

Thank you to Professor Fava and the Bioeconomy coordination group of the Presidency of Ministries for this excellent opportunity to reflect and invest in synergies.

As Regional Minister for Agriculture, I also bring the greetings of our President, Vincenzo De Luca, who proved in every dimension of the regional government how central it is to keep the focus on Europe and on the Med area for our Region to have sustainable and intelligent growth able to match the needs of the future generations and the present challenges and ongoing crisis.

This meeting aims to identify the critical points, discuss possible solutions and operational methods and contribute proactively, with the involvement of all stakeholders and those directly involved, to the construction of the mechanisms that will subsequently allow coherent and effective inclusion in the national and regional Operational Programmes of the necessary tools to make synergies operational.

So let me go straight to the three points we can use as a common framework to share opportunities and draft joint actions.

The first point is

**1) Successful examples of synergies among Horizon2020/BBI JU and structural funds implemented by the Region;**

Let's consider the CAP and the structural funds in this new programming period, especially if we think the greater flexibility in the use of EARDF ERDF and ESF, as well as the simplification of reporting and program notifications, even if they come after a very long process of approving the legislative framework. We have, for sure, a smoother scenario to continue some good practices that we put in place in 2014-2020.

I only list four activities as an example of what we can do together and what we can do better in the next future:

- a) The teaming of resources from Horizon, Prima, and Interreg to support innovation related to the Med Diet and healthy foods as a common path to encourage the re-positioning of traditional productions. This is stimulated by a virtual matchmaking tool combining Horizon and Interreg projects in our region, dedicated to supporting researchers in participation in the upcoming Horizon Europe calls. This matchmaking tool is also intended as a benchmarking tool for the projects supported by the EARDF through the European Innovation Partnerships. This exercise made our regional system more aware of the innovation challenges and the reusable knowledge and innovation from which we can benefit, not paying twice for something already existing.

In the framework of the CRPM and the Westmed initiative, we are carrying on similar activities, starting a joint analysis with other regions in the area

(Catalunia, for example) to investigate the possibility of setting up interregional financing mechanisms that would complement and make these synergies possible.

- b) We explored the possibility of combining EARDF and ESF in the COFUND mechanism of the Horizon Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action. In this area, we twinned with Abruzzo Region to explore how to move forward their experience of the REPEAT project by aligning the reporting procedure and the simplified cost options to make the cofinancing of doctoral programs addressing innovation in agriculture possible and easier in the next future
- c) In designing one of the key projects supported by the RRF, the Agritech Hub, we identified downstream funding to capitalize and consolidate results from outstanding Horizon 2020 projects. This is the core of a similar action we will coordinate on Blue Careers and Innovation in Fisheries in the first half of 2023.
- d) In updating the smart specialization strategy and drafting the regional plan for forestry or the master plan for innovation in agrifood, the Horizon Europe Clusters were taken as a reference. Explicit reference was made to the bio-economy, whose strategic importance was recognized by the regional policies, considering the competencies acquired and experiences in the area and the context of interregional partnerships and European thematic platforms.

Let me move on to the second point Prof. Fava asked us to focus on

## **2. Benefits and difficulties associated with the implementation of the mentioned synergies**

Despite the progress we have made, there are several mechanisms that we still need to experiment with at the regional level, also taking a cue from what other regions have done.

A first example is the stable involvement of the business actors participating in Horizon in the definition of the strategies of the AKIS that will be financed by the CAP 2023-2027

The second strand is better programming and procedural integration between funds, which also involves training and strengthening the administrative capacities of our officials and training beneficiaries so that they know how to activate synchronous or sequential complementarities between structural funds and directly managed programs.

Finally, I come to the third point to stay within the agreed timeframe.

## **3. Suggestions about tools and actions that can facilitate synergies among Horizon and structural funds at the territorial level.**

We need to learn more and more by doing. The GIURI Guide and DG REGIO's initiatives within the INTERACT program on complementarities and synergies between programs have made us aware of schemes and procedures. The

regulatory framework of the directly managed programs, the Structural Funds, and the CAP allow and support complementarity. The problem is no longer 'if it can be done' but 'why don't we try to do it.'

As far as the region I represent is concerned, in parallel with the direct or indirect co-financing action of the AKIS on the strategic regional complement of the CAP, we are thinking of defining a pilot action on alternative food packaging that will allow us to channel the convergence of EAFRD resources under regional direction, Interreg, Horizon (also through the involvement of EIT) and Erasmus (capitalizing on a series of forward-looking projects linked to the Pact for Skills for Food coordinated by Food & Drink Europe, which we have joined as a department).

It is meant to be a spark, not just a glimmer of light showing the way, but a trigger, a triggering factor for a process of transformation that we would like to be structural.

The help of the Commission and the other regions will be essential to accompany us on this path.

Thank you for your attention.