



The [second meeting](#) of the Thematic Group on 'Mainstreaming the Bioeconomy' allowed a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss territorial and local approaches to developing bioeconomy in rural areas.

Territorial bioeconomy clusters, strategies and projects can emerge from a coordinated policy approach or as bottom-up initiatives driven by local needs. Either way, key elements of success include the active engagement of diverse stakeholders, retaining added value within the local economy, and a policy framework favouring collaboration and innovation.

Several funding instruments can be combined to support rural bioeconomy initiatives at all stages. Participants underlined the importance of information and examples to make use of available opportunities.

## Event Information

**Title:** 2nd Meeting of Thematic Group on 'Mainstreaming the Bioeconomy'

**Date:** 17 January 2019

**Location:** Brussels, Belgium

**Organiser:** ENRD Contact Point

**Participants:** 42, including representatives of local action groups, research institutes, Managing Authorities, European organisations and the European Commission.

**Outcomes:** Examples of, and suggestions for, local and territorial approaches to rural bioeconomy

**Website:** [https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-mainstreaming-bioeconomy\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/2nd-meeting-thematic-group-mainstreaming-bioeconomy_en)

## Territorial and local approaches to bioeconomy in rural areas



Successful territorial approaches to bioeconomy build on local resources and needs, avoid capital outflow from the area, and add value to the local economy. Ben Allen (ENRD Contact Point) [illustrated](#) how EAFRD funding can support different steps in the process of developing a sustainable bioeconomy; other presentations illustrated the potential that lies in synergies with national and other EU funding programmes, including Horizon2020, ERDF, LIFE and ESF.

**Local Action Groups (LAGs)** can involve local communities in initiatives that use bioeconomy to face local challenges. [LAG Bornholm](#) (Denmark) calculated how bioeconomy could enhance the island's economy and is supporting its path towards self-sufficiency in food, feed and renewable energy production. In

Hungary, [Vox Vallis Development Association](#) is using bioeconomy to address multiple challenges for rural areas (see next page).

**Regional bioeconomy clusters** facilitate linkages between enterprises, services and innovation initiatives and can attract new investments to (re)generate the rural economy. The [Andalusian circular bioeconomy cluster](#) was launched by the regional authorities in parallel to the regional bioeconomy strategy with the aim to support the development and competitiveness of the Andalusian bioeconomy. [CluBE](#), the Cluster of Bioenergy and Environment of Western Macedonia (Greece), is instead a bottom-up initiative that is supporting the region's transition to a low-carbon economy in the frame of the EU's Just Transition Fund.

**Regional bioeconomy strategies** require a coordination among relevant public policies, also to facilitate the access to available funds. The French [Grand Est region](#) developed a 'BioPacte' to optimise the use of biomass in regional markets through 12 value chains (see next page). The [South Savo regional strategy](#), in Finland, integrates forest management, food production and water management activities under a regional coordination group. Applicants representing rural bioeconomy SMEs are offered expert support to access the funding instruments that are most suitable for their needs.



## The bioeconomy in Grand Est (France) region

Pascale Gaillot, Regional Council Grand Est region, France

The French Grand Est region [developed](#) a 'BioPacte' to optimise the use of biomass from agri-, vini-, and aquacultures in regional markets through 12 value chains. A dynamic regional strategy ensures constant communication among relevant public policies and ensures the optimal utilisation of available funds. The development of the biogas sector – 95 out of the 382 biogas plants operating in France are based in this region – has been one of the successful initiatives under the Grand Est bioeconomy strategy.



Another example of strategic approach is the development of the hemp value chain in which the activities of 400 farmers are coordinated under the European Pole of Hemp.

## Local solutions to multiple rural challenges

Géza Gelencsér, Vox Vallis Development Association, Hungary

Bioeconomy [pilot initiatives](#) are being used to address local challenges of depopulation, ageing population, soil degradation, low interest in innovation and unsustainable biomass production. A first project aims to add value to ecological buffer strips on agricultural land through the introduction of energy crops: the yearly biomass production of these buffer strips could heat local households and support complementary livestock activities that could benefit over 100 local families. A second small-scale pilot scheme combining aquaponics, hydroponics and renewable energy production could provide sustainable livelihood for new entrants (young families) moving into the territory.



## INPUTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS AND NEXT STEPS

Through working groups the participants discussed opportunities, challenges and possible solutions for local and regional bioeconomy initiatives in rural areas.

**Local actors can identify opportunities in bioeconomy** if they have access to relevant knowledge and information about the impacts of bioeconomy on rural development, including through good examples and local 'champions'. Such knowledge can help inform also the choices of local policy makers.

For bioeconomy to create economic, social and environmental **value that remains in the local rural community**, knowledge (both local and external) has to be combined with long-term commitment and a local network, empowering local communities to innovate. There appears to be often a disconnect between local level initiatives and regional/national strategies, with the former being unaware of the latter, and the latter not always translating down to local stakeholders. Networking can be a solution to this.



**Regional bioeconomy clusters** can contribute to the long-term viability of rural SMEs by bringing SMEs and other stakeholders together through joint projects and collaborations. This creates supportive ecosystems that generate economies of scale and greater visibility for all stakeholders. Appropriate policy frameworks and economic models for clusters' sustainability are key to show local actors the advantages of collaboration over competition.

**Public instruments can ensure sustainable bioeconomy development in rural areas** if there is synergy between tools, a flexible regulatory framework and a common vision among stakeholders. This can be ensured through training and awareness-raising for decision-makers and civil servants to illustrate potential economic, social and environmental benefits of bioeconomy. A more participatory approach to defining public policies would ensure that public action meets local needs.

**Biomass use can develop within sustainable boundaries** if this is a common objective for all stakeholders and both incentives and sanctions are put in place. Circularity and use of wastes and by-products for bioeconomy reduce the pressure on natural resources. Fair distribution of value in the chain should be ensured with targeted and coordinated public measures such as compensation payments, regulation and land taxes to avoid land use conflicts and over-exploitation of biomass.

The discussions will continue at the next [TG meeting](#) (15 May) and final seminar (3 July) and will feed into final recommendations on The use of public instruments to promote rural bioeconomy value chains.

## ENRD resources and tools

### Rural Bioeconomy Portal

Policy documents, relevant stakeholders and inspiring project examples (beyond EAFRD) – in six languages!

[https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal\\_en](https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/greening-rural-economy/bioeconomy/rural-bioeconomy-portal_en)

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