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Nordic and Baltic Farmers Organizations:

Technology and research are crucial for farmers to produce food, to adapt to changing climate and to provide climate change mitigation results

The impacts of climate change are felt to a greater extent in the Northern parts of Europe and especially in the sectors that are based on renewable resources and biodiversity, i.e. in agriculture and forestry. Additionally, Nordic and Baltic farmers can be a natural partner in feeding the world's growing population, since Nordic and Baltic farmers are efficient, well-educated and thus well prepared to adapt to future conditions and demands from society and consumers. Nevertheless, to secure the full potential, our sector's ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change must be strengthened. Finally, to realise the maximum mitigation potential of substituting fossil energy and materials with bio-based resources, it is pivotal that the stewards of these resources are provided with the tools and means to adapt to the future climate change. In addition to the profitability of the production, we need legal clarity in using new technologies, enhanced sustainability in plant protection and enough funding for research and innovation to adapt to climate change.

Legal clarity in using new technologies

Farmers are expected to produce more efficiently, responding to environmental and consumer concerns. The agriculture and food sector should also be a natural partner in feeding the world's growing population. To do so the farming toolbox should include new technological, biotechnical and agronomical solutions that are emerging globally. In the EU we should not limit the farming community's access to technology while competitors outside EU benefit from the most recent innovations.

Especially in the smaller Northern region, where climatic and environmental conditions differ from the rest of Europe the farmers increasingly need to utilize new technologies and especially new breeding techniques.

Europe should enable the breeding of varieties to help farmers in all climatic conditions meet societal demands and challenges regarding climate change, the environment, agricultural biodiversity, and the effective production of sufficient, high-quality food and feed. This can be achieved by providing plant breeders with access to advanced plant breeding methods including targeted mutagenesis.

The current European Court of Justice decision regarding mutagenesis techniques is removing powerful tools from the operators' toolboxes. The situation should be resolved, and the legislation changed as soon as possible. It should be the priority to the European Commission to provide clarity on this.

In general, the European decision-makers must ensure that the farmers have all the necessary technological options available that enable them to face the challenges ahead and compete in dynamic markets.

Funding for research and innovation

Agronomic research specific to regional conditions should at minimum be maintained and preferably be increased to refine the precision in agricultural practices to minimize losses, and inputs while maximizing yields of our crops, as our farming systems require ever more tailored responses to climate change. This requires that enough funding is allocated to research and innovation programs. Especially the Horizon Europe funding must be guaranteed and supplemented with national co-funding. To be effective, research projects must include and tangibly support farming actors of all sizes through efficient communication channels ensuring quick dissemination, swift feedback and rapid adjustment to local needs.

Nordic and Baltic farmers are also keen to contribute to producing more protein crops in the EU hence to limit the EU's protein import dependency. Also, other feed protein sources from downstream processes in the food chain should be investigated.

More investments in innovation empowering farmers and forest owners to produce more efficiently and environmentally friendly should be advanced. Incorporating precision farming, information and communications technology further into the food chain ensures that farmers can continue to deliver quality products to consumers with minimal environmental impact.

The sustainable food production must be based on the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability. The role of the agricultural and forestry sectors in the circular bio-economy must be recognized and should bring new opportunities to the sector.

Sustainability in plant protection

Farmers are the primary users of plant protection products (PPPs) to ensure high yields of good quality. It is in the farmers' interest to store, handle and apply these products safely and responsibly to protect human and animal health and the environment. To do so, farmers need science-based risk analysis and decisions to support the sustainable and responsible use of PPPs, which also contributes to environmental protection. Simple banning of various PPPs will damage the production potential and will leave the farmer

to deal with the problems without offering solutions to tackle them. We strongly support the idea of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), but further research is needed to optimize our operations and minimize the dependency on pesticides.

There is an emerging consensus that the winter crop cover of the fields contributes strongly towards the water protection targets in terms of nitrogen. This important environmental measure widely used by the Nordic and Baltic farmers will be hampered without glyphosate or alternative substances. Loss of glyphosate will furthermore increase the need for mechanical weed control and the CO₂-emissions

We should encourage the legislators to consider cautiously the availability, affordability and wider impacts of various alternative measures when discussing with the general public and legislating about the PPPs. The decisions on given market access to PPPs must be based on science and not on public opinions.

Agriculture and forestry sectors have several solutions to the climate challenge. The Nordic and Baltic farmers are proud to be the stewards of climate, consumer safety and environment, and informing consumers about the food and other public goods we're providing. To continue resiliently and vitally contributing to sustainable development, the economic and social conditions must allow us to adapt, invest into and develop our operations.

The presidents of the Nordic and Baltic farmers' organizations

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