

Speech by Commissioner Phil Hogan at Closing Event of the Steering Committee for the EU Scientific Programme

15th October 2015, Expo Milan

– Check Against Delivery –

- Commissioner Moedas, Director Ridolfi, Elected Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to be back at Expo Milan for this occasion. Thank you to all the participants in today's conference for your insights and ideas.
- This is my third visit to Milan this year, and I believe the Expo has been a thriving forum for stimulating policy debate, fostering global research, and communicating with citizens.
- I'd like to emphasise this latter point: informed citizens have a vital role to play. We must continue to communicate our work and make citizens a part of the solutions we design. Every family around the world understands the need to put food on the table.

- My hope is that events like Expo Milan will trigger a greater interest in sustainable food production, food security and how citizens' consumer choices can make a difference.
- Innovation and research in farming and food production used to be focused on greater yields and improving productivity. But the stakes have changed. Today, the type of food we produce and how we produce it has implications in countless other areas: societal, economic, and environmental.
- You're familiar with the statistics: as global population growth accelerates, the world will have to produce 60% more food by 2050. This means an annual increase in production globally of around 1.1% per year. **This is the reality in terms of quantity, but there is also the question of quality.**
- Worldwide demand for high-quality nutritious food will continue to increase in the coming years, particularly in emerging markets. This is a positive development- healthier food means healthier citizens.

- But we cannot afford to ignore the environmental imperatives. Agriculture is a resource-intensive endeavour, and farmers have a responsibility to protect the environment. **So the challenge for researchers and innovators is to develop ways to produce more, using less.**
- **Farmers** must be empowered to embrace research and innovation, and every region of the globe has to play its part in tackling this challenge.
- The 17 **Sustainable Development Goals** approved on 25 September by the United Nations provide clear targets on which we all have to deliver.
- The second goal, to "***End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture***" is central to our discussion today.
- Four of the associated targets are directly related to agriculture research and innovation.
- Beyond this second goal, several of the goals also concern us directly, such as **climate action, sustainable production and consumption and sustainable land management.**

- **At the end of the year in Paris, we hope to see a legally binding climate agreement, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. EU leaders will lead from the front, as we have consistently done.**
- **So we know the big picture. We have our targets. We recognise the challenges. Now we need to develop the solutions.**
- I would like to thank the EU Scientific Steering Committee, and its chairman Franz Fischler, for your excellent work during the past 18 months.
- You have given us a real blueprint for a research and innovation strategy to shape our future farming and food systems. We will examine your recommendations carefully.
- In June, here at the Expo, we launched **a long-term plan for European agriculture research and innovation**. Through your initial discussion paper, through your final recommendations, and through the rich discussion we had today, you have given us many important ideas which will be taken into account when I present the final details of this plan in January.

- We expect this strategy to be an important first building block of a European Food Research Area which recognises the central role of farming in delivering sustainable food and nutrition security.
- Commissioner Moedas will tell you more about this exciting five-year action plan, which the Commission expects to launch a year from now.
- The solutions we develop must keep our soils healthy, our water clean, our environment rich in species which keep pests away. But above all we must keep our farmers active and ensure they receive a fair income for their work. **There will not be food security without farmers.**
- Europe has every capacity to become a champion in environment and climate-smart agriculture. We have some of the world's leading agriculture research institutes, with decades of expertise.
- **And we are ready and willing to share this with our partners throughout the world.**
- **The biggest potential for yield growth lies in developing countries.** However, these countries will also witness the highest growth in food demand and will be hardest hit by the adverse impacts of climate change.

- So we must work closely with these countries, helping them increase their productivity while making the smartest possible use of their resources, in particular water. And we must strive to improve the nutritional value of food for their populations.
- We see **big potential in Africa and in Asia**, which Commissioner Moedas will tell you more about in a few minutes time.
- We are proud, for example, of our ongoing **collaboration with China** which promises to yield positive results. This initiative will tackle topics as varied as **plant breeding, reduction of anti-microbials in livestock, soil and water resources, and urban farming**.
- We are also working on the creation of an **International Research Consortium on Animal Health** together with partners in and outside Europe.
- Ladies and gentlemen, everybody agrees that the **agriculture of tomorrow will be more knowledge-intensive**.

- From this point of view, your second and third recommendations are very much in line with the philosophy of our European Innovation Partnership on "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability".
- From your recommendations, we clearly see that the **scope and ambition of agriculture research has widened tremendously.**
- **And greater ambition calls for greater investment.** We must be willing to put our money where our mouth is.
- This is why the **EU decided to nearly double its budget allocation for agricultural research** under our flagship Horizon 2020 programme.
- The Horizon Work Programme for 2016-2017 that we published yesterday is a promising and ambitious step forward, with **over 560 million Euro invested in research of interest to agriculture and food.**
- In this work programme, **we will invest an unprecedented 431 million Euro in the area of "Sustainable food security".**

- Activities will support more **resilient** and **resource-efficient value chains, environment and climate-smart farming systems**, as well as a **competitive food industry** and **healthy and safe diets**.
- Scientists will be supported to find solutions that **make better use of nature in farming systems, breed plants and animals for multiple objectives** such as sustainability and resilience, and **develop the farming systems of tomorrow**.
- There are opportunities in other areas under Horizon, in particular in the **new priority area entitled "Rural Renaissance"**. **This will receive €128 million of funding**, aiming to develop the sustainable growth potential of rural areas through innovative approaches.
- We also strengthen our efforts on interactive innovation projects, with around €371 million dedicated to boosting multi-actor collaboration. This mirrors similar efforts supporting local innovation projects under our Rural Development Policy.

- This **European Innovation Partnership on agriculture productivity and sustainability** is still new, but I am pleased to report it has been adopted by a majority of EU Member states. And with these two funding streams, we will aim to bridge the gap between research and practice and deliver knowledge and training directly to farmers.
- You have placed a strong emphasis **on interactive innovation in your recommendations**. I believe this is absolutely correct. Research is only useful if its results are put into practice, and involving farmers from the outset of project development is a way to ensure greater uptake of innovative products and services.
- Science has a crucial role to play in the development of evidence-based policies, and collaboration is the key to unlocking that potential. For this reason, the European Commission is committed to work as much as possible outside silos. I like to tell farmers, researchers and policymakers that the only silos we see should be in farmyards!

- Ladies and gentlemen, I hope I have provided a compelling overview of where we are, and where we're going. In Europe, we consider our farmers to be custodians of the soil. They provide the food we eat, and maintain our natural heritage. As policymakers, our challenge today is to provide them with the tools, structures and supports to produce more food – efficiently, productively, and sustainably.
- Your views matter to us, and we will listen to them carefully as we design our future strategy; so allow me to take this opportunity to **invite you to our Conference in Brussels on January 26-28**, where we will present and discuss our strategy for European agriculture research and innovation.
- Thank you again for inviting me here today, and it gives me great pleasure to hand over to Commissioner Moedas to formally bring proceedings to a close.
- Thank you.