

## **Copa-Cogeca's Working Party on Research & Innovation and the European Technology Platform "Food for Life"**

### **Joint strategic priorities for research and innovation**

1. **Horizon Europe:** Research for the benefit of the whole agri-food sector should be at the centre of the Horizon Europe programme, especially in cluster 6. Collaboration within the whole food system should be supported and promoted in order to co-create and co-develop new tools and business models that underpin sustainable innovations relevant for European farmers, food processors and society as a whole. The Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken to halt the spread of the virus are having a major impact on the agri-food sector. The disruption of the single market and the impact on farmers, their cooperatives, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reflects the importance of the resilience of the sector. Bringing the whole food system together to develop practical and replicable solutions is vital for successful EU Research and Innovation policy and to achieve the European Commission's Green Deal ambitions.
2. **Climate Change:** Research and Innovation should address both climate change mitigation and adaptation in a manner that considers the whole agri-food system, including consumers. This is a key priority that will have an impact on the future of the sector and the availability of food, feed and other products and services that are critical for a sustainable food system. Solutions must address the need for a more climate-smart and robust agri-food sector focused on sustainable resources, water and energy efficiency, innovative technologies, new breeding and growing techniques and digital tools. These provide the sector with the means to tackle climate change and its effects. An integrated approach is vital to ensure that we meet our international commitments and EU targets and take consumers with us as we face these challenges.
3. **Circular bioeconomy:** The untapped potential of the circular bioeconomy for the agri-food sector is highlighted in the Farm2Fork strategy and is key to improving resource efficiency and enhancing sustainability. It is important that all of the sector's actors are mobilised in order to ensure coverage of areas such as valorising residues and by-products for the broadest range of value-added products. This itself could lead to the creation of new businesses and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.
4. **Vibrant Rural Areas:** Repopulation, generational renewal and improved services and infrastructure are vital to the vibrancy of rural areas and would benefit the EU as a whole. Rural businesses need to be supported in order to be sustainable and competitive, as well as to develop new business models where appropriate. The EU has a very diverse range of traditional foods, diets and landscapes and it is important that these are preserved to ensure that the European agri-food sector can continue to produce high quality, safe, nutritious, diversified, and sustainable food.
5. **Digitalisation and New Technologies:** Research and Innovation is key to the development and uptake of new technologies by the agri-food sector. Cross-sectoral collaboration through digital tools should be promoted and supported. The potential of satellites, sensor technologies, internet of things, tools for Industry 4.0 (e.g., digital twinning) with a focus on Artificial Intelligence have enormous potential and can have a positive impact on its contribution to food safety, food security, consumer trust and transparency and to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. It can also help develop new business models and enhance sustainability and competitiveness.