



BOOSTING RURAL BIOECONOMY NETWORKS FOLLOWING MULTI-ACTOR APPROACHES

NEWSLETTER

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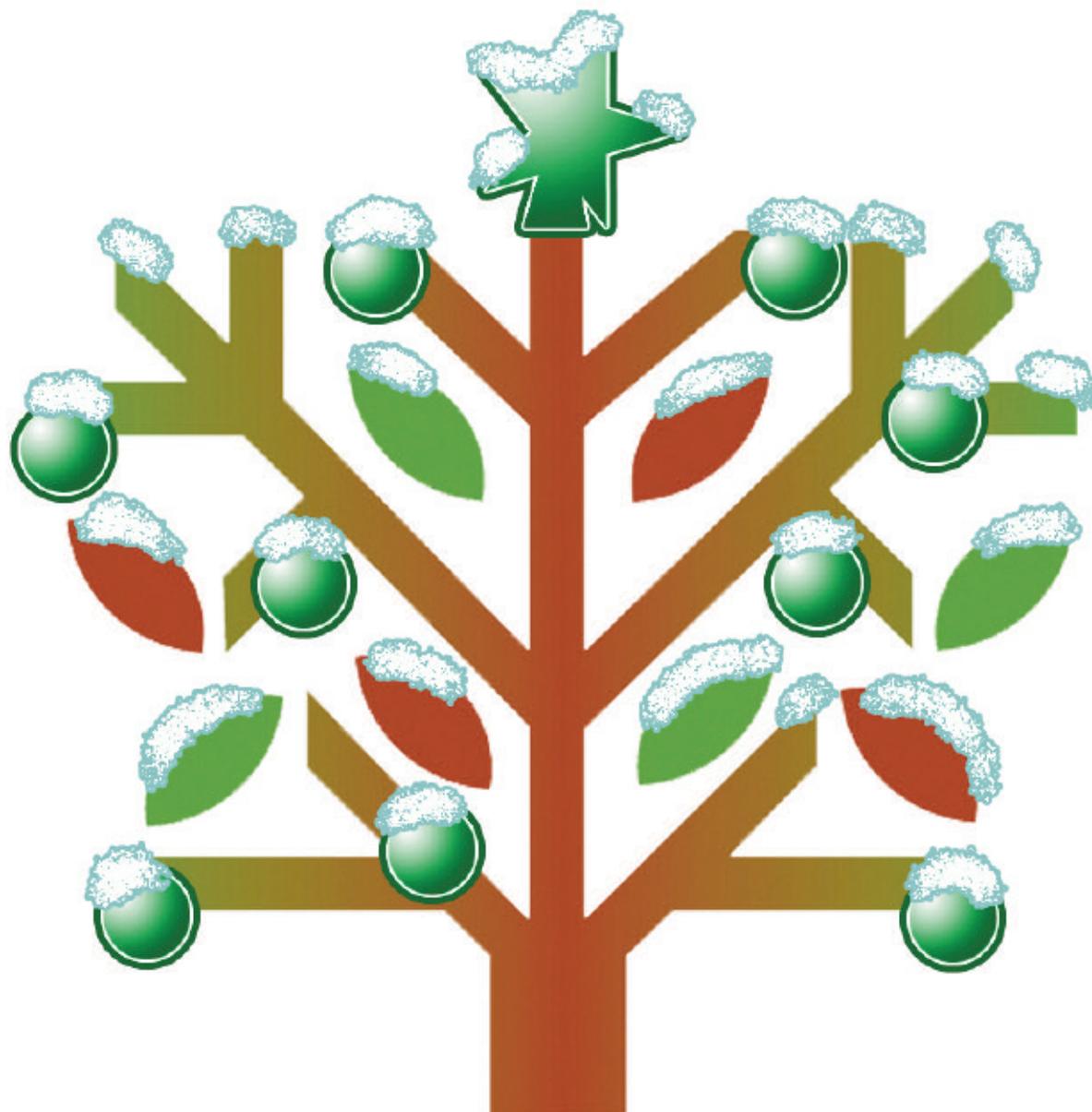


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PARTNERS



BRANCHES wishes you a happy and sustainable new year



BRANCHES

BOOSTING RURAL BIOECONOMY NETWORKS

The BRANCHES project partners launch the campaign for the Best Practice Award in the Bioeconomy

