



Knowledge, innovation and skills for sustainable horizons

31 May-1 June 2023, The Square, Brussels

Plenary sessions - Biographies of Speakers *(in alphabetical order)*



Stefania Avanzini has years of experience in Business Development, Marketing and Social Innovation in Africa & in Europe in the corporate and NGO sector. She is Director of One Planet Business for Biodiversity (OP2B), an action-oriented business coalition for the protection and restoration of biodiversity within the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Their mission is to improve agricultural biodiversity by scaling-up the deployment of regenerative agriculture and restoration of nature. Positioned at CEO-level, while working at an operational level with technical actors, OP2B is an impactful coalition of 30 engaged companies across the entire value chain. OP2B as part of WBCSD also acts as the private sector representative on the multi-stakeholder Regen10 initiative.



Wolfgang Burtscher has been Director-General of DG AGRI since April 2020. From 2009 to 2020, he was Deputy Director-General of DG Research and Innovation (responsible for i.a. agriculture, food and health). From 2000 to 2009, he was Director in DG AGRI (responsible for i.a. legal issues, quality policy and the control of agricultural expenditure). Before 2000, he was a representative of the federal states in the permanent representation of Austria to the EU.



Mateusz Ciasnocha is an active farmer co-leading Ciasnocha Family Farms - a family business stewarding 700 ha of prime meadows in the Żuławy Wiślane Region in northern Poland specialising in producing the highest-quality hay. Mateusz Ciasnocha runs the European Carbon Farmers in order to live his mission of building a farmer-centric bridge between agricultural and climate policies of the European Union using "carbon farming" as the building material. In addition, he co-runs the Farm of Francesco and supports the EU Soil Health Mission, as well as the Cool Farm Alliance as the Advisory Board and Supervisory Board Member respectively. In the past heavily involved in the UN processes focused on climate - the COP26 - and food systems - the UN Food System Summit.



Elisabeth Claverie de Saint Martin studied at France's prestigious "École Normale Supérieure and École Nationale d'Administration", and began her career as a researcher in microeconomics. She joined the Civil Service in 1993, and quickly began to work under the direct authority of three French ministers (Finance, Research and Foreign Affairs), as well as for the Spanish government. In 2013, she was appointed Senior Advisor to the Executive Director for France at the World Bank and the IMF in Washington DC, where she worked on the elaboration and management of public development aid policies. In 2016, she returned to France and was appointed Deputy Director of Sustainable Development for the General Directorate of Global Affairs, Culture, Education and International Development at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. This varied career has made her highly sensitive to the biodiversity and climate issues within the European and multilateral context. Elisabeth Claverie de Saint Martin joined the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) in 2018, as General Director of Research and Strategy, before being appointed CEO on 16 June 2021.



Dóra Drexler is Director of the Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (ÖMKi) and hon. associate professor of the Debrecen University. She is also the coordinator of the Agroecological Thematic Working group of BIOEAST, the central and eastern European initiative for knowledge-based agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry in the bioeconomy. Dóra Drexler received her MSc in landscape planning at the Corvinus University of Budapest (2004) and acquired her doctoral degree at the Technical University of Munich, Department of Landscape Ecology (2010). In 2017 she acquired an additional MSc in Plant Protection at the Szent István University, Gödöllő. Previous to her appointment at ÖMKi, she worked as a research associate of FiBL in Switzerland. She has experience in coordinating national research and innovation projects on organic agriculture (ÖMKi On-farm Living Lab) and participates in several European research projects, such as ALL-Ready, AgroecologyTransect, PREPSOIL, OrgenicTargets4EU and others. She was elected vice-president of IFOAM Organics Europe (2020-2023).



Ismahane Elouafi holds the position of Chief Scientist at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations since 2020. She had previously held senior scientific and leadership positions in several countries and has been a member of various strategy expert panels and advisory groups. She sits on the boards of the International Food Policy Research Institute, the USA; the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International, the UK; and the Professional Development Institute, Canada. She is also a member of the Scientific Group for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and of the CGIAR System Management Board. Elouafi is a strong advocate for rethinking food systems and is internationally known for her work on promoting use of non-fresh water in agriculture and empowerment of women in science. Her contributions to science and policy have been recognized with a number of prestigious awards and accolades. She holds a B.Sc. in Agricultural Sciences (1993) and an M.Sc. in Genetics and Plant Breeding (1995) from the Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Morocco, and a Ph.D. in Genetics (2001) from the University of Cordoba, Spain.



