
Plants for the Future ETP input to the EC Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation

Horizon 2020 aims to tackle the biggest challenges that societies are facing in Europe and globally by enabling the path of innovation as joint effort of different stakeholders. To further strengthen its impact, widen stakeholders' participation and increase mobilisation of resources Plant ETP recommends several key actions:

- Further support European Research Council (ERC) as well as the Marie-Curie programmes are a major success supporting and attracting excellent frontier scientists and training the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs.
- Support the entire collaborative Research and Innovation Cycle in the Societal Challenges, composed of basic research, applied research, demonstration and innovation actions. More balanced basic and applied research funding should be encouraged. Currently SCs include applied research, demonstration and innovation actions. Missing are:
 - a) Basic collaborative research which can be included through a combination of:
 - collaborative basic research as intrinsic part of R&I projects;
 - collaborative basic research as focus of collaborative projects: basic biological processes relevant to crop improvement e.g. on plants & microbiomes; plant health; photosynthesis; plants for human nutrition and health;
 - collaborative basic and applied research via broader ERA-Nets COFUND (e.g. like ERA-CAPS).
 - b) Research-innovation interface (bi-directional) which can be included as virtual centre for translational research (slim form of current cPPPs) – e.g. on Integrated Crop Production.

All these will at the same time widen participation incl. from underrepresented countries, increase mobilisation of national and EU resources and contribute to resolving gaps on collaborative research. It will create a translational bridge between the scientific excellence and the industrial leadership pillars.
- Strengthen the concept of multi-actor approach by taking into account the needs of all partners; securing adequate public funding allows greater participation of relevant stakeholders.
- Increase involvement of science, industry and farming community associations in developing the Work Programmes through open dialogue rather than one way input submission.
- Focus on how the challenges can be addressed by manifold practices and technologies. For innovative solutions, the call text should specify the goal and objectives to achieve but not restrict possible ways to solve the specific Societal

Challenge. The WP should not exclude or restrict the use of any technology, innovative process and product development.

- Increase success rates and improve evaluation to attract the best proposals: inviting only very few of the above-threshold proposals to the 2nd stage should be applied to all SC proposals to motivate the best scientists and companies to apply. It is necessary to further improve the quality of evaluations to attract the best applicants. The evaluation feedback is relevant and unbiased.
- Incentivise outreach activities of scientists (public and private) across Europe and above: stakeholders should be encouraged to initiate and coordinate snowball-principle bottom up activities at European or even global scale, incentivised by competitive European funding to support the central coordination and core resources.
- Facilitate advancement of and access to state of the art research infrastructure in the plant sector highly relevant to e.g. Food and Nutritional Security: Perform a gap analysis on research infrastructure in the plant sector (build on the example of phenotyping via the EMPASIS project) and advance the issues of data management and standardisation (as recently initiated by ERA-CAPS).
- Encourage participation of industry especially SME through better allocation of funds. Financing more projects instead of having fewer with a bigger budget would widen stakeholders' participation. A higher number of smaller projects preferred of larger ones would attract different and smaller actors, as easier to manage and to focus on the R&I needs of companies. Additionally, the SME instrument should be changed into a bottom up funding scheme, ensuring SME most innovative and crucial ideas to be funded.
- Implement Fast Track to Innovation pilot as a regular funding instrument with an adequate amount of funding to increase the success rate of excellent proposals.
- Create financial tools adapted to the special characteristics of the agricultural sector. These tools should boost investments and at the same time take into account the volatility and the risks associated to farming.

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About ETP Plants for the Future - www.plantetp.org

The European Technology Platform 'Plants for the Future' (Plant ETP) is a stakeholder forum for the plant sector that brings together members from industry, academia and the farming community. The industrial sector is represented by the European Seed Association (ESA) which represents itself the totality of the European seed industry (more than 7000 companies, 90% of which are SMEs) active in research, breeding, production and seed marketing. A certain number of individual companies are also direct members of Plant ETP. The academic sector is represented by the European Plant Science Organisation (EPSO), an independent academic organisation with over 220 research institutes, departments and universities as institutional members and 3.200 Personal Members, representing over 28 000 people working in plant science. The farming sector is represented by Copa-Cogeca, the European organisation for farmers and their cooperatives. Copa represents over 13 million farmers whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 38,000 agricultural cooperatives.