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Protein agenda 2020: The Dutch taking the lead in managing a future shortage

Bilthoven – The world's population will reach over 9 billion by 2050. Global food transition is imminent and a protein shortage is foreseen. Existing protein foods chains such as meat, dairy and fish need to focus on improvements in productivity in production and technology and yield, whereas high investments in research for new protein sources are needed to secure food and protein supply according to global experts in the food and feed industries at the Protein Summit, organized by Bridge2Food, 25 & 26 November 2010 in The Netherlands.

"A Protein Agenda 2020 is needed to accelerate a transition towards sustainable protein consumption, based on ambitions and visions shared by companies in the various existing protein food chains. A timeline which goes beyond the regular 3-5 year corporate planning periods", commented Gerard Klein Essink, Managing Director at Bridge2Food. The food industry is indeed facing soaring prices for protein ingredients and food manufacturers need to prepare themselves with alternative solutions to manage price increases and availability, according to Professor Emmo Meijer, Senior Vice-President at Unilever. The Director General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture & Innovation, Mrs. Annemie Burger, concluded that more public-partnerships, industry and sector co-operations for the existing protein value chains can also offer solutions for the nearer future. Strategic partnerships are needed to offer more food security for world population, particularly for the lesser developed world and should be part of a greater food agenda towards 2020.

Key to developing the 2020 agenda is, however, to get the retailers on board. Important issues to tackle for UK food retailers are traceability, sustainable agriculture as well as water and carbon foot prints, according to Mrs. Alison Austin, former Head of Environment with Sainsbury's. Mrs. Brigit Hofer, who is Responsible for Consumer Policy at Swiss retailer COOP, confirmed that COOP is already working with different stakeholders from farmers to research institutes and is looking forward to form partnerships along the supply chain in managing a sustainable protein supply: "ensuring food protein supply in a sustainable way is the responsibility of many parties."

Is the agricultural chain able to produce enough protein by 2050? Yes, according Rudy Rabbinge, Professor at Wageningen University and advisor to many international organisations like FAO, governments and companies.



Certainly there are issues with regard to a soaring demand for proteins from China, India, Russia and also Brazil, but the yield growth of crops in the last decades has shown that a lot is possible with innovation and genetics. This was confirmed by Mr. Leo den Hartog, Director R&D and Quality Affairs at Nutreco. Supply issues exist and it is crucial to work together on common goals. However, substantial gains can already be achieved at this moment with improvement of feed conversion and better farming methods and many initiatives are already taking place. Mr. Jeroen Leffelaar, Global Head Animal Proteins, Rabobank International in the Netherlands, however, clearly pointed out the growing disparity between the increasing protein demand from countries like China and India on the one hand and protein supply on the other hand.

Mr. Niek Snoeij, Managing Director with the Dutch Research Institute TNO, concluded that investments in research on new protein sources such as algae, insects and single cell proteins can offer great opportunities and contribute to securing food protein supply, yet it will take many years to develop the value chains. More international collaboration and investments between knowledge leaders can accelerate this development. Mr. Johann Tergesen, Managing Director with Canadian Burcon Nutrascience Inc. explained the issues regarding food law approvals and the importance to get investment funds involved in speeding R&D breakthroughs. New single cell protein research is needed to progress, yet getting enough long-term commitment is crucial for the future, added Professor Joost Teixeira de Mattos from University of Amsterdam. According to Mr. Marco Giuseppin, Research Director with Solanic/AVEBE, bio-refinery of the potato protein value chain can offer new innovation opportunities.

More information on The Protein Summit 2010 and The Protein Agenda 2020 can be obtained from Bridge2Food, The Netherlands. Contact Gerard

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Bridge2Food is a knowledge and network agency based in The Netherlands. Its key strength is the development of specific platforms for the food industry: **'Building bridges between food professionals'**. Bridge2Food is operating in the international food sector. Bridge2Food facilitates **international food networks** such as the **Protein Innovation Network (PIN)** for research managers with an interest in food proteins. Bridge2Food also organizes a wide range of **food industry conferences** for senior managers of food manufacturing companies in Europe, the USA and Asia.

Upcoming events:

- 2nd Sports & Performance Nutrition Conference, May 2011 (The Netherlands)
- 5th Food Proteins Course, 15 - 17 June 2011, New Orleans (USA)
- Protein Technology innovations Conference, September 2011 (The Netherlands)
- Elderly, Medical & Clinical Foods Conference, October 2011 (The Netherlands)