

WHO IS WHO IN THE SCAR BIOECONOMY WORKING GROUP

Johanna Kohl (Co-Chair) - Finland



Adjunct Professor, Dr. Johanna Kohl works as Director in Circular Bioeconomy Research Programme in Natural Resources Institute Finland. She leads the research project portfolio and future developments of optimized material cycles, added value and new products from main and side streams and transition towards circular bioeconomy. She is strongly connected with Circular Bioeconomy, national Circular Economy strategy implementation and influencing via research the future research need development in Horizon Europe National Expert Group on Cluster 6 (incl Circular Economy). She was also working in the SCAR foresight expert panel for the EU Commission on Resilience and transformation. Kohl has over 25 years of experience on foresight and participatory RDI collaboration.

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Luka Juvančič (Co-Chair) - Slovenia



Luka Juvančič, agricultural and resource economist, and Associate Professor of Economics of Natural Resources at the Biotechnical Faculty. His research experience spans widely in terms of time (more than 25 years of experience as researcher, principal investigator, or project leader), substance (agricultural and rural development policies, risk management, ecosystem services, bioeconomy) and methods (econometric modelling, system modelling, environmental accounting, economic experiments). As for his work related to bioeconomy it is worth highlighting his leadership of two nationally relevant projects, his recent research on bioeconomy-related assets and transition pathways in BIOEAST region, publishing (editor, author), teaching (course leader, supervisor) and professional work (BIOEAST, TWG Education and Knowledge Transfer).

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Martin Behrens (Co-Chair) - Germany



Martin Behrens holds a MA in political science and a MSc in Environmental Studies. He is working as Senior Advisor and Deputy Head of the department of EU and International Affairs at the Agency for Renewable Resources. He is involved in EU-Project development and implementation, specialised in multi-stakeholder activities focusing on bio-based products. He is also in charge of EU networking activities at FNR. Martin participates in various EU Advisory Boards in EU projects and is also member of the SCAR Forest working group.

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Alina Donici - Romania

Donici Alina holds a doctorate in horticulture and two master's degrees in the protection of plants and biotechnology for environmental protection. She has over 18 years of research experience as a principal investigator or project leader. She is a Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture's research department and an Associate professor of the Horticulture Faculty. She is involved in programming, implementation, and monitoring of the policies and strategy in agriculture research –innovation, by default in the bioeconomy, on the national level. She participates in various Advisory Boards in national projects and is also a national representative of the SCAR.

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Hilde Muylle - Belgium

Hilde Muylle works as a senior scientist at the Flanders Research Institute of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. She is conducting research in the frame of circular bio-economy including the primary sector, focusing on biomass production for bio-products, valorisation of side streams in view of optimized valorisation of natural resources and this in a multi-stakeholder approach and aiming at system innovation. She is involved in the execution of the Flemish policy for Bio-economy and the Flemish circular economy. In this, she is co-ordinating the B2BE- facilitator which acts at the interface of primary sector and the processing bio-industry.

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Iris Kuhi - Estonia

Iris Kuhi is working as the Chief Specialist in Circular Bioeconomy at the Estonian Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. She represents Estonia as a member of the BIOEAST Board and acts as the country's National Contact Point for the initiative. In addition, she chairs the Policy Area Bioeconomy under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Iris holds a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Management and is currently advancing her expertise through a Master's program in Earth, Marine, and Climate Sciences.

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Jan Nedělník - Czech Republic

Senior researcher, director of Agricultural Research, Ltd. Troubsko, coordinator of the BIOEAST HUB CZ, established in 2019. Coordinator of many national and international (Eureka, V4 fund) research projects, recently mainly in H2020 and HE focused to bioeconomy sector. He is strongly connecting with preparation of national bioeconomy strategy, coauthor of Bioeconomy Concept Paper of the Czech republic. Member of scientific boards at different Czech Universities and research organisations, member of "shadow" national group for HE Cluster 6, coordinator of RIS3 strategy for envi sector. Chairman of the Czech Academy of Agriculture Science.

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Miroslav Hájek - Czech Republic

Miroslav Hájek is forestry and environmental economist and Associate Professor at the Forestry and Wood Science Faculty. He previously worked at the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Environment. He has been an employee of the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague for the last ten years. He has been engaged in research for 25 years, particularly in the areas of economic instruments, ecosystem services and bioeconomy. Scientific results of his work were published in 96 scientific and special journals. He is an author and co-author of 6 scientific books, and he presented his work at 67 international and national conferences. In the last five years, he was elected president of the Bioeconomy Platform of the Czech Republic.

