

To:
Ms. Ekaterina Zaharieva
Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation
European Commission

Brussels, 20 January 2025

Dear Commissioner Zaharieva,

On behalf of CropLife Europe, congratulations on your appointment to the College of Commissioners. Today, the EU requires both vision and a clear framework to address the challenges and opportunities outlined in the Draghi report. We are excited to introduce CropLife Europe as a partner in the transition to sustainable and innovative food systems for Europe.

As the European organisation that represents the crop protection sector, we advocate for an outcome-focused approach that leverages a sustainable toolbox of solutions for farmers. Our members are 25 global companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and 32 national associations operating in conventional pesticides, biopesticides, plant biotechnology, and digital and precision agriculture. This vision aligns with your mission to drive the EU's scientific and technological progress, from basic research to applied innovation, ensuring that research and innovation become central to Europe's competitiveness, security, and sustainability goals.

Innovation will be the cornerstone of progress for agriculture, as we work towards more sustainable and competitive practices. The potential for innovation in the agricultural sector is huge, with new solutions and technology nurturing more resilient and sustainable crops representing an exciting future for Europe. This vision aligns with your stated mission to foster innovation and enhance the competitiveness in the EU. We believe our expertise and resources can contribute meaningfully to a productive partnership with the European Commission in driving this transition.

Also, I would like to take the opportunity of this letter to highlight the work on our 2030 Commitments launched in 2021. These Commitments focus on three main priorities: fostering Innovation and Investment, advancing the Circular Economy and Protecting People and the Environment.

This year, we are proud to share substantial progress across these areas:

Innovation & Investment

Our members have committed to invest €10 billion in Digital and Precision Agricultural technologies and an additional €4 billion in biopesticides by 2030. We have already made substantial progress, with €3.8 billion allocated to digital agronomy and €2.4 billion to biopesticides. This represents 38% and 60% of our respective targets. These investments contribute to the EU's goals of fostering innovation and ensuring that research, policy and economic priorities go hand in hand.

Circular Economy

Our dedication to resource efficiency is central to our packaging recovery and recycling efforts. In 2023, we achieved a 71.8% collection rate for plastic packaging, with an ambitious target of reaching a 75% collection rate across all EU countries by 2025. Notably, 89% of the collected plastic was successfully processed for recycling, underscoring our focus on turning waste into valuable resources. These efforts support the EU's ambition to transition to a circular economy.

Protecting People & the Environment

We have reached 69% of our goal to train 1 million advisors, trainers, and farmers in best management practices. Additionally, we are on track to make Closed Transfer Systems available to all European farmers and operators by 2030, significantly reducing exposure risks during product handling. This contributes directly to improving safety for rural communities and ensuring sustainable farming practices, aligning with the EU's broader sustainability objectives.

We support the core recommendations from the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture as well as the Letta and the Draghi reports and are eager to continue working towards solutions that can support the transition to a more sustainable and competitive EU.

Once again, congratulations on your appointment. We would welcome the opportunity to meet you and your team to explore avenues for collaboration and share further insights into how our sector can support Europe's environmental ambitions.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to working together.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Olivier de Matos', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Olivier de Matos
Director General

Cc.

Andreas Schwarz, Head of Cabinet.
Sophie Alexandrova, Deputy Head of Cabinet.