

Welcome to the workshop

## **BIO-CIRCULAR VILLAGES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

European Economic and Social Committee, JDE61 7 March 2019, 11:00 – 12:20

# **Objective**

- Showcase best practice for integrating bio-circular principles in rural development and especially at village scale
- Discuss the challenges rural stakeholders face in stimulating a bio-circular economy

#### Leader

Oana Neagu

Copa-Cogeca @CopaCogeca

**Schedule** 

**Welcome by the Moderator** 

David Lamb @David\_ENRD

European Network for Rural Development @ENRD\_CP

Multi-enterprise network for sustainable food and energy production

Markus Eerola @MTKry

Knehtilä farm

Circular integrated approaches for viable rural areas

Tajana Radic

Croatian Chamber of Agriculture @HPK\_CCA

Panel on challenges to and opportunities for a bio-circular transition

Olivier Diana

DG AGRI @EUAgri

Meri Siljama @CEPFSecretariat

Confederation of European Forest Owners

Conclusions on overcoming barriers to bio-circular models in rural development

Kjell Ivarsson

Copa-Cogeca @CopaCogeca

### Setting the scene

The vitality and prosperity of rural areas in Europe is crucial to overall sustainability, key to profitable business models in forestry and agriculture, and imperative to the wellbeing of future generations regardless of whether they live in cities or the countryside. In the 2016 *Cork 2.0 Declaration*, European rural stakeholders developed a vision for "A Better Life in Rural Areas", where they emphasised the need for horizontal strategy and integrated approaches in bridging the urban-rural divide and bringing digitalisation and connectivity to all. Promoting bio-circular policy tools and business models for efficient use of local natural resources could provide a framework through which to deliver this vision, as such policy will not only stimulate job creation and economic growth but also contribute to overcoming challenges such as climate change and food waste.

While the EU's Urban Agenda partnership or global alliances such as C40Cities are making substantial progress towards a circular economy for wealthier urban areas, the transition to a circular Europe can't succeed fully without realising the potential bio-circular thinking grants rural areas. The *European Network for Rural Development* and *Copa-Cogeca* show there is much to be gained from adopting such thinking, with this potential being self-evident in the natural cycles inherent to agri-forestry.









Among others, bio-circular steps toward improving the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing in rural areas include:

- developing integrated farming systems that reduce external inputs (water, fertilisers, energy), lower production costs and diminish negative environmental impacts
- optimising production and consumption along the entire value chain to help meet rising demand for foodstuffs and make best possible use of productive land
- improving the (re-)use of resources to stimulate new business models and enables SMEs in fulfilling their innovation potential by making by-products and residues profitable, thus creating new jobs and growing rural innovation eco-systems
- integrating circular principles with the bio-economy when using renewable resources to reduce fossil fuel dependence and stimulating production of biogas and other renewable energy production.

Circular economy provides rural areas with great opportunities to enhance their sustainability and ensure economic growth, which pioneering farms and communities have already brought to life. However, rural actors are still facing some barriers such as lack of connectivity, infrastructure and mobility making it difficult to adopt digital methods such as precision technology. Limited access to finance due to increasing market volatility in a changing climate also hampers innovation.

To overcome these barriers and simultaneously address climate change and market volatility, local associations, agri-forestry organisations, public authorities and the knowledge community must collaborate in developing strategic policies throughout value chains. To show what role key actors play in driving the bio-circular transition and how the local context should be taken into consideration, this workshop introduces smart and innovative community approaches, e.g. integrated farming in Finland or awareness raising in Croatia, as success stories. By tackling the challenges rural stakeholders face when implementing bio-circular projects, this workshop will also provide the ingredients for a bio-circular village.

#### **Questions for discussion**

- How can we best integrate bio-circular policy tools and business models for agri-forestry in a rural context to reindustrialise and revitalise communities? What are the preconditions in terms of connectivity, education and mobility?
- What role do various public and private actors such as public authorities, farmers and forest owners play when applying bio-circular tools for rural development? How can they promote innovative projects and support best practice in spreading across Europe? How can EU and national strategies support such initiatives?
- Can Agenda 2030 support rural stakeholders in designing a vision for bio-circular villages? What contribution does bio-circular agri-forestry make to achieving SDGs on reduced inequalities (10), sustainable consumption & production (12), climate action (13), and life on land (15)? How can they measure this contribution and what indicators should they use?

### What happens next

- A **report** highlighting the innovative community approaches discussed here and summarising the challenges rural stakeholders face in the bio-circular transition will be published on the ECESP website and sent to all conference participants
- Presentations will be published on the conference webpage upon authors' consent
- With the *Grown not Thrown campaign*, which showcases the efforts Copa-Cogeca's members make in leading the fight against food loss and food waste, the network is sharing *6 ways to avoid food waste* and dozens of best case practices across EU member states.

#### **About the lead**



**Copa and Cogeca** are the united voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU. Together, they ensure that EU agriculture is sustainable, innovative and competitive guaranteeing food security to half a billion people throughout Europe. Copa represents over 23 million farmers and their families whilst Cogeca represents the interests of 22,000 agricultural cooperatives. Together they have 66 member organisations from the EU member states and are a founding member of the **European Bioeconomy Alliance** 

Want to keep the conversation going? Contribute your good practice on *circulareconomy.europa.eu*, join the online forum or drop us a line: *CEStakeholderEU@eesc.europa.eu* 







