



JOINT POSITION OF THE 11 MINISTRIES OF AGRICULTURE

on the **BIOEAST Foresight Report's Recommendations**



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Position Paper

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The Member States' representatives of the BIOEAST Initiative for knowledge based agriculture, forestry and aquaculture in the bioeconomy emphasize that climate-neutral future depends on sustainable bioeconomies. Establishing sustainable and circular bioeconomies in Central and Eastern Europe is decisive for achieving circularity and climate-neutrality by 2050.

Having regard to the past declarations,

In 2011 Budapest Declaration on the Standing Committee of Agricultural Research (SCAR) the member states representatives expressed a warning message “Globally the food insecurity is increasing in the resources constrained world and is associated with political and economic turmoil. Europe must focus on research areas of strategic importance that can enable a swift transition towards sustainable food consumption and production in a resource constrained world.”

In 2015 the EU Member States' representatives in SCAR expressed their opinion about the SCAR Foresight, and emphasized that “the public policy makers and others will have to play a main role in the governance of the Bioeconomy”. The foresight experts warned that will not be sufficient if only technology and market developments govern the economy, and encouraged policy makers to develop new policy models, which can govern the biomass need of food-feed, material-chemical and fuel-energy systems for sustainable future.

In 2020, the SCAR representatives in the Berlin Declaration “consider that a drastic transformation of the way we produce and consume food and exploit natural resources is necessary, as incremental improvements are no longer sufficient. At the same time, it is necessary to increase resilience to stressors and shocks”

The BIOEAST Initiative welcomes the macro-regional BIOEAST Foresight Report: “Sustainable bioeconomies towards 2050”

The BIOEAST Foresight Exercise – conducted in 2021 by external experts – aiming to support the BIOEAST Member States in developing their sustainable and circular bioeconomies towards 2050. The expert's task aimed to build upon existing foresight reports, already available knowledge and to deliver in a form of a report new insights about possible pathways for the development of bioeconomies in Central and Eastern Europe. Based on this outcome the BIOEAST Initiative has a new ground on which to fulfil its advisory role for the member states and for EU institutions.

Admit that the role of the foresight exercise is not to predict the future but to reveal its malleability, offering the possibility to consider trends, obstacles, limits and potential of the circular bioeconomy within different scenarios, which could assist and better substantiate policy decisions by having in mind the future targets set to achieve a sustainable and climate-neutral future.





Support the main recommendation of the foresight report that our countries must step into the much-needed shift from a mostly linear to a circular bioeconomy model empowering the transition towards sustainability, resilience and climate neutrality.

Reiterate the foresight experts' awareness and warning on what is lacking in our region in terms of governance and connectivity, resources and finances, jobs and knowledge and other threats and regional challenges.

Call to act on overarching bioeconomy policy framework – lack of inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial coordination, still in some countries lack of national bioeconomy strategies and/or action plans, insufficient political engagement, low connectivity, lack of the citizens' involvement and lack of public-private partnerships.

On possible scenarios

Welcome the experts' work on the four scenarios: 1) a fully thriving circular bioeconomy – SUPERHEROES; 2) a linear bioeconomy – PRETENDERS; 3) business as usual – UNCHANGEABLES; 4) a non-profit circular bioeconomy – CHANGE AGENTS which are clearly connecting the specificities of Central and Eastern European society and mentality with future trends, thus highlighting the importance of systemic need for change in the national institutional model for innovation and collaboration.

Recognise the crucial importance of the identified scenarios to show the possible directions of future changes in the following areas: i) Sustainable natural resources; ii) Sustainable and resilient food system; iii) Renewable carbon use and decarbonisation; iv) Governance in the context of circular and sustainable pathways; which clearly shows some unfavourable characteristics of our region and of our society, asking for urgent intervention.

On the role of the government and policy-makers

Urge with other governmental departments to invest special attention towards creating long-standing regular structure for national inter-ministerial coordination on the sustainable and circular bioeconomy. The experts' opinion highlights as key importance that governments should primarily focus on inter-ministerial collaboration. Enabling the optimal conditions for an efficient systemic change is of the utmost importance. For this purpose, it is crucial to identify the overlapping (and missing) data, responsibilities, activities and investments between different fields of responsibilities of the national institutions.

