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LATEST NEWS

Activities of the Agricultural Academy of Bulgaria supporting the development of the country's bioeconomy

Using renewable biological resources is an essential tool for improving the sustainability of the economy, increasing food security, reducing carbon emissions, and conserving natural resources. The bioeconomy encompasses producing renewable biological resources and their conversion into food, feed, organic products, and bioenergy. The bioeconomy involves all sectors and related services and investments that produce, use, process, distribute, or consume biological resources, including ecosystem services.

BIOEST is a joint political initiative of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry in the context of the bioeconomy. It was launched at the end of 2016, within the framework of the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group, with the active participation and support of Hungary. The Ministries of Agriculture and Science support the Initiative in the 11 CEE EU Member States (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia and the Czech Republic). For this reason, the BIOEASTsUP Horizon 2020 EU project was launched under the auspice of the macro-regional governmental initiative to support the countries mentioned above in building up their bioeconomy strategies and action plans for the transition to bioeconomy. The main objectives were:- triggering strategic thinking at governmental level and paving the way for development of national circular bioeconomy strategies;- developing a macro-regional framework and a bioeconomy Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for the BIOEAST countries;- facilitating evidence-based policy making by aggregating bioeconomy relevant statistical, quantitative and qualitative data;- increasing the visibility of the bioeconomy within the quintuple helix in the BIOEAST region.

Agricultural Academy, Bulgaria, was a BIOEASTsUP Horizon 2020 EU project partner. A team of scientists from the Institute of Agrarian Economics, the Agrobiointitute, the Institute of Cryobiology and Food Technologies, and experts from the academy administration were involved in the

implementation of the main tasks of the project. BIOEASTsUP mobilized the main actors of the bioeconomy macro-regional landscape. Policy documents have been elaborated, and national policymakers and experts have been engaged in horizontal transnational peer discussion and internal evaluation process. The macro-regional SRIA has been developed using a bottom-up multi-actor approach, allowing current and future EU programs and calls to drill in the BIOEAST SRIA. BIOEASTsUP project team of Agricultural Academy- Bulgaria developed a **Bioeconomy Concept Paper**, which identifies key strategic directions for priority industrial sectors of the bioeconomy in Bulgaria. The study leans on the understanding that the bioeconomy is a system of components: finance and governance, renewable resources, research and development, innovation and technology, and public and private expectations. The primary mission of this concept document is to develop a preliminary impact assessment and to set the framework for a national bioeconomy strategy and action plan development, aiming to generate a more profound discussion in Bulgaria on the necessity of a paradigm shift in economic thinking regarding the sustainable valorization of biomass as renewable natural resources. Bulgaria has a growing biomass production, well-developed biotechnology, and modern scientific achievements that are prerequisites for building a knowledge-based bioeconomy. Targeted policies to strengthen the link between science and business and to promote innovation, technological renewal, staff training, and cooperation among bioeconomy SMEs are key to achieving this goal.



As a follow-up, a **draft of the Bioeconomy Strategy** was elaborated. The European and national bioeconomy policy has developed the strategy. It is based on the „Strategy for Strengthening the Role of the Agricultural Sector in the bioeconomy“ approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as well as on the achievements of the activities of the BIOEAST Initiative. This strategy outlines the bioeconomy's role in the country's development, enhancing productivity and adding value for the transition from a linear to a circular green economy, which aligns with the EU strategic documents

and the National Development Agenda: Bulgaria 2030. The Strategy defines the needs, national objectives, and priorities for developing the bioeconomy and the measures to achieve them. It provides for a cross-sectoral approach to cooperation and a shared governance model based on information on bioresources and their distribution among sectors to use them more efficiently, creating new jobs based on interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, compliance with the ecological boundaries, and protecting the environment. The main strategic goal is to increase the added value from 4.61 billion EUR in 2020 to 6.00 billion EUR in 2030 by introducing the principles of the circular bioeconomy.



In 2024, Agricultural Academy – Bulgaria joined as a partner in the next project, supporting the **BIOEAST Initiative – “BOOSTING** the bioeconomy transformation for (4) the **BIOEST macroregion “(BOOST4BIOEST)**. This project aims to empower national stakeholders in the Central Eastern European and Baltic countries to develop national bioeconomy action plans and build long-lasting structures and spaces of dialogue for national and macro-regional cooperation. At the project's core, there is a need to establish or improve **national bioeconomy expert communities (BIOEAST HUBs)** as focal points of capacity building and catalysts for stakeholder engagement at the national level for decision-making through participatory processes. In the next three years, the HUBs will develop national bioeconomy action plans and foster national bioeconomy innovation ecosystems through cross-sectoral collaboration, capacity building, and facilitating access to knowledge and networks to all bioeconomy stakeholders. Furthermore, at the macro-regional level, they will contribute to the **BIOEAST Thematic Working Groups’** (TWGs) specific strategic areas (Agroecology, Bioenergy and New Value-Added Materials, Food Systems, Forestry Value Chains, Freshwater Bioeconomy, Bio-based Materials, and Education) in **updating the BIOEAST SRIA** from 2022 to influence national and European research & innovation programs.



On December 3, 2024, the founding meeting of BIOEAST HUB Bulgaria was held in a hybrid format at the EXPO Hotel Sofia in Sofia. The Agricultural Academy organized the event under the project **BOOST4BIOEST**, funded by **the European Union's Horizon Europe program**. The meeting was opened with a presentation by the **Secretary General of the BIOIEST Initiative, Mr. Barna Kovach**, and welcoming words to the participants were delivered by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food, Mr. Ivan Kapitanov, and the President of the Agricultural Academy, Prof. Violeta Bozhanova. The BIOEAST HUB Bulgaria will be a leading platform that brings together representatives of the state administration, private companies, research centers, higher education institutions, civil society, and manufacturers. It will work together to implement innovations and sustainable practices and support the development of policies for the development of the bioeconomy in the country. Its mission is to cultivate a sustainable, inclusive bioeconomy that aligns with EU objectives and policies while responding to the Bulgarian environment's environmental, economic, and social challenges.

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