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Press Release

Horizon Europe: a gateway to a competitive future for agriculture and forestry

Ahead of the Romanian Presidency's high-level conference on research and innovation set to take place on 5th of April in Bucharest, Copa and Cogeca, representing European farmers and agri-cooperatives, call for a strong budget for the new Horizon Europe framework. In a context where agriculture and forestry will more than ever need innovative and practice-based solutions, the EU farming community will not accept any attempts to water down EU ambitions in agricultural research.

Research and innovation are essential to finding solutions that will help the agricultural and forestry sectors contribute to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the Paris Agreement adopted at COP 21. They also have a key role to play in ensuring that farming and forestry can meet the needs of a world population set to reach 10 billion by 2050. Against this backdrop, the future Horizon Europe framework will set the ambition and give a clear direction for the most promising fields of research.

The European Commission, backed by the European Parliament's vote, recognises the central role of agricultural and forestry research and innovation activities under Horizon Europe. Copa and Cogeca hope that the European Council will follow the same line and will not dilute the discussion on topics that are relevant and beneficial to the agricultural and forestry sectors. The European farming community needs new management tools for digital farming, climate change mitigation and adaptation measures as well as for innovative bio-based projects. In order to achieve the EU's strategic goals, EU-13 countries' participation in research and innovation activities under the Horizon Europe programme must be improved.

For Daniele Rossi, Chairman of the Copa and Cogeca Working Party on Research and Innovation, *"It is essential that the Council aligns itself with Commission's and Parliament's ambitions when it comes to agricultural research. A 10 billion euro envelope was promised to the EU agricultural and forestry sectors and it is vital that these funds continue to be earmarked for EU agricultural research. We all know that we will have to face many new challenges in the coming years. Watering down the EU's ambitions in agricultural research will send out a counterproductive signal that would be hard to understand for farmers, researchers, and consumers."*

In their recently approved position paper on the Horizon Europe programme, Copa and Cogeca also urge the EU institutions to ensure consistency between the CAP objectives and the future framework for research. They underline that the calls should guarantee the involvement of farmers in the development of EU projects and could increase the numbers of SMEs taking part. Involving farmers, forest owners and their cooperatives from the very beginning of projects will ensure more demand-driven research and innovation as well as helping to bridge the current gap between academia and practice, resulting in solutions that can be applied on the ground.

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Translations (in French, Italian, Spanish, German and Polish) will soon be available www.copa-cogeca.eu

For further information, please contact:

Tobia Capuzzo

Policy Advisor

tobia.capuzzo@copa-cogeca.eu

Jean-Baptiste Boucher

Communications Director

Mobile: + 32 474 840 836

jean-baptiste.boucher@copa-cogeca.eu

CDP(19)2657:1
