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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	EU Bioeconomy Conference 2022 (Brussels, 6-7 October 2022) - Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex a background document received from the Commission services on the EU Bioeconomy Conference 2022, which took place in Brussels on 6-7 October 2022. This subject will be dealt with under “Any other business” at the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 21 November 2022.

EU Bioeconomy Conference 2022 (Brussels, 6-7 October 2022)

The European Commission organised a high-level conference, entitled: *The Bioeconomy – Enabling the European Green Deal in challenging times* on 6 and 7 October 2022. More than 1600 participants registered to follow the discussions onsite or virtually. Speakers, such as Executive Vice-President Timmermans, the FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu, and Prof Johann Rockström highlighted the need to move the bioeconomy from niche to norm. While Ladislav Miko provided a welcome address on behalf of the Czech Presidency, Kristina Nordéus provided an outlook on bioeconomy activities under the upcoming Swedish Presidency.

The conference further highlighted the role of bioeconomy policy in enhancing policy coherence and system thinking. A series of bioeconomy success stories were presented, such as the contribution of the bioeconomy to rural development and promising bioeconomy innovation ecosystems. The second conference day featured forward-looking discussions on how the bioeconomy can help to better manage certain trade-offs, by addressing the question of how increasing biomass demand for energy and industrial needs can be matched with increasing climate and biodiversity objectives.

The conference discussions were based on the findings of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy Progress Report, which the European Commission adopted on 9 June 2022 in form of a Communication¹ and accompanying Staff Working Document². The report, entitled *European Bioeconomy policy: stocktaking and future developments*, covers the progress of the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy from 2018³ and replies to Council conclusions from November 2019⁴ with their call upon the Commission “to deliver a progress report and if appropriate with update of the action plan and/or the Strategy at the latest by 2022”. In addition, the New European Innovation Agenda⁵, adopted on 5 July 2022, provides the instruments to make Europe the global leader for deep-tech innovations and start-ups in the bio-based chemicals and materials domains.

¹ COM/2022/283 final

² SWD/2022/162 final

³ COM(2018)673. and SWD(2018)431

⁴ Doc. 14594/19

⁵ COM/2022/332 final

The progress report reiterates the increased importance of the bioeconomy in the green transition by providing concrete, renewable solutions to sustainable production, sustainable consumption, reuse and recycle of materials to support more sustainable lifestyles. The bioeconomy can revitalise our cities as well as secure the vitality of rural areas and communities, increasing regional equality. New bio-based solutions also play a key role in tackling the climate challenge and have the potential to increase Europe's resilience, for key sectors, such as food security and energy independence.

The bioeconomy offers broad opportunities to develop solutions based on biological material, many of which are not widely known: for example, innovative building materials like cross-laminated timber that allows the long-term storage of carbon in products, bio-based packaging, bio-degradable mulch films, fertilisers from biowaste, wood-derived car batteries, food supplements and nutraceuticals from algae, or nano-cellulose applications in cancer research.

The report further shows that the actions set out in the Bioeconomy Strategy of 2018 are on track in achieving the strategy's main objectives:

- An increasing number of national and regional bioeconomy strategies promote cross-sectoral cooperation and sustainability principles, and invest in bioeconomy innovation.
- Progress on bioeconomy deployment has been achieved in Central and Eastern European countries, aided by significant EU funding contributions and the establishment of new fora and networks. For example, the European Bioeconomy Policy Forum, launched in 2020, facilitates exchange of knowledge and best practices between Member States for developing and implementing their national and regional bioeconomy policies.
- Mobilisation of private investments, start-ups and research and innovation in food and other bio-based industries are increasing and show promising developments. Europe has a strong position in the global market for bio-based chemicals and materials.

The EU research and innovation framework programme will continue to play a key role in deploying a sustainable and circular bioeconomy. In total, the EU mobilise targeted investments with a volume of around € 9 billion under Horizon Europe for the period 2021-27; dedicated to the work programmes, partnerships, and missions of cluster 6 related to food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment.

In addition, both the current and future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) recognise the opportunity for our rural areas and our primary producers to deploy the bioeconomy in a more holistic and systemic manner. While the CAP has already supported the bioeconomy in the current programming period, the new CAP from January 2023 explicitly includes, for the first time, the bioeconomy under one of the CAP's specific objectives. Interventions and measures from the rural development funds (EAFRD) will continue to support investments, innovation, knowledge transfer and advisory services in rural areas.

Yet, the report also identified gaps in the implementation of the action plan that require further action. First, increased focus on how to better manage land and biomass demands to meet environment and economic requirements in a climate neutral Europe. Second, work on more sustainable consumption patterns to enhance environmental integrity.

In line with the feedback received by stakeholders during the conference, the Commission proposes to focus its further actions towards closing the gaps identified in the progress report.
