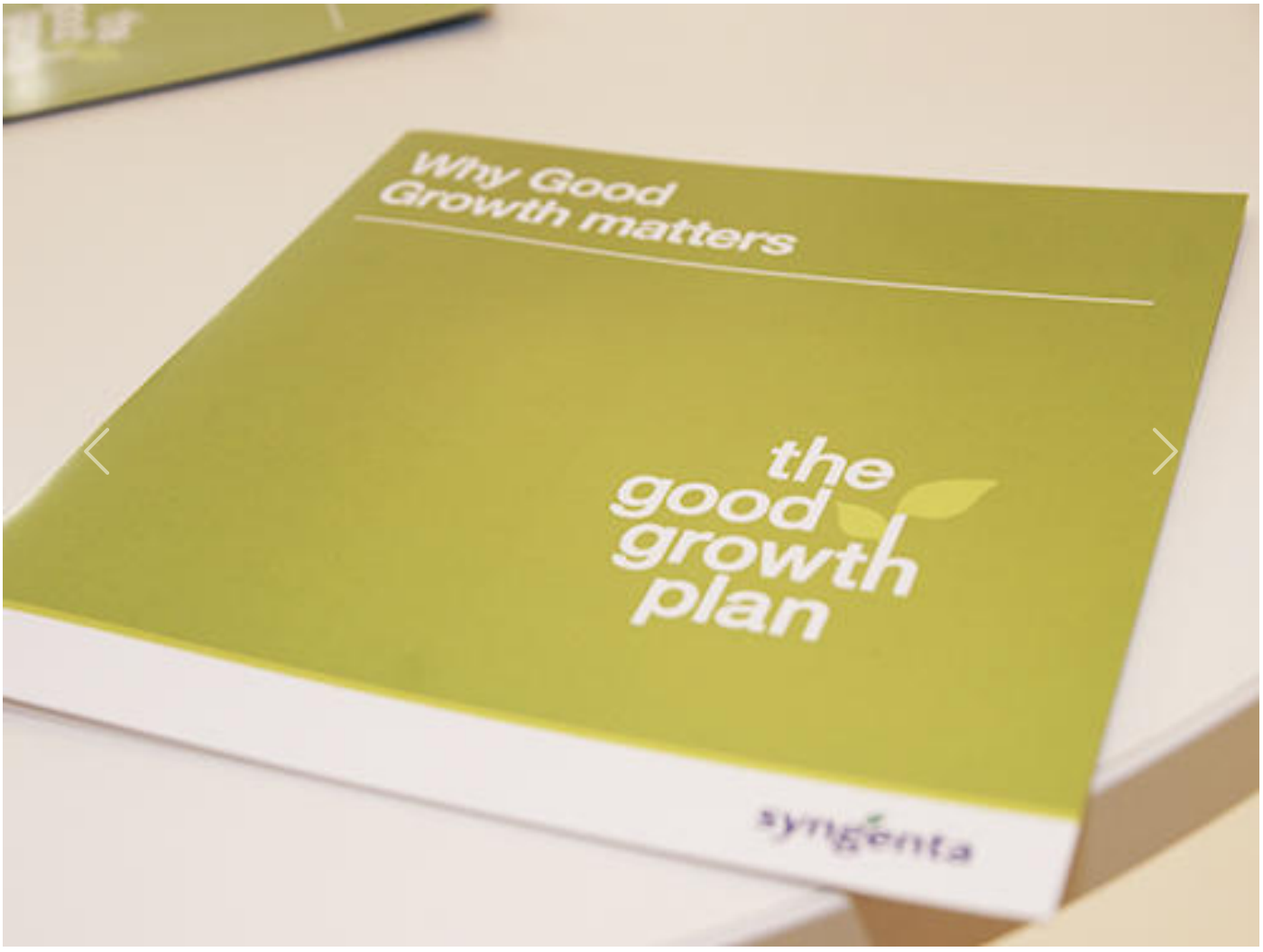
Растителна защита
електронно списание за растителна защита
семена, торове и земеделие
ISSN 2815-522X

Syngenta presents its Plan for Responsible Growth of Global Agriculture

Author(s): Нора Иванова, Редактор Растителна Защита /РЗ/
Date: 03.08.2014 *Issue:* 8/2014



The seventh consecutive edition of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture was held in Brussels. The hosts of this large-scale event – the Swiss multinational agrochemical and seed company Syngenta and ELO – the European Landowners' Organization, initiated a discussion platform for the participants on the topic: "HOW TO PRODUCE SUSTAINABLY MORE WITH LESS AND SELL IT BETTER".

