



European Plant Science Organisation
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Open letter

EPSO Endorses Position of Chief Scientific Adviser to the President of the European Commission

Brussels, 25.07.2014

To Mr Jean-Claude Juncker
President-elect of the European Commission

Dear Mr Juncker,

We as **plant scientists fully endorse the position of the Chief Scientific Adviser to the President of the European Commission** and call upon you to nominate a CSA to help implement your vision of a '*A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change*', which was well received by the European Parliament on 15 July in Strasbourg.

EPSO, a non-profit academic organisation with 227 public research institutes and universities in 31 countries as members – 28 of which are in Europe-, representing over 28.000 people working in plant sciences, calls for a science based policy. The plant science community is happy to provide in-depth scientific evidence, expertise and advice and in addition sees high value in the function of the CSA to the Commission President, which is not a conflict but a complementary approach.

As nine NGOs point out in their public letter to you this week (on 22 July 2014), there are different views. They give the impression that the scientific community does not support the appointment of a CSA, which is incorrect. The plant science community in Europe fully endorses the appointment of a CSA. The nine NGOs criticise 'the role of the CSA has been unaccountable, intransparent and controversial', 'the nature of her [CSO] advice ... remains unknown', as are the topics 'on what the Commission President has requested advice on', and 'what advice has been given'. Any **such concerns can be fully addressed by** adding to the CSA guidelines a note to '**inform the public on the broad lines of advice requested and provided**'. This will '*restore European citizens' confidence*' as you stated. Confidence cannot be maintained nor restored by the removal of the mechanism by which evidence-based information and understanding can be incorporated into policy formulations.

The plant science community calls upon policy makers to implement a science-based policy as a priority. For a new start in Europe, the plant science community encourages the new Commission President and his team of Commissioners to work towards balanced support for all technologies focusing on the European as well as global goals and challenges and combining the advantages of all available technologies towards these ends – as you said '*to focus our policies on the key*

challenges ahead for our economies and for our societies’ and ‘a European Union that is bigger and more ambitious on big things’.

Regarding the specific criticism of the 9 NGOs on the CSA’s statements on genetically modified organisms, policy makers should follow the assessments of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which approved, among others, several GMOs for cultivation in Europe. Plant scientists endorse these and are happy to provide additional expertise and advise whenever requested by policy makers. This will bring together two goals – ‘*restore[ing] European citizens’ confidence*’ and fostering ‘*the right regulatory environment and promote[ing] a climate of entrepreneurship and job creation*’.

Last, but not least we would like to point out that **Europe has enormous potential and responsibility to be one of the leading science forces globally**. There is an urgent need to enable European scientists to join and lead longer term global partnerships which will help to make Europe ‘*a stronger global actor*’ as you envisage.

As you promised to the European Parliament and earlier to European citizens during the Parliament elections to ‘*do your utmost to make this difference*’, plant scientists are ready to join you realise this ambitious objective. We can help you to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches for a bright and responsible future.

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Useful links

Communications webpage: <http://www.epsoweb.org/epsomail.org>
EPSO member institutes and universities: www.epsoweb.org/about/members.htm
EPSO representatives: www.epsoweb.org/about/representatives.htm
EPSO: [Science Based Policy](#), 1.9.2013
EPSO: [Statement on agricultural technologies](#), 15.6.2012
EPSO: [International Cooperation](#), 8.6.2012

About EPSO

EPSO, the European Plant Science Organisation, is an independent academic organisation that represents more than 227 research institutes, departments and universities from 31 countries in Europe and beyond. EPSO’s mission is to improve the impact and visibility of plant science in Europe.
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Further signatories are now invited and will be listed on the see next page in the online version

Signatories:

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