

Strategic plan for Food Meta-Cluster development

Clusters-Cord project



1. Summarization of Scan

1.1. Industrial regional mapping

Official English translation	GDP contribution	Employment contribution	Cluster
Regional food cluster – Taste good. South Bohemian	n.a.	n.a.	Y
Czech brewer's cluster	n.a.	n.a.	Y
Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce, Upper Austrian Food Cluster	14 percent (figures relate to Austria as a whole)	16 percent (figures relate to Austria as a whole)	Y
NUTRIBIOMED Cluster	5 Percent (of whole Poland GDP, and 24 % of the industry as a whole)	5 Percent (relate to whole employment in Poland)	Y
Parco Tecnologico Padano	n.a.	n.a.	Y
PharmAgora Quality of Life Cluster	10, 35 % (figures relate to Hungary as a whole, based on 2012. Q1)	7 % (figures relate to Veszprem County)	Y

	data)		
Eger Food Cluster	10, 35 % (figures relate to Hungary as a whole, based on 2012. Q1 data)	n.a.	Y
Network bioactive plant foods	n.a.	n.a.	Y

n.a. = not available

1.2 Scan of potential clusters

Food clusters in the participating regions and countries

Official English translation	Region	Country	Website	Year of