The major news, produced by Syngenta for the highly authoritative representation that honored the large-scale event, was the positioning of its well-founded corporate strategic concept for

ISSN 2815-522X

sustainable and responsible growth of world agriculture in an uncertain climate environment, whose key goals are intensity and high yield. Syngenta formalized its participation and responsibilities in the largest transformation in the history of modern world agriculture.

The seventh consecutive edition of the Forum for the Future of Agriculture was held in Brussels in early April. This year the main theme was **"How to produce sustainably more with less and sell it better"**. Organizers of this large-scale panel are Syngenta and ELO (the European Landowners' Organization), who aim to steer the event towards open debates, where controversial topics from the fields of food, food security and the environment are discussed as part of sustainable agriculture. The Forum attracted a diverse audience - European Commissioners, producers, scientists and representatives of non-governmental organizations in the field of agriculture and the environment. This year the program was divided into three modules, with the first focusing on **sustainable intensification**, as a response to the growing need for food with diminishing natural resources and an increasing population, the second dealing with topics such as **increasing competitiveness and investments in agricultural enterprises**. The third module directed attention to **the transatlantic market and the investment partnership between the European Union and the USA**.

In the last session, the emphasis was primarily on harmonizing standards in European and American agriculture. John Atkin, CEO of Syngenta, pointed to the major differences in food and health standards as the main obstacle to world trade. 'Reducing the complexity of the harmonization procedure will benefit not only trade but also consumers,' he stated.

This is precisely the challenge of the discussed agreement, which is expected to be finalized by the end of 2014 - to harmonize standards in contentious areas such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals and financial services. European law guarantees comparatively freer regulation of the financial sector, unlike the strict laws governing American banks. At the same time, Europe pursues a policy of restricting GMOs and the import of meat from animals fed with growth

ISSN 2815-522X

hormones. These are the key points emphasized in the discussion by Paola Goggio, Director-General for Health and Consumer Protection at the European Commission.

The agreement, which has not yet entered into force, is already the subject of serious criticism, growing tension and speculation. In practice, most trade tariffs have already been eliminated, and this is a consequence of various previous trade agreements. The doors are opening wide for focusing on non-conventional barriers, such as the liberalization of provisions regarding fracking, GMOs and financial resources, and the modernization of copyright laws. For example, European chemical and pharmaceutical companies expect the agreement to simplify procedures for placing their products on the American market with its strict rules. EU agriculture, subsidized by the Community and member states, will be able to market surpluses of dairy products and pork across the ocean.

One of the most important aspects for controlling the challenges shaping modern agriculture is continuing on the path towards achieving a multilateral trade agreement, which is "the most effective and fairest" and will help address food security, according to Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organization and honorary president of the northern European Jacques Delors Institute. In Europe, the problems related to climate change are being assessed, as well as the introduction and compliance with strictly regulated environmental measures guaranteeing the sustainability of agriculture and the environment. In this sense, Europeans are faced with the dilemma of whether the new agreement will manage to meet high expectations and whether it will preserve the already created legislation in its current form?

The Challenges

Over the past decades, agriculture worldwide has faced the need to produce more to meet growing consumption. In other words, food production must double to feed a population of 9 billion by 2050. At the same time, the available resources continue to be used, becoming more limited with each passing day. Soil degrades from improper use, water becomes a luxury, climate change is already a limiting factor, migration from rural areas creates conditions for economic growth in specific sectors, but on the other hand destroys agriculture and depopulates regions that have traditionally balanced the world economy through their rural character. Paradoxes are present: ecological catastrophes, climate imbalances, loss of fertile land, while at the same time geometrically increasing consumption. This is a world where almost a billion people go to bed hungry, and one in three is affected by water scarcity. One-third of global food production is lost or wasted along the supply chain. In the EU, about 30% of vegetable crops are not harvested because they do not meet expected appearance standards. In India, about 40% of all fruits and vegetables are discarded due to poor storage and transport systems. In both Europe and the USA, more than half of the food purchased is thrown away. This is not only a loss of food, but of land, water, raw materials and labor involved in its cultivation.

