PRESS RELEASE

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Plant ETP Welcomes the European Commission's Bioeconomy Strategy and Calls for Stronger Recognition of Plant Breeding in Building a Sustainable Bio-Circular Economy

Plants for the Future European Technology Platform (Plant ETP) welcomes the European Commission's recently published **Bioeconomy Strategy**, a landmark policy that sets out a strategic framework to scale innovation, create lead markets for bio-based materials and technologies, and secure sustainable biomass supply for Europe's green transition. This initiative represents a major step toward reducing fossil dependency, strengthening Europe's competitiveness, and delivering climate and biodiversity goals.

A Vision for a Competitive and Sustainable Bioeconomy

The Bioeconomy Strategy rightly positions bioeconomy as a major driver of green growth and resilience, with the potential to generate trillions in added value and multiple jobs across Europe. By promoting circularity, resource efficiency and industrial deployment of bio-based solutions, the Strategy charts a pathway to a future where Europe leads globally in sustainable technologies and materials.

Plant ETP strongly supports this vision and emphasizes that **primary production is the foundation of the bioeconomy**. Farmers and foresters, among others, manage Europe's living resources, ensuring food security and renewable raw materials for bio-based industries. Their role is central to achieving the Strategy's objectives of competitiveness, sustainability, and strategic autonomy.

The Missing Link: Plant Breeding

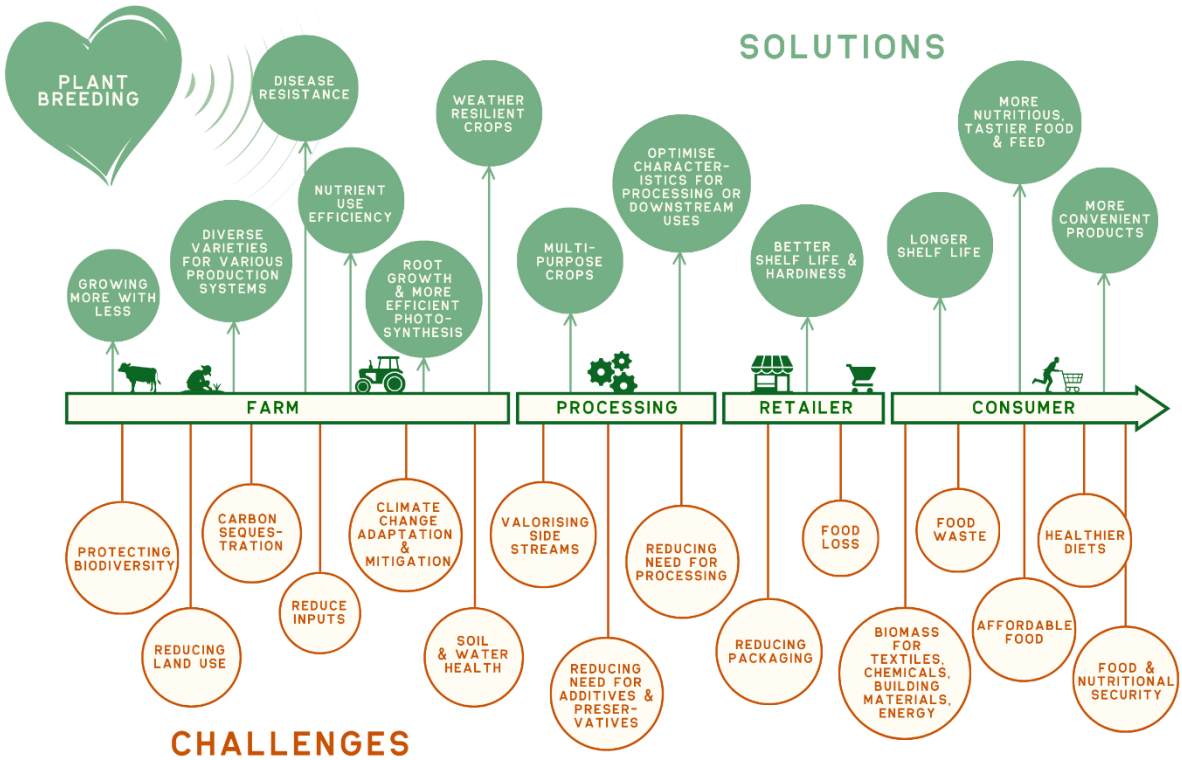
While the Bioeconomy Act outlines ambitious measures to scale innovation and investment, **it does not explicitly address the importance of agricultural productivity to ensure access to plant-based feedstocks for bioeconomy value chains. Farmers must have access to a well filled toolbox to design the crop systems that sustainably produce the needed biomass. While the strategy recognises the value of biotechnology it does not call out the importance of plant breeding as a critical enabler for the bioeconomy**. Plant breeding is the starting point for creating crops that are **fit-for-purpose**, delivering quantity and quality food, feed, and biomass tailored for diverse bioeconomy applications. Without innovation in plant breeding, Europe cannot fully unlock the potential of **multipurpose crops that support cascading use of biomass and circular value chains**.