(Photo by Duncan de Fey)

Sjoukje Heimovaara is since 1 July 2022 President of the Executive Board of Wageningen University & Research (WUR). She studied Plant Breeding at Wageningen and obtained her PhD at Leiden University. She subsequently worked at the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) and the international plant breeding company Royal Van Zanten, as Research & Development (R&D) director and thereafter as CEO. Heimovaara knows the plant breeding and research world like the back of her hand and has been getting to know the food world as Director at the Agrotechnology and Food Sciences Group (AFSG) at WUR.



Marion Jansen is the Director of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate at the OECD. She previously held senior positions in the World Trade Organization, the International Labour Office and the International Trade Centre. She has represented different organizations at the G7 and G20 level, led critical interagency collaborations and major interdisciplinary research networks. She has also provided support to trade negotiations and to the WTO dispute settlement system. Marion Jansen holds a PhD in economics from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona). She has published widely on international trade and global economic governance and co-edited the volume "The Use of Economics in Trade and Investment Disputes". She has lectured in multiple academic institutions, including the University of Geneva and the World Trade Institute, and is member of the Board of the Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales (CEPII) in Paris, the Advisory Board of the MSc IB at SKEMA Business School in Paris and the WEF's Global Future Council on Trade and Investment. A German national, Marion Jansen grew up in the Netherlands. In addition to German and Dutch, she speaks English, French, Italian and Spanish.



Magda Kopczynska is Deputy Director General in European Commission Director-General Agriculture and rural development since January 2023, responsible among other areas for Research and Innovation. Before she was Director Innovative and Sustainable Mobility in the European Commission's department for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) since May 2014.



Peter Kullgren is the Minister for Rural Affairs of Sweden and Chair of the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council since October 2022. Before this position Mr Kullgren was Party Secretary for the Christian Democrats 2018-2022. Before that he has held diverse assignments in the Karlstad Municipal Council.



Marc Lemaître is Director-General for European Commission Research and Innovation (RTD). He studied at Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and Bruges (College of Europe) and holds a Master in European Economics. He brings 25 years of profound experience in European Affairs, both in the European Commission and in the diplomatic service of Luxembourg. Between 1996 and 2006, he worked in the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the European Union, dealing with budgetary, trade and general affairs issues. He joined the Commission in 2007 as Head of the private office of Regional Policy Commissioner, Danuta Hübner, and then her successor, Paweł Samecki. Between 2010 and 2013, he led the private office of Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski. Between 2013 and 2016, he managed, as Director, the Office for Administration and Payment of individual entitlements (PMO). Between 2016 and January 2023, he was Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO). Since February 2023 he is Director-General for Research and Innovation (RTD).



Diana Lenzi is the President of the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA) since June 2021. She is a young farmer from Tuscany where since 2008 she manages her family's winery. She cultivates and process grapes to make Chianti Classico wines, olives for EVO and ancient grains for flour and pasta. Diana has been involved and held leadership positions in farmers' organisations since 2012. She collaborates with the Rome Business School as Professor of the Master in Food and Beverage Management and the Online Master in Agribusiness Management, and with the University of the Arts of Florence (FUA) as Professor of the Wine Career Programs, and with other Universities.



Norbert Lins is a German politician who has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2014. Since 2019, he is chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. He is member of the Christian Democratic Union, part of the European People's Party.



Frank O'Mara is the Director of Teagasc, Ireland's national agri-food research, advisory and education agency. He is an agricultural scientist and sustainable livestock systems specialist, with more than 30 years of experience in scientific and senior managerial roles in Agri-Food research, education and development institutions. He has a comprehensive knowledge of national and international Agri-Food industries and sustainable farming, and a history of achievement in the initiation, development and application of new technology in the industry. He became President of the European Animal Task Force in 2020, and is a board member of Euragri. He previously served on the Governing Board of FACCE-JPI, and was coordinator of the co-funded eranet, ERAGAS. He is an ex officio member of Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council.



Teresa Pinto Correia is the vice-chair of the Mission Board "A Soil Deal for Europe" and professor in Landscape and Planning University of Evora, Portugal. She is a Portuguese geographer, with a record of publications on the dynamics of rural landscapes at multiple scales. She develops her research with a focus on the transitions taking place on agricultural landscapes in the Mediterranean, and how they are affected by different sets of drivers, between production, consumption and protection, creating tensions but also synergies. She coordinates a research unit with 120 senior researchers (ICAAM), centred on Mediterranean agriculture and environment, aiming to contribute to the sustainability of the production systems and their related ecosystems and landscapes.



