

Cross sectoral opportunities in the Bio-economy and the implementation of the SDGs

Welcome address

Thanks to our guests, the Research Council of Norway

Thanks to the speakers/participants present to the XXXIInd EURAGRI conference

32 years is a long time. EURAGRI : a useful and relevant platform, as shown once more by the interest/response given to the chosen topic : research and the SDGs

Reference to other global commitments : Paris agreement on Climate, agreements on biodiversity, etc...

Importance of the agrifood sector for the completion of the SDGs and other commitments

Many research organisations have included the SDGs as part of their strategy.

It is more than mere opportunism/superficial communication.

Including the SDGs in research strategy is accepting a part of responsibility for their achievement or non-achievement. Part of a collective responsibility towards humankind and towards the planet, who are in danger due to our model of civilization.

Responsibility calls for action within the research system at global level : that is organising convergence of research efforts towards the SDGs, through coordination, synergies, alignment of research programmes.

In Europe such effort has started with EraNets, Co-funds, JPIs, etc.. Beyond H2020 direct funding, the coordination/alignment of national programmes is really what is at stake.

Efforts to go beyond the boundaries of EUROPE with PRIMA (nexus food water and agricultural production in the Mediterranean) and to

coordinate/align national research programmes of Mediterranean countries where challenges are very high indeed.

How to imagine and implement mechanisms at global level quickly and efficiently, based on the European experience, and others. CGIAR system is an important player but cannot do it alone. Research alliances exist (climate smart agriculture). IAASTD International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development) was an early attempt to contribute to that goal. Time has shown the formidable obstacles in the way of such efforts, due to differing political views and diverging interests. But SDGs have a time span and an obligation of result.

Research cannot do it alone. Coordination also has to be sought with other non-research interested actors. The public, economic actors, decision makers, in order to foster innovation towards the SDGs.

Here again Europe has an experience of such co-ordination. One of the latest very promising experience of that is the EIP, with well defined and validated tools and methods : operational groups, thematic networks, multiactor research projects, ...). It is comforting that the new European research programme Horizon Europe will strengthen that approach

How to use that experience and others to reinforce coordination between a global research system and other crucial players for the achievement of the SDGs

2 major challenges for the governance of research :

- 1) How to mobilise researchers at grassroots level. Experience of opening a research seminar in Montpellier at the level of a research unit and mentioning the SDGs, JPIs, PRIMA, EraNets, etc.. and receiving looks of incomprehension from researchers...**
- 2) How to protect the independence of research and the job of researchers which is to increase knowledge and make it available for use ?**

It is good that platforms like EURAGRI exist as a frame to discuss and exchange views on such issues, in a relaxed, distantiated way, with no immediate stake, institutional, financial or otherwise, to defend.

EURAGRI is an independant, flexible, platform free to fix its own agenda, according to the concerns of European research organisations and other actors interested in research. Its mission is to exchange/confront ideas about research policies, research agendas, the organisation and management of research and the relation of research systems with other constituencies. Workshops, annual conferences, publications are the core of its activities.

It is hoped that, individually, each participant to those activities are exposed to new ideas and that, collectively, new intelligence is produced.

I am proud and delighted to be chair of EURAGRI since 4 years ago. After 2 mandates it is time for me to step down, to allow fresh ideas and fresh energy to steer EURAGRI and to support Bettina who is the real keystone of the EURAGRI building ! Those 4 years have been extremely stimulating.

Thank you.