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Europe plants Ã?Â¢Ã¢â?¬Å¡Ã?Â¬3.7 billion in bio-based economy

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Singapore: European Commission president Mr JosÃ?Æ?Ã?Â© Manuel Barroso, and Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Ms MÃ?Æ?Ã?Â¡ire Geoghegan-Quinn, announced the formal launch of a Ã?Â¢Ã¢â?¬Å¡Ã?Â¬3.7 billion Public-Private Partnership (PPP) on bio-based industries in Brussels on July 9, 2014.

In 2014 and 2015 alone, more than Ã?Â¢Ã¢â?¬Å¡Ã?Â¬250 million is expected to come from the European Commission, with the private sector expected to contribute nearly three times as much.

Substantial investments in bio-based products and fuels sourced locally, and made in Europe will be initiated using the continent's untapped biomass and wastes as feedstock, to make fossil-free and greener everyday products.

This is seen as an opportunity to create numerous jobs, sparke rural growth, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Europe is not ahead of the curve when it comes to realizing the immense potential around the creation of a bio-based economy, the only viable alternative to our current oil-based society," said Mr Peder Holk Nielsen, president and CEO, Novozymes.

"With this unprecedented public-private commitment, however, we demonstrate that EU wants to take the lead in this transition towards a bio-based economy. For Europeans, it is an opportunity to secure thousands of rural jobs and sustainable growth in our regions, while reversing the investment trends currently going to other parts of the world," he shared further.

Through financing research and innovation projects, the PPP will create new partnerships between sectors such as agriculture or agro-food, chemicals, energy, pulp and paper, and technology providers.

"Advanced biorefineries and innovative technologies will convert the renewable resources into sustainable bio-based chemicals, materials and fuels. The novelty with this PPP is its focus on bridging the gap from R&D to the market," Mr Holk Nielsen added.

The large majority of the Ã?Â¢Ã¢â?¬Å¡Ã?Â¬3.7billion will go to first-of-a-kind flagship projects. These are essential to show the technical and commercial viability, at industrial scale, of new generations of bio-based products and fuels, and to reduce perceived investment risks for rolling them out.

This partnership represents a shift from a fossil- and imports-based society to increase Europe's share of sustainable economic growth, and is expected to create tens of thousands of jobs, with 80% in rural areas, revitalize industries, and diversify farmers' incomes.

The initiative will also help combat climate change, as bio-based products reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 percent in comparison to fossil-based applications - a number as high as 90 percent in terms of advanced biofuels from agricultural residues and municipal solid waste when compared to oil-based fuels.

More than 70 leading European companies in the biotech, chemical, energy, agro-food and pulp and paper sectors are part of the initiative.

Concrete examples of projects this PPP intends to support include advanced biorefineries that turn agricultural and forestry residues or municipal solid waste to biochemicals and advanced biofels.

According to a press release, by 2020, the ambition is to have at least five flagship biorefineries, each of which is expected to generate feedstock supply chain jobs between 12,000 - 18,000 annually.

In 2012, a report by Bloomberg New Energy Finance concluded that in Europe alone more than 1 million jobs can be created from transforming agricultural residues into advanced biofuels, while generating economic growth, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to energy security by 2030.