly by the policy makers from the European Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC), Member States and the European Technology Platforms (ETPs).

Already today, bioeconomy is the largest economic sector and employer in Europe – employing over 22 million people with an annual turnover of more than 1.8 trillion euros. It is estimated that from 1960 – 2050 the world population will double to 9.1 billion people. In the next 50 years we have to produce better and more food than ever before – on less land per capita. At the same time, we have to reduce the amount of water usage and the amount of energy we use. The

introductory speech by Karin Metzloff (EPSO) urged the importance of all platforms working together, defining the concept of bioeconomy as a complex web of interactions: where one platform ‘ends’ another carries on. To get closer to implementing the bioeconomy of the future we must go beyond our respective sectors – and must address the challenges and find solutions bridging across the sectors in chains which eventually cycle again back through the complex chains in a dynamic and synergistic flow.

The goal was to generate momentum not only for cooperative research but as well towards innovation, by addressing the needs of people with biology-based innovative research and development. The meeting ensured that Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were fully aware of the important developments and that they can contribute their views and support for co-operative research innovation towards a knowledge based bioeconomy (KBBE).

EC Director Maive Rute presented the vision of the European Commission, highlighting BECOTEPS (Bioeconomy Technology Platforms) as the main project for policy, research, delivery and development of markets where producers and consumers work together towards the KBBE.

Three expert presentations were then given to further highlight the synergies in the aims and roles of the Technology Platforms involved: namely Plants for the Future; Food for Life; Farm Animal Breeding; Global Animal Health; Aquaculture; Forest Based Sector; Sustainable Chemistry; Biofuels; Agricultural Engineering; EUFETEC.



Climate, energy, natural resources and consumer demand play a major role in creating challenges in all these sectors. Since agriculture is Europe’s main industry, the obvious way forward is to increase agricultural production (quality and quantity) and decrease the eco-footprint of the industry. So, with a dynamic climate affecting the agriculture industry, the food industry, for example, must be greener and biomaterials including waste elements particularly should be recycled where there are concerns for environmental impact.

The first presentation was given by Gerd Harzer (Kraft Food, DE), who discussed 'Sufficient and better food' – which covered the interaction between food security, environmental impact, greening industry, waste elements and the need for Europe to lead the way towards synergistic R & D.

The second presentation by Dirk Carrez (EuropaBio, BE), discussed "Smart bioproducts – the non food part of bioeconomy" such as textiles (dyes and washing powder), pulp and paper (production and bleaching of paper), health (pharmaceuticals and vitamins), food (maltogenic amylase for bread) and organic wastes. To keep up with consumer demand, he suggested that the biorefineries concepts will need to use different technologies. Where do we go in the future? Europeans will look closely at economical perspectives for bioproducts and non-food applications particularly where there may be global environmental impact of bioproducts.

The final presentation was made by Ulrich Schurr, (Forschungszentrum Jülich, DE) who stressed that resources need to be managed by co-operation of different sectors of bioeconomy. The Bioeconomy requires new scientific knowledge, implemented in novel products and supported by adequate regulations. Europe needs to look further, in global dimensions, by forming a dynamic web of platforms and a mix of regional activities. Bioeconomy must address sustainability – since a non- sustainable bio-based economy would be even more disastrous than a fossil-based economy. In bioeconomy the three pillars of sustainability go together naturally through novel technical solutions, ecosystem stewardship and economic validity. He concluded that cyclic processes are often the key to avoid losses, to transfer waste into raw materials and to reduce the impact on the environment.



The strong urge was to ensure that the lead in R & D should be kept by Europe and the vision is to develop the bioeconomy further with European bodies and the Member States, involving for instance the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, the ERA-Networks relevant to the Bioeconomy, FP7 Programme Committees and national ministries. This joint effort will help to raise bioeconomy on the political agenda by pooling resources with joint initiatives, attracting the right personnel, increasing R & D and funding and overcoming hurdles for innovation.

This initial Bioeconomy symposium was a major success in bringing together policy makers from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Member States with the nine Technology Platforms in the field to present and in reviewing the complex web of world bioeconomy and gave a wonderful opportunity to all involved in networking with other members working in a different field and having another view on the challenges ahead.



We thank our hosts and chairs - the five members of the EP - Giles Chichester, Teresa Riera Madurell, Paolo de Castro, Romana Jordan Cizelj and Antonio Fernando Correia de Campos for their contributions which made this a most inspiring event.

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