

PRESS RELEASE
Brussels, 11.10.2018

EU Bioeconomy Strategy seeks for a systematic approach to address the bioeconomy value chain

Today, the European Commission published its Communication on the update of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy: A sustainable Bioeconomy for Europe – Strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment. European forest owners and managers welcome this long-awaited strategy that aims at supporting the development of a sustainable, circular bioeconomy in the EU and contributing to the international sustainability agendas and their respective policy objectives and priorities.

On a positive note, the strategy acknowledges that the bioeconomy has the potential to be a game changer in terms of economic growth and better life in local communities by, among other things, enhancing competitiveness and creating new jobs, especially in rural and remote areas of Europe. Furthermore, the bioeconomy is seen as a crucial component in the efforts to tackle climate change by meeting the objectives of the Paris Agreement and decarbonizing European societies.

Renewable biomaterials, such as wood, have a great potential to displace carbon if they are used to substitute non-renewable and high energy-intensive materials. In this regard, forest owners and managers regret that the concrete actions proposed by the Commission seem to miss the opportunity to tap into this potential. In addition, the undersigned organisations would like to highlight that the further development of the circular bioeconomy, by encompassing ecosystem services, does not only provide well-being to local communities but also strengthens the resilience and health of terrestrial ecosystems and prevents the impact of devastating factors such as forest fires and/or pest and disease outbreaks.

To deploy investments, the market needs to have a clear political direction. Therefore, a long-term vision and commitment to developing the European bioeconomy is needed. Ambitious goals need to be set and actions must be monitored over time. The undersigned organisations welcome the systemic approach of the new strategy to the development of the bioeconomy and are glad to see the enhanced importance of cross-sectoral cooperation and policy coherence. The previous strategy, from 2012, included too many actions that were difficult to measure and many of them were lacking ambition. In the renewed strategy this problem seems to be solved.

“Scaling-up of research and innovation outlets via the market pull mechanism is important, but care should be taken when developing new standards or labels for bio-based products. From the primary producers’ viewpoint, it is of utmost importance that existing legislation and voluntary schemes are adequately taken into account when considering the development of new labels or standards. As mentioned in the updated strategy, the EU is already a global leader in the sustainable use of natural resources, i.e. raw material from Europe’s forests is sustainable regardless of its end use”, reminds **Meri Siljama**, Interim Secretary General of CEPF.

“A bottom-up approach and strengthening the role of local bioeconomies is crucial concerning the development of the bioeconomy. The Strategic Deployment Agenda, which will provide a long-term vision on ways to deploy and scale up the bioeconomy in a sustainable and circular manner, seems to be the right way forward. Developing pilot actions, such as forestry carbon farms, may potentially provide innovative solutions in the context of the evaluation of the entire spectrum of ecosystem services which forestry provides to the society. This, however, must be carefully analyzed in order to tap into the potential of the forest sector and avoid any counter-productive effects”, notes **Piotr Borkowski**, Executive Director of EUSTAFOR.

“For the bioeconomy strategy to be successful, farmers and forest owners should be considered as strategic partners rather than simply feedstock providers along the bio-based value chain. This role should be better addressed in the implementation of the updated strategy including the future private public partnerships. Following the Commission’s Communication, we will need to make sure that any guidance takes into account the three pillars of sustainability and promotes simplification in the implementation of the proposed actions”, says **Pekka Pesonen**, Secretary General of Copa and Cogeca.

For further information, please contact:

Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)

Meri Siljama

CEPF Interim Secretary General

Tel.: +32 491 73 56 05

meri.siljama@cepf-eu.org

European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR)

Piotr Borkowski

EUSTAFOR Executive Director

Tel.: +32 (0)2 239 23 06

piotr.borkowski@eustafor.eu

European Farmers and European Agri-Cooperative (Copa and Cogeca)

Oana Neagu

Copa and Cogeca Director

Tel.: +32 2 287 27 26

Oana.Neagu@copa-cogeca.eu

Jean-Baptiste Boucher

Copa and Cogeca Press Officer

Mobile: + 32 474 840 836

jean-baptiste.boucher@copa-cogeca.eu