The main goal of the H2020 BRANCHES Project is the support to the development of rural bioeconomy production chains and, dissemination and sharing of good practices, are key among the portfolio of activities envisaged by the project. In this regard, the project is launching a competition to highlight the best innovative practice in the circular bioeconomy sector and, since last December, has launched an invitation opened to all practitioners from the 5 project countries to participate to the initiative by submitting good practices proposals. Participants are requested to propose their good practice and describe the main strengths through an easy-to-fill-in format. The received good practices will be circulated through several channels including web pages, social media and traditional distribution through project partners. The best good practice will be identified by an open public vote (accounting for 50% of the evaluation) and by the evaluation of a jury composed by experts from the BRANCHES Consortium. The prize will cover travel and accommodation costs for the winner to participate to a meeting / event and illustrate the innovative best practice in detail. The good practice will also receive prominence through all the channels activated by the project and good visibility will also be ensured by issuing a dedicated Practice Abstracts (PA) that will be brought to the attention of DG AGRI of the EU Commission, published on the BRANCHES website and mentioned in the project newsletter.

AWARD CRITERIA

The award criteria should include the following:

- **Replicability potential, feasibility of the solution in the assessed operational environment**
- **Innovation, usefulness, applicability**
- **Economic profitability**
- **Environmental improvement reached through the innovation implementation**
- **Social sustainability**

ELEGIBILITY

Innovative practices will be considered eligible when:

- **The innovation is already in practice in real environment (not only at lab or pilot scale) corresponding to TRLs 8-9.**
- **The applicants are owners or developers or users of the innovation, and have undersigned of a self-declaration of responsibility.**
- **There is clear evidence that the practice can be adopted (high replicability potential). Very singular unique cases may fall out of the scope.**
- **There is evidence of profitability, and whenever the practice has been subsidised, it must be evident the practice can be implementable profitably without subsidising.**
- **All sections of the award template have been fulfilled and criteria have been addressed.**
- **There is no evidence of a potential hacking of the voting, or machine voting. In such case the suspicious practice will be considered not eligible.**

Kick-off meeting of the German Network - Bioeconomy in Practice

In the last issue of the newsletter we reported on the initiatives to launch the National Thematic Networks in Finland, Italy, Poland and Spain. We are now pleased to inform that last 25 November 2021, the German Network –  Bioökonomie in der Praxis (Bioeconomy in practice) was also launched. The event, organized by the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ and DBFZ German Biomass Research Center gGmbH - counted with 37 participants, from a variety of stakeholder groups such as research and development institutions, public bodies, national and regional authorities, industries and NGOs. Speakers from the Bioeconomy Cluster e.V (from Central Germany), the German Bioeconomy Council (Bioökonomierat), UFZ and DBFZ presented the project BRANCHES and the motivation and goals of the Network, as well as reported on its initiatives and its advantages at EU, national and regional level. In an intensive discussion the participants had the opportunity to express their views on what they expect from the network and what they would like to contribute to it in order to strengthen the German bioeconomy.

The Network's next event will take place in April 2022. It will include topics of interest collected by the participants in this kick-off meeting (e.g. Information on technology assessment, scaling and industrialization, bioenergy & value creation) and will provide a platform for the dissemination of current projects, initiatives and best practices in the German bioeconomy. The participation in the Network is open and there are no obligations. Anyone interested in registering to the Network can do so by filling out the form [here](#)



The “New Soil Strategy - healthy soil for a healthy life”

Soil is not an easily renewable resource and it takes more than two thousand years to form only 10 cm of fertile soil. To recognize the proper role of the vital functions of the soil in regulating the balance of the Earth, the EU Commission has recently approved (November 17, 2021) the Strategy for 2030 "Healthy soils for the benefit of people, food, nature and climate". It is a short text that in 27 pages explains how EU Member States must equip themselves - with specific measures - to eliminate land erosion (zero net land take) and improve its conditions through concrete actions to be implemented within 2050 and largely in this decade. The soils - where more than 25% of the planet's total biodiversity is found - are the basis of the food chains that have always served to feed, directly and indirectly, all of humanity. In addition, good healthy soils constitute the largest carbon sink on the planet. For this reason, protecting conserving soils is of crucial in the challenge to be undertaken for the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. This Strategy, which will be an integral part of the implementation of the European Green Deal, recognizes that healthy soils affect certain EU objectives in terms of climate, biodiversity and even

the economy. To date, according to estimates, degraded soils concern between 60% and 70% of soils subject to erosion, compaction, reduction of organic matter, pollution, loss of biodiversity, salinization and waterproofing. Firmly countering the trend of soil degradation recorded on a global scale could generate up to 1,200 billion



euros per year of economic benefits associated with the positive externalities generated. On the contrary, it is clear that the cost of not acting with respect to this phenomenon - in Europe six times the cost of the necessary interventions - generates risks that are much more serious than merely economic ones, putting environmental and food safety at risk (link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12634-Healthy-soils-new-EU-soil-strategy_en).

