BIOECONOMY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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The bioeconomy is a key priority for the European Union (EU) in promoting sustainable rural development, given that many bio-based activities—such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries—are concentrated in rural areas. These areas, often characterized by economic stagnation and demographic challenges, stand to benefit significantly from enhancing the transition towards a bio-based economy, which is essential for fostering innovation, circularity, and resource efficiency while unlocking significant regional benefits. However, despite strong policy support such as the EU Bioeconomy Strategy of 2012 and 2018, its integration into rural development remains uneven across member states due to policy fragmentation, financial constraints, and technological disparities. This study examines the bioeconomy's role in rural development within the EU using a systematic literature review based on PRISMA methodology. The analysis synthesizes peer-reviewed literature, policy frameworks, and empirical studies to identify key opportunities and challenges. Findings highlight the bioeconomy's potential for job creation, environmental sustainability, and economic diversification. However, its success depends on coherent policies, targeted investments, and multi-level governance. Innovation in bio-based industries, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy is crucial for strengthening rural resilience. Y et challenges persist- such as unequal access to technology, insufficient financial incentives, and weak stakeholder coordination persist. The findings contribute to the academic discourse on bioeconomy transition and provide valuable insights for policymakers seeking to promote sustainable rural development in the EU.