PRESS RELEASE

EuropaBio at COP21: With the right support Industrial Biotech will help put the brakes on climate change

Paris, 6 December 2015

2.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ could be saved per year by supporting the development and uptake of products and processes made with Industrial Biotech. These were the WWF figures quoted by Marcel Wubbolts, Chief Technology Officer of Royal DSM and chair of the board of the Biobased Industries Consortium (BIC) at COP 21 discussions in Paris this Sunday¹. This figure is equivalent to taking 490 million cars off the roads or to 68% of the EU’s total emissions in 2013.

But in order to attract the industry investments necessary to capitalise on this technology, stability and longevity of policy is needed – crucially, with no room for U-turns. Royal DSM represented EuropaBio at the gathering of biobased leaders presenting to a COP21 audience from around the world and calling for a levelling of the fossil/biobased playing field to help tackle the threat of climate change. Amongst the points raised were the need to support the development of a biobased infrastructure and to stimulate new markets for biobased products through, for example, a strong public procurement program and other market creation measures.

Marcel Wubbolts emphasised the role that the bioeconomy will play in helping to reduce our dependence on fossil resources by instead using biomass to make our chemicals, materials, energy and fuels. He noted that, whilst other renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, will help reduce the amount of fossil resources that is burned, only a shift towards the bioeconomy can replace fossil-resource derived chemicals. He went on to highlight that making the switch to biobased resources will reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the value chain.

Barend Verachtert, Deputy Head of Unit for biobased products and process at the European Commission’s DG Research, Science and Innovation, highlighted the opportunity that the Commission’s Circular Economy action plan presents for the valorisation of biomass and for the role that the bioeconomy will play in the creation of a more sustainable future.

OECD Policy Analyst Jim Philp shone a spotlight on the stark reality facing biobased industries compared to the established and mature fossil industry which, the IMF estimates, still receives approximately $1.9 trillion per year in subsidies.

The event, held at the Chamber of Commerce, also saw a coalition of international biofuels associations, including ePURE, RFA, GRFA, UNICA and US-based BIO, launch a call on world leaders to support a global commitment to replace at least 15% of the world’s total oil use in transport with sustainable biofuels by 2030, with a significant presence of advanced biofuels.

Jeroen van Campen from DuPont Industrial Biosciences presented the case for the economic, energy security and environmental benefits of advanced biofuel production. Cellulosic ethanol technology can reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions by 90% over traditional gasoline. DuPont’s new facility in Iowa, US, represents a farm to fuel solution which uses the non-food part of the maize plant to produce fuel. Cutting edge, sustainable ligno-cellulosic technology, creates a global opportunity for countries to meet their energy needs with locally produced fuel. But Mr. van Campen cautioned that governments must keep pace with advances in science and technology and use all the tools available to tackle the threat of climate change. In a world where fossil fuel prices are still at historic lows, renewable, biobased industries will require ongoing collaboration and unwavering political support to emerge and to deliver the massive, global climate benefits that they can provide.

To learn more about how industrial biotech is reducing GHG emissions around the world click here.

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About industrial biotechnology and the bioeconomy:

Industrial biotechnology is a central pillar of innovation within the EU and is a key enabler of the transition towards a lower carbon, circular economy. Industrial biotech enhances quality of life and enables development of smarter, more sustainable products and processes, based on renewable raw materials, which make better use of our precious natural resources, adding value in the process.

The bioeconomy offers huge potential to tackle societal challenges such as resource efficiency, climate change, maintaining European competitiveness and creating jobs.

About EuropaBio:
EuropaBio is the European Association of BioIndustries. Our members are involved in research, development, testing, manufacturing and commercialisation of biotech products and processes in human and animal healthcare, diagnostics, bioinformatics, chemicals, crop protection, agriculture, food and environmental products and services. EuropaBio also counts a number of National Biotech Associations in its membership who in turn represent more than 1800 biotech SMEs.