

An FP7 ERA-Net on Sustainable Food Production and Consumption

M18 Report – Publishable summary

V3

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Summary description of the project context and the main objectives

Context

According to the “Europe 2020 strategy”, the vision for the European Union is to achieve a sustainable future, to ensure more jobs and better lives. Some of the key elements for this future are sustainability, innovation, economic growth and competitiveness, high employment rate and societal and territorial cohesion. The grand challenges that Europe is facing require sustainable solutions in areas such as :1) Food security to ensure enough food for the world’s growing population, 2) Sustainable food production to address the tightening supplies of energy, water, natural resources and climate change 3) Food and health to improve and secure quality of life of an ageing society.

Overall goal

The goal of the ERA-Net SUSFOOD is to reinforce the scientific cooperation between EU member and associated states in order to maximise the contribution of research to the development of more sustainable food systems:

- responding to the increasing demand for food to be met by increasing production sustainably and reducing losses and waste
- mitigating the impact on the environment
- combating obesity, malnutrition, and under-nutrition
- reducing inequalities between rich and poor individuals and populations
- Improving competitiveness and economic growth in the European food industry, with special attention to SMEs.

The scope of SUSFOOD encompasses the entire food supply chain with main focus on food chain sustainability beyond the farm gate, taking account of work pre-farm gate developed in other initiatives. It covers processing,

packaging, transport, retailing, food services, storage and consumer activities. It promotes a multi-disciplinary approach, from biology to food engineering, and social sciences.

Sub-goals

To achieve its objectives, the consortium develops a strategy in three points:

- ❖ Construct an overview of the existing research
- ❖ Develop a transnational Strategic Research Agenda (SRA)
- ❖ Launch transnational calls for proposals to expand the structuring impact of the network.

Description of the work performed since the beginning of the project and the main results achieved so far

A central issue for the ERA-Net has been to define precisely what sustainability represents in the food area, in order to identify critical points across a wide range of activities throughout the food supply chain. SUSFOOD has come up with a definition of sustainable food systems as supporting food security, making optimal use of natural and human resources and respecting biodiversity and ecosystems for present and future generations, being culturally acceptable and accessible, environmentally sound and economically fair and viable, and providing the consumer with nutritionally adequate, safe, healthy and affordable food.

The work performed in the project and the achieved results in relation to the specific sub-goals are:

- ❖ Adaptation and updating of an open web based archive to map research (Meta Knowledge Base, MKB)

To create this database, the SUSFOOD scope, the MKB classification system and the MKB functionalities have been defined in common by the SUSFOOD partners. Several questionnaires were used and a Joint workshop was held in Belgium (Ghent) in May 2012. After a short testing period by the SUSFOOD partners, the online database, called “the SUSFOOD Meta Knowledge Base (or short MKB)” was publically launched in September 2012

In this database, nearly 600 researchers from various institutions in Europe were registered in May 2013 and data on funding bodies, national programmes and research organizations was posted by SUSFOOD partners. A country report based on the latter has been issued in March 2013 and will be published in the most recent version. The SUSFOOD Meta Knowledge Base (MKB) can be consulted at <http://susfood-db-era.net>.

- ❖ Building a transnational Strategic Research Agenda

Through workshops (Ghent in May 2012, Copenhagen in January 2013), questionnaires and national consultations, a close and active cooperation between SUSFOOD partners, accompanied by interactions with representatives of other initiatives or institutions participating to our External Advisory Group, has allowed to produce a report on research needs (November 2012) and a draft Strategic Research

Agenda (May 2013), as well as proposals for topics to be included in the first transnational call (launched in February 2013).

❖ Launching transnational calls for proposals

SUSFOOD has completed its first call for transnational projects based on funding by 19 funding organizations from 15 countries (around 10 million € as a virtual common pot). The call topics were: 1. Improving input, waste and side flow strategies to increase resource efficiency and provide added value in food products and food processing; 2. Innovation in food processing technologies and food products; 3. Understanding consumer behavior to encourage sustainable food choice. The call addressed research academic projects as well as public-private innovation projects. The call for proposals attracted 98 applications. Of these, 91 were eligible and 26 have been selected for submitting full proposals which will be evaluated by a scientific international panel.

The successful projects will start between February and June 2014.

A second call is planned for 2014.

Other achievements pertain to communication and dissemination for the ERA-Net. A website has been created (<https://www.susfood-era.net/>), a logo, a leaflet and a newsletter (two so far) created.

The coordination and the management of the project have implemented the governance (an Executive Committee, a Governing Board and an External Advisory Group). The project management guidelines have been produced, and the Consortium Agreement established and signed between partners.

Description of the expected final results and use (including socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

SUSFOOD has several major strengths for potential impact:

- ❖ Addressing the grand challenges with a multidisciplinary and holistic approach at the European level.
- ❖ Connecting national activities, increasing coherence, innovating on procedures and methods for joint actions, building a coordinated common SRA, influencing the international food research.
- ❖ Taking into account other initiatives: several ERA-Nets, the FACCE and the HDHL Joint programming Initiatives, the Food for Life ETP (supported by European food industry), and several other FP7 projects.

As an ERA-Net, SUSFOOD aims at increasing cooperation and synergy between the European partners and at defining common future perspectives in sustainable food production and consumption. Thanks to the identification of research priorities, gaps and opportunities, and a study of future research needs, SUSFOOD will have positive impacts on European research. The Strategic Research Agenda will establish a **joint agenda for European food research when it comes to the sustainability issues** (to be made available for H-2020 and the JPIs FACCE and HDHL). By means of its **two open calls** (in 2013 and 2014), sustainability oriented food chain projects will be supported,

in order to allow the European research area to be in the lead in sustainable food production, supply and consumption.

With a wider perspective, at the end of the project we expect to have raised the awareness of the scientific community, of the food industry, and of policy makers and NGOs on the subject of sustainability along the food chain.