

Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in the Bioeconomy A Challenge for Europe

The conference “Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in the Bioeconomy - A Challenge for Europe” took place on 8th October 2015 in Brussels. The event was organised by the European Commission (EC), DG Research and Innovation. The aim was to present the latest findings of the Foresight Expert Group of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) and to start a debate between the actors involved in **bioeconomy**.

What is the SCAR?

The SCAR was established in 1974 and re-launched in 2005. It was created to provide **advice on European agricultural and wider bioeconomy research**. Nowadays, the SCAR helps the EC to define its research and innovation agenda, to establish priorities and to provide ground for EU policies on agriculture and bioeconomy. Several European Research Area-Networks (ERA-NETs) funded under Horizon 2020 are directly emerging from SCAR Collaborative Working Groups (CWGs)¹.

The SCAR Foresight Expert Group (FEG)

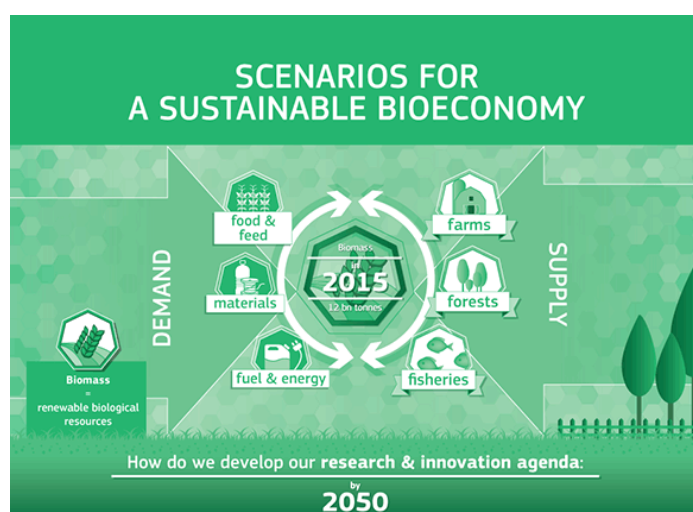
The FEG is working on **cross-cutting issues** and produces relevant studies for EU **research planning and policy building**. The 4th FEG known as FEG4 focused particularly on exploring the interactions between the primary sectors and the broader bioeconomy. Sustainable primary sectors (Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) and bioeconomy are part of the Societal Challenge 2 of the Horizon 2020 programme. The findings of the FEG4 were published in the report ‘[4th SCAR Foresight Exercise](#)’ in spring 2015.

The 4th Foresight Exercise

According to the 4th Foresight Exercise, bioeconomy has the potential to deliver “*food security, sustainable resource management, reducing dependency on non-renewable resources, tackling climate change and creating jobs and maintaining competitiveness*”. In accordance to these goals, five **principles** can lead to a **sustainable bioeconomy** “*food first, sustainable yield, cascading approach (i.e. optimisation of the resource use), circularity and diversity*”.

Following the definition of bioeconomy, the report presents the **state of play** on food and feed, bio-based chemicals and materials, forestry, bioenergy and biofuels. This part is completed by an analysis of the current policy framework.

From the analysis of the current situation, different scenarios are proposed based on **two major uncertainties**: first, the demand growth for biomass for materials and energy and secondly, the supply growth of biomass.



The analysis led to a **series of recommendations** meant to **strengthen the research systems** in Europe dealing with agriculture and bioeconomy. Among them, we will mention those of particular interest for Euromontana:

- Innovating by making use of the regulating functions of the nature using the principle of **ecological intensification**;
- Moving towards a **new energy** landscape in favour of renewable resource use;
- Involving all stakeholders in decision making and fostering the diversity of practices with the help of transdisciplinarity (recommendations on

¹ More information on SCAR activities can be found [here](#).

business and policy models, socio-cultural dimensions and governance and political economy of the bioeconomy)

You can read the findings and the recommendations of the 4th SCAR Foresight Exercise [here](#).

Discussions of the findings of the 4th Foresight Exercise

The conference gave stakeholders the opportunity to expose their opinion on the 4th SCAR Foresight Exercise.

One of the main criticisms was that **focus was on growth rather than on sufficiency** as a mean to answer societal needs. Tine Van Criekeinghe - working on Foresight & Behavioural Insights at the EC Joint Research Centre (JRC) - argued that priority should be on developing policy incentives to foster the **adaption of the economy to local needs**. She insisted on two points:

- A food system where production and consumption are balanced between local, regional and global levels (markets and trade);
- A largely demand-driven food system where responsible consumer behaviour shapes sustainable objectives.



Further information on EU policies on food security can be found in the JRC report “[Global Food Security 2030. Assessing Trends in View of Guiding Future EU Policies](#)” published this year.

It was pointed out that it **cannot be expected an immediate impact from research-based policies**. For speeding-up the innovation processes, François Houllier, President of the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA), advised research systems to focus on having a close link with society. He highlighted the importance of developing trans-disciplinary Knowledge and Innovation System (KIS).

As a last remark, stakeholders from the forest sector contested ‘food first’ as one of the principles for the further development of bioeconomy in the EU. They argued that it was **diminishing the contribution of the wood sector** in the making of the bioeconomy.

Conclusions

The conference was an opportunity to better understand the concept of bioeconomy and its implications for the future of research and innovation. The outcomes of the 4th SCAR Exercise will help to develop further the EU research agenda and policies aiming to make the best use of the local and natural resources.

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