

## **Workshop on the European Bioeconomy Strategy. Opportunities for Comunitat Valenciana.**

The first "Workshop on European Bioeconomy Strategy. Opportunities for Comunitat Valenciana." was held at Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Agrarias – IVIA (Valencian Institute for Agricultural Research) on September 22, 2016.

**The European Bioeconomy Strategy** is aimed at addressing the European needs for sustainable exploitation of renewable biological resources, not only to ensure feeding people and livestock, but also to produce new bio-materials and bio-products, thus moving towards a post-petroleum society.

The **objective** of the Workshop was to get firsthand knowledge of the principles and goals of the European Bioeconomy Strategy and how to put it into effect in Comunitat Valenciana. At the same time, to assess the strengths, weaknesses and challenges for the development of a bio-based economy in our Region.

**Participants** virtually represented all the Bioeconomy stakeholders, starting by representatives of the **European Commission**, like Mr. Gilles Laroche, Head of Unit of Bioeconomy Strategy of DG for Research and Innovation, and his colleague Christina Nanou. Ms. Elisa Tesselli represented the Bio-based Industries European Public-Private Partnership (**JTI BBI**). We also benefited from the experience of D. José Manuel González, from **CDTI**, Spanish representative in the Program Committee H2020 Social Challenge 2 and Bioeconomy. Additionally, 26 more people with **complementary roles** participated from **Comunitat Valenciana**:

- Generalitat Valenciana policy makers related to Agriculture, Environment, Economy and Business.
- Heads of several Public and Private Research Centers and Technological Institutes
- Experts in the R&I European framework from IVIA, AINIA (Technological Center), IATA (Research Center) and University of Valencia.
- Researchers in fields related to the Bioeconomy
- Public organisms dedicated to knowledge and technology transfer
- Agricultural cooperatives and other enterprises
- A municipality pioneering Bioeconomy
- High level technical staff of Conselleria d'Agricultura, Medi Ambient, Canvi Climàtic y Desenvolupament Rural (Regional Ministry of Agriculture Environment, Climate Change and Rural development)

The workshop was opened with a general presentation of Valencia Region to the Commission and JTI-BBI representatives, after which, they exposed the bases of the European Bioeconomy Strategy and the EU tools to promote it. The essential message was the importance of transmitting to the Commission, by means of the Valencian representative in the European Stakeholders Panel on Bioeconomy, the expectations, needs and difficulties of Comunitat Valenciana for the development of a bio-based economy. They also highlighted the importance of learning and sharing experiences with other regions, through different instruments like the Knowledge Exchange Platform

of the Committee of the Regions or the ERRIN Working Group on Bioeconomy. Finally, another crucial issue, which is funding, was addressed. They showed how to use EU structural funds for financing R&I projects awarded by the "Seal of Excellence" that did not receive H2020 funds.

In order to display the strengths and weaknesses of Comunitat Valenciana for developing a bio-based economy, several presentations were made, about the regional Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Agro-food Industry; Bioeconomy in the Valencian RIS3; Bioeconomy in the Rural Development Programme; the potential of R&I in Comunitat Valenciana; and the participation of Valencian organizations in R&I EU funded projects.

Since Bioeconomy is not only a strategic political issue, nor exclusively a matter of economic capacities, but a question connected to businesses and markets, the next session consisted of the exposition of three success stories starred by Valencian companies. Ingelia, a technology-based company, showed an example of hydrothermal recovery of organic matter for manufacturing different bioproducts (i.e. bio-coal and liquid bio-fertilizers). They highlighted the importance of having a modular technology, adapted to the amount of biomass locally available. Tetma, a Becsa Group company, has reduced by two-thirds the amount of rejections of the local waste treatment plant of Algimia thanks to the combination of technology and smart logistics. Finally, Heliotec, co-funded by LIFE (Project Ecocitric), has developed a semi-industrial facility that converts citrus pruning materials into fodder.

Driven by European companies, the Bio-Industries Public-Private Partnership provides funding to companies and R&I organizations for the development of Bioeconomy related projects through annual workplans and calls. The BBI representative and the Spanish representative on the H2020-RS2 Committee Program showed different instruments and opportunities for funding.

A series of **technical visits** to the urban waste management plant of the Society "Agricultores de la Vega", the Science Park of the University of Valencia and the Municipality of Serra facilities for using local forest biomass for heating public buildings completed the workshop.

The Workshop ended with a **debate** whose major **conclusions** are summarized:

- Comunitat Valenciana has strong potential and capacities for the development of a Bio-based economy.
- Setting-up of a Standing group to articulate the strategy of the Region in Bioeconomy and the corresponding Action Plan. The group should be led by the Regional Government and should involve representative of all major stakeholders in Bioeconomy, including users and citizens.
- Appropriate links should be established with the Spanish authorities to coordinate the Regional and National Actions
- Seeking increased involvement in European fora dealing with Bioeconomy Strategy and implementation

- The Commission would seek to recommend the participation of Valencian actors in specific fora considered appropriate to consolidate the take.off of the Regional strategy and the exchange of good practices with other European actors (e.g. forum of cities on Biorefineries)
- Promote active participation of the Valencia Region in the upcoming Conference of Bratislava
- Visit of a Regional delegation to Brussels in due time to present the Strategy and Action Plan.
- Increased efforts to promote the participation of Valencian groups in H2020 and BBI proposals
- Consideration by the Regional authorities to provide support to proposals with a granted Seal of Excellence (IVACE, IVF)
- Monitoring of RIS3 Action Plan and the ESIF Regional Operating Programmes to better support the implementation of the Regional Bioeconomy and its Action Plan.

In the words of Mr. Laroche:

*"The Bioeconomy potential of Valencia Region makes no doubt. It is of paramount importance that you all continue working together. The action you have agreed at the end of the Workshop: setting up a Bioeconomy stakeholder's platform is excellent to prepare regional Bioeconomy strategy and action plan. The involvement of all stakeholders will make a robust and sustainable strategy. The Ministries (Agriculture, Economy, Environment ...), the Researchers, the Local policy makers, the industry and particularly in SMEs, the primary Producers, the citizens / NGOs etc. should be on board. This is what we witnessed successful in other regions. It is also Important that you integrate EU networks of Regions to benefit from the best practices of others and share your own successes. "*