Luis Planas Puchades is the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Spain since 2018. Member of the European Parliament from 1986 to 1993. In 1996 he was appointed Chief of Staff of the European Commission Vice President, Manuel Marín and then Head of Cabinet of European Commissioner Pedro Solbes, responsible for economic and monetary affairs, until 2004, when he was appointed Ambassador of Spain to Morocco. In 2010, he was appointed Permanent Representative of Spain to the European Union. In 2014, he was elected Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee."



Kerstin Rosenow is Head of Unit 'Research & Innovation' in DG AGRI, European Commission where she is responsible for agricultural research under EU research programmes. Her unit provides the secretariat for the Horizon Europe R&I Mission "A Soil Deal for Europe". Previously, she was Head of Unit in the EC Research Executive Agency (REA) where she managed the implementation of the project portfolio for Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge 2 (food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime, and inland water research and the bioeconomy). She has been working in the EC for over 18 years after covering a managerial position in the German administration (Representation of the State of Hessen to the EU). For DG AGRI she coordinated negotiations with pre-accession and candidate countries and the preparation of the 2014-2020 CAP legislative framework. She studied law, politics and administration in Marburg, Grenoble and Bruges.



Alice Ruhweza is a global thought leader and international development expert with over 25 years' experience working at the intersection of climate change, development, and the environment. She is currently the Senior Director for Global Policy Influence and Engagement at the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) where she works to ensure WWF and partner's thought leadership and best practice continues to be highly influential and proactively shapes and informs the sustainability agenda and key policy directions in Africa, Asia and Europe. She also sits on the Board of CGIAR; Co-chairs the World Economic Forum's Sustainable Aquaculture 2030 Working Group; and is a member of the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on Scaling up Sustainable Finance in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICS).



Sadhguru Save Soil is a global movement launched by Sadhguru, to address the soil crisis by bringing together people from around the world to stand up for Soil Health and supporting leaders of all nations to institute national policies and actions toward increasing the organic content in cultivable Soil.



Gilles Saindon was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Science and Technology Branch in December 2019, after serving in a variety of research and management positions within the department. The Science and Technology Branch provides industry producers and processors a single point of access to AAFC's science and technology expertise and to sustainable solutions. As Branch Head, Dr. Saindon serves as AAFC Agricultural Chief Scientist representing Canada at various international fora. Dr. Saindon holds a Bachelor degree in Agronomy Science (1983) and a Masters in Plant Breeding (1986) from Laval University, as well as a Ph.D. in Plant Genetics (1988) from the University of Guelph.



Rogier Schulte leads the Farming Systems Ecology group at Wageningen University & Research, which focuses on the redesign of farming and food systems around the world, so that they are ready for the challenges of 2050. His team has explored all corners of the globe in search of exemplar farms that have radically redefined what we mean by 'sustainable agriculture'. They have brought these together into the Global Network of Lighthouse Farms: a global classroom and laboratory that allows us to "learn from future successes" and that allows researchers, students and PhDs to elucidate the ingredients to success that this wide variety of farming systems share in common. Prof. Schulte and his team share their findings as stories of hope and inspiration with audiences around the world, and have prepared a professional curriculum for training-the-trainers of tomorrow's farming and food in the form of the Lighthouse Farm Academy which will be launched this autumn.



Neil Watkins is Deputy Director in the Global Policy and Advocacy division of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. He leads the foundation's policy, advocacy, and communications work on agricultural development, nutrition, climate change, development finance and global education. He manages a global portfolio of policy and advocacy grants on these issues. Neil represents the Gates Foundation on a number of external boards and steering committees including the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), Stronger Foundations for Nutrition, and is on the Executive Committee of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. Neil holds a degree in international relations and African affairs from Georgetown University in Washington, DC.



The Hon. Penny Wensley AC is Australia's National Soils Advocate. Prior to this Ms Wensley was Governor of the state of Queensland from 2008 to 2014. Her appointment followed a long and distinguished career as a diplomat (1968–2008), representing Australia in a wide range of bilateral and multilateral postings overseas and senior policy positions in Canberra.

Currently Ms Wensley is also a Board Member of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Chairman of the Reef 2050 Advisory Committee, advising the Australian and Queensland governments on implementation of the Long-Term Sustainability Plan for the Reef. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (FAIIA) and an Honorary Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (HFEANZ). She has a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours) from the University of Queensland (UQ) and Honorary Doctorates from UQ, James Cook and Griffith universities, and the Queensland University of Technology.



Janusz Wojciechowski is the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development since 2019. Between 2016-2019 he was Member of the European Court of Auditors and between 2004-2016 he was Member of the European Parliament.