

Speech of Monique Remmers, Head of Unit CAP, Department of European Agricultural Policies & Food Security, Directorate General for Agro, Ministry of Economic Affairs

- Ladies and gentlemen,
- It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to open this workshop on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs.
- This is an important workshop for a lot of you but also for many actors in the bio economy.
- Not only for the scientists, who are driven by curiosity but also for people involved in policy, like me.
- My area is the Common Agricultural Policy.
- As you may well be aware, a complex and diverse policy.
- On the one hand, there are a lot of complicated issues in the CAP.
- Like the greening of the CAP, where we have been searching for a way to serve biodiversity objectives fitting the different circumstances in Member States.
- On the other hand Agriculture in European Member States needs to be more competitive and contribute to solving the challenges of society like the effects of climate change or the need to feed an increasing world population.
- The FAO, for example, acknowledges the importance of agriculture with the concept of Climate-smart agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- Climate Smart Agriculture contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals. The Dutch Minister of Agriculture supports this concept with, amongst others, research and innovation.
- After three conferences on Agriculture, Food security and Climate Change in the Netherlands, Vietnam and South-Africa, we are working on an alliance on climate smart agriculture, to be launched during the summit of the UN in New York next September.
- She also supports the challenge of diminishing food waste with scientific research.
- Research is one of the key elements to find innovative solutions.
- Knowledge development for innovative solutions for the challenges agriculture faces is however costly.
- The economic crisis does not make this easier, if only because the budget for research decreases in many countries.
- Furthermore, many challenges can only be solved with knowledge development on a European level.
- Organising research on a European level results in two advantages: we can get excellent knowledge and we can increase the efficiency of budget spent on research in each member state.
- Organising research on a European level means avoiding duplication of research efforts and getting synergy of expertise. But also connecting research carried out in member states.
- There is however, also a paradox in Europe

- Although we have very good scientists we are not always able to translate this into innovative applications and get the financial benefits of these innovative applications.
- Solving these problems means connection with the key players in the agricultural sector.
- Although it exists for a long time, we involve the private sector in the Netherlands more and more in the solutions for the challenges which agriculture faces.
- We strengthened the existing golden triangle of the collaboration between government, private sector and knowledge institutes such as Wageningen UR.
- Therefore, we are happy that the Commission introduced the European Innovation Partnership on Agriculture and that the Commission is aware of this problem, and challenge scientists with for example, the societal challenges in Horizon2020.
- These issues overlap for a significant part with the Dutch philosophy on research and innovation, the Golden Triangle I mentioned earlier.
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- The Ministry of Economic affairs is happy to have you here and I hope that the theme of the workshop, ERA-nets for the future, can inspire you to contribute to better working ERA-nets.
- In my opinion, the ERA-Platform project is a unique project. A platform to exchange your experiences as an ERA-net coordinator can help to improve ERA-nets.
- The links with many actors, for example the private sector, which you have made in the previous workshops in Paris and Copenhagen is of utmost importance.
- These linkages show that research and innovation becomes an integrated part of many initiatives and policy areas like the EIP Agriculture became an integrated part of the CAP.
- You also explore the possibilities for new combinations where research is included such as structural funds and the private sector. This is an excellent message for me and many of my colleagues.
- I hope that you can contribute to smart ERA-nets. I hope that it can contribute to concrete recommendations to use ERA-nets for innovative solutions the challenges of for example, European agriculture.
- These recommendations can be used as a road map for the commission to improve ERA-net, and as a possible start for continuation of this PLATFORM project.
- I wish you all a fruitful workshop.
- Thank you for your attention.