

## ***Cluster Matchmaking Event on Eco-efficient Management of Resources in the Agro-food Sector – EU-US Days, Milan Expo 2015***

*5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 – Milan, Italy*

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, a delegation of 19 cluster representatives from 9 European countries participated in a *Cluster Matchmaking Event on Eco-efficient Management of Resources in the Agro-food Sector* organised in the scope of the Milan Expo 2015 EU-US Days.



The European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs together with the Enterprise Europe Network conducted a *Cluster Matchmaking Event on Eco-efficient Management of Resources in the Agro-food Sector* at the Milan Expo EU-US Days. The main activities of the event were conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October with site visits on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October.

In support of a policy aimed at promoting international cluster cooperation for the benefit of SMEs, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry launched in 2012 an initiative, which was renewed in late 2013, that contributes to the facilitation of specific cluster matchmaking missions to support cluster organisations and their SME members in their efforts to develop partnerships and business cooperation in global markets. Under this framework, Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (SPI) organised and supported a delegation of European cluster representatives that attended the aforementioned Event.

This Event represented an opportunity for European cluster organisations and business networks to promote cooperation through matchmaking meetings and other networking activities. The Cluster Delegation consisted of 19 cluster representatives from 9 European countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain). These cluster organisations represented a range of fields such as agri-food, agricultural machinery and manufacturing, green-tech, clean-tech, ICT and electronics, renewable energies, biomass, and transport and logistics. The clusters were selected primarily due to their willingness and understanding of the need to collaborate with other clusters and network organisations in order to better support their SMEs in a competitive global market. There was a lack of US clusters at the Event which prevented the establishment of cooperation between European and US clusters. However, the Event was useful to set the ground for new potential partnerships and agreements between European clusters, aiming to support European SMEs in their internationalisation and innovation efforts.

The Cluster Matchmaking Event was comprised of several activities, which included:

- A conference focused on business opportunities and challenges between the EU and USA, and supporting policy tools that enable greater cooperation towards the transatlantic markets. Moreover, the conference included business success stories in the field of eco-efficient management of resources.
- A Cluster introduction session, where clusters had the chance to present themselves to the entire cluster delegation.
- Cluster-to-cluster (C2C) and cluster-to-business (C2B) matchmaking meetings.
- A networking social event hosted by the Lombardy Region.
- A guided visit to the Milan EXPO 2015.



During the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, the European Cluster Delegation participated in C2C and C2B meetings, where they had the opportunity to meet other organisations and discuss potential collaboration opportunities, including cooperation agreements and collaborative project ideas. On average, each cluster participant conducted around 8 meetings with other clusters and companies.

Furthermore, the European Cluster Delegation participated in a *cluster introduction session*, where each cluster representative had the opportunity to briefly present their cluster and cooperation interests in order to foster more C2C meetings and informal networking. At the closing of the first day, a *cluster debriefing session* was conducted to obtain the feedback of the delegation in regards to the Event.

These sessions were complemented by more informal networking events such as a cocktail hosted by the Lombardy region and a guided visit of the Milan EXPO 2015 on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October. The Cluster Delegation had positive comments regarding the Event and found the Event beneficial to establishing new contacts and identifying new collaborative opportunities that will support their SMEs.