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Sophie Thoyer - France

Sophie is a senior researcher at the National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment (INRAE) and Deputy Director of the INRAE Department of Economics and Social Sciences. She has led national and international research projects on the design of agri-environmental policies and the transition of farmers towards agroecology. She co-founded the REECAP network, on experimental approaches for the evaluation of the common agricultural policy. She is the national director of the major program funded by INRAE on the "bioeconomy for cities". Sophie Thoyer conducts her research at the Center for Environmental Economics in Montpellier (CEE-M), where she was a professor for 20 years before turning to full-time research and research management.

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Helmut Frischenschlager - Austria

Helmut Frischenschlager holds a doctorate from the Vienna University of Technology with a focus on environmental analysis and a master's degree in chemical engineering. After seven years of work in research & development and as an application engineer in the field of environmental technology, Helmut Frischenschlager has been employed at the Environment Agency Austria in Vienna since 2005, initially in the expert team 'Industry & Energy Generation', and since 2022 in the expert team 'Environmental Assessment & Transformation of the Economy'. He has been National Expert in various Technical Working Groups (TWGs) under the European Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) with focus on the chemical industry, polymers and tanneries. Helmut Frischenschlager's main work is dedicated to eco-innovation and environmental technology with its processes, products and services, including innovative, function-oriented business models (e.g. chemical leasing) and new economic concepts such as sustainable bio-economy, biobased industries (e.g. bioplastics), biobased circular economy, green chemistry and its renewable feedstock. With his background in chemical and process engineering, Helmut Frischenschlager has always pursued integrated, systemic approaches in his work and studies wherever possible, with their ecological effects and its contribution to achieving the SDGs.

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Helmut Gaugitsch - Austria

Helmut Gaugitsch studied technical chemistry and food chemistry at the technical University of Vienna, with graduation as PhD in these areas. After some years in applied research, he joined the Environment Agency Austria in 1991. He has worked on biodiversity and sustainability topics, including ecosystem services, impact of landuse activities, as well as environmental risk assessment and monitoring issues, including genetically modified organisms (GMO). Presently he is Head of Scientific Management Biodiversity at the Environment Agency Austria, coordinating the Agency's work on sustainability and biodiversity topics, including scientific quality assurance. His scientific and management responsibilities involve the coordination and preparation of studies on sustainability measurement and assessment, ecosystem services, environmental effects of different economic activities, bioeconomy, capacity building projects concerning development and implementation of national, regional and international Regulatory Frameworks for sustainability, landuse, agriculture and food as well as biosafety.

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Stefano Grando - Italy

holds a MSc in European Regional Development at the Cardiff University and a PhD in Agrarian Economics at the University of Basilicata. As a lecturer and researcher, he has been working in several EU-funded projects since 2001 with various Universities and research centres in the fields of rural development, agricultural economics and food studies. He has also experience in the field of technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation of regional programmes funded by EU structural funds. Currently he works for the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) in the coordination of research policies for agriculture, food and bioeconomy, also as deputy national delegate to the SCAR - Standing Committee on Agricultural Research – and member of various SCAR Working Groups.



Agata Foks - Poland

is working as a Counsellor to the Minister in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland. She advises the Minister in relation to European Affairs in the scope of cluster 6 Horizon Europe merit and coordinates activities related to agriculture, climate change, biodiversity and bioeconomy on behalf of the Ministry. She is a Polish representative and delegate to PC CL6, a member of the Governing Board JPI FACCE and the Chair of the SRG CBE JU partnership. She also represents Poland as a support delegate in the SCAR. Professionally she is a Government in EU Affairs specialist with 14 years of professional experience in public and policy management both on national and EU level.

