European Policy & Open Markets

Biotechnology can make industrial processes more sustainable - if you let it

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At a glance

The use of biotechnology in industry has the potential to advance the green agenda. But restrictive regulations in Europe are slowing down the development of biosolutions and weakening the international competitiveness of the European biotech sector. Leading business associations from various European countries - including Switzerland - want to change this and have today founded the European Biosolutions Coalition.

Biosolutions have the potential to play a significant role in addressing the major challenges of our time, such as sustainable food production, environmentally friendly textiles, or the preservation of biodiversity.

Diverse applications of biotechnology

Humans have been using biotechnology to produce everyday products since the earliest times: For example, yeast bacteria are used in the production of bread, beer, and wine, and living lactic acid bacteria are needed to make cheese. Living microorganisms are also increasingly used in industry for the manufacture of products. They can often carry out substance transformations at room temperature more efficiently and in a more environmentally friendly way than conventional processes. The field of application is almost inexhaustible. Today, they are already used to produce environmentally friendly detergents or fragrances. But there is also great potential in the textile and energy sectors. In 2022, for example, the Swiss company Clariant started the first commercial production of cellulose ethanol from straw in its new biorefinery in Podari, Romania. With the help of customised enzymes, around 50,000 tonnes of ethanol will be produced from 250,000 tonnes of agricultural residues from the region.

Unsatisfactory legal framework

However, Europe does not currently have an adequate regulatory framework that would allow biotechnological processes to be used quickly and efficiently in industry. The legal frameworks that currently regulate biotechnological processes have one thing in common: they are not geared towards biosolutions. For example, industrial biosolutions and the biological production of fuels are subject to regulations aimed at regulating fossil substances. These inadequate regulatory frameworks inhibit resource efficient biosolutions and the potential to advance the global agenda for sustainability

International coalition for better framework conditions

A coalition of national and sector-specific business and industry associations now want to change this. They have founded the "European Biosolutions Coalition". In addition to economiesuisse, the founding members are the national trade associations of Denmark, Austria, and the Netherlands as well as the Italian industry association Assobiotec. The aim of the coalition is to improve the legal framework for the use of biotechnological processes in industry. Even though the work will initially concentrate on the EU's regulatory framework, it is of great importance to economiesuisse that corresponding reforms also take place in European countries outside the EU - such as Switzerland. Only in this way is cross-border cooperation in the biotech sector possible. The aim is to create the necessary conditions for strengthening sustainable industrial production all over Europe. This includes countries such as Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Only in this way will Europe have a chance to keep up with the global competition for efficient industrial applications of biosolutions.

Press release European Biosolutions Coalition

10 solutions for the industrial biorevolution

Rudolf Minsch

Head of General Economic Policy & International Relations, Chief Economist, Member of the Executive Board

François Baur

Head of European Affairs

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