Breeders' toolbox, including conventional, established and new genomic techniques (NGTs) to **generate plant genetic diversity**, **genomic selection, marker assisted selection, multi-omics approaches and advanced phenotyping**, allow the rapid development of varieties with improved

yield, stress tolerance, and optimized composition for bioplastics, biofuels, textiles, and construction materials. These innovations **increase productivity, reduce waste, enhance resource efficiency, enhance the quality and processability of plants resulting in savings in downstream processing and enable farmers to produce more value per hectare**, all key goals of the circular bioeconomy.

Plant Breeding is at the heart of Europe's Bioeconomy

Breeding innovations address challenges across the entire value chain, from farm to consumer, **by enabling solutions such as increase yield, disease resistance, nutrient efficiency, biochemical composition, weather-resilient crops, and multipurpose varieties**. These improvements cascade through processing, retail, and consumption, reducing food loss and waste, optimizing biomass for textiles, chemicals, and building material, among others. **By connecting upstream genetic innovation with downstream industrial and consumer benefits, plant breeding emerges as a cornerstone for achieving a truly circular and sustainable bioeconomy**.



Plant ETP's work advocates for **the transformative role of plant breeding at the heart of Europe's bioeconomy**. From cassava and potato breeding programs that apply genomic tools and CRISPR-based techniques to improve starch quality for food and industrial applications (reducing reliance on fossil-based materials), to miscanthus and sorghum, high-yield and low-input biomass crops adapted to marginal lands that provide sustainable feedstocks for bioenergy and bioplastics. These are only some

examples that demonstrate how **plant breeding connects agriculture and industry, enabling integrated value chains that deliver economic, environmental, and social benefits**.

A Call for Strategic Action

To reach the bioeconomy's full potential, Europe must **strategically support plant breeding research and innovation**. This requires:

- Dedicated funding mechanisms under future EU research frameworks to accelerate breeding for multipurpose crops.
- Facilitating Public-Private partnerships to translate research into market-ready solutions.
- Regulatory clarity and enabling conditions for the use of advanced breeding tools, including conventional and biotechnological approaches.

Plant breeding is a **strategic investment** that underpins Europe's ability to produce sustainable biomass, reduce imports, and strengthen resilience in the face of climate change.

Looking Ahead

Plant ETP stands ready to work with the European Commission, Member States, and stakeholders to ensure that plant breeding is recognized as a cornerstone of the bioeconomy. By integrating breeding innovation into policy and funding priorities, Europe can deliver on its vision for a **competitive, sustainable, and circular bioeconomy**, one that leaves no region behind and secures prosperity for future generations.

Take a look to our *Plantastic Discoveries* series on Plant Breeding for the Bioeconomy: click here

Plants for the Future ETP (Plant ETP) is a multi-stakeholder European Technology Platform representing the plant sector, from the seed and breeding sector, the farming community and academia. Plant ETP brings stakeholders from the plant sector together to consider the challenges and opportunities of agricultural value chains in a holistic way, while developing a vision for future systems spanning food, feed, and biobased raw materials. In this way, Plant ETP provides strategic direction, recommendations of essential research and innovation, and science-based advice for the benefit of policymakers, research funding providers, practitioners, and innovators throughout agricultural value chain.