

PRESS RELEASE

Bioplastics industry met in Vienna to discuss benefits, barriers, and prospects of the European bioeconomy

Vienna/Berlin, 11 June 2015 – On Monday, 8 June 2015, European Bioplastics (EUBP) and the Austrian Energy Agency (AEA) hosted a seminal meeting in Vienna with over 75 thought leaders and senior experts involved in the important process of advancing the bioeconomy in Europe. The participants discussed the initiatives currently being advanced in Austria, the Netherlands, and on the EU level. Special focus was given to the immense potential of the budding bioplastics industry with companies showcasing their innovative bioplastic applications and their vision for a growing resource efficient bioeconomy in Europe. The seminar was generously sponsored by the Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands in Austria.

In his opening statement, Peter Traupmann, CEO of the AEA, highlighted the importance of bioeconomy: “Austria is committed to fighting climate change and to contributing to the transition from a fossil-based economy to an economy based on renewable resources. On behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, we are responsible for the management of the climate protection initiative ‘klimaaktiv’. Within the klimaaktiv programme ‘nawaro markt’, climate-friendly technologies and the use of renewable resources are supported. The corresponding ‘Action Plan for the Material Use of Renewable Resources’ clearly reflects the growing importance and potential of the bioeconomy and the bioplastics industry in particular.”

At the start of the morning session, focussing on legislative developments in Europe and on policy initiatives in Austria and the Netherlands in particular, Karin Weustink, Deputy Director Biobased Economy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation of the Netherlands, presented the efforts of the Dutch Government in creating a favourable regulatory framework for the biobased economy. The ‘Green Deal’ sustainability certificates, for example, were pointed out as a successful instrument to promote the use of renewable feedstock, e.g. in the production of polymers. Weustink also sent a clear signal to other legislators from across the EU: “Europe needs to do more in order to stimulate and strengthen the bioeconomy and to stay competitive in the future. We need the right legal framework that creates a level playing field for biobased chemicals and products in order to attract and promote investments in biobased research and production in Europe”.

Gerhard Mannsberger, Head of DG Forestry at the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, also stressed the need for a harmonised EU policy to secure the supply of sustainably sourced renewable feedstock. “A responsible use of our natural resources is one of the key pillars of the Austrian bioeconomy. Our agriculture and forestry sector provides sustainably sourced renewable resources for premium biobased applications and in doing so helps to strengthen the economic development of rural areas all over Austria.”

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Press contact:

Kristy-Barbara Lange, Head of Communications, European Bioplastics, Marienstr. 19/20, 10117 Berlin, Tel: +49 (0) 30 28482 356, Fax: +49 (0)30 284 82 359, press@european-bioplastics.org

During a panel discussion on the benefits, barriers, and prospects of the European bioeconomy, panellists and participants emphasised the tremendous innovation potential of the bioeconomy and the bioplastics industry being evident in numerous research projects, small-scale production plants, and innovative products and applications. Yet, for these projects to unfold their full potential and to enable a full-scale market penetration, the participants demanded a more favourable legal framework and corresponding policy measures promoting a level playing field for the biobased industries, equal access to renewable resources, as well as commonly agreed terminology and standards.

Following the debates on policy initiatives and regulatory frameworks, the afternoon sessions focussed on bioplastics products and materials that are available on the market. Furthermore, technical properties, environmental advantages, and new design trends were discussed. Summarising a successful seminar and networking day in Vienna, Hasso von Pogrell, Managing Director of European Bioplastics, urged EU as well as Member State policy makers: “Making our economies fit for the future requires us to collectively reduce our impact on the environment. Using renewable resources efficiently in use cascades or extending product life cycles through better recycling needs to become a reality soon. We have to make sure that we can harvest the fruits that have been cultivated through years of research – we need a clear framework to be able to successfully bring our bioeconomy products to the market.”

For photos of the event, please click here:

<http://en.european-bioplastics.org/press/press-pictures/eventsactivities-2/>

About European Bioplastics:

European Bioplastics is the European association representing the interests of the bioplastics industry along the entire value chain. Its members produce, refine, and distribute bioplastics, i.e. plastics that are either biobased, biodegradable, or both. More information is available on www.european-bioplastics.org.

About Austrian Energy Agency:

The Austrian Energy Agency is the national centre of excellence for energy. New technologies, renewable energy, and energy efficiency are the focal points of our scientific activities. We are an independent think tank that manages knowledge, provides the basis for well-founded decision making, and develops suggestions for the implementation of measures and projects. More information is available on www.energyagency.at.

Press contact:

*Kristy-Barbara Lange, Head of Communications, European Bioplastics, Marienstr. 19/20, 10117 Berlin,
Tel: +49 (0) 30 28482 356, Fax: +49 (0)30 284 82 359, press@european-bioplastics.org*