

# RISE Expert Workshop on Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture and Nutrient Recycling and Reuse

September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015

EU Pavilion – EXPO Milano

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, the RISE Foundation held a Workshop on Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture and Nutrient Recycling and Reuse in the EU Pavilion at the EXPO Milan. The aim of the event was to raise discussion around the key drivers for greater nutrient recovery and reuse in Europe before looking at the main challenges and opportunities of such an approach.



The event was the second of two events prepared upon request of the European Commission's EXPO Scientific Steering Committee whose aim is to generate discussion on key topics around the EXPO's theme: *'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life'*. During the workshop, progress on RISE Foundation's new study entitled *'Nutrient recovery and Reuse in European Agriculture: a review of the issues, opportunities, actions and policies'* and launched earlier in May this year, was presented by the study's director, Allan Buckwell.

"Sustainability is not an option ... it is a must", said Dr. Janez Potocnik, former European Commissioner for the Environment, and since April this year, the new RISE Chairman, as he opened the workshop with a keynote on the importance of Circular Economy. He emphasized that this concept was not only about the re-use of materials, but also biological cycles- noting its role in food security, the preservation of the environment and in the creation of opportunities for new rural businesses. Dr. Potocnik stressed the need of increasing nutrient use efficiency and reducing the impact of excess nutrient use on the environment and human health. Low nutrient use efficiency and air and water pollution are identified in the RISE Foundation's study among a set goals and concerns facing nutrient management in the EU. Other concerns are the finiteness of natural resources used to produce mineral fertilizers and the decline in soil organic matter that is threatening future soil productivity and health. Lively discussions revolved around the potential role that the Circular Economy can play in relation to nutrient management and the opportunities it can create both in terms of distributing jobs all over the territory and reducing our environmental impacts.



Throughout the workshop, speakers and participants agreed on the importance of tackling the inefficiency of the current agri-food system and on the dissemination of current knowledge in order to raise public awareness on such a timely topic. Reinhard Buescher, Head of Unit at DG Enterprise, mentioned that the new Fertilizer Regulation will be delivered within the EC Circular Economy package early December. Through it, the European Commission aims at establishing a level playing field for mineral and organic producers, a situation that will contribute to the creation of new business opportunities and more options available for farmers.



The conceptual discussions were brought to life by a visit to Aqua & Sole Nutrient Recovery Centre outside of Milan. There, participants were introduced to the technical aspects of the installation. On operation, the centre will process 120.000 tonnes of waste annually, producing 190.000 tonnes of organic fertilizer deodorised and sanitised through a thermophilic anaerobic treatment. In addition to the plant visit, several successful projects focusing on nutrient recovery throughout the EU were presented. Speakers stressed the importance of finding local, tailored solutions for each region, the need for

good economic conditions that enable investments, and the development of a market for new products deriving from recovered nutrients.

The discussions on nutrient recovery and reuse will continue in the next RISE event: an Expert Workshop in the European Parliament on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November.



For more information visit [www.risefoundation.eu](http://www.risefoundation.eu)