



Official Participant

Report Template for Events at EXPO

organised in the frame of the Week of DG AGRI stakeholders' at Expo Milano

Event Title :	Sustainable Beet Sugar in the EU: Launch of the EU Beet Sugar Sustainability Partnership.	Date:	9 September 2015
Event Organiser:	CEFS (European Committee of Sugar Manufacturers), CIBE (European Confederation of Beet Growers) and EFFAT (European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors).		
Event Target Group:	EU beet sugar sector stakeholders (beet growers, sugar producers, trade unions, sugar customers, sustainable investments banks/funds, sustainable chemical producers, decision-makers –MEPs, Commission officials etc-, NGOs, journalists, etc)		
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Event Concept

- End of 2013, The European beet growers (CIBE), sugar producers (CEFS) and trade unions of the food and agriculture sector (EFFAT) formalised a landmark agreement to jointly highlight and report on representative Good Practices of sustainable production of beet sugar in the EU. The official launch event in Milan will be the culmination of the intensive work that started then and that will now make an important further step by sharing the result of that work with all interested stakeholders across the food chain.
- The draft program contains 4 main parts: 1) General guidance from the leadership in the sector (unions, industry and farmers) followed by a more in-depth presentation of the 'Good Sustainability Practices', 2) Panel on the Partnership, its members and society as a whole, 3) Panel on Customers expectations and 4) Panel on markets and the future outlook for the sector.
- Across the whole event, the objective is to enter in an interactive debate with all participants taking as a basis the above panel discussions with selected key stakeholders coming from different parts of the food and non-food (i.e. bio-economy) chain.

Expected Outcomes

- This will be the first public event of the EU Beet Sugar Sustainability partnership. The objective of this official launch will be to present the result of almost 2 years of work among the three partners of the beet sugar chain: the EU Sustainability Good Practices.
- We expected at least 50-75 participants coming from different parts of the food chain including the agricultural sector, companies in the food industry, trade unions, NGOs, academia, experts in the sustainability of agri-food systems and journalists.
- We aim to make the Partnership an international referent and a platform for dialogue among all stakeholders interested in sustainability in beet sugar production. Therefore, with the launch in Milan's Expo we aim also to increase the visibility of the Partnership and its work internationally.
- The key messages will evolve around how environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability are being dealt with in the EU based on the 'Good Practices'. The role that the 'European mode I' (be it social and agri-environmental) plays in supporting those good practices in beet sugar production will feature strongly in our key messages.

Main Conclusions

- Although our Partnership only received confirmation of it being selected for DG Agri's stakeholder week in May, leaving mainly the difficult summer months to promote the event, the event was very well attended with 85 participants (out of a total room capacity of 97).
- The audience included a very diverse range of stakeholders including farmers, sugar producers, trade unions, sugar customers, investment banks, traders and chemical companies among other participants.
- **We very much missed, however, the presence of any DG Agriculture official despite repeated invitations and demands coming from the partners in that regard.** There were no MEPs either but this was due to the Parliament's Plenary taking place at the same time in Strasbourg.
- The EU BSSP Sustainable Good Practices were very well received by stakeholder and the work of the Partnership was lauded as relevant, serious and credible.
- The general quality of the stakeholder dialogue was very good as stakeholders were quite open and ready to express their opinions which led to a lively and constructive debate. The lunch in the beautiful Pavilion terrace and the coffee breaks also provided a lot of opportunities for side interactions among stakeholders.

What follow-up actions emerged from this event?

Members of the partnership expressed their commitment to continuing working in collaboration with each other and to following up on their joint initiative, in response to stakeholders' feedback. Below are some of the key ideas discussed by participants at the EU BSSP stakeholder roundtable, which the partnership will be working to address in coming months:

- The Good Practices are both formative and informative: The purpose of the Good Practices is to be disseminated and taken up throughout the sector, all around Europe. They provide ongoing inspiration for continuous improvement, as well as a handy and practical benchmark for practitioners.
- European beet sugar is widely recognized as a sustainable crop and product: Customers, manufacturers, investors and other stakeholders already acknowledge the sustainability credentials of beet sugar grown and produced in the EU. They further encourage its development as a bio-based feedstock to produce materials currently requiring petroleum or other non-renewable materials. This diversification would have a positive economic benefit for the region, as well as an environmental one.
- Customers, consumers and governments need reassurance on the sustainability of products: It is vital for the work of disseminating Good Practices to translate into a clearer, more reliable picture of actual sustainability performance in practice. Sustainability certification applied at EU level is not the answer for EU-produced beet sugar, but more needs to be done to ensure the widespread uptake of good practices.
- The future for sustainable beet sugar is bright, but not easy: While sustainability can help differentiate sugar producers in an increasingly competitive market, it may not affect the prices that producers can hope to achieve. The environmental, economic and social changes ahead for the EU and global sugar markets, in light of forthcoming changes to the Common Agricultural Policy, paint an uncertain picture, but sustainability is likely to become more and more a part of the expected criteria for sugar demanded by customers. From that point of view, producing sustainable sugar will be a competitive advantage. Sustainability indicators, if relevant and communicated transparently are also seen by investors as useful proxies for the quality of a company's management and its value as a potential investment.