

European Commission launches scientific debate on how to feed the planet

Expo Milano 2015

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USPA NEWS - Expo Milano 2015: The European Commission has launched an online consultation on how science and innovation can help the EU ensuring safe, nutritious, sufficient and sustainable food globally.
(Source: European Commission)

The discussion is linked to the theme of this year's Universal Exhibition (Expo Milano 2015) "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", which aims to go beyond cultural activities and open a real political debate on global food security and sustainability. The paper was presented today in Brussels by Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and responsible for the Joint Research Centre, together with Franz Fischler, Chairman of the Expo 2015 EU Scientific Steering Committee.

Commissioner Navracsics said: "The European Union has a vital role to play in tackling the challenges associated with food and nutrition security and sustainability. Expo 2015 offers us a great opportunity to showcase what the EU is already doing in this field. I hope it will also breathe new life into our efforts and further foster international collaboration. I commend the work of the Joint Research Centre and look forward to working on these issues closely with my colleagues, in particular my fellow Commissioners in charge of agriculture, health, research, environment and development."

Chairman Franz Fischler said: "I believe that science and innovation are crucial if we are to guarantee access to safe and nutritious food for all, produced in a sustainable way. We have worked hard to ensure that Expo 2015 has a strong scientific dimension. I hope that the consultation and the discussion paper will steer a global debate." The consultation will underpin the debate on a future research agenda to help tackle global food and nutrition security challenges.

It will focus on the areas where the EU's research efforts can have the strongest impact, such as how to improve public health through nutrition, increase food safety and quality, reduce food loss and waste, make rural development more sustainable, increase agricultural yields through sustainable intensification, as well as how to better understand food markets and increase access to food for people around the world.

The consultation is available online for input by all interested stakeholders until 1 September. The results of the consultation will be published on 15 October, ahead of World Food Day, and will contribute to shape the EU's legacy for Expo 2015. They will complement the scientific programme taking place at the EU's Expo Pavillion, which will bring together experts and decision makers from around the world.

Background - The 2015 World Expo will take place from 1 May to 31 October in Milan, Italy. More than 145 countries and international organisations will take part in this year's exposition and around 20 million visitors are expected. The EU's contribution to the event will draw on the expertise in many areas of the work of different EU institutions and services. Their participation is coordinated by the Commission's Joint Research Centre.

The EU is a crucial player in different areas related to the Expo: It is the world's largest food exporter and second largest importer, but also the biggest development and humanitarian donor. The Expo also coincides with the move from the "Millennium" to the "Sustainable" Development Goals, the European Year for Development, and the International Year of Soils, and this provides an opportunity for the EU to take an important step forward.

Agricultural research and development is one of the most effective tools for substantially increasing agricultural production in a sustainable manner. Horizon 2020, the EU's €80 bn research funding programme for 2014-2020, will invest more than €3.8 bn in research and innovation actions addressing some of our society's biggest challenges like food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy.

In the area of health and food safety, the EU's policies set the highest food safety standards in the world and are underpinned by solid

science and risk assessment. As nutrition is a major determinant of health, promoting a healthy diet is also a policy objective of the European Commission.

The Joint Research Centre, which is in charge of organising the EU's participation at the Expo, is the European Commission's in-house science service. It has a long standing track record in food safety and security research, including its environmental aspects.

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