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Clearly communicating about the bioeconomy: Making bioenergy research relevant and accessible to politicians and the public

The bioeconomy, of which bioenergy is a significant part, is essential to achieving a low-carbon future. But adopting the products of the research and development that support the bioeconomy is fraught with misunderstanding at many levels. For example, While the public understands that the bioeconomy is here, there is poor understanding of what it is and what it means. There is also a need for much greater understanding about the bioeconomy among policy makers in general. This lack of understanding is one of the biggest hurdles in getting policy support for what professionals who research, develop, and commercialize bioproducts are trying to accomplish. The public and some policy makers erroneously feel that sustainability is a problem when it comes to the bioeconomy-for example, the food

versus fuel debate. That this is based on their biases rather than factual evidence presents significant and critical challenges that must be met. And to top it off, there is an incredible lack of knowledge in most countries about the bioeconomy's major benefits. Very clear, non-ambiguous messaging is needed, but it's in short supply. We are losing the opportunity to capture the public's imagination about the bioeconomy. Understanding these varied audiences, knowing how to craft clear, evidence-based messages, and understanding effective approaches like plain language communication and data visualization are essential tools for all scientific and business professionals whose aim is to advance any aspect of the bioeconomy.

Biography

Anton Holland is President and CEO of NIVA Inc., a consultancy focused on all aspects of science communication and knowledge brokering. He leads the company's strategy to assist science-based organizations bridge the gap that exists between complex science subject matter and the information demands of different audience types. He has developed keen insight into the need for clear and concise science writing for public audiences; this has provided him with the ability to find innovative ways to make the connections that help people understand science and technology.

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