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SOFIE2 – 2nd Summit of the Organic and organo-mineral Fertilisers Industries in Europe

Tuesday 17 January 2023 to Wednesday 18 January 2023,
from 10:00am to 4:00pm
Online

An online replay of the Summit is accessible through the Summit website or on the following links: Day 1 and Day 2. The slides will be available on the Summit website shortly. EBA participated to the summit as speaker.
Following a summary of the most relevant interventions.

1. Welcome and introduction

Formal welcome by Chris Thornton (ESPP Secretary) acting as moderator during the Summit, Robert van Spingelen (President of ESPP), Jacob Hansen (Director General of Fertilizers Europe) and Jessica Fitch (ECOFI).

- **Oliver Sitar, European Commission (DG AGRI): the fertilisers supply and price crisis – opportunities for organic (secondary carbon-based) fertilisers**

The speaker recalled the particularly difficult context the EU is in today with the energy dependency on Ukraine and its effects on the availability and price of mineral fertilizers. Organic fertilizers have an important role to play.
The EU Commission reacted to this crisis by publishing its communication on "Food security: availability and affordability of fertilisers" (9 November 2022) to try to mitigate the situation.
Three other communications were published by DG ENER at this period on energy costs, naming fertilizers a critical product and introducing a gas price limiting mechanism.
In the EU Commission "RePowerEU plan" (18 May 2022), a paragraph on biogas/biomethane had been included. The use of digestate as an organic fertilizer is a solution.
Better nutrient use will also be one of the objectives of the CAP strategic plans. There are eco-schemes on fertilisation.
There is potential to replace mineral fertilizers by organic fertilizers, with limitations (e.g. 90% of manure would be already used as an organic fertilizer but still a more concentrated manure to non NVA). This is where R&I is important. The European Parliament is currently drafting its own opinion on fertilizers.

Q&A:
Some participants expressed regret that the speaker did not mention enough organic fertilizers though it is the main topic of the Summit. The speaker indicated that the future proposal on the nutrient management action plan should be a very interesting opportunity for the sector. He also mentioned again CAP plans and the opportunities of Cluster 6 in Horizon Europe. DG GROW is the DG dealing with the Fertilizers Products Regulation (FPR).

- **Pekka Pesonen, Copa-Cogeca: the importance of organic fertilisers for European farmers**

Copa Cogeca's Secretary General made a strong statement indicating that he was going to skip its presentation to speak directly because the subject was too important. He stated that the Fertilizers communication mentioned by the EU Commission was not providing the right tools to answer the current crisis and recalled the particularly difficult context also mentioning food inflation (nutrient market is essential to deliver food).Three problematic examples: prohibition of the use of communal sludges in certain sectors fields for various biohazards reasons;

limit of 170kg/ha on the amount of nitrogen from manure that can be applied, call for temporary lifting of this measure/support of renure); too many measures in ecoschemes to properly address nutrient management.
The speaker asked for a new legislative initiative to enhance the organic fertilizers market, enable operators to have a better use of existing resources and address all these issues.

Q&A:
Oliver Sitar, European Commission (DG AGRI) recalled that the reason DG ENVI is careful with renure is because in certain countries, it could increase environmental issues.

- **Jacob Hansen, Fertilizers Europe: complementarity between mineral and organic solutions to achieve balanced fertilisation**

Manure does not always reflect what the plant needs, that is the task of mineral fertilizers. Nutrients balance is key.

2. Agronomic benefits

- **Verena Pfahler, Fachverband Biogas: biogas digestates and soil fertility – an overview**

The nutrient content of the digestate varies a lot depending on the content of the feedstock that you put in the digestate. See diagram with nutrient content of digestates. When you directly apply without upgrading, you can have a low content of nutrients, so you have to transport a large amount of liquid digestate (and then not profitable).
She presented different types of digestate upgrading.
The speaker mentioned the ECN report that summarizes all the compost and digestate benefits on soil fertility.
The question of the effect of digestate on soil is a very complex question.
See slides for three concrete examples from the members of the German biogas association of anaerobic digestion in organic or pig farms .
Key take away: OF digestates are not as easy to handle as manure fertilizers, you have to know your digestate and your local conditions. If it does not fit, make it fit meaning that you can combine your digestate with other materials such as biochars.
She also presented the German Quality Assurance System (QAS) which is the independent sampling, analysis and control system.
Regarding the FPR, there are two components' categories for digestate in the regulation: CMC 4 (energy crop digestate) and CMC 5 (other digestates). But most of the digestate does not fit in the regulation, especially for unseparated and liquid digestates. Easier to separate your digestate into solid and liquid fraction.

- **Andrea Schievano, EU Joint Research Center (JRC): reserach organic and organo mineral fertilisers**

The speaker presented a JRC study reviewing farming practices (meta-analysis of meta-analyses).
According to the study, organic fertilisation is proved to have a positive effects on the decrease of soil NH3 emissions and of nutrient leaching and run-off as well as the increase of soil biological quality, soil nutrients and carbon sequestration. However, the effect of organic fertilisation would be neutral or negative on the decrease of soil CH4 emissions and the increase of plant nutrient uptake.
The study should be available soon on a wiki platform "evidence library on farming practice".

