



Press Release

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Press Office

Wilhelmstraße 54, 10117 Berlin,

OFFICE ADDRESS Germany

PHONE +49 30 18 529-3170

FAX +49 30 18 529-4262

E-MAIL pressestelle@bmel.bund.de

INTERNET www.bmel.de/en

Agriculture Ministers from around 70 countries undertake to promote a sustainable bioeconomy

Özdemir: “Sustainable bioeconomy is the compass for an intact natural environment”

Under the chairmanship of **Federal Agriculture Minister Cem Özdemir**, agriculture ministers from approximately 70 states and representatives of 14 International Organisations agreed at the **17th Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Conference** to jointly drive forward sustainable bioeconomy. They undertake to strengthen the contribution of sustainable bioeconomy to global food security, conserve biodiversity and mitigate climate change. The ministers unanimously support the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) to fund a project of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to develop a global bioeconomy partnership.

At the end of the Berlin Conference of Agriculture Ministers, **Federal Minister Özdemir** said: “It is still the case that every tenth person in the world goes to bed hungry. Wars and conflicts send hunger rates soaring, and the climate crisis is exacerbating the situation drastically. Hunger in turn stifles peace - a vicious circle.

As agriculture ministers, we must shoulder responsibility. We have therefore agreed today on a clear pledge: Bio-based and sustainable instead of fossil - that is the compass for an intact natural environment and for climate change mitigation. Our final communiqué expresses our agreement that bio-based innovations are a genuine game-changer that can outstrip fossil resources. They combine sustainability with economic progress and create new opportunities. It is very important to state in this regard that the food-first principle is not open to negotiation”.

The agriculture ministers agreed in their final communiqué to join international partners in pooling knowledge and coordinating approaches through a global bioeconomy partnership at the FAO. **Federal Minister Özdemir**: “We need effective knowledge transfer. With the Bioeconomy Partnership, we are

building on the Brazilian G20 Presidency which last year launched a Global Initiative on Bioeconomy. We aim to create a sustainable circular economy instead of being stuck in the dead end of fossil resources.”

Federal Minister Özdemir also underlined that it was particularly important that rural regions and also smallholder agriculture profited from the innovations of sustainable bioeconomy: “Sustainable agriculture and bioeconomy are not a luxury; they are a necessity for a safe and decent future. Together we can create good prospects and added value based on sustainability, peace and human dignity!”

Following the first case of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Germany since 1988, the animal disease also had an impact on the Agriculture Ministers’ Conference. In the course of numerous talks, **Federal Agriculture Minister Cem Özdemir** and the BMEL State Secretaries provided transparent information to their counterparts on the outbreak, the current situation and possible export agreements against the backdrop of the FMD outbreak.

High-level representatives of 14 International Organisations, such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) took part in the Agriculture Ministers’ Conference and contributed their expertise.

You can have another look at the doorstep interview of Federal Minister **Cem Özdemir** and **John Steenhuisen**, the South African Minister of Agriculture, which will be online shortly, [here](#). Further information is available on the GFFA website [here](#).

Key results of the check Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Conference:

Sustainable production of biomass

When renewable biological resources are produced, managed and processed sustainably, the bioeconomy can contribute to social, economic and ecological development and consequently to achieving the sustainable development goals. The ministers reiterate their support for the Paris Climate Agreement and to the Convention on Biodiversity. They emphasise the importance of sustainable food systems and sustainable production, including agroecology, precision farming and organic farming. At the same time they recognise that no production system is a one-size-fits-all solution but must always be adapted to local and regional conditions.

Bioeconomy as a source of income

The bioeconomy already provides many people's livelihoods worldwide and constitutes the foundation of entire industrial sectors. This applies, for instance, to the sustainable use of pasture land, resources from the sea and aquatic ecosystems, and non-timber forest products that are collected, such as fruits, nuts and resins. The ministers emphasise the potential of a blue bioeconomy as an additional source of value creation and income, in particular for fishing communities. They highlight algae as one of the most promising currently underutilised resources.

Using biomass sustainably – Ensuring global food security

While the ministers will promote a sustainable bioeconomy, they also undertake to achieve and prioritise food security. They support strengthening the step-by-step realisation of the **right to adequate food**. They recognise how important it is to advance a sustainable bioeconomy together with a **circular economy** for all value chains in order to reduce the pressure on renewable biological resources. They undertake to promote the use of agricultural, forest and aquatic biomass and the respective by-products. They emphasise that the diversification of protein sources can help improve global food security and nutrition.

Strengthening innovation

The ministers emphasise that science, technology, innovation, training, communication and cross-sectoral cooperation are key for a sustainable bioeconomy, while acknowledging traditional knowledge and cultural heritage. They emphasise that access to finance is necessary in order to provide the bioeconomy with opportunities to grow, in particular for smallholder farmers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

Creating a fair framework – Harnessing change

The ministers acknowledge that the greater need for biomass for food and non-food uses could lead to **conflicts of interests**, creating competition between different end users in respect of the use of natural resources such as land and water. When they address these issues, their **priority is the step-by-step realisation of the right to adequate food** and sustainable development within the planetary boundaries.

Launching an international partnership

The ministers welcome the FAO project, funded by Germany, to develop a Global Bioeconomy Partnership; this project will help define the Partnership's sphere of activity and governance framework. Recognising the necessity for such an initiative, the ministers call for this initiative to be actively supported as soon as it is finalised. A description of the project is available [here](#).