



The outgoing European Commissioner for Agriculture, **Dacian Cioloș**, provides an insight into the major challenges facing the rural economy and how Horizon 2020 provides key support for long term sustainability

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## Reflections from the field

**D**acian Cioloș was promoted to the position of European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development in 2010 following a prominent career in Romanian politics. He served as Undersecretary of State for European Affairs with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2007, before quickly being promoted to Agriculture and Rural Development Minister later the same year. Before coming to Brussels, he headed the Presidential Commission on Agricultural Development Public Policy of Romania from 2009-2010.

During his tenure, Cioloș has aimed to establish a prosperous and sustainable agricultural economy. Recent years have seen continued reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and Cioloș has championed such changes as being of great benefit to European farmers. The commissioner's mandate states: "A thriving agricultural sector will be of strategic importance in Europe's future development, not only in ensuring food security, preserving the environment and protecting the countryside, but also in facing new challenges such as climate change while providing a fair standard of living for farmers."

"The successive reforms of the past decade have modernised the CAP. As Commissioner with responsibility for Agriculture and Rural Development, I will continue to drive this process of adaptation and restructuring so as to adapt to a changing and more challenging European and global environment."

### Major achievements

The last four years have seen significant pressure on the rural economy. Yet despite the economic crisis, the EU has preserved key funding to support the Union's 12 million farmers and the further 46 million jobs in the agri-food industry. The EU has also developed into a net exporter of agri-food products.

A new deal has been finalised for EU agricultural spending. The 2014-2020 EU budget includes €281.8bn for the first pillar of the CAP, as well as a further €89.9bn for rural development. The budget marks a decrease in real terms compared to the previous seven-year allocation, but funding is more targeted on job creation, economic growth and the environment. The new CAP also has greater provision for supporting sustainable agricultural practices: 30% of the payments now awarded to farmers will be linked to improving the environment, including protecting biodiversity, whilst a further 30% of rural development funds are aimed at specific regional environmental priorities.

Cioloş was originally named as Romania's candidate in the next College of Commissioners. However that honour has now gone to Corina Cretu. The new Commission, which will be led by Jean-Claude Juncker, will begin work on 1 November 2014.

Portal speaks to the outgoing Agriculture Commissioner and reflects on his time in office during the last four years. Cioloş discusses the role of Horizon 2020 in the bioeconomy, the importance of public private partnerships, the role of international collaboration in overcoming societal challenges, and his greatest achievements during his term of office.

### What are the core challenges facing the EU regarding agriculture, food security and the bioeconomy?

Agriculture is the cornerstone of the biggest industry in Europe, the agri-food sector, which has a turnover of €715bn, or 6% of European added value, and contributes more than €100bn to EU exports every year. The developments in this sector will be key in the coming years for economic growth and job creation in rural areas. Beyond this economic medium term reality, food safety and food quality are becoming increasingly important to society and consumers in the EU. Expectations that production methods and processes are sustainable and respect the environment are growing, along with the demand for quality and concrete actions to fight against the loss of biodiversity and climate change.

**CAP reform has been a major focus for Dacian Cioloş**



If agriculture wants to meet the multiple expectations emerging from society and contribute to tackling the challenges of food security, food safety, quality, sustainability and climate change, it has to be increasingly knowledge-based. Farmers need to be aware of and have access to the best practices available. This also means that we need to innovate to produce more and better with fewer resources. In tackling these challenges, agriculture can bring solid answers to the expectations of EU society and generate growth and added value.

### What role can Horizon 2020 and public private partnerships play in providing solutions?

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU research and innovation programme ever, with a budget of nearly €80bn over seven years from 2014-2020. Compared to the previous research programmes, Horizon 2020 aims at coupling research and innovation and developing cross-thematic activities, avoiding the traditional research in 'silos'. The goal is to ensure Europe produces world class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.

Horizon 2020 in particular can play a role in providing solutions to agriculture, food security and bioeconomy challenges with the €3.8bn budget dedicated to financing research and innovation projects addressed in the 'Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy' Societal Challenge.