Brussels definitively recognizes “carbon farming”



On December 2021 the Commission adopted a Communication on Sustainable Carbon Cycles, setting out how to increase carbon removals from the atmosphere. To balance out the impacts of our CO₂ emissions, the EU will need to drastically reduce its reliance on fossil carbon, upscale carbon farming to store more carbon in nature, and promote

industrial solutions to sustainably and verifiably remove and recycle carbon. Removing and storing more carbon, from the atmosphere, oceans and coastal wetlands, is essential to achieve the EU's legally binding commitment to become climate neutral by 2050. The Communication sets out short- to medium-term actions to support carbon farming and upscale this green business model to better reward land managers for carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection. By 2030, carbon farming initiatives should contribute 42Mt of CO₂ storage to Europe's natural carbon sinks. Measures to achieve this goal include:

- promoting carbon farming practices under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other EU programmes such as LIFE and Horizon Europe's “Soil Deal for Europe” research mission, and through national public financing and private finance;
- standardising the monitoring, reporting and verification methodologies needed to provide a clear and reliable certification framework for carbon farming, allowing for developing voluntary carbon markets;
- provide improved knowledge, data management and tailored advisory services to land managers, both on land and within blue carbon ecosystem.

While the focus of the European Green Deal is on drastically reducing the use of fossil carbon, the EU economy will still need carbon as a feedstock for industrial processes, such as the production of synthetic fuels, plastics, rubbers, chemicals and other advanced materials. This carbon will increasingly be delivered by the bioeconomy and technological solutions that capture, use and store CO₂. The Commission will engage in a dialogue with stakeholders with the aim of at least 20% of carbon use in chemical and plastic products to come from sustainable non-fossil sources by 2030.

The FAO-led “Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World” initiative

The sustainable use of natural resources, including forests, is a key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2015 Paris Agreement also highlighted the contribution of forests to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Forests therefore play a key role in the strategies for the transition to low-carbon economies as they are at the same time a fundamental element in the capture and storage of atmospheric carbon and suppliers of wood resources. Technical and methodological progress facilitates better monitoring of the life cycle of forests and wood products and, at the same time, the impact of sustainable forest management, on improving the livelihoods of rural populations, on the contribution to forest and landscapes restoration, on the role that urban forests play in cities and on the reduction of carbon footprints, is also growing. Despite all these positive impacts, the sustainable production and consumption of wood products has received little attention on the international development agenda, partly due to the use of unsustainable management and utilization practices that has led to low levels of funding and poor marketing for sustainable wood value chains. It is vital to raise awareness of the benefits of sustainable wood production and consumption by changing approaches to encourage a more positive and responsive attitude to develop and strengthen sustainable wood value chains. Sustainable Wood for a Sustainable World (SW4SW) was adopted in May 2018 as a joint initiative of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a result of the SW4SW global meeting held at FAO headquarters in 2017. This initiative is jointly led by FAO, with the support of its Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest Industries (ACSF), the Center for International Forest Research (CIFOR), the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the World Bank and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). SW4SW aims at strengthening sustainable wood value chains by enhancing their social, economic and environmental benefits from production through to consumption. The initiative will implement collaborative activities and catalyse efforts to strengthen sustainable wood value chains by promoting positive linkages between these value chains and poverty reduction, sustainable landscapes and sustainable growth. It will support the formulation of policy frameworks and approaches, as well as market solutions, to strengthen sustainable wood value chains. Ultimately, SW4SW will contribute to the attainment of most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including the UN Global Forest Goals, and the climate change objectives. Given the strong convergence of interests with BRANCHES, it would be very nice if over the next few years we could create a synergy between the two projects.



