

The Copenhagen Declaration for a Bioeconomy in Action March 2012

“Bioeconomy in Action” was a major event to discuss the European Commission Strategy “A Bioeconomy for Europe: Innovating for Sustainable Growth” submitted during the Danish Presidency for the European Union, in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy and its two flagship initiatives “Innovation Union” and “A Resource Efficient Europe”. This declaration presents the key findings and recommendations presented and debated at the Copenhagen conference “Bioeconomy in Action” on 26 March - 28 March 2012 with ministers, high level governmental officials, research councils, industry, stakeholder organisations, NGOs, and scientists.

The European bioeconomy today has an annual turnover of about € 2 trillion and employs more than 22 million people, approximately 9% of the total EU workforce. Its further development will significantly contribute to reducing the dependency on fossil resources and offers opportunities for growth and jobs. Building the bioeconomy is one of the great research and innovation challenges within Horizon 2020, the proposed European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the years 2014 - 2020. The Bioeconomy Strategy “Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe” adopted by the European Commission on 13 February 2012 wants to make this vision a reality for Europe by addressing bioeconomy related challenges in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. Its implementation will build momentum for strengthening European competitiveness, making the bioeconomy a powerhouse for economic growth and job creation in Europe and beyond.

The participants welcomed this Strategy and Action Plan, recognising that the potential of the bioeconomy is an opportunity for Europe and its regions to build future competitive advantages.

The attendees of the conference stressed that public and private actors in the Member States including regions of Europe should also take up many of the proposals and activities in the Strategy, in order to speed up and further build on the bioeconomy already in action in different parts of Europe but at various levels of commitment. To achieve this, public and private enterprises must be encouraged to sustain and stimulate training, research and innovation across the whole bioeconomy, in particular in the area of biotechnology.

The following recommendations can be distilled from the comprehensive presentations and discussions during this conference:

1. The concept of the bioeconomy should be more strongly integrated into European policies. In particular the Common Agricultural Policy should take the bioeconomy much more into account. This economic concept is composed of numerous new value chains to which farmers, fishermen and forest and aquaculture managers will add significant value. This requires a higher degree of training for new skills and competences which undoubtedly will lead to higher earnings and the creation of new businesses. New facilities and infrastructure will be required to effectively use the available biomass resources. Investments in establishing and optimising infrastructures and logistical capabilities are crucial to ensure that all biomass can be mobilised and used, in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.
2. A level playing field must be created for the different uses of biomass – such as food, feed, bio-based products and bio-energy – by reviewing incentives and regulatory frameworks. This is a prerequisite for increasing the value generated from biomass, and for stimulating the value chains.
3. There is a need for new ways of highly committed partnering between all stakeholders: citizens, consumers, academia, industry, primary producers, and policy makers. In this respect, the conference stressed the potential of using the whole range of mechanisms at European level, including European Research Area Networks, Joint Programming Initiatives, Public-Private Partnerships, and European Innovation Partnerships. Industry should play a stronger role. The conference found that the triple-helix collaboration between governmental bodies, universities and industries must be further developed. The Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) will also address questions related to the bioeconomy, in particular the proposed KIC “Food4future”. However, rules and application processes urgently need to be strongly simplified.
4. The activities of the Lead Market Initiative (LMI) for Bio-based Products (including public procurement, labelling and certification schemes for bio-based products) should be continued and implemented as the recommendations and results are highly relevant for the enhancement of markets and EU’s overall competitiveness.

5. The perceived conflict between food and non-food production from arable land could be overcome by using agricultural crop and forestry residues and bio-degradable waste as well as selecting feedstock such as algae and other under-exploited resources from aquatic and marine environments, and by using existing and new knowledge and technologies to increase biomass yield.
6. The conference emphasized the overall importance of resource efficiency and sustainability, especially regarding soil, nutrients, water and biodiversity, and stressed the need for strong links to the flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe.
7. With respect to resource efficiency and sustainability, common standards for life cycle assessments as well as agreed methodologies for sustainability criteria must be developed.
8. The conference demonstrated that successful bioeconomy initiatives already exist in many Member States. The experiences in building the bioeconomy as a highly cross-cutting endeavour should be shared in order to implement the basis for bioeconomy throughout Europe. The delegates welcomed the proposal of the Bioeconomy Strategy to create a Bioeconomy Panel which should be supported by similar cooperation platforms in Member States and at regional levels, and stressed in a similar way the need for an annual Stakeholder Conference to monitor and further enhance the bioeconomy in Europe. Closer collaboration with stakeholders, including the bioeconomy European Technology Platforms, was strongly supported.
9. The conference also underlined the need for new pilot and demonstration plants and scaling up facilities, in particularly biorefineries. It was stressed, that the development of these facilities requires smart integration of various funding sources, including the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the Cohesion Policy, the Renewable Energy Policy, Horizon 2020, and private investments.
10. A common bioeconomy strategy is needed to assist global cooperation, to stimulate European industrial and scientific competitiveness, as well as European contribution to improving global environmental sustainability and social inclusiveness.