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Patrick Barrett - Ireland

is an Agricultural Inspector with the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine with responsibility for bioeconomy as outlined here: gov.ie - [The Bioeconomy \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie). He has lead responsibility for developing the national bioeconomy action plan 2023-2025 - gov.ie - [Bioeconomy Policy \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie). He is also part of the States Representative Group for the [Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking \(CBE JU\) \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu), participates in the European Bioeconomy Policy Forum technical group and attends the International Working Group | [Sustainable and circular bioeconomy for food systems transformation | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](http://www.fao.org). He previously was a co-author of the [Deploying the bioeconomy in the EU. A framework approach for bioeconomy strategy development: 10 policy recommendations for building national bioeconomies toward a fair and just climate neutral Europe as part of the Policy Support Facility established by the EU Commission to support the implementation of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy.](http://www.gov.ie)

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Matthew Halpin - Ireland

Assistant Agricultural Inspector, Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, Ireland. Matthew is an Assistant Agricultural Inspector in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in Ireland. He is based in the Research Division of the Department, working specifically in the area of [the Bioeconomy \(gov.ie - The Bioeconomy \(www.gov.ie\)\)](http://www.gov.ie). Matthew is currently involved in the implementation of Ireland's Bioeconomy Action Plan ([gov.ie - Bioeconomy Policy \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)), as well as participating in the secretariat of Ireland's Bioeconomy Implementation and Development Group, Bioeconomy Forum and Bioeconomy Network ([gov.ie - Stakeholder coordination & consultative groups \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)). Matthew is also centrally involved in developing and managing bioeconomy research and demonstration funding opportunities offered by the Department ([gov.ie - Bioeconomy Funding & Finance Options \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)). Matthew has a degree in Agricultural Science from University College Dublin and has past experience in the Agri-Food Industry in Ireland.

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Jesús Escudero - Spain

PhD in Molecular Biology of Plants from the University of Basel (Switzerland). He has experience in the area of sciences applied to agriculture in different research centres, both national (Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Science), as foreigners (Friedrich Miescher Institute, Basel, Switzerland; Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands), as well as in the industrial biotechnology sector (MOGEN International, Leiden, The Netherlands; Zeneca Agrochemicals, Syngenta Ltd., London, UK). He has participated in scientific projects, having been supported for their realization by leading research organizations such as the European Molecular Biology Organization and Human Frontier Science Program Organization. Lately, he has been focussed in management, performing international-cooperation functions at the National Institute of Agricultural and Food Research and Technology-INIA (Madrid, Spain). His current position is Head for Scientific International Relations with the European Union. He is also National Contact Point for issues related to Agriculture, Food and Bioeconomy within the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

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Harley Stoddart - United Kingdom

is the Head of Climate Mitigation Science for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), providing scientific support to evidence-based net zero policy making and manages the research interests across Agriculture, Forestry, Biomass, Peat (& soils), Waste, Wastewater and F-Gases sectors.

Previously he was the lead on agricultural emissions at the national Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board. Harley was formerly a farm surveyor, an environmental policy advisor for Defra, and a bioeconomy advisor for Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC, now renamed the Department of Energy and Net Zero (DESNZ)). He is responsible for understanding policy issues affecting the land-based sectors, as well as the emissions from and mitigation potential across the sectors. Harley is a Chartered Biologist, and a Member of Institute of Agricultural Managers.

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Sharleene Bibbings - United Kingdom

Sharleene is the Head of Economic Strategy Policy for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Sharleene's team use policy expertise and insight to set the direction of the Economic Strategy. This includes cross-government initiatives such as the UK's previous Engineering Biology Roadmap. Currently, Sharleene leads on Defra's industrial strategy, championing engineering biology, agri-tech, and a circular economy.

Previously Sharleene was the Head of Engagement and Research at the UK's Trade and Agriculture Commission. Sharleene also worked at the Department for International Trade, working overseas to lead support for the UK's agri, food and drink sector. Sharleene also worked at UK Export Finance, widening access to capital for UK investors and exporters.

Sharleene holds a Ph.D. in Politics, and is a graduate of executive education from Yale University with a focus on excellence in multi-disciplinary teams. Sharleene is responsible for ensuring Defra's economic strategy supports teams across the department to play their part in fostering the economic health of the nation - harnessing the potential of the rural economy; driving resource efficiency through a circular economy, unlocking innovation and building resilience to natural hazards.

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Ali Berk - Turkey

is an Associate Professor at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey, specializing in agricultural economics, rural development, project management, agricultural value chains, and digital agriculture. He holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Çukurova University and advanced diplomas from CIHEAM, Italy, and France. Dr. Berk has contributed to international projects, including the FAO-supported National E-Agriculture Strategy for Turkey, and has represented Turkey at global forums like the International Sustainable Development Congress and the FAO High-Level Forum on E-Agriculture.