ISSN 2815-522X

Gradually, agriculture is transforming from an economic sector viewed primarily in the light of consumption into a political instrument that is leading in the construction of a common global future. The intensification of agriculture in recent years has encountered problems such as environmental protection, biodiversity, and water resource management, which through legal measures and good agricultural practices are slowly but surely being integrated and developed in the direction of sustainable and predictable agrarian policy.

What is sustainable intensification?

The concept of sustainable agriculture is based on the principle of increasing production from available land without harming the environment. It is associated with careful and proper use of soil resources so that the land has the ability to maintain its fertility. The success of agricultural production depends first and foremost on environmental policy! The truth is, there is no specific model to follow and expect specific results. Work is done in a certain direction, the problems facing the future of people as part of the agricultural community are recognized, and new agricultural practices are formed.

Soil Conservation

'We cannot have sustainable agriculture if we do not think about soil conservation as an exhaustible resource,' emphasized Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment. Because only stopping its degradation could prevent ecological catastrophes and guarantee the necessary food to meet the needs of a growing population. Sustainable soil management includes conserving and reducing food waste! In 2006, 90 million tons of food were wasted in EU countries! The calculation is clear - by 2020, 160 million tons of food will be wasted annually in Europe. One-third of the food produced in Europe is wasted! And that is one-third of the water, land, and energy. 'The Commission is already working on this issue with a serious focus on reducing food waste, and we hope the measures will be clear later this year,' shared Commissioner Potočnik.

The Future of Family Farming

'For several years now, the focus has been shifting from large-scale farms to local and regional ones,' stated Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. "In the past, we were convinced that by relying on developed regions to provide food for the rest, we would succeed in reducing hunger and malnutrition, but we realized that instead we must support every country and every region, which means investing in producers who may not necessarily be the most efficient and competitive." According to Mr. Schutter, the future of agriculture is not linked to increasing production, but to increasing the diversity of local farms, as well as ensuring adequate distribution of food. Global agricultural production will decline by about 2% per decade, which necessitates immediate measures! It is no coincidence that 2014 has been declared by FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organization) as the year of family farming.

ISSN 2815-522X

These farms will be an alternative to globalization in the field of agriculture. Through them, traditional food products will be preserved, biodiversity will be stimulated, and they will also provide an opportunity to promote local economies. Family farming has an important socio-economic, environmental and cultural role because it integrates within itself the principles of agroecology, limiting the farm's dependence on the resources necessary for its functioning.

Biodiversity

On a territory of 333 hectares, in central England over the last 20 years, intensive agriculture has been developing with an emphasis on environmental protection and promoting biodiversity. The 'Allerton' project is one of the largest in England, with the leading idea being that intensive agriculture can be combined with environmental care. Dr. Alistair Leake, head of the project, informed how he combines intensive production of wheat, rapeseed, oats and legume crops with creating living conditions for wild animals, birds and insects. The scheme he applies is simple but extremely effective. At the end of each field sown with a specific crop, areas are left that are not treated with chemicals, are planted with flowers for pollinating insects, and are shaped in a special way to mimic natural nesting and living places for various animal species.

The benefit of this type of farming for the farmers themselves is significant. They receive additional payment under the second pillar of the CAP for agro-ecological measures and manage to negotiate higher prices for their produce based on their responsible attitude towards nature.

Syngenta's Plan for Sustainable and Responsible Growth

In the center of Brussels, the capital of the EU, right in front of the Forum's presentation halls, real fields with corn, rapeseed, and vegetables were improvised. Here insects buzzed and flew around, and the plants made a strong impression because this was an exotic oasis in the urban jungle. This attraction was a vivid example of Syngenta's activity, mission and messages.

In the Forum's preliminary program, the company presented its corporate Plan for Sustainable and Responsible Growth of world agriculture. John Atkin, CEO of Syngenta, summarized at the beginning of the meeting that the Plan represents practical tasks aimed at facilitating farmers in applying the main principles of sustainable and intensive agriculture. Syngenta, in its capacity as a global partner to millions of agricultural producers, acknowledges the growing crisis in world agriculture and, after a period of research, has developed specific steps to overcome it. **'We need sustainable agriculture, but it must also be intensive and high-yielding!', Mr. Atkin was categorical.**

One Planet. Six Commitments

The company focuses on three areas of global agriculture. We are faced with the problem of the planet's growing population, which defines the challenge of providing sufficient food that meets all quality indicators. For this, of course, natural resources are needed, whose capacity and qualities are drastically decreasing, while global natural disasters are changing the climate environment. **More food, less waste.** The solution is for

ISSN 2815-522X

agricultural production **to become more efficient**. *This means increasing the yields of major crops worldwide by 20%, without using more land, water, fertilizers and pesticides.* In reality, such a result can be achieved through next-generation breeding, efficient water resource management, multifunctional crop protection and training of those employed in the sector. The population of bees and other pollinators has been declining threateningly in recent years, and their function is vital for all agricultural crops. The chain is clearly outlined: bees - pollination - biodiversity - soil conservation.

