

Call for proposals on

Research in sustainable and resilient agriculture

Increased demands for food, renewable energy and raw materials from biomass are among the “Great Challenges” for the 21st century. Based on the vision of a European bioeconomy 21 countries are now calling for research that can provide a sustainable intensification of agricultural production.

The world population is expected to grow up to 9.5 billion people in 2050. Combined with changing consumer demands, food security will become a major challenge. As an additional challenge, the world's available agricultural land area is steadily decreasing as a result of soil degradation and expansion of residential areas etc. Furthermore, climate change will increasingly affect agricultural productivity.

This means that there are a number of opposing challenges for the future food production. In Europe and most other countries it is not an option to convert forests and nature areas into farm land. As the area that can be used for food production is dwindling, food production must be intensified on the remaining farm land.

However, it is not an option to increase the environmental footprint of agriculture, meaning that agriculture must reduce its impact on climate and environment. This includes maintaining natural capital such as soil and biodiversity.

Likewise, society needs to reduce pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions deriving from the use of fossil energy. One of the solutions is to increase the use of renewable biomass that can substitute the use of fossil raw materials in the production of a vast variety of products and energy resources.

Finally, as climate changes increasingly will affect agricultural production there is a need to develop more resilient agricultural systems that can tolerate and adapt to external disturbances.

Welcome to the future.

Aim and scope of the call

It is obvious that these challenges demand a research effort that cannot be shouldered by individual countries.

To address these challenges, 21 countries have formed a partnership and a new initiative in the frame of the Joint Programming Initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI).

In collaboration with the European Commission the partner countries announce today a call for joint European research projects with an indicative budget of 15 M€.

The new initiative is entitled FACCE SURPLUS (Sustainable and Resilient agriculture for food and non-food systems) and is committed to improve collaboration across the European Research Area in the range of diverse, but integrated, food and non-food biomass production and transformation systems, including biorefining.

The call for proposals aims as well at supporting innovation and value creation from biomass and biorefineries in synergy with the environmentally sustainable intensification of agricultural and other biomass production systems, taking into account the required economic, environmental and social conditions and resilience to climate change.

The scientific scope of the call for proposals addresses collaborative projects in three research areas, which are incorporated into the following three subthemes of this call, namely:

- Spatial targeting of land use to increase biomass production and transformation, stimulating the growth of systems for the efficient utilisation of green (plant) biomass cascading through novel transformation.
- Developing markets for a wide range of products and services generated through integrated food and non-food systems.
- Sustainable intensification of integrated food and non-food systems of agriculture, by developing integrated, systems-based approaches to land management.

About the call

FACCE SURPLUS is an ERA-NET under the Cofund scheme of Horizon 2020 of the European Union. The indicative total available budget amounts to 15M €. The call opens 7 January and the closing date for pre-proposals is 4 March 2015.

The call invites proposals for collaborative research and development of transnational consortia of research organisations and companies from at least 3 countries participating in the call. The duration of proposed projects may be up to 3 years. National eligibility rules, including the potential eligibility of the private sector, e.g. SMEs, must be followed and will be published together with the call text on www.faccejpi.com.

The submission of the proposal occurs online at www.submission-faccejpi.com

For more information on application procedures and evaluation criteria, please visit www.faccejpi.com and see the Call Announcement published here.