



Media statement 8th Forum for the Future of Agriculture

Brussels, March 31, 2015

Forum calls on farmers, industry and NGOs to rebuild trust and recognize their common objectives for sustainable agriculture

Today, the 8th annual Forum for the Future of Agriculture called on all sides to recognise the need for change and a long-lasting partnership for the global development of sustainable agriculture. We must take into account global challenges, including achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture, but also reversing climate change and using our limited resources wisely. In a time of economic crisis and following the recent CAP negotiations, there is an urgent need to find new ways to improve both farm productivity and the protection of the ecosystem and biodiversity.

Speakers and delegates at the Forum recognised that the trust between proponents of farm productivity and environmental protection has been weakened, but that the innovative solutions, practices and knowledge necessary for sustainable agriculture could only be delivered by working together. According to FFA Chairman **Janez Potočnik**, this is vital for realisation of the vision of the circular economy and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals both in Europe and globally.

The Forum therefore called on farmers and the agri-business industry to step up their efforts to provide healthy and abundant food while reducing pressures on natural resources and our climate. Farm practices should be further adapted to benefit the environment and to improve resilience, particularly for soil conservation, water quality and biodiversity. Farmers should be recognized and rewarded for their efforts but such changes are essential to maintain and build public support for Europe's farming systems.

Input providers, including pesticide producers, were specifically asked by the Forum to be more transparent with their data, if they are to convince others of the safety of the products for both people and the environment. But the Forum also made clear that all stakeholders, including environmental NGO's, must recognize that both, the economic viability of farmers and well-functioning ecosystems, are essential parts of sustainable land management.

Amongst the 1.500 speakers and delegates attending this year's Forum, there was an agreement that by taking these steps bridges can be built between farming and the environment. Such common ground would enable practical solutions, both on the field and in policies, to emerge that support the common goal of sustainable agriculture in Europe.

Appearing for the first time as the **new FFA Chairman, Janez Potočnik**, former European Commissioner for the Environment and Chairman of the RISE Foundation, said: *“In Europe we produce about 90 million tons of food waste per year, and a significant part could be easily avoided. We must work towards resource-efficient production techniques, sustainable food choices and reduced food waste in a combined effort with farmers, the food industry, retailers and consumers.”*

Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, commented: *“Innovation is the key to sustainable food security. Through innovation, we can improve resource-efficiency, adapt to climate change, improve food safety, diversity and quality while maintaining the competitiveness of the agri-food sector and creating more and better jobs in rural areas.”*

Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *“Realistic goals and smart legislation regarding the circular economy can help mitigate our resource deficit, strengthen our competitiveness, and at the same time improve our development sustainability.”*

Amina Mohammed, Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, United Nations, added: *“In the new Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable agriculture and food systems are critical for the overarching goal of ending extreme poverty in its different dimensions, everywhere, through sustainable rural development and rural prosperity.”*

Thierry de l'Escaille, Secretary-General of the European Landowners' Organization, commented: *“Innovation is crucial. As farmers and land managers, we need better access and understanding of innovative tools, new practices and new thinking if we are to achieve resilience in Europe's agriculture. The best way to achieve this will be if all actors of food value chain, including NGO's, food processors and industry, usher in a new period of open and trustful relationships.”*

Jon Parr, Chief Operating Officer at Syngenta, said: *“Making agriculture more sustainable demands different thinking and new ways of working from all of us. This is what Syngenta's Good Growth Plan is about and why we've embedded it in our strategy. But we also need other stakeholders to change their mindset and approach so we can work together to equip growers with the modern farm practices and innovative technologies they need to be economically, as well as environmentally, sustainable.”*

Notes to editors

The Forum's 8th edition was chaired by former European Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner **Franz Fischler** and former European Environment Commissioner and Chairman of the RISE Foundation **Janez Potočnik**. It featured a range of high-level speakers, including **Phil Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission, **Karmenu Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission, **Amina Mohammed**, Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, United Nations, **Arun Gandhi**, Agent of Change & Author, Total Nonviolence, **Anne Krueger**, Senior Research Professor, Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, **Jon Parr**, Chief Operating Officer, Syngenta, **Frederic Seppey**, Chief Agriculture Negotiator and Director General, Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada, **Pavan Sukhdev**, Founder-CEO, GIST Advisory, **Jeremy Rifkin**, Founder and President, The Foundation on Economic Trends, **Ren Wang**, Assistant Director General of Agriculture & Consumer Protection Department, FAO and **Martin Stuchtey**, Director, McKinsey Center for Business and Environment.

Over 1,500 participants were present at the Forum, which remains open to all stakeholders and free to attend, making it a unique feature and highlight of Europe's agriculture and environment conference calendar.

About the Forum for the Future of Agriculture

The annual Forum is an initiative of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) and Syngenta. It brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to catalyze thinking on the way European agriculture needs to respond to the major challenges that it faces in delivering food and environmental security. The Forum was created in 2008 in response to a belief that many EU policies impacting agriculture are focused on solving yesterday's problems, such as overproduction, and do not deal with new challenges and market opportunities. Challenges include feeding a growing world population, demand for a higher quality diet, increased demand for renewable sources of energy and changing weather patterns. With limited arable land available, there is a need to sustainably maximize production from that already under cultivation.

www.forumforagriculture.com

About the European Landowners' Organization

The European Landowners' Organization, created in 1972, is a unique federation of national associations from the 28 EU Member States and beyond which represents the interests of landowners, land managers and rural entrepreneurs at the European level. Independent and non-profit, the ELO is the only organization able to stand for all rural entrepreneurs. The ELO promotes a prosperous countryside through the dynamism of private ownership and its vision of a sustainable and prosperous countryside. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

www.elo.org

About Syngenta

Syngenta is one of the world's leading companies with more than 28,000 employees in over 90 countries dedicated to our purpose: Bringing plant potential to life. Through world-class science, global reach and commitment to our customers we help to increase crop productivity, protect the environment and improve health and quality of life.

www.syngenta.com

About the RISE Foundation

The Rural Investment Support for Europe (RISE) Foundation is an independent pan-European foundation devoted to the conservation and development of the European rural world. Chaired by Janez Potočnik, it deals with policy analysis and project financing.

www.risefoundation.eu

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