

Enhancing innovation in European agriculture

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Warsaw, Poland on 1 to 3 December 2016:

Having regard to:

- the resolution 'Agriculture and climate change' adopted at the 2009 ALDE Party Congress in Barcelona, Spain;
- the resolution 'Agriculture and Global Development' adopted at the 2003 ALDE Party Congress in Amsterdam, the Netherlands;
- the ALDE Party's fringe meeting on 4 June 2016 at the Council meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on 'Enhancing innovation in European agriculture'.

Producing more with less

Notes that:

- owing to pressure on natural resources, climate change, the scarcity of land, the vulnerability of the environment, the growth of the world population and changing consumer behaviour, it is essential that farmers produce more with less; meaning reducing the ecological footprint per kg of product produced;
- innovation plays a key role in making agriculture part of the solution to many of these challenges; and is vital for European agriculture to remain competitive and sustainable.

Recognises that:

- agriculture is one of the most innovative economic sectors yet the potential of innovation in agriculture has not been fully recognised nor is the European regulatory framework fit to keep pace with rapid advancements;
- being at the forefront of new technology uptake ensures a thriving rural economy and job creation as well as keeping pace with wider economic development;
- economic development and ecological sustainability are complementary provided enough room is left for innovation and entrepreneurship;
- the average age of EU farmers is steadily increasing, as there are fewer young people entering or remaining in the sector to guarantee the succession, and therefore innovative practices can help to make the profession more attractive to younger generations.

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Is strongly committed to:

- unleashing European agriculture's innovative potential in order to produce better quality products, ensure enough food supplies, reduce its environmental footprint and improve animal welfare.

Smart farming

Encourages:

- the uptake of precision agriculture which provides new whole farm management approaches enabled by new technologies, such as navigation satellite driven machinery and drones, which can significantly reduce both the use of fertiliser and water use, and combat soil erosion;
- innovative solutions in animal housing systems that can contribute to a higher level of animal welfare and consequently reducing the need for veterinary medicinal products, including antimicrobials;
- the possibility of processing animal manure into mineral concentrate that could be used to manufacture 'green fertiliser' which could reduce the need for artificial fertilisers;
- the continuous development of innovative new breeding techniques for plants contributing to the development of plants with higher yields, greater nutritional value and better resistance to pests, diseases and adverse weather conditions; and which provide unprecedented opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of conventional agriculture.

Stresses:

- the importance and relevance of the European Digital Single Market for agriculture in terms of tackling problems of interoperability, standards for better convergence and questions of data ownership;
- the importance of favouring bottom-up SME innovation initiatives over industry initiatives, in order to empower small farmers.

Calls on:

- the European Commission and Member States to support innovation in agriculture by providing regulatory coherence, clarity and room for entrepreneurship, and to update obsolete legislation to accommodate new solutions because conflicting and contradictory measures steer farmers away from producing more efficiently;
- the European Commission and Member States to come forward with solutions to stimulate the uptake of precision farming techniques and

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technologies, and remove the barriers to adopting precision farming, in particular those linked to complex and fragmented ICT systems and lack of access to capital;

- the European Commission and Member States to foster research and development in farming.

Unleashing innovation with a reformed CAP

Stresses that:

- innovation is an essential tool and considers it to be a key horizontal policy priority for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to develop, implement and achieve the objectives of the CAP 2014-2020 reform;
- a more market-oriented CAP will enhance the innovative power and competitiveness of the European agricultural sector by reducing government intervention and stimulating entrepreneurship;
- educational programs need to target climate change, sustainability and resilience to a larger extent, as well as business modelling, investment support alternatives, farming side products and technology. The generation shift in the agricultural sector needs to come to terms with a new outlook on what farming encompasses in terms of financial sustainability and business modelling.

Calls on:

- the European Commission to ensure that innovation is explicitly taken into account in forthcoming review and reform of the CAP after 2020; and to ensure that the CAP provides more flexibility for the use of newly developed techniques and practices without an increase in burdensome rules and procedures in order to give farmers more space for entrepreneurship;
- the European Commission and Member States to ensure accessible and innovative agricultural education as a central aspect of the development and transformation of the agricultural sector;
- the European Commission to reform CAP with a view to promoting small- and medium-scaled farming as well as promoting diversity of farming methods including ecological farming with a view to laying the groundworks for a sustainable agricultural sector in Europe.

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