Dr. Berk has published numerous peer-reviewed articles on agricultural production efficiency, rural development, and agri-food sector competitiveness. He has collaborated extensively with international organizations and academic institutions and Dr. Berk has over 20 years of experience in field studies, including data collection and analysis processes, policy formulation, and management of monitoring and evaluation processes.

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Spyridon Mantzoukas - Greece

is an Entomologist. He works as researcher at Institute of Mediterranean Forest Ecosystems and is the head of the Entomology laboratory. He has published 62 works in international acknowledged scientific journals, and is Section Editor in Applied Science, Applied Biosciences and Bioengineering Section. His main scientific field is Biocontrol of insect's pests in Agriculture and Forest Ecosystems, specializing the utilization of entomopathogenic microorganisms such as fungi, viruses and bacteria.



Richard Lange - Germany

Richard holds a PhD in biology with a focus on crop sciences. Working for the German National Contact Point Bioeconomy and Environment, he advises stakeholders from academia and industry on funding opportunities within Horizon Europe's Cluster 6. Furthermore, he provides support to the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) in strategic matters related to bioeconomy, agriculture and other sustainability topics. In September 2025, Richard joined the Programme Committee of Cluster 6 as an expert-level member.

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Steliana Rodino - Romania

Senior Researcher works as Research Director of Institute of Research for Agriculture Economy and Rural Development Bucharest (ICEADR). She is Honour Member of Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, Romania. She holds a PhD in Biotechnology, and a PhD in Economy, bachelor in Environmental Economy and M.Sc in Biotechnologies for Environmental Protection. She is involved in National and EU-Project design and implementation, specialized in bioeconomy related activities focusing on agroecology and education. Is currently involved in activities related to: design of good practice models for agriculture and food industry, analysis of business environment for identifying cases that can become local/regional flagship on specific areas (food production, circular economy, bioeconomy, ecosystem services); identifying target groups and stakeholders for project implementation; dissemination and transfer of technical and scientific knowledge to the business environment, public administration, farmers and their associative forms.

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Krystian Butlewski - Poland

Krystian Butlewski is an Expert at the Institute of Technology and Life Sciences – National Research Institute (ITP-PIB) in Poland. His work focuses on biomass conversion technologies, sustainable bioenergy systems and the development of bio-based value chains. He is the author of an internationally recognised multi-module biomass and organic waste refinery concept, which has contributed to the development of European biohubs, biorefinery models and research initiatives under CBE JU and Horizon Europe. His research has also informed local energy planning and gained international visibility through invited talks, editorial board invitations and expert reviewing. Within the SCAR structures, he supports strengthening the bioeconomy dimension by linking innovative scientific concepts with policy and implementation needs across EU Member States.

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Wiebke Müller - Germany

is the head of the [National Contact Point Bioeconomy and Environment](#) in Germany. In this function, she and her team are contracted by the [German federal research ministry](#) to aid applicants to gain funding in Horizon Europe, specifically in Cluster 6 and the Soil Mission. She also works closely with that ministry in matters pertaining to European Research funding. Wiebke Müller gained a BSc Biological Sciences and a MSc Integrative Biosciences from Oxford University, UK, and holds a Phd in Molecular Ecology from Christchurch University, New Zealand. She has been working for [Project Management Jülich](#) since 2009. She is also a member of the SCAR Agroecology and AKS Groups.

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Kristine Sirma - Latvia

is the Deputy Head of Strategy, Knowledge and Climate Department at the Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia. In the ministry Kristine Sirma is working for 19 years, she used to work with sectoral issues related to the Common organisation of agricultural markets. For the last 11 years her division is in charge to develop and promote the concept of bioeconomy within the Ministry and among different other ministries and stakeholders, as well to raise awareness and knowledge about EU climate and energy policies, nature restoration, soil health and sustainable agriculture production among policy makers, researchers and farmer organizations. She represents Latvia as a member of the BIOEAST Board and coordinate Policy Area Bioeconomy under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Kristine Sirma graduated Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies, Department of Veterinary medicine and University of Latvia Department of Chemistry and Department of Life Science. In the latest publication of the Latvian National Encyclopaedia (2018), Kristine Sirma has been recognized as the founder of the bioeconomy concept in Latvia.



