

Conditionality and social conditionality as a regulatory framework for the development of the bioeconomy in the Republic of Croatia

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Introduction

The development of bioeconomy in the Republic of Croatia is based on the sustainable use of biological resources from agriculture, forestry, fisheries and related processing sectors, while simultaneously strengthening economic competitiveness, the resilience of rural areas and the transition towards a circular and low-carbon economy.

Bioeconomy Strategy until 2035 defines this development direction as a multi-sectoral and long-term public policy framework, with an emphasis on sustainable production, more efficient use of biomass, greater added value, and the development of innovations and markets for bio-based products in Croatia.

At the same time, the development of bioeconomy depends not only on investments and innovations, but also on regulatory rules that determine the use of resources and the conditions for obtaining support. In this sense, the Ordinance on Conditionality and Social Conditionality (Official Gazette, No. 71/2025) represents an important normative framework for the implementation of development goals in agriculture and related sectors.

Material and methods

After the content analysis of the Rulebook and the Strategy, a comparative interpretation of goals, obligations and implementation mechanisms follows. This will enable the identification of the functional connection between the regulatory and strategic framework

The main objective is to analyze the connection between the Ordinance on Conditionality and Social Conditionality (Ordinance) and the Bioeconomy Strategy until 2035 (Strategy) and to determine how mandatory environmental and social standards influence the development of the bioeconomy in the Republic of Croatia.

The Ordinance prescribes conditionality and social conditionality, those obliged to comply with these rules, controls and the implementation of administrative penalties.

Areas covered by the Regulations:

- climate
- environment (water, soil, air)
- biodiversity
- public health and plant health
- animal welfare
- labor relations,
- safety and protection at work

The Strategy represents a multi-sectoral and long-term act of strategic planning. It contributes to the implementation of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030, enabling: strengthening sustainable biomass production and market, higher productivity and utilization of by-products, residues and waste from production and processing. The strategy connects agriculture, forestry, fishing, industrial processing, research and innovation and other public policies related to sustainable economic development.

Main findings

The strategy sets the development direction. It is focused on the growth of sustainable production, more efficient use of biomass and increasing added value in bioeconomy .

The Ordinance sets minimum implementation limits. Beneficiaries of aid must comply with environmental, production and social standards in order to receive aid.

The connection is functional, not hierarchical. The Strategy is not the legal source of the Ordinance, but its goals are achieved within the regulatory framework set by the Ordinance.

The Ordinance builds on social conditionality. This links the sustainable development of bioeconomy (protection of resources and the environment) with legal employment relationships and safe working conditions in the agricultural sector.

The Ordinance provides for control and administrative penalties, thus giving operational effect to the rules on sustainability and social responsibility.

Discussion

The development of bioeconomy in the Republic of Croatia can be successful if the growth of production, biomass processing and the creation of new value chains takes place within rules aimed at climate goals, the protection of natural resources, the preservation of biodiversity and occupational safety and health. The Ordinance therefore acts not only as a control mechanism, but also as an instrument for directing development towards sustainable practices within safe early relations and occupational safety.

Conclusion

The Regulation and the Strategy have different legal functions, but they act complementary.

The Strategy defines the development vision of the Croatian bioeconomy , while the Ordinance ensures that this vision is implemented in accordance with environmental, climate, production and social standards.

Therefore, in the context of bioeconomy development, it is necessary to simultaneously take into account the technological, market, environmental and social dimensions.

Literature

- Ordinance on Conditionality and Social Conditionality, (Official Gazette, No. 71/2025)
- Draft of Bioeconomy Strategy until 2035, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Pohajda, I. (2024): The Green Architecture of the Strategic Plan of the 2023–27 Common Agricultural Policy of the Republic of Croatia, *Agroekonomia Croatica* 14:2024 (1) 138-147