

BREAKOUT SESSION GREEN AND HIGH VALUE CHEMICALS

Summary of discussion

Discussion was structured around market needs for the relevant sectors, barriers for market penetration and economic growth, regional opportunities in this market, role of InCrops and its partners, and future InCrops activities that would facilitate the development of new products and technologies. Participants ranged from scientists, to businesses, and government organisations.

Market needs /Challenges / Barriers

Petrochemicals are still a cheap resource, therefore it was pointed out that breeding of new plant varieties to supply more easily available and cost-effective alternative materials should be accelerated. It was noted that the market for renewable materials is customer-driven and customers would be prepared to pay more for sustainable products. The second important issue discussed was communication with consumers as end-users. Business representative stated that increased price of the products is the price that customers have to pay for the low carbon economy. The opportunity for new products based on renewable feedstocks should be seen as additional streams for adding value before market demand will develop; a second promising model is based on using co-products and waste. Businesses are concerned whether new feedstocks could be easily produced in commercial volumes and whether single-use starch based films would be a viable product. It was noted that specific contracts for suppliers and reproducible specification would be very important for the companies who wish to incorporate new materials in their production lines. The sector heavily relies on government incentives and tougher environmental standards to drive forward.

Regional opportunities

Regional opportunities were seen in encouraging farmers to form cooperatives that could use resources more efficiently and split costs. Alternative crops or products would give the opportunity for farmers to become commodity suppliers and tap into alternative markets. It is also important to take in account the regional fit of the crops and their requirements from processing.

Role of InCrops

InCrops is perceived as a forum for exchange between companies and scientists that would help to meet, engage, and exploit links with commercial partners. InCrops needs to stimulate research towards increasing commercial values of alternative crops including accelerated breeding.