

AIMING FOR A SUSTAINABLE BIOECONOMY

The bioeconomy is in full swing. As the new name for the economy grounded in natural, agricultural and forestry resources that make up biomass, it represents a dramatic change for the economic sectors. For it is called to partly replace the use of fossil fuels with renewable resources.

And yet, the bioeconomy inevitably impacts ecosystems and biodiversity. It can generate risks of over-reliance on natural resources and of food security or environmental shocks. There are therefore questions over how sustainable it really is.

The ESEC recalls that new production and consumer methods must be adopted if the environmental and societal challenges are to be taken up without casting doubt over populations' quality of life or the



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development capacities of future generations. It therefore presents its proposals for a sustainable bioeconomy with this in mind.



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THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BIOECONOMY

The ESEC recommends implementing agricultural practices in keeping with France's climate aims, protecting and maintaining soil fertility whilst respecting biodiversity.

It recommends increasing support for innovation so as to develop dietary habits that are more balanced, based on plant proteins in particular.

Efficiency and sustainability criteria must come into the equation alongside value added ones. The ESEC recommends:

- setting sustainability criteria at local and global level in terms of bioresource production;
- steering public financing towards more efficient uses depending on the type of biomass;
- adopting a European bioeconomy strategy which features more sustainability criteria;
- venturing further as regards studies on land use change and the consideration of related indirect carbon emissions in the calculation of emissions.

Environmental accounting can contribute to efforts to use bioresources rationally. The ESEC recommends testing out the merits of the "CARE" accounting method and assessing its scope.

The purpose of the new National Biomass Resources Observatory (ONRB) will be to list and estimate the resources. The ESEC recommends coordination between the ONRB and the French Agency for Biodiversity (AFB).

The ESEC stresses the need for multiple forward-looking scenarios backed up by figures, which integrate sustainability conditions. To develop these, it asks the State to set up a dedicated "sustainable bioeconomy task force", particularly bringing together public and research institutions. This task force would open up these scenarios for debate by a national bioeconomy council - where information is shared, ideas are pooled and guidance is provided for decision-making.

The ESEC recommends shifting the balance of the public incentive mechanism in favour of non-energy uses of biomass - biomaterials in particular.

It recommends that France champion these key thrusts of a sustainable bioeconomic model in the current revision of the European strategy.

BIOECONOMIC RESEARCH

Regarding this research, an ethical framework needs to be defined and resources set aside; transparency processes need to be guaranteed and debates organised; and the appropriate security mechanisms need developing.

The ESEC recommends drawing up a road map to focus part of this research on replacing the most hazardous products; the most energy-efficient industrial processes; and the standardisation of life cycle assessment methods incorporating biodiversity criteria.

Today it appears necessary to federate, coordinate and promote research on the bioeconomy; and document the administrations, industry and researchers on the scientific knowledge and industrial techniques.

To address these challenges in terms of streamlining and making more efficient, the ESEC recommends setting up a public interest research group, which could group together such structures as INRA, the CNRS and ADEME. Setting up a French bioeconomy institute, similar to IFP Énergies nouvelles (IFPEN), could represent an alternative, and one which is perhaps in a better position to oversee all of the implications of the bioeconomy.

DEVELOPING THE INDUSTRY AND JOBS

The ESEC calls for studies on the changes to tailor current jobs more to the bioeconomy.

Developing biorefineries is an opportunity for all stakeholders across the board. The ESEC asks that local projects comply with sustainability criteria and take the goals bearing on safeguarding biodiversity and soils that support production. Under such conditions, the ESEC invites the public authorities to make the development of biorefineries a key consideration.

The criteria defining the sustainability of biofuels and the certification method must be broadened and strengthened. The ESEC invites the European Commission to start working with the stakeholders in this respect.

Regarding the minimum incorporation limits for second-generation biofuels, the ESEC invites the public authorities to conduct an impact study prior to organising talks with the stakeholders.

The ESEC recommends swiftly getting the agricultural education sector on board in view of the job and training specifics associated with the bioeconomy.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND THE STEERING BODIES

By implementing regional schemes for planning, sustainable development and equality for territories (SRADDET) as well as regional biomass schemes, it will genuinely be possible to conduct a regional bioeconomy scheme in each region. Such a scheme would be backed up by an action plan developed with all of the stakeholders and tools for assessing the sustainability of projects within a local area. Trials in target local areas with "bioeconomic potential" should be developed.

The ESEC strongly encourages the RESECs to look into this question of developing the sustainable bioeconomy and to include it in their analysis of their region's SRADDET.

The ESEC recommends that the convergence between national strategies, programmes and plans bearing on the bioeconomy be organised when the action plan of France's national strategy is drawn up. This action plan will have to harmonise and stabilise the target figures.

The ESEC believes that a debated and shared notion must underpin the development of the bioeconomy, which will provide a legitimate basis for rolling out public policies.

The ESEC recommends setting up a national bioeconomy council. With regard to coordination, arbitration and support for public decision-making, the ESEC also advises setting up:

- regional bioeconomy committees;
- a cross-government delegation that reports to the Prime Minister.

Modern societies are embarking on a series of changes without grasping all of their consequences. In light of its strategic guidelines, the ESEC must contribute to these discussions which will have to give an idea of what the society of tomorrow looks like: with account taken of the fact that sustainable global growth, at the global ecological scale of the "finite world", is no longer possible. The sphere of human activities is an integral part of the biosphere: the economy cannot therefore turn its back on its rules, without compromising the sustainable functioning of the whole.