

‘Don’t just make plans – open opportunities’

08.06.2016

A call for strategic decisions and actions, not just strategies was at the heart of the high-level ThinkForest seminar on the bioeconomy, which was held in Helsinki on 7 June.

The Finnish Minister of Economic Affairs, Olli Rehn, placed forests at the centre of a sustainable, flexible European bioeconomy, ‘the next economic wave’. ‘It’s a challenging but inspirational journey, which will create new jobs, new business, new export opportunities’ said Therese Knapp, speaking on behalf of Ibrahim Baylan, Swedish Minister for Policy Coordination and Energy.

Those challenges for bioeconomy development, and for forests, were the subject of intense discussion among speakers, panellists and the audience.



Speakers agreed that there is a lack of a narrative about the potential and use of forests, which hampers engagement with society. We need to raise awareness of the bioeconomy – something disruptive is difficult to sell, pointed out Christine Lang, chair of the German Bioeconomy Council.

We also need to take risks with innovation, and be bold enough to invest in the new, emphasised Esko Aho, EFI Strategic Adviser and Göran Persson, ThinkForest President. Bioeconomy investments should be widened, and should come from the private sector. However, that would require the reduction of regulatory uncertainties, and a long-term policy framework. EU policy should be developed by using existing policy and legislative instruments, said Minister Rehn. We should avoid too much regulation, but encourage policy coherence.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, MEP, sounded a warning that in Europe we were not leading the way, for example in the USA they already have bio-preferred procurement policies. Action is what is missing from EU and national bioeconomy strategies, said Prof Markku Ollikainen. We need to boost the creative forces in the forest sector.

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The ThinkForest event 'Building the Bioeconomy: Insights from European strategies' was held at the Marina Congress Center, Helsinki on 7 June 2016. The event was chaired by ThinkForest president Göran Persson and EFI Strategic Adviser Esko Aho.

[View the recording of the event](#)

Read the statement from Esko Aho and Göran Persson: [Bioeconomy can tackle society's grand challenges](#)

ThinkForest is facilitated by the European Forest Institute, an independent, science-based international organization. ThinkForest is a high-level discussion forum which brings together policy makers, the scientific community and stakeholders, building bridges on pan-European forest and bioeconomy issues. Since 2012, 17 events have been held, attended by over 1,000 people.

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