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## Plant ETP position on the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, 8.11.2017

The European Technology Platform “Plants for the Future” (Plant ETP) welcomes the orientation of the next framework program towards reaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sees many opportunities for industry, academia and the farming community. Plant ETP is convinced that for Europe to successfully address the SDGs targets, it is crucial to better align research and innovation efforts across the agricultural value chain and beyond.

An improved alignment of R&I efforts in Europe requires a coordinated “whole systems” approach that will facilitate increasing resilience towards variable abiotic and biotic stresses, harnessing the diversity of the biosphere, contributing to diverse diets for human nutrition and health, delivering superior alternatives to today's fossil-based economies, providing high value products for human health and wellbeing, and fostering economic growth and social prosperity.

To maximize the reach and impact of FP9, the Plant ETP recommends considering the following measures:

1. Ensure an adequate level of funding in the upcoming years by increasing the overall budget of FP9 (to €120 billion)<sup>1</sup> accompanied by a substantially better aligned and increased public and private investment in agricultural research and innovation.
2. Encourage an integrated approach of different stakeholders of the whole agri-food and non-food value networks. The Plant ETP sees much value in public-private partnerships as this mechanism facilitates “co-production of knowledge” by the participating actors and supports both innovation push and pull. To this end, a PPP on Integrated Crop Production could boost an interdisciplinary and multi-sector mission at critical mass and thereby trigger dedicated preferred partnerships between industry, farming, academia, European Commission and the Member States. In addition, PPPs directly address SDG9 (“Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure”).
3. Establish long-term funding instruments (>7 years) to allow the full research and innovation cycle and raise the likelihood of meaningful outcomes; especially in the plant breeding sector, where 10-15 years is often required to introduce new varieties on the market that serve the needs of farmers and society at large.
4. Continue the “Excellent Science” pillar including the European Research Council (ERC) programmes as well as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) which have achieved major successes in supporting and attracting excellent frontier scientists and training the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is calculated by maintaining the average annual growth rate of Horizon 2020, as recommended by: [The ‘Lamy report’ of the independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation Programmes](#) [REPORT on the assessment of Horizon 2020 implementation in view of its interim evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal \(2016/2147\(INI\)\)](#)

5. Ensure that the Fast Track to Innovation and the SME instrument are maintained as open instruments with sufficient funding, and that novel plant breeding technologies continue to be considered Key Enabling Technologies.
6. Ensure that the Mission-based pillar addressing "Global challenges" includes the plant research and innovation areas that provide solutions to address the targets set under the SDGs. Plant research and breeding make significant contributions to help ending hunger and malnutrition by promoting more productive, more resource-efficient and more sustainable agriculture and food production as well as by combating climate change and supporting renewable energy; therefore, within the FP9 budget, it is crucial that sufficient funding is allocated to those missions relevant to plant research and breeding.
7. Support in the Global Challenges pillar the entire collaborative Research and Innovation Cycle by achieving a balance between fundamental research and applied research, demonstration and innovation actions and strengthening collaborative research. Encourage the multidirectional dialogues and exchanges between different stakeholders. The current requirement for all actors to be addressed within each project significantly limits the chances for discovery science and innovation in European research. Flexible approaches and separate mechanisms for the subsequent integration of research and innovation should be encouraged to maximise both discovery and impact.
8. Endorse the use of advanced practices and technologies to broaden the scope and chances of success for innovation opportunities. Focus on how challenges can be addressed given the multitude of approaches available. Multidisciplinary and collaborative setting must be strengthened. Future programmes should be more flexible in their approach to encourage a truly balanced integration of diverse combinations of technologies and practices.
9. 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 for outreach activities.
10. Encourage participation of industry especially SMEs through better allocation of funds. Financing more projects within a same scope instead of having fewer with a bigger budget would widen participation of small and medium sized actors. A higher number of smaller projects would attract more SMEs, as these are easier to manage and better suited to the focused R&I relevant to smaller companies. Otherwise, a multitude of similar, independent projects involving the SME target group might help to better tackle potential bottlenecks in the workflow and in turn provide innovative solutions. Continuation of bottom-up funding scheme will ensure the most innovative and crucial ideas are funded.

11. Further simplify rules of participation and improve the quality of evaluations to attract the best applicants. Subject to higher funding per project, the inclusion of all actors (public and private) from the setup of a consortium should be a prerequisite and participation across underrepresented regions of Europe (EU13) should be increased.
12. Increase synergies between EU Framework Programme and other funding mechanisms including the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the Common Agricultural, Food and Nutrition Policy (CAP+), The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and Regional Funds.

European breeding companies together with plant scientists and farming community have played, and continue to play, a prominent role in creating knowledge, providing innovative solutions with advanced technologies and new concepts that strengthen societal progress and the competitiveness of the EU. The Plant ETP, itself being composed of industry, academia and farmers, would welcome that the future Framework Programme facilitates a holistic systems approach promoting stakeholder interaction and coordinated R&I efforts.

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#### **About ETP Plants for the Future - [www.plantetp.org](http://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 7,000 companies, 90% of which are SMEs) active in research, breeding, production and seed marketing. A 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 and universities as institutional members and 3,300 Personal Members, representing over 27,000 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.