SUSTAINABLE WOOD
for a
SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Ms. Sofia Mannelli, Chair of the Italian Association “Green Chemistry bionet”, informed us that one of the main innovations of the New European Regulation on Fertilizers (2019/1009), which will officially enter into force the next 16 July 2022, concerns the inclusion of organic fertilizers and biostimulants, as a valid alternative to synthetic fertilizers. Furthermore, Ms. Mannelli pointed out that the use of ashes, from the combustion of virgin vegetable biomass, is reported in paragraph 19 of the regulation as it follows:

“For some recovered wastes, such as struvite, biochar and ash-based products, under Directive 2008/98 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, there has been a market demand for them to be used as fertilising products. Furthermore, for the waste used as raw material in the recovery operation, for the treatment processes and techniques as well as for the fertilising products resulting from the recovery operation, certain requirements are necessary in order to ensure that the use of these fertilising products does not have general repercussions harmful to the environment or human health [...]”

The Regulation contains useful elements to take other steps forward towards the circular bioeconomy.



Frans Timmermans and Janusz Wojciechowski



Regarding the recent EU Strategy on “Sustainable Carbon Cycles”, Mr. Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal said: “Carbon removals are vital in keeping our climate commitments within reach. Together with sharp emission reductions, we need sustainable solutions for removing and recycling carbon, which will make our economy more resilient and help us fight both the climate and biodiversity crises. Today, we set out the main principles and objectives of our work to prepare the necessary rules. These rules will ensure carbon removals are credible and have the

desired effect, and help to create new business opportunities in carbon farming for farmers, foresters, and other land managers.”

On the same theme, Mr. Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture added: “Agriculture and forestry are our allies in the fight against climate change, they mitigate its impacts by removing carbon from the atmosphere. Carbon farming will strengthen the contribution of farmers and foresters to the decarbonisation of our economy, by providing extra income for farmers, while protecting biodiversity, making farms more resilient to natural disasters and ensuring food security. Research and innovation will also contribute to this goal, providing further solutions to farmers and foresters.”



Fuels of the Future 2022

The 19th International Conference on Renewable Mobility "Fuels of the Future" will take place again from 24th to 28nd January 2022.

The motto of the conference is: "Fuels of the

Future 2022 - Navigator for sustainable Mobility!" Fuels of the future 2022 welcomes national and international participants including representatives from the raw material collecting and processing industry, the biofuel, mineral oil and automotive industry, the chemical industry, the transport and logistics sector, certification systems as well as from politics, science and research. The aim of the International Conference is to provide participants with an up-to-date status report on the many different legislative initiatives and to discuss corresponding recommendations for action, to present current market developments and project examples of renewable mobility, and to provide a broad platform for the exchange of experience. The event will be bilingual (German-English).



Bioenergy in Tomorrow's Energy System: Decentralised Solutions for a Climate Neutral Economy

Unveiling of the Report "Towards an Integrated Energy System: Assessing Bioenergy's Socio-Economic and Environmental Impact" on 24 January 2022, 14:30-16:00 CET. The report reviews the current and future role of bioenergy in the EU energy system, from the perspective of employment and economic growth in Europe, as well as the economic and societal benefits of the increasing use of bioenergy within the transition towards a circular economy. The presentation of the report will be followed by a panel discussion with the industry and policy makers to debate the opportunities of the energy transition from the perspective of the bioenergy value-chain and discuss current and future legislative framework to deliver on EU climate and energy targets, and the role of bioenergy in this transition.

How to implement bioenergy in existing industrial installations - Results from the BIOFIT project

This January 2022, the BIOFIT project will hold its final conference. The event will take place online as series of conference sessions spread over three days between 18-20 January. On January 18 and 19 four industry sessions will be held, each of them addressing a specific industry sector and presenting results from the project case studies. The event will be rounded off with a Policy Breakfast “Retrofit-for-55” on January 20 (08:30 – 10:30 CET). This conference session is specifically dedicated to national and EU-level policymakers. It will present drivers and barriers as well as policy recommendations from the BIOFIT project in a nutshell and provide an interactive platform for discussion among participants.



Rethink - Circular Economy Forum 2022

Re-think Circular Economy Forum Milan 2022 on 10 and 11 February 2022 per presentare aims to present a vision on macro-trends, possible evolutionary paths and main projects concerning the Circular Economy both nationally and internationally. Its main purpose is to stimulate the birth and development of innovative and entrepreneurial activities that could have a positive impact on local and national economic systems. During the two days of the forum, companies, startups, research bodies and institutional actors will present the projects they are carrying out and supporting at different levels.