The second challenge we face is **more biodiversity, less erosion**. The persistent trend of population migration from villages to cities, as well as soil erosion, are factors that continue to activate processes for reducing arable land. Syngenta's commitment **is to save more farmland**!

Syngenta takes responsibility for improving the fertility of 100 million acres of farmland that is currently on the brink of degradation.

Farmers can increase soil fertility by using organic fertilizers, crop rotation, and special agricultural tillage practices. Fertile soil is the foundation of sustainable agriculture, but already about 40 percent of the world's arable land is unfit for use. In Colombia, Syngenta runs a successful program (Conserving My Land), which aims to control and prevent the level of soil erosion in this region, where potatoes are traditionally grown. Training is provided to small potato producers in soil conservation techniques such as minimum tillage, as well as in the responsible and efficient use of water and crop protection products. The results are evident - increasing productivity by 25-30%, while simultaneously reducing soil loss by 67%. Planting special plots around agricultural fields also helps reduce erosion and increase habitats for pollinating insect species.

Syngenta **will increase biodiversity** *on 50 million acres of farmland*.

Agricultural producers can create their own environment to be inhabited by pollinators: a set of food habitats, as well as suitable nesting areas. Strips of local flowers and wild plants are planted around crops, primarily rapeseed and sunflower. Thus, on the one hand, the soil structure is improved, and on the other, conditions are created for pollinators. Since 2001, Syngenta's 'Operation Pollinator' has been active in many European countries, as well as in America. The 'Allerton' project is one of the pioneers in this activity. Farmers report a significant increase in the number of bees over the last 10 years. 'This is not something we make money from, but a service we offer,' notes John Atkin. In Bulgaria, the project started approximately a year ago, with plots sown around sunflower fields. The Syngenta Bulgaria team is ready to help any farmer who wants to join this exceptional opportunity to invest in biodiversity by providing full information and seeds for wild plants.

The third challenge, for which the global company will undertake commitments, is reducing poverty in rural areas and guaranteeing safe jobs for all those employed in agriculture. **More health, less poverty.** The productivity of 20 million small producers will be increased by 50%.

ISSN 2815-522X

A relevant emphasis in Syngenta's Plan is on small producers and their long-term development. Agricultural producers need skills and knowledge to grow quality and sustainable produce. Syngenta is the initiator of the NUCOFFEE ® project in Brazil, which is oriented towards small coffee producers with the aim of properly certifying the origin of coffee. Another successful initiative of the company, in Africa, is SAGCOT, a public-private partnership that brings together government agencies, non-governmental organizations, agricultural producers and private firms. Investments are directed towards increasing rice and corn production in small farms that lack access to new agricultural practices, infrastructure and markets.

Syngenta directs attention to **labor safety and care for each individual worker**. Farmers will be trained each year to reach 20 million agricultural workers by the end of 2020. Local non-governmental organizations, producer unions, as well as company distributors will be involved in the entire process. In 2000, a program for the safe use of pesticides was launched in China. Syngenta together with the Ministry of Agriculture in China by the end of 2012 had organized over 8500 meetings, in which 260,000 farmers participated. The trainings are usually divided into two parts: techniques used when treating crops with pesticides that comply with all safety procedures, and modules including diseases and pests, the conditions under which they are active, and their life cycles and habits. Thus, the training covers both scientific methods and innovations for prevention and control.

Syngenta is also fully committed to the fate of all human resources that work for it globally. The company guarantees fair and safe conditions for production and supply. Seed suppliers are encouraged to comply with the company's corporate standards through intensive training and financial incentives. Since 2004, Syngenta has been working with the **Fair Labor Association** (a non-governmental labor association), which since 2012 has been protecting the rights of seed suppliers in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

How will Syngenta measure its success?

The Plan for Responsible Growth will be