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RENEWABLE RAW MATERIALS AND THE TRANSITION FROM A PRODUCT-BASED ECONOMY TO A SYSTEM-BASED ECONOMY: THE NOVAMONT CASE

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NOVAMONT

The presentation takes in consideration the sector of renewable raw materials, considering the risks and the opportunities. A sector which is crucial to the future of our planet, in light of the ever-changing relations between science and society. Through the description of Novamont's development, as a case study in the renewable raw materials sector, I have endeavoured to present my vision as to how academia and local businesses can tackle wide-ranging, ambitious projects. Projects capable of moulding the local region, rendering it once more competitive, stimulating trust and raising the cultural level.

The scarcity of energy resources, climate change and agricultural problems, are all phenomena which in large part can be attributed to the consequences of a way of life distinguished by wastefulness; one which encourages all of us to squander the planet's resources over a shorter and shorter timeframe and in increasing their quantities.

To revert the trend we need to find innovative development models which are capable of preserving the planet's resources, whilst maintaining and improving the quality of the lives of its inhabitants.

We need to encourage the transition from a product-based economy to a system-based economy, making a cultural leap in the direction of economic and environmental sustainability which must involve the whole of society. We must start by enhancing the value of our local areas and co-operating with all the players involved.

Only by counting on greater cultural awareness and critical capacity can we hope to obtain a more mature society, one which is capable of finding the right balance between change and tradition in the local area, fostering economic competition and environmental quality together with tolerance and democracy.

Novamont is an experimental model which continues to evolve in terms of research and industrial development in the sector of bioplastics and chemicals from renewable raw materials (biodegradable products for food packaging and food-serviceware, agricultural films, biofillers for low rolling resistance tires, bags for organic waste management, etc.). Areas of research cover macromolecular chemistry, traditional synthesis chemistry, microbiology, more recently, bio-technology combined with chemical processes, process engineering, transformation technologies and agronomic aspects connected with non-food crops and with experimentation of biodegradable materials in agriculture.

The investigation of innovative models relates to a system rethink with: training, management of complex research projects; the development of partnerships, active participation in defining quality standards, strategic management of intellectual property, cultural activity, integrated supply chains and case histories.

Novamont is a veritable laboratory in every sense of the word in which people can develop their skills and take part in a system-based economic experiment.

Today, the challenge for Novamont is to become a catalyst in this sector, fully implementing the “Bio-refinery model closely linked to the Territory” by working in partnership with the agricultural, industrial, institutional and academic sectors. We hope that our experience can also be of benefit in defining a development strategy in the renewable raw materials sector, with an approach which has to demonstrate much more wisdom than in the past.