On the role of network governance

Call for network governance as an indispensable addition to conventional public governance. The systemic approach for stakeholder engagement across sectors is crucial for the transformative processes. The urgency to change our economic, environmental and societal setup requires well-established networks. Some of the BIOEAST countries still lack these well-established bioeconomy hubs, clusters and public-





private partnerships on unlocking their bioresource potential, thus a network governance should aim to help the bottom-up and local processes leading to the green transition.

On the role of scientific research

Highlight to pay special attention on the communication of scientific advice. The BIOEAST region's state administrative bodies, and local authorities should be better served with research results and trusted knowledge. To be able to address the concerns and resistance of incumbent industries and reluctant citizens, scientific research achievements need to be communicated in a more open, transparent and accessible way. Predictably, the transition period towards 2050 is paved with crises, the COVID-19 related crisis shows us how fragile and easily misinterpreted is information, thus, it is necessary to build up trusted knowledge exchange channels and scientific breakthroughs should be explained by well-trusted organization for the public.

Agree with the experts **and highlight** the necessity of paying special attention to research and innovation, including digitalization through better integration of bioeconomy into national RDI programmes or creating specific programme. In our region, the multi-sectoral involvement and the climate-neutral efforts for finding sustainable bioeconomy solutions do require special calls towards scientific advancements, and better engagement in research and innovation of the private sector and private funds.

On the role of environmental agencies and agro-forestry chambers

Call the BIOEAST countries' agro-forestry chambers and other agencies representing primary producers to better engage in the promotion of the new bioeconomy concept among their members. The BIOEAST countries are predominantly characterized by primary production of biomass, thus the engagement of farmers, foresters and fishermen, and better involvement of agri-food businesses and cooperatives into the value-creation process is essential.

On the role of citizens

Note that the transition towards climate-neutral future cannot happen without the involvement of the society. Neither scientific nor policy solutions will advance without societal acceptance. **Invite** governmental bodies on national, regional and local level to engage the citizens in community projects, to involve them in dialogue for policymaking and to develop new ways of collaboration in local actions.

On the role of businesses

Emphasize the crucial role of local business, specifically SMEs in the implementation of bio-based solutions for the climate-neutral future. Today, the BIOEAST countries are characterized by conservative business models and not investing enough in research and into risk-taking associated with innovative approaches.

Call for programs to invest in mobilizing and interlinking traditional sectors towards new business models and agri-food systems approach as the necessary solution to drive towards sustainable processes.



On the role of education

Stress that based on the experts’ assumption the BIOEAST macro-region insufficient human resources specialized in bioeconomy for higher education and academia is one of the main bottlenecks to accomplish the goals of the European Green Deal. The region lacks multidisciplinary bioeconomy education systems.

Recognise the need for structural reforms in education towards new transdisciplinary educational programs on sustainable bioeconomy.

From common vision towards shared vision

Underline that in order to guide the BIOEAST macro-region through the transition towards 2050, the role of BIOEAST Initiative is essential in supporting the preparation for transformative research and innovation agendas for knowledge based policies.

Stress that the common sustainable vision for 2050 will become a reality if it is a truly shared vision. The bioeconomy as an overarching concept connecting the transformative policies should be part of the digitalization and greening agenda. The European sustainable transition should be based on tangible European and national programmes in order to achieve the climate-neutrality by 2050.

Call for support from Member States and European institutions to empower the BIOEAST Initiative, to strengthen trans-regional cooperation and guide the countries from this macro-region towards developing sustainable bioeconomies. This common vision frames the contribution of low and moderate innovator countries to achieve the objective of a circular and climate-neutral Europe.

Endorsed by

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of the Republic of Bulgaria *Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania*

Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Poland*

Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Romania*

Ministry of Rural Affairs of the Republic of Estonia *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic*

Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary *Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia*

Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia

