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Press Release

New EU study reveals EU would need 19 million more hectares of farm land to produce same amount of food without plant breeding techniques but warns of challenging policy environment

A new EU study reveals that the EU would need 19 million more hectares of farm land to produce the same amount of food without innovation in plant breeding, but it warns of a challenging policy and regulatory framework which needs to be improved to maximize the benefits.

Copa & Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said “I welcome this study on “The economic, social and environmental value of plant breeding in the EU” by HFFA Research GmbH which was commissioned by the European Plant Technology Platform of which Copa & Cogeca are members. It shows that innovation in plant breeding count for a lot, enhancing overall productivity in EU arable farming by 74% to enable the EU to help combat hunger and malnutrition globally”.

The same study shows that genetic crop improvements in EU arable farming boosts the EU economy significantly, adding over 14 billion euros to the EU’s Gross Domestic Product. It also boosts growth and jobs in the EU and enhances arable farmers annual income by an estimated 30% in the last 15 years.

Substantial environmental benefits are also a result of plant breeding since it helps save scarce land resources around the globe by generating higher yields per unit of area, the study claims. Without plant breeding for the majority of arable crops in the EU in the last 15 years, global agricultural acreage would have to be increased by over 19 million hectares, the study adds.

But it warns that EU plant breeders in the EU face a challenging policy and regulatory framework. They should be encouraged to invest in new breeding technologies instead of being hindered. The obviously high societal rates of return plant breeding investments generate need to be recognized more and supported politically through proper administration, sound legislation, higher financial support and overall awareness raising, the study states. The study should be considered as a first step and further research will follow. For details, see: <http://www.plantetp.org/>

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