Pawan Kumar Mishra - Czech Republic

Pawan Kumar Mishra is an Assistant Professor at Mendel University in Brno and a multidisciplinary bioeconomy researcher. He coordinated the Bioeconomy Changemakers Festival (2024)– Brno Edition, one of 26 EU satellite events, and has led the BISC-E Bio-based Student Innovation Challenge for Czechia since 2022. He represents Czechia in BIOEAST's Working Group on Biobased Advanced Materials and serves as ~~Ambassador for~~ Eastern Europe in the World Bioeconomy Association. He teaches Bioeconomy at both Bachelor's and Master's levels and focuses on biomass valorization, circular transitions and sustainability assessment. He has over 60 peer-reviewed publications, a US patent, and international research experience at ETH Zurich, LSU, BOKU and others.

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Niels Gøtke - Denmark

is Head of Division in the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science and he is responsible for leading the implementation of EU Research & Innovation policy and programming across the Bio-economy in Denmark. Niels Gøtke is heavily involved in a number of international research activities within food and bio- economy. From 2009-2025 he has been involved and coordinated several cross thematic European initiatives and partnerships within digitalization and bioeconomy. From 2013-2016 Niels Gøtke was Chair of the Governing Board of the joint programming initiative on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change (FACCE- JPI). He is member of the Horizon Europe Cluster 6 Programme Committee, the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research, the States Representatives Group for the Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking (CBE-JU) and he is the Danish representative in EIT (the European Institute of Technologies). Niels Gøtke has a MSc in Economics from Aarhus University from and a MSc in financial management and business administration from Copenhagen Business School. Niels Gøtke started his career as economist in the Danish Ministry of Agriculture and later he was posted at the Danish Mission to the OECD in Paris before he joined the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

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Balázs Imre - Hungary

Balázs Imre holds a PhD in chemistry and conducts research on bio-based polymers and sustainable materials at HUN-REN Research Centre for Natural Sciences and Budapest University of Technology and Economics. He contributes to strengthening the international role of his groups by developing, implementing, and managing collaborative international projects. To extend beyond the boundaries of academic research, he established and leads SUM Institute, an independent think tank dedicated to sustainable materials R&I. Balázs plays an active role in the Central and Eastern European BIOEAST Initiative, coordinating the Hungarian BIOEAST HUB, as well as the macro-regional Thematic Working Group on Advanced Biomaterials. He is also one of the principal organisers of the series of international conferences on Bio-based Polymers and Composites (BiPoCo).

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Martin Dedina - Czech Republic

is a researcher at the Czech Agrifood Research Centre (CARC). He has led national research projects focused on the carbon footprint of agriculture. He is a national expert for inventories of pollutant emissions from agriculture. Within the framework of the Industrial Emissions Directive, he was a member of the TWG for Intensive Rearing of Poultry and Pigs (IRPP). He is currently involved in the implementation of the RED Directive into Czech legislation

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Bas Verkuijl - Netherlands

holds a PhD in physical organic chemistry and currently works as a senior policy officer at the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery, Food Security, and Nature. In this role, he focuses on innovation policy and leads the strategic development of initiatives to promote the use of bio-based feedstocks in the food, feed, fuel, and materials sectors. Before joining the ministry, Bas spent 15 years in the chemical and agrifood industry working, where he worked on innovation in various capacities. He has extensive experience in commercializing agricultural feedstocks for new applications, ranging from leading major product development projects to taking on strategic roles with a European or global scope. His contributions include a diverse portfolio of scientific publications and patents.



Aleksejs Nipers - Latvia

Aleksejs Nipers is a Professor and Leading Researcher at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU), specialising in sustainable bioeconomy and land use. His research focuses on socioeconomic and environmental impact assessment, including the evaluation of policy measures affecting agriculture, forestry, rural areas, climate, and biodiversity. He has been closely involved in shaping Latvia's bioeconomy agenda, contributing to the development and assessment of the Latvian Bioeconomy Strategy 2030 and to the co-creation of the BIOEAST Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for Central and Eastern European countries. He has coordinated and led numerous national and international research projects for clients and stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia and the European Commission.

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Irina Pilvere - Latvia

Irina Pilvere is a Professor and Leading Researcher at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU), specializing in Agricultural and Rural Development, Land Use Efficiency, Common Agricultural Policy, Food Processing Development, and Bioeconomy. She has been involved in developing the Latvian Bioeconomy Strategy 2030 in numerous national and international research projects for stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia and the European Commission. She is a True Member of the Latvian Academy of Science, a True Member and Vice President of the Latvian Academy of Agriculture and Forestry Science. She is a Member of the European Union Rural Networks' Assembly, the Nordic Association of Agricultural Scientists, and the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research.

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