

***“The Bioeconomy isn’t just something for the future,
it is already part of our lives”***

Strasbourg, 10 March 2015: Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen in charge of Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness attended the kick-off meeting of the “Bioeconomy” working group of the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” chaired by Miapetra Kumpula-Natri MEP.

The dinner debate entitled **“Where’s the Bioeconomy: update your knowledge”** offered the opportunity to assess the state of the art of the European bioeconomy sector and its actual and potential contribution in the efforts towards a more energy efficient, resource efficient and sustainable Union.

Finnish MEP Miapetra Kumpula-Natri highlighted the remarkable size of bioeconomy-related business in the European economy, with an annual turnover of more than 2 trillion Euros.

Within the Horizon 2020 program, the funds allocated to the bioeconomy represent an investment of 4,5 billion Euros, with large contributions from industry in addition.

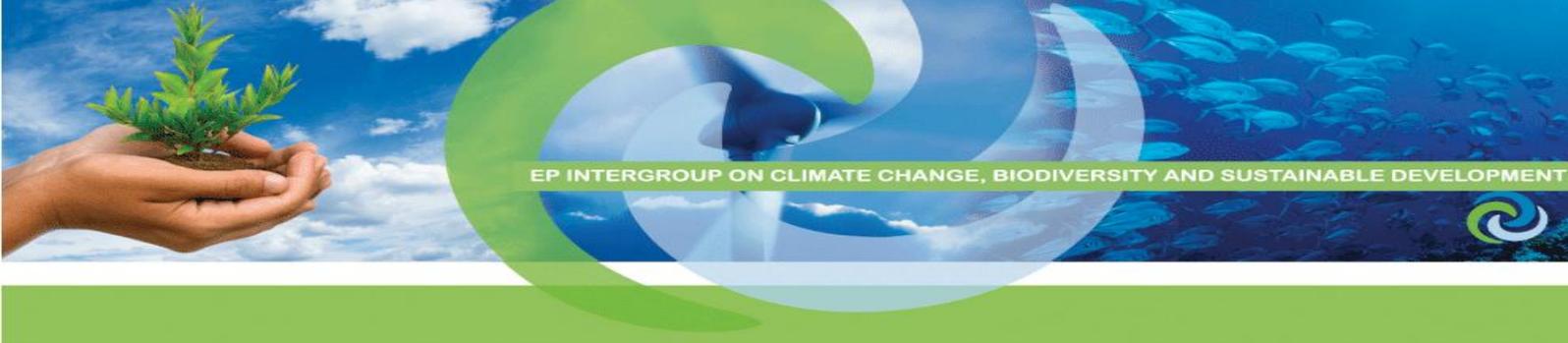
For these reasons, and given the invaluable contribution of the bioeconomy to achieve the climate and energy targets, besides strengthening economic growth in Europe, MEP Kumpula-Natri called upon decision-makers to further promote this sector.

Vice-President Jyrki Katainen stressed the importance of the Single Market in boosting the Bioeconomy sectors in Europe. If Europe manages to ensure a competitive and stable market for bio-based economy, this will create the basis and the incentives to expand on a reliable business model.

In this light, the high environmental standards that Europe has put in place doesn’t have to be seen as an obstacle, he said, but as an opportunity to step up innovative solutions and job creation.

Mr. Katainen highlighted the role of innovative driven economy based on public-private partnerships, where banks can play a role in reducing the investment risk of highly advanced technological projects.

Yet, more importantly, he emphasised the need to create a level-playing field as well as clear and comprehensive regulation.



Waldemar Kütt, Head of Unit “*Biobased products and processing*” in DG Research and Innovation, European Commission, highlighted that the activities of bio-based industries are very much in line with the main objectives of the Juncker Plan, focusing simultaneously on environmental, economic and social sustainability.

The bioeconomy also represents a big potential in reducing emissions and promoting rural development, while it also plays a central role in the Circular Economy where the final aim is to eliminate waste, use all inputs into the value chain, and ensure resource efficiency.

Representing the recently launched European Bioeconomy Alliance, Stefan Sundman of UPM (Finland), frontrunner of the new forest industry, and Jean-Marie Chauvet of ARD, a research and development centre located at the core of the agro-based biorefinery Pomacle Bazencourt (France), offered concrete examples of current bio-based activities.

Both speakers pleaded for clear and predictable policy frameworks in order to improve competitiveness and attract further investments in the bioeconomy.

Finally, Sini Eräjää from Bridlife Europe stressed the need to promote behavioural change in consumption patterns to avoid the simple replacement of fossil-based materials by bio-based materials.

The discussion between the participants touched upon several aspects, including the role of primary producers in bioeconomy and circular economy, the need to have a holistic view on policy throughout the whole bioeconomy value chain, the specificity of different regional situations when it comes to biomass, the importance of raising awareness of the wide public about the potential of the bioeconomy, and the need to resolve conflicts between coexisting European policies.

Participants to the meeting included MEP Linnea Engström, MEP Henna Virkkunen, MEP Sean Kelly, MEP Paavo Väyrynen, MEP Anneli Jäätteenmäki, as well as stakeholder representatives from EuropaBio, CEPI, Copa-Cogeca, CEFS, CEPF, ePURE, Starch Europe, METSA, and the Bio-based Industries Consortium.

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