3. Circular Nutrients & Climate Change

- **Leon Fock, Eurofema: carbon footprint of organic fertilisers**

EUROFEMA had consultants conducted a study about the carbon footprint of organic fertilisers based on LCA databases and members specific data, using the European Product Environnmental Footprint (FET) method.

See the slides for detailed results of the study. Evidently, application ration, packaging materials, transport ex-gate and eventual compensation on total foodprint should also be considered.

- **Peter Hammond, CCm: the elimination of waste and pollution, the retention and reuse of CO2 combined with organic materials and the regeneration of soils**
- **Harald Mikkelsen, Koppert: carbon sequestration as a result of the nitrogen content of fertilisers**

4. Regulation introduction

- **Ana-Lucia Crisan, European Commission (DG GROW): EU Fertilizer Regulations**

The speaker presented the FPR (16 July 2022) which aims to open a single market notably to fertilisers made from recovered waste and by-products available in the EU. The regulation sets out rules for EU fertilising products from different categories that will be allowed to carry the CE marking. The regulation is optional, does not prevent national regulations. It empowers 10 Notified Bodies (NoBos) in the EU that are in charge of the conformity assessment of the components of fertilizing products. There are different modules depending on the components that you need to assess.

Along with the FPR, CEN technical specifications have been set (see slides for the links), more will follow. Harmonized standard should also be first set by April 2024 (not mandatory but will facilitate the placing on market). A legislative proposal on digital labelling should also be adopted soon. Regarding the use of products derived from animal by-products in EU fertilising products, DG SANTE is still defining the end-points of the delegated Regulation and then DG GROW will amend Component Material Category 10 in the FPR.

- **Laura van Scholl, NMI: Technical study in support of a Guidance document Fertilisers**

The speakers explained the whole procedure to get a CE mark for a fertilising product.

- **Finbarr O'Regan, Ireland Department of Agriculture and (pending) AdCo (EU FPR Member States market surveillance authorities administrative cooperation group): registration of organic and organo-mineral fertilisers**
- **Murray Smedley, Barkwith Associates Limited: practical experiences & GB position**

- **Giulia Laura Cancian, EBA: Completing the nutrient cycle**

Q&A:
Questions/remarks on:

- Stating that mineral fertiliser can be replaced by digestate would be inacurrate because the nitrogen contained in the digestate is coming from manure or agricultural residues which are already recycled in fields today so not a new input.
- Future perspectives in terms of farms scalen the percentage of upgraded digestate and feestocks sources.
- The fact that with upgraded digestate, it will lead to an increase in transport costs.
- The availability of phosphorus in digestate.

- **Giel Tettelaar, EFCI Register (Notified Body): CE registration of organic fertilisers using Module B&C of the Conformity Assessment procedure**
- **Dorottya Lőrincz, Certrust (Notified Body): explaining pitfalls of CE registration in practice & Module D 1**

5. Q&A on EU Fertilising Products Regulation (FPR 219/2009) implementation

Numerous questions on FPR certification amendments and responsibilities between suppliers and manufacturers).

Ana-Lucia Crisan, European Commission (DG GROW) considered that the timeline for a new CMC to be included in the FPR should be around 4 years. Chris Thornton (ESPP Secretary) recalled that the amendment to include post processing of digestate has been included much faster (because no safety issue).

Discussion on the hypothetical difficulty related to manure as a raw material (when amendment accepted) for organic or mineral fertilizers since it is not uncommon to have many different suppliers: will they have to be all declared according to the FPR?

The digital labelling proposal should be adopted by February 2023 (based on the findings from a previous workshop on digital labelling with the expert group).

6. Perspectives and panel discussion

- **Company presentation and market perspectives: Irmgard Leifert (ECN), Karlien Vermeiren (DCM), Luuk Braam (Ferm-O-Feed)**

Irmgard Leifert (ECN): deals with compost and digestate. ECN is monitoring developments regarding the Waste Framework Directive (e.g. implementation of biowaste separate collection), FPR and Animal By-Products legislation (e.g. exemption of sludges from food & feed processing industries as input material for composting and anaerobic digestion), Farm to fork and sustainable Carbon cycle (Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plan (e.g. including compost & digestate from biowaste in carbon farming practices, carbon removal schemes ; replacement of mineral fertilisers with high-quality recycled organic materials ; recognition of soil organic matter in the Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plan) as well as Soil Health Law and Biodiversity strategy (e.g. recognition of carbon sequestration potential of compost and solid digestate ; replacement of peat in growing media with high-quality recycled organic material i.e. compost and solid digestate).

Karlien Vermeiren (DCM): DCM is a producer of organic and mineral fertilisers in Belgium. The speaker presented concrete examples of advantages/barriers they have with the new FPR.

Luuk Braam (Ferm-O-Feed): company developing, producing ad selling organic fertilisers and bio-stimulants.

- **Panel members: Ana-Lucia Crisan, European Commission (DG GRO) ; Laura van Scholl, NMI ; Finbarr O'Regan, Ireland Department of Agriculture ; Murray Smedley, Barkwith Associates Limited ; Giel Tettelaar, EFCI Register (Notified Body) ; Dorottya Lőrincz, Certrust (Notified Body)**

Panel members indicated their key takeaways: big challenge of the adoption of the animal by-products amendment ; importance to work collectively with organic and mineral fertilisers communities ; still a lot of gaps in the FPR.