

## Press Release

Vienna, 21 July, 2017

### **EU Agriculture Ministers Agree to Meet UN Sustainable Development Goals with Soya**

*European agriculture has the potential to become more sustainable with the cultivation of protein plants such as soya, peas, and broad beans. At the moment, however, only a few farmers cultivate these so-called leguminous crops. With the signing of the European Soya Declaration, EU agriculture ministers are now calling for further cultivation of these nitrogen fixing plants.*

On Monday, 14 EU agriculture ministers, including those of Italy, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, and Finland, signed the European Soya Declaration spearheaded by Germany and Hungary. The objective of the declaration is to take Europe one step closer towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put into place by the United Nations (especially with regard to objectives 2 and 15). These focus on improving the world's food supply and using natural resources in a sustainable way.

A significant contribution to this end will be the cultivation of protein plants such as soya, peas, and broad beans in Europe. Leguminous plants lower the risk of other crops being affected by diseases — especially with regard to cereals. According to the two-page declaration, they furthermore bind nitrogen to the ground and thus enable farmers to reduce the use of synthetic fertilisers.

Currently, leguminous crops are cultivated on only 2 to 3 percent of European fields. The signatories of the declaration, however, point out that there are still large areas in Central and Eastern Europe suitable for cultivating protein plants. In these regions, only a few crops are cultivated throughout the year. With soya, peas, and broad beans, farmers would be able to introduce more variety onto their fields and use their harvests as feed. This would reduce their dependence on feed imports from South overseas, and help support their local economy.

The 14 EU agriculture ministers emphasised that consumers' desire for non-GMO products is on the rise, and therefore support transparent identification and certification standards such as Donau Soja and Europe Soya.

In his speech, Hungarian Minister of Agriculture Sandor Fazekas thanked the Donau Soja Association and Matthias Krön, and underscored that the declaration is a joint accomplishment of the organisation and the agricultural ministers.

Matthias Krön, president of the European soya association Donau Soja, explained that an increase of leguminous plant cultivation in Europe would be a great opportunity for rural development, since locally produced soya would also be

processed and used in Europe. Donau Soja is committed to the protein revolution: sustainable, regional, and rural cultivation of protein in Europe for Europe. Krön was pleased that 14 governments already signed the Europe Soya Declaration and hopes that more countries will follow. Because of this initiative,

EU commissioner Hogan also announced his wish to develop a European protein strategy. According to Krön, Donau Soja will engage in an intensive dialog with its European partners to ensure that the protein revolution will make its way onto fields, plates, and feeding troughs.

### **About Donau Soja**

The Donau Soja Association is a non-profit, independent association and constitutes Europe's major initiative in the agricultural sector. The association unites the civilian, politics, and businesses sectors all along the value chain, ranging from non-GM seed production to food of animal and plant origin. Donau Soja's focus is on the support of non-GM, source identified high-quality soya from the Danube Region. The association has more than 265 members from all over Europe. With six subsidiaries (AT, GER, SRB, RO, UA, MD) and two representatives (IT, POL), Donau Soja is well represented. Fifteen countries have signed the Donau Soja Declaration for the promotion of non-GM soya cultivation in Europe. Donau Soja is supported by the Austrian Development Agency.

### **Inquiries**

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