

EU Research Commissioner Carlos Moedas addresses opening of Teagasc Innovation Centre

17/04/2015

Thank you Commissioner Hogan for reminding us of Ireland's fantastic history of agricultural research and innovation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to be here.

Thank you to the Teagasc Centre and the new Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre for providing such a warm welcome.

It's always a great honour to meet the people behind so many successful EU funded projects and more. People who get things done and make the world a brighter place while they do it.

One of the projects that springs to mind is Autograssmilk - down on the farm, cows graze while robots milk. Set up with help from our previous research funding programme, its new technology lets farmers combine pasture feeding with automated milking systems, for more efficient production and happier cows.

Teagasc researchers have been developing a cow movement system that allows farmers to combine grazing with automated milking, managing grazing more efficiently through a handheld device called the GrassHopper.

And Ireland-based True North Mapping & Technologies plan to release GrassHopper, together with an associated app for smartphones and tablets this year.

What a great example of Irish research and innovation creating sustainable agriculture, while bringing a range of scientific, data, digital and technological disciplines together in cooperation! The kind of cooperation that leads to ground breaking solutions.

I am delighted to be working with Phil to ensure the European Commission also works more closely across disciplines. We share responsibility for EU funds for food security, sustainable agriculture and bioeconomy.

3 areas of research and innovation in which Irish progress is outstanding.

3 areas in which Ireland can contribute a great deal to the world.

The Irish agri-food sector contributes 24 billion euros to your national economy, providing almost 10% of Irish exports.

You are a food island, that's getting even greener!

But, sustainable food production and security are issues for every nation, as we face the daunting task of feeding a population of 9 billion people with 1 planet.

As much as a 60% increase in agricultural production will be needed across the globe within our lifetimes.

So, research and innovation must address environmental conservation, yield and nutrition with some urgency.

But, in our current research funding programme Horizon 2020, the food industry is not performing to the levels we would expect from the vast size and resources of the sector.

Phil and I, have to work to find ways and means and bring everyone on board, across the whole food and agricultural value chain, to meet the 21st century challenges of climate change, biodiversity, crop resilience, food nutrition and security.

The EU food industry needs to develop a strategic vision for innovation and investment just as other sectors like biopharma did some time ago.

Investment in innovation in the food industry could involve new European cooperatives or impetus from the small business sector in bio-based industries, feeding much needed new ideas into our EU-wide efforts.

Politically, there are further opportunities to develop, for example, a joint political agenda for global food and nutrition security.

I am a big fan of European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'. A great example of all these ambitions in action, bringing together farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs and others as partners in agricultural and forestry innovation.

They work together, voice their needs, share their ideas and create innovative solutions with practical applications. By joining forces, everyone involved spreads knowledge more efficiently, achieving results more quickly.

Ireland, as a country with a modern economy, a strong tradition of science, a history of successful participation in EU funded research, can make the difference on whether Europe leads or follows global, sustainable agricultural research and innovation.

At the opening of the Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre, I am delighted to see that progressive investment in the future of farming and food is in the hands of such impressive research and business communities.

And I will do everything I can with Phil to see that Horizon 2020 brings new life momentum to scientific cooperation in this sector.

But for now, I congratulate you on this wonderful new centre and look forward to hearing your ideas about how we can go forward in the future.

Thank you.