



PRESS RELEASE

‘Plants for the Future’ invites Europe to reap fruits of knowledge-based bio-economy

Brussels, 25 June 2007

The EU-backed ‘Plants for the Future’ Technology Platform officially released its full and final Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) at a lunch hosted by MEPs Giles Chichester and John Purvis in the European Parliament in Brussels today. The document backed by scientists, farmers and industry and other public and private stakeholders signposts a route for Europe to use plant sciences and biotechnology to enhance EU competitiveness and welfare.

Plants for the Future is a stakeholder forum on plant genomics and biotechnology that was initiated by the European Commission in 2003. It is coordinated by EPSO and EuropaBio, and has members from industry, academia and the agricultural sector. It provides a short-, medium- and long-term vision for Europe’s plant agricultural sector and sets out a consensus on the research needed to fulfill the vision.

The SRA identifies five challenges for Europe’s society to which the plant sector can contribute:

- Healthy, safe and sufficient food and feed
- Plant-based products – chemical and energy
- Sustainable agriculture, forestry and landscape
- Vibrant and competitive basic research
- Consumer choice and governance

Speaking at the event, the president of EPSO Mr Gruissem said: “Europe must put its knowledge base in the field of plant science into practice to keep the European agricultural sector innovative and internationally competitive.” Plant genomics, the other life sciences and biotechnology are the main scientific drivers of the bio-economy which is worth an estimated €1.6 trillion a year in Europe. Together, they make up what is becoming known as the knowledge-based bio-economy.

“To improve their future competitiveness, European farmers will need more diversified and environmentally friendly crops, producing more and better quality food and non-food products. This real challenge will be tackled through state of the art innovation, especially in plant biotechnologies,” said Mr Serra Arias, former vice-president of the Committee of Agricultural Organisations (COPA).

For example, improved crops could be developed and grown to combat health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, obesity or diabetes. New or improved feed could also be used for farm animals to reduce Europe’s dependency on foreign imports of animal feed, such as soybeans. Furthermore, plant science is a key technology for addressing the challenges of climate change by replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources of biomass for energy, including biofuels.

“The development of the knowledge-based bio-economy – involving a global industry based on renewable plant resources as an alternative to the current fossil fuel-based industry – constitutes by far the most challenging and promising opportunity in terms of economic, environmental and societal potential,” said Mr Markwart Kunz of German sugar manufacturer Südzucker AG.

We hope that the research themes described in today's Research Agenda will feature in the EU Commission conference which opens June 26th in Brussels entitled "[Towards future challenges of agricultural research in Europe](#)" and in any European Agricultural Research Agenda that may be developed thereafter.

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Useful links

Final Strategic Research Agenda and information on the launch event available on the launch event webpage: <http://www.epsoweb.org/Catalog/TP/TP%20SRA.htm>

About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 140 leading research institutes and universities from 24 European countries. EPSO's mission is to improve the impact and visibility of Plant Science in Europe.
www.epsoweb.org

About EuropaBio

EuropaBio is the political voice of the biotechnology industry in Europe. This association of bioindustries has some 81 corporate and 11 associate members operating worldwide, 5 Bioregions and 25 national biotechnology associations, representing 1800 small and medium sized biotech companies in Europe. www.europabio.org