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I am pleased that the German EU Presidency brings innovative technologies into the focus of attention. For our country with scarce natural resources, Biotechnology is one of those innovative technologies that provide a solid foundation for jobs and prosperity.

Hereby plant biotechnology plays an important role within the knowledge based bioeconomy. The global data on cultivation of genetically modified plants reflects the potential of plant biotechnology: biotech crops are grown on 100 Mill hectares in 22 countries. On the other hand, the EU countries are quite unprogressive, because they grow less than 70 000 hectares of genetically modified corn. In Germany, only 2000 hectares are listed in the public register. In this country, the potential of biotechnology is still underestimated!

For this reason, our association, the German Association of Biotechnology Industries (DIB) and the Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union and the foundation Hans Böckler Stiftung, conducted a new study that provides the first scientifically substantiated, overall picture (and not only core biotech companies) of biotechnology in Germany today and in the future.

The study reveals that at present 258,000 to 443,000 jobs are influenced directly by biotechnology (people employed directly in biotechnology, employed by users of biotechnology and suppliers). Depending on the adoption rate of this future-oriented technology – especially regarding the development of genetically modified plants - more than 100,000 jobs will be created additionally over the next years. By 2020 biotechnology can safeguard or create between 369,000 and 596,000 jobs. By 2020 the number of people in a workplace linked to biotechnology will be higher than the number of people currently employed in the entire German chemical industry where present staff total is around 440,000. It is essential for Germany as an industry location to drive forward the use of this potential and to benefit from the entire range of possible applications.

Data from another new study: the European Commission's mid-term review of its biotechnology strategy demonstrates that 32 to 38 percent of the revenues in agribusiness and food industry are linked to biotechnology in 2005. This corresponds to 382-453 billion Euro of revenues. Our study confirms this revenue estimation.

On May 21st, the competitiveness council confirmed the mid term review and acknowledged the potential of biotechnology for Europe. It is essential for Germany's economy to harness the full spectrum of biotechnology in order to utilize its potential for job creation.

Against the background of these findings, it is of utmost importance that policy makers commit themselves to biotechnology. But the German government coalition has conflicting views about biotechnology. Although the coalition agreement stresses the advancement of plant biotechnology as an important goal, certain departments attempt to prohibit the use of plant biotechnology. It is unacceptable that innovative jobs in Germany cannot grow, because key policy makers delay the review of German biotech regulation on purpose – solely because certain biotechnology applications are politically discriminated. Biotechnology is a cross section technology that has an impact throughout the value chain. It is a far from coherent and consistent policy, if on the one hand the ministry of research provides research funding for plant biotechnology or climate protection and on the other hand other parts of the government block the market access for the products that resulted from public research. A fragmented and non-competitive value chain results from an inconsistent and dogmatic policy.

Whoever believes that it is sufficient to enable research but restrict market access at the same time, has not understood basic economic interrelations.

Investments only flow into markets. Policy makers and industry should work together to achieve an open, fair and objective discussion about the chances of biotechnology for Germany. Furthermore the cologne paper presented yesterday came to the conclusion that this is absolutely necessary.

Even in the field of renewable resources and the energy market plant biotechnology can make a significant contribution to the competitiveness of renewable resources: tailor-made plants for energy supply, e.g. genetically modified corn for competitive bioethanol production.

Approved products must have the chance to compete with other products on the market. An overall validation of plant biotechnology is only feasible with products on the market in Germany and Europe. True freedom of choice for the consumer is only possible with true freedom of choice for the producer of goods. Industry is willing to accept the challenge of proving to the market that biotech-products are superior to other products. We ask policy makers to provide us exactly with this opportunity.

Die DIB ist die Biotechnologievereinigung des Verbandes der Chemischen Industrie e.V. und seiner Fachverbände
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