Subject: FP10 & ECF – Research and Innovation at the heart of Europe's agriculture, food and bioeconomy transition: strengthening European competitiveness, resilience and sovereignty

Dear Dr Ehler,

Dear Members of the ITRE Committee,

AGRALIFE is the French national programme agency for research and innovation in sustainable agriculture and food, forests and associated natural resources. Bringing together more than 30 partners, this ambitious undertaking is spearheaded by INRAE, with the overarching goal of defining future strategic directions with a forward-looking approach, and pioneering new research initiatives. Together with our European research and academic partners, we emphasize the paramount significance of establishing a robust priority on agriculture, food systems and bioeconomy within the future European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) and European Competitiveness Fund (ECF).

We believe that FP10 and ECF should support the transition of the entire agri-food and bioeconomy value chain, through ambitious and sustained investment in research and innovation - from knowledge generation and long-term research to demonstration, deployment and uptake by farmers, businesses and other actors. Indeed, research can provide solutions at every step of the value chain, improving the resilience of our systems. These include: new crop varieties to adapt our agriculture to climate change and ensure Europe remains a key player in the global agrifood market; improved agricultural practices and technologies to ensure competitiveness, farmers' livelihoods and working conditions; and infrastructure development to add value on-farm and reduce risk in the upscale of food and bioeconomy innovations.

The explicit inclusion of agriculture and bioeconomy in the new “Health, biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy” window proposed by the European Commission and the Council is therefore a positive signal. By contrast, replacing these explicit references with a broader concept of “Sustainable Prosperity” would result in diminished visibility of sectors that are pivotal to Europe’s food security, economic resilience and strategic autonomy.

Furthermore, adequate and dedicated research and innovation funding is essential to develop and deploy the solutions Europe still needs, as this summer’s catastrophic heatwaves’ impact on our food systems and biodiversity demonstrated again. It is vital to acknowledge the pivotal role of agriculture, food and bioeconomy in ensuring Europe’s food security, strategic autonomy and sovereignty. Consequently, any dilution of these sectors within a broadly defined policy window would be detrimental, as it would diminish their visibility. Furthermore, it is likely that the impact of the funded actions would be undermined.

We therefore encourage the European Parliament, in its work on FP10 and ECF, to ensure that:

- agriculture, food, forestry, natural resources and the bioeconomy are recognised as strategic areas for European competitiveness, resilience and sovereignty and explicitly referenced in the FP10 and ECF;
- adequate and identifiable resources are secured for these areas within Pillar II and in the ECF policy window;
- European funding supports the full research and innovation continuum, including long-term research, demonstration and deployment through both market pathways and the practical uptake of solutions by farmers, foresters, advisors, SMEs, cooperatives and other actors across agri-food and bioeconomy value chains, in particular to enhance research and innovation in technologies and varieties necessary for the resilience of our food system;

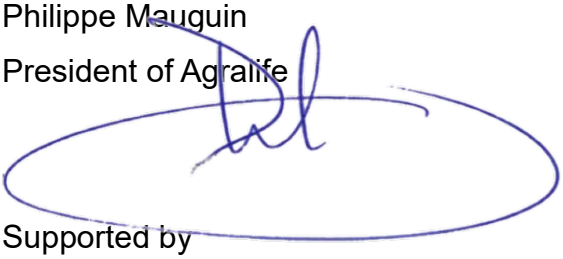
Europe’s sustainable transition and its future competitiveness are intrinsically linked. Investing in ambitious and collaborative European research today is an investment in

Europe’s future food security, economic resilience and strategic autonomy. At a time when the United States and China are making strategic investments in research and innovation, strengthening Europe’s own research and innovation capacity is essential to safeguard its long-term sovereignty.

We invite you to reflect these priorities in the ITRE Committee’s work on FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund, and we remain fully committed to supporting you in doing so.

Yours sincerely,

Philippe Mauguin
President of Agralife



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