



Opportunities of the circular bioeconomy

Circular bioeconomy – concrete solutions to increase the added value of farming production
Report of the COPA COGECA panel debate

SHORT SUMMARY FOR PRACTITIONERS

EN version

Since the first EU Bioeconomy Strategy was adopted in 2012, positive changes have enabled European farmers and agri-cooperatives to adapt or create new business models, ranging from biorefineries to new types of energy production and materials for bio-based industries.

However, there is still room for growth. By utilising EU research funds and supporting private-public partnerships such as Circular bio-based Europe, the integration of primary producers into value chains can be further enhanced. In addition to this, by highlighting the key role of cooperatives in building a strong bioeconomy, promoting collaboration across value chains, and sharing added value, will increase the awareness of the benefits for the entire EU.

During the 2024 Congress of European Farmers, organised by COPA-COGECA, a panel of experts discussed the circular bioeconomy and its concrete solutions to increase the added value of farming production. The panel consisted of Enda Buckley (Director of Sustainability at Carbery Group Dairy Co-operative), Pedro Luis Cordero Castillo (President, FEFAC), Iulia Sima (Vice-President, Agroplant, U.N.C.S.V) and Virginia Puzzolo (Head of Programme, Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking). Tessa Avermaete (KU Leuven) moderated the panel.

The panel concluded that there is need for more coherence, transparency and stability in policies to boost the development of the circular bioeconomy.

SHORT SUMMARY FOR PRACTITIONERS

NATIVE version

De eerste EU-strategie voor de bio-economie, ingesteld in 2012 heeft geleid tot positieve veranderingen. Europese boeren en agrocoöperaties hebben zich aangepast en nieuwe bedrijfsmodellen werden ontwikkeld, variërend van bioraffinaderijen tot nieuwe soorten energieproductie en materialen voor biogebaseerde industrieën.

Er is echter nog ruimte voor groei. Door gebruik te maken van EU-onderzoeksmiddelen en privaat-publieke partnerschappen zoals Circular Bio-based Europe te ondersteunen, kan de integratie van primaire producenten in waardeketens verder worden verbeterd. Door de sleutelrol van coöperaties bij het opbouwen van een sterke bio-economie te benadrukken, samenwerking in de ketens te bevorderen en toegevoegde waarde te delen, zal het bewustzijn van de voordelen voor de hele EU toenemen.

Tijdens het Congres van Europese Boeren 2024, georganiseerd door COPA-COGECA, besprak een panel van experts de circulaire bio-economie en de concrete oplossingen om de toegevoegde waarde van de landbouwproductie te vergroten. Het panel bestond uit Enda Buckley (Director of Sustainability bij Carbery Group Dairy Co-operative), Pedro Luis Cordero Castillo (President, FEFAC), Iulia Sima (Vice-President, Agroplant, U.N.C.S.V) en Virginia Puzzolo (Head of Programme, Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking). Tessa Avermaete (KU Leuven) modereerde het panel.

Het panel concludeerde dat er behoefte is aan meer samenhang, transparantie en stabiliteit in beleid om de ontwikkeling van de circulaire bio-economie te stimuleren.



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CONTEXT

It is acknowledged and accepted that to better tackle climate changes the EU needs concrete solutions to replace fossil-based fuels and materials (for energy, textile, construction etc..). The circular bioeconomy can provide these alternatives and can also create an added value for farmers and farmer cooperatives.

PROBLEM

Many technologies that have the potential to replace fossil based fuels have already been developed. However, the uptake is slow. This slow uptake has several reasons, among others the fact that alternatives are not always economically performing better than conventional products. Also, there is inherent aversion against significant changes in the agrofood sector especially when these changes require high investments and come with significant risks. Finally, the pressure on farmers is high in all European regions and across all subsectors, which leaves little space and means to explore new pathways that may potentially fail.

APPROACH

During this session at the COPA COGECA congress, experts were brought together to share their experiences. The panel included both entrepreneurs and policy experts. From the business side, Mr Buckley and Ms Sima outlined how they implemented the bioeconomy in their companies. Mr Cordero Castillo emphasised the importance of the bioeconomy for feed manufacturers in Europe and also pointed on the global perspective. Ms Puzzolo provided information on how the European Commission supports consortia to invest in the bioeconomy.

OUTCOME

1. Cooperation between actors in the agro food chain is a key to success for the development of the bioeconomy in Europe.
2. Implementation of biobased alternatives within a company or at the farm level takes time.
3. Europe has several means to support consortia that explore and develop biobased alternatives for the agri food system.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Regional specificities need to be taken into account when setting up initiatives to stimulate the biobased economy
- ✓ Sharing best practices and field visits pave the way to the acceptance of new technologies and process.
- ✓ There is need for more coherence, transparency and stability in policies to boost the development of the circular bioeconomy.