The fact that agriculture, food security and bioeconomy research and innovation under Horizon 2020 are now closely co-ordinated with the Common Agricultural Policy (via innovation support under rural development) is a golden opportunity to bolster innovation actions at local level. This will result in a more knowledge-based EU agriculture and forestry sector. This co-ordination via the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' will enable synergies between Horizon 2020 and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

In this context, new types of Horizon 2020 project formats have been created which match the EIP concept of innovative interactive projects. 'Multi-actor projects' are research projects where farmers and other end-users will be involved 'all along the project', from preparation and implementation up until dissemination of the project results: here, practitioners should not just be the study object but be encouraged to co-create solutions. Furthermore, 'thematic networks' are also multi-actor projects, but they target the collection of existing scientific knowledge and best practices in order to turn them into easily accessible end user material for practice to be distributed through the EIP network. Those two types of projects are being targeted in the first calls for proposals under Horizon 2020 in 2014 and 2015.

Horizon 2020 aims to achieve a greater impact with respect to research and innovation by combining private sector and its own funds into PPPs in key areas where research and innovation can contribute to the EU's wider competitiveness goals, leverage private investment and help tackle societal challenges. These partnerships are based on a long term commitment, including a balanced contribution from all partners, are accountable for the achievement of their objectives and are aligned with the Union's strategic goals relating to research, development and innovation.





The Bio-based Industries JTI (BBI) is a new PPP between the EU and the Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC) – a group of 70 European businesses and over 100 research organisations and universities working across technology, industry, agriculture and forestry. The BBI aims to use innovative technologies to build new value chains, converting Europe's untapped renewable resources and wastes into greener products, such as food, feed, chemicals, materials and fuels. The BBI JTI should mitigate the different types of market failures that discourage private investment into precompetitive research, demonstration and deployment activities for bio-based industries in Europe. The total budget of €3.7bn includes contributions from the European Commission through Horizon 2020 worth €975m and BIC, which will provide funding worth €2.7bn. The BBI launched its first call for proposals in July.

The work programmes of the BBI and 'Food security' Societal Challenge should be complementary and closely co-ordinated to maximise their impact.

### **How important is international collaboration in overcoming these challenges?**

Research and innovation are increasingly interlinked at an international level, aided by rapidly developing ICT. The number of internationally co-authored scientific publications is rising, and the mobility of researchers is increasing. In addition, global societal challenges are important drivers for research and innovation. Our planet has finite resources that need to be cared for sustainably – climate change and crop diseases do not stop at national borders, and food security needs to be ensured across the globe.

The Commission's 2012 communication entitled 'Enhancing and focusing EU international co-operation in research and innovation: A strategic approach' stated that there needs to be an "intensification of international co-operation" activities focused on "engaging with

partners outside of Europe on equal terms and in programmes and activities of high mutual interest".

Under Horizon 2020, the Commission decided to enhance and focus the EU's international co-operation activities in research and innovation by using the dual approach of openness complemented by targeted international collaboration activities, developed on the principles of common interest and mutual benefit, optimal scale and scope, partnership and synergy.

Under the Food Security Societal Challenge Work Programme for 2014/2015, particular attention is being paid to support important strategic bilateral agreements and dialogues as well as multilateral co-operation initiatives and international initiatives. For example, several topics were published to increase EU-China research and innovation collaborations that stem from the EU-China political dialogue on Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology, also known as the FAB flagship initiative.

**Horizon 2020 will provide key RDI funding to meet long term agricultural challenges**

### **What would you consider to be your greatest achievements during your time as commissioner?**

We have given a new orientation to the CAP through the reform agreed last year with the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Many things were new in this reform process. For the first time, the Parliament was fully involved with real decision making power. Also for the first time, we worked on a reform of the CAP with all 28 EU member states around the table, which means a wide diversity of agriculture. Thus, I am delighted that we were able to reach a compromise that will make the CAP fairer in supporting farmers across Europe and better adapted to the diversity of EU agriculture. I am particularly glad that we have strengthened our tools to innovate more, to help young people to invest in agriculture, to reinforce farmers' position within the food chain and to enhance the sustainability of agricultural practices across Europe.

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HORIZON 2020

Dacian Cioloş  
European Commissioner for  
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