



## **Press Release**

### **'Plants for the Future' programme sets a European agenda for the goals and benefits of plant genomics and biotechnology**

*This strategic research agenda to set the scene for European agricultural development for the next two decades*

Strasbourg, 5 July 2005

A wide group of stakeholders jointly publish today the strategic research agenda 'Plants for the future' on how Europe can improve the safe exploitation of the genetic diversity in plants using plant genomics and biotechnology. Input has been collected from research institutions, industry, farmers, politics, financial world, regulatory authorities, as well as consumer and environmental organizations.

*"'Plants for the Future' is an impressive demonstration of how working together can build competitiveness. This joint effort of all those involved in the agricultural production chain to identify and take into account scientific and technological potential, market drivers and consumer demand can only be positive for the future of the agricultural sector," says Janez Potočnik, EU Commissioner for Science and Research. "Plant genomics and biotechnology, as outlined in the strategic research agenda published today, will play a major role in ensuring sustainability of our economy through renewable biological resources."*

The agenda defines the strategic research priorities for the two coming decades. The priorities are to produce healthy and safe food and feed, and to increase competitiveness of the agricultural value chain while contributing to sustainability.

*"If we talk about the European agricultural value chain we talk about more than 600 billion Euros of turn-over each year, 8% of the European workforce, and 17 million farms. Research and application of plant genomics and biotechnology will foster this leading industrial sector," says Hans Kast, Chairman of EuropaBio – the European association for bioindustries. "The consensus of all stakeholders on the research agenda is a great achievement and clearly shows that Europe wants to earn the benefits of plant biotechnology," he adds.*

*“With ‘Plants for the future’ we address four major challenges: Producing healthy, safe and sufficient food and feed while securing sustainable agriculture and landscape, developing green products such as biomaterials and biofuels and last but not least securing Europe’s competitiveness, consumers’ choice and good governance,” says Marc Zabeau, President EPSO – the European Plant Science Organisation. “It will be achieved by private and public funding at regional, national and European level. I am pleased about the proposal of the European Commission, which has proposed €2,5 billion for food, agriculture and biotechnology, in the next EU research programme. We will consult the EU Member States to discuss our proposal and ensure national support for it.”*

As the joint research platform “Plants for the future” will focus on EU aspects in agriculture, raw materials, feed and food, such as oil plants containing more long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids with health benefits for humans, or crops with higher levels of vitamins.

The platform will also be extended to animal feed crops that are important to Europe, e.g. wheat, grain, legumes, and rapeseed. A special focus on biodiversity will help to expand the variety of crops cultivated in the EU.

In addition, crops will be further developed in terms of reducing the need of agricultural inputs and better protection against pests and diseases.

Responding to climate change, and the growing awareness towards environmental responsibility, plant science will be a key technology in delivering the bio-based economy where energy, raw materials and renewables are increasingly produced by the agricultural sector.

*“This research agenda in plant science will enable European farmers to improve both plant productivity and quality while preserving our environment. This is the key to answer customers needs and to compete in a global market while at the same time sustaining our rural communities and preserving the European countryside,” says Pierre PAGESSE, Presidium Member of COGECA, General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the European Union. “I believe ‘Plants for the future’ will also bring new tools to enhance biodiversity and use it in plant breeding programs”, he adds.*

Speaking at the launch event, Giles Chichester MEP who chairs the European Parliament’s Industry Committee said *“I have pleasure in launching the Plant Technology Platform and supporting the project by chairing a mirror group in the Parliament. This is a vital area of science both because of the benefits it can produce and as a significant source of economic growth. The way the interested parties have come together to establish this platform is a most impressive exercise in co-operation and sectoral planning for the future.”*

## **Links**

Press Conference web page ([www.europabio.org](http://www.europabio.org))

Strategic Research Agenda ([www.europabio.org](http://www.europabio.org))

Plants for the Future – Vision to 2025 ([www.europabio.org/relatedinfo/Plantgenbrochure.pdf](http://www.europabio.org/relatedinfo/Plantgenbrochure.pdf))

Copa Cogeca Press Release ([www.copa-cogeca.be/en/pressreleases.asp](http://www.copa-cogeca.be/en/pressreleases.asp))

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## **About EPSO**

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent body that represents more than 50 leading Research Institutions from 23 European countries

[www.epsoweb.org](http://www.epsoweb.org)

## **About EuropaBio**

EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, represents almost 50 member companies operating worldwide, 7 associate organisations, 2 regions and 25 national biotechnology associations. Through our associations EuropaBio is also the voice of 1500 small and medium-sized enterprises involved in research, development, testing, manufacturing and commercialisation of biotechnology applications.

[www.europabio.org](http://www.europabio.org)