

## **EURAGRI 2008**

### **Contribution to Panel I**

#### **The conclusions of the informal competitiveness council in Versailles (July 17<sup>th</sup> 2008)**

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The conclusions of the informal competitiveness council of Versailles must be considered as.... informal. They are not official conclusions/decisions by the council of ministers. However the conclusions of the Versailles informal council will be on the agenda of the next, formal, competitiveness council on September 25<sup>th</sup> ., as an information point (no discussion).

The Versailles informal council main objective was to carry on the Ljubljana process started under the Slovene presidency and which will be continued under the Tcheque and Swedish presidencies. The Ljubljana process intends to revivify the Lisbon strategy of building the European Research Area (ERA) by establishing a shared vision of the ERA by 2020 and drawing a roadmap to reach this vision. The objective of the French presidency, ending in december 2008, is to come up with a shared vision. The Tcheque and Swedish presidencies will be in charge of the collective drawing of the roadmap and of proposing an action plan towards the shared vision.

In a very timely manner, on the eve of the Versailles informal council, the Commission issued a communication on joint programming, which could become a core concept for building the ERA.

The Versailles informal council started by a plenary session discussing the general stakes regarding the building of the ERA. Then the ministers split into 4 thematic working groups for more detailed discussions on appropriate pathways towards a shared vision of the ERA in the selected sectors.

One interesting point was the choice of the selected areas:

- ICT,
- Energy,
- Health in a context of ageing population, and
- Food, water & ecosystems. The new face of agriculture. What research agenda fo 2020?

The Versailles council was instrumental in putting agriculture and food research at the forefront of the agenda of the Ministers of research, which can be considered as an important step.

The agriculture and food working group was chaired by the Tcheque Minister and composed of delegations from Ireland, the UK, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Island. It was co-chaired by JM Silva Rodriguez, the DG for Research in the Commission. Marion Guillou, and Lisa Sennerby Forsse were asked to give introductory presentations to the working group.

The conclusions of the working group can be classified into 3 types:

- conclusions related to the objectives and *raison d'être* of agricultural & food research

- conclusions related to concepts and tools to reach the objectives, and
- conclusions related to actions to be undertaken

### **1) Objectives and *raison d'être* of agricultural & food research**

- take international leadership and contribute to solving global challenges related to food & agriculture
- give evidence in support of policy decision making, mainly for integrated policies (CAP, fisheries) but also for non integrated policies (health, environment, regional development).
- Support innovation through partnerships (notably public/private) and ensure that all EU countries (including associated and candidate countries) can benefit from new knowledge.
- Support the competitiveness of European agriculture and Agri-food industry
- Improve the attractiveness of the ERA by adequate training programmes for researchers

### **2) Concepts and tools to reach the objectives**

- Joint programming is an opportunity for agriculture & food research
- There are already existing tools that can be mobilised to develop and fulfil a vision of agriculture & food research that would reach the objectives, like the European Technology Platforms, SCAR, etc. An alliance of research organisations could also contribute to fulfilling the objectives.
- The most successful Platforms (food for life, sustainable water) could be transformed into JTIs with strong commitment of the industry
- research infrastructures are a vital element for the future of agricultural research: an overall strategy towards shared access to European research infrastructure is needed.
- Prospective exercises and collective scientific expertise are useful tools to guide research orientation and programming and should be used systematically
- International food security should be a prominent topic for research and the various international initiatives underway concerning that subject should all have a strong research component.

### **3) Actions to be taken**

- reinforce SCAR, link it to stakeholders (Platforms,...) and establish an alliance of research organisations in Europe
- establish a knowledge and innovation community (KIC) in the European Institute of Technology
- reinforce co-operation between European research organisations and the CGIAR
- articulate research priorities with the CAP.