PRESS RELEASE

EuropaBio calls for reality check as Commission’s Circular Economy proposal hits the mat

Brussels, 2 December 2015 – EuropaBio welcomes the adoption of the Commission’s Circular Economy Package and Action Plan but calls for a realistic appraisal of the EU’s economy and highlights the need for long-term, supportive policy with tangible measures and standards.

‘We have high hopes for the Commission’s strategy, but also some serious, ongoing concerns’ commented EuropaBio’s Industrial Biotech Council chair, Stephan Tanda, of Royal DSM. ‘Sustainable jobs and growth and resource efficient, renewable products and processes are exactly what the EU needs right now. Industrial biotech can help deliver on these goals, contributing towards a circular economy; however this cannot be achieved without the right long-term framework conditions in place to attract the business investment needed’.

Industrial biotech is one of Europe’s strengths helping to produce more than 50% of the world’s enzymes and microorganisms. These are developed to make products and processes in a more resource efficient and sustainable way in world leading sectors as diverse as chemicals, materials, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, plastics, food and feed ingredients, detergents, pulp and paper, textiles and fuels. The enzymes produced through industrial biotech transform ‘renewable raw materials’ such as biomass, agricultural & forestry residues, municipal waste and CO₂ in biorefineries* into everyday products. This creates a renewable carbon cycle, taking CO₂ from the air and converting it via plants into sustainable products, as an alternative to using finite fossil carbon, like crude oil, natural gas or coal as the basic feedstock.

EuropaBio welcomes the Commission’s focus on public procurement schemes, communication and awareness campaigns and incentives for the use of more resource efficient, renewable products and processes. Its members also call for the prioritisation of biotech solutions for a circular economy in Horizon 2020 and for the promotion of agricultural productivity and efficiency. This includes the ‘locally grown and sourced concept’ and the need to fund European schemes for the collection, harvesting, storage and transport of renewable raw materials. In addition, EuropaBio encourages the Commission to take its 2012 Bioeconomy strategy into consideration in the development of the circular economy action plan and to consider reviewing and revising this. Furthermore, in order to adopt a holistic approach, it will be necessary to coordinate the production of biobased products with waste management, adopting appropriate political measures to ensure a sustainable transition from a linear towards a circular economic model.

Secretary General, Nathalie Moll concluded ‘Industrial biotech is a cutting edge technology in the EU and is a big driver of the circular economy across many other sectors. But we are trying to emerge into a marketplace where the fossil carbon industry still receives an estimated $200 billion in subsidies per year globally, often with no need to demonstrate or foot the bill for ensuring product sustainability. An EU circular economy strategy only makes sense in the context of a serious reality check of this situation and of the need to put in place long-term support and measures to enable the EU’s better performers to flourish’.

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Click here to read EuropaBio’s position on the Circular Economy

* About biorefineries:

Biorefineries are at the heart of the transition towards a circular bioeconomy. Increasingly, they will play a vital role in developing and adding value to the principles of a ‘zero waste’ society. The concept of biorefineries is analogous to that of petrochemical refinery processes but biorefineries use renewable, rather than fossil/carbon based feedstocks, basically plant biomass. Such feedstocks can include municipal solid waste, which would otherwise be landfilled, designated crops and agricultural and forestry waste which might otherwise simply be burned or ploughed back into the land.

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 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.