

The twelve Dutch provinces and the state of Baden-Württemberg present their position paper on biotechnology

The European Commission has announced an initiative on biotechnology and bio-production in its work programme for 2024. The state of Baden-Württemberg and the province of Noord-Holland, on behalf of the House of Dutch Provinces, welcome the initiative. In view of the growing importance of this sector for the economy both in the EU and in our regions, we hope that this will provide important impetus. With this position paper, we would like to ask the Commission to consider the potential of the sustainable circular bioeconomy for this initiative.

We want to promote the fact that the initiative on biotechnology and production also considers biological processes in the area of recycling and recovery of raw materials from waste, waste water and exhaust air as well as CO₂ and thus takes into account and supports the sustainable bioeconomy as well as focussing on the regional and municipal level. It is important that the initiative facilitate a triple helix approach to encourage close cooperation between industry and all levels of government as well as academia.

Biotechnology is a key technology for the bioeconomy. The planned biotechnology initiative is therefore of great importance for the urban and industrial bioeconomy. Numerous biotechnological processes are used in the bioeconomy. This applies, for example, to urban and industrial biorefineries for the production of raw materials such as fibres, fertilisers or hydrogen from waste and wastewater. Baden-Württemberg and the Dutch provinces are promoting numerous pilot projects as part of their respective strategies for a sustainable bioeconomy, often with the support of the ERDF. We therefore see great synergy effects for the planned biotechnology initiative with the EU bioeconomy strategy as well as with our regional bioeconomy strategies and projects.

We consider it important for the biotechnology initiative to focus on the circular bioeconomy, building on the EU bioeconomy strategy. This applies in particular to the urban and industrial bioeconomy sector, which

is based on secondary raw material flows such as waste, wastewater or exhaust air. In our view, the sector can only realise its full potential if the EU bioeconomy strategy and the EU biotechnology initiative are interlinked in the sense of a sustainable circular economy. To this end, it is essential that the regional dimension is also taken into account in the planned biotechnology initiative and that regions and municipalities are addressed directly - also with regard to funding, including from the ERDF. In its interim report on the bioeconomy strategy, the European Commission recognises an increase in regional and local bioeconomy strategies for good reason. In particular, when secondary raw material flows, such as wastewater, waste or exhaust air, are used as resources for the bioeconomy, local actors who manage the infrastructure and are responsible for the management of these material flows come into focus. This means that regions and municipalities in the EU generally bear administrative responsibility for these secondary raw material sources.

However, these resources are not only highly relevant with regard to biotechnology and bioproduction; biotechnological processes can also be used to recover critical raw materials such as metals from secondary sources. Their consistent utilisation not only contributes to achieving the EU's circular economy goals, but also has advantages in terms of sustainability compared to the primary production of biomass, which is available in limited quantities.

We look forward to a continued discussion on this important topic.



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