



'Plants for the Future' Technology Platform: Strategic Research Agenda launching event.

Brussels, 25 June 2007

Introduction by Ricardo SERRA-ARIAS, Member of COPA: Farmers' perspective

Dear President, Members of Parliament, Madam, Sir, dear all,

I am very pleased to be here today, in the European Parliament in Brussels, for the official launching of the Strategic Research Agenda of the Technology Platform "Plants for the Future", putting forward farmers' views.

As you may know, I am one of the 21 stakeholder representatives that signed the "Plants for the Future" vision paper in June 2004, on behalf of COPA, along with my colleague Pierre PAGESSE, on behalf of the COGECA.

We, farmers, had a lot of expectations from this technology platform and, during this past three years, we have contributed to make this Strategic Research Agenda meaningful with our global vision and priorities.

Although starvation is 'something of the past' in Europe, some parts of the world still suffer from periodic famines and, today, some 800 million people (13% of the world's population) are malnourished. Since the human population will continue to grow over the coming 25 years, urbanisation will increasingly encroach on agricultural land and forests, while reservoirs of new land are very limited.

Furthermore, farmland is being degraded in too many countries. As European farmers, thanks to the introduction of new techniques, we have taken the challenge of producing more food, with better qualities while maintaining land fertility potential at a good level within the EU.

Continuing to maintain this potential just by reducing EU production is not a sustainable option: Europe cannot stand as a global importer of food and feed in the middle of an ocean of malnutrition.

We strongly believe that the European Union, as every single region of the world, has to bring its contribution to the key challenges of mankind for the coming decades: to meet local and global needs for food, in terms of both quantity and quality, while conserving natural resources and biodiversity.

We also share the views that the development of a supply industry based on renewable plant-derived products, as an alternative to the current fossil fuel-based

industrial infrastructure, constitutes another global challenge and represents a promising opportunity in terms of economic, environmental and societal benefit.

Therefore, Europe will have to find ways of boosting its contribution to global output of food, feed and renewable resources in a more sustainable way.

To achieve this will require the use of novel tools to study plants at various biological and environmental levels. At the same time, genomics could help to enhance plant breeding techniques, leading to improved varieties and agricultural practices. We are pleased to hear from the PTP that an array of novel technologies has emerged which allow researchers to identify the sources of further step of crop improvements, driving, in the coming decades, to the creation of more efficient plants (more productive, able to use water and fertilisers in a more efficient way and to be self-resistant to more and more pests), leading to more efficient farms and new economic opportunities. Of course, we know that a lot will have to be done to meet these expectations.

We believe that the Plant Technology Platform SRA will fully contribute to the EU initiative of building a strong Knowledge Based Bio Economy (KBBE) and will be one of the keys of our tomorrow's competitiveness and of European citizen wellbeing.

We therefore believe that Europe must make strategic funding allocations to support PTP SRA recommendations.

This would make today a great.

Thank you for your attention.