



## European Technology Platforms representing the Agri & Aqua Food sector call for a more ambitious budget for Horizon Europe.

Brussels, 24 July 2020

*In trying to provide the right framework for an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic European Heads of State and Government agreed earlier this week on the Union's budget for 2021-2027. Whilst the Council decision provides a clear direction for a rapid decision later this fall, the reduced fund allocated to the Research Program Horizon Europe are a concern. Investment in Research and Innovation (R&I) are fundamental to improve food security and the sustainability of EU food systems and ensure its transition in line with the Green Deal objectives.*

The undersigned European Technology Platforms and research partnerships in the European Agri & Aqua Food sectors welcome the unprecedented visionary agreement achieved by the European Council to finance the recovery of the EU from the COVID19 crisis. However, full recovery requires resilience embedded in all parts of society. This can only be achieved by strengthening future R&I efforts beyond what is done today, supporting the ambitious plan already laid out in Horizon Europe. Therefore, a decreased budget, as suggested in the decision of the European Council, is incompatible with these objectives and significantly diminishes Europe's capacity to accomplish the green and digital transitions.

We would like to address an urgent message to the European Council, European Parliament and European Commission on **the importance of R&I to support robust and resilient food, agricultural and aquaculture systems**. Important research needs have already been identified by our respective platforms, including increasing sustainability and circularity in food and feed production and processing. These will all impact the EU's competitiveness when it comes to sustainable food production, as well as its food security in times of crisis.

A substantial budget for R&I is key, as it will support the transition towards a greener Europe and address these challenges in the global context, in line with the ambitious goals of the EU Green Deal and the subsequent Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.

With its set of new instruments, such as the Missions and European Partnerships, combined with an expected increased engagement from citizens, SMEs, young entrepreneurs, suppliers of technology and services and farmers, appropriate funding is key. The decreased funding will endanger these challenges and ambitions.

The current pandemic has demonstrated a clear need to secure our food production, from the farmers to the consumers, whilst protecting rural and coastal areas, seas, nature and biodiversity. The EU is a world leader in responsible agri-/aquaculture, food production and in scientific excellence. Science-based sustainable solutions will be essential to drive improvements in our food systems and help farmers produce in a more sustainable manner whilst securing a fair income. It is of vital importance that the EU, in collaboration with its Member and Associate States, continues supporting European Land and Aqua Farming through collaborative research and innovation actions. This is essential for a full recovery of Europe and to utilise the opportunity to move forward with the focus to address major challenges ahead. We therefore urge the European Institutions to protect and even extend the budget allocated to Horizon Europe.



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