



**Media statement
Regional Forum for the Future of Agriculture
Sofia, Bulgaria**

Wednesday, November 29, 2017 - Sofia, Bulgaria

***An economically viable and environmentally sustainable future
for European agriculture***

Ahead of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Regional Forum for the Future of Agriculture has taken place in Sofia (Bulgaria). Participants have agreed today that a growing global population, a changing climate combined with continued pressure on the environment calls for increased food production using more sustainable methods.

Furthermore, participants have agreed that agriculture has a key role to play in addressing global challenges, especially in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Climate Agreement, a role that has been recognised by the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP23) held recently in Bonn. These ambitions demand to put the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs), set out by the UN, in the centre of the food systems agenda. Those goals must be achieved at a time of political uncertainty, including the European Union itself.

Without significant changes at global, European and local level, future generations could face not only reduced production, but also biodiversity losses. Low agricultural prices and nature preservation are interrelated challenges to which finding solutions is not easy. Europe, in particular, is facing serious challenges in finding its new generation of farming entrepreneurs willing to face them.

Europe's farmers depend on research to increase production, better adapt to climate change and provide for ecosystem preservation. Agriculture and forestry have become know-how and capital intensive and require more research and development and more innovative capital investment. Farmers need to be better educated, better trained and better informed.

In order to deliver on both production and environmental protection, there has been a broad agreement amongst FFA Regional participants that EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU's biggest budget item, remains the best tool with which to effectively change and help the European rural areas turn challenges into opportunities. Thanks to precision farming tools, better integrated pest management, new breeding techniques and good cooperation between farmers and institutions, greater harvests could be achieved while reducing pressure to the environment. With all this, FFA Regional participants have expressed concerns as to whether Europe would allow its land managers full access to these potential benefits.

The discussion and debate held today in Sofia are part of a Europe-wide search for solutions to the questions raised at the main FFA event in Brussels, which will see its 11th edition in Brussels on March 27 of this year.

Vladimir Urutchev, member of the European Parliament said: *“Preservation of worldwide ecosystems must be a top priority. Agriculture should adopt climate-smart practices in producing, transporting, processing & consuming food, and here EU can show the best example through a forward-looking CAP which boldly faces the environment and climate challenges”.*

Pierre-Olivier Drège, ELO President said: *“Climate change is already affecting agriculture & food security. We need to produce more and better, reconciling the productivity of soils and plants with high technology and health standards and with a minimal ecological footprint. Farmers, foresters and land managers are aware of their responsibilities and therefore we suggest a support system structured around the concept of land management for food and environmental security that focuses on objectives rather than being driven by pure compliance considerations that are often too bureaucratic.”*

Juan Gonzalez-Valero, Head public policy and sustainability, Syngenta said: *“The promise of new agricultural technologies - ranging from green biotechnologies, precision agriculture and big data - offer unprecedented opportunities to feed growing populations using less resources regardless of the production model”.*

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Notes to editors

The regional FFA in Sofia is part of the FFA series of conferences, which aim to address topics of both food and environmental security. Today's event, held at the Grand Hotel Sofia, under the auspices of MEP Vladimir Urutchev, first examined how the Sustainable Development Goals can help address global agriculture issues, before focussing on how the European Union's Common Agriculture Policy reform could contribute to this any many other challenges. The final session was dedicated to finding concrete solutions for farmers, foresters and land managers to ensure competitiveness and environmental protection to coexist within the Bulgarian agriculture landscape.

About the Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA)

The annual Forum and regional events are an initiative of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) and Syngenta. FFA brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to catalyse thinking on the way European agriculture needs to respond to the major challenges that it faces in delivering food and environmental security.

The annual 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. Every year, as well as the annual Forum in Brussels, FFA organises two regional events, with its local partners to continue the discussion at regional level. This year's regional conference took place in Reims, France and in Sofia, Bulgaria.

FFA2018 will be held at the Square in Brussels on March 27, 2018. Registration is free of charge. More information is available online at www.forumforagriculture.com

About the ELO

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO), 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 political 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 private property dynamism. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.

www.elo.org

About Syngenta

Syngenta is a leading agriculture company helping to improve global food security by enabling millions of farmers to make better use of available resources. Through world class science and innovative crop solutions, our 28,000 people in over 90 countries are working to transform how crops are grown. We are committed to rescuing land from degradation, enhancing biodiversity and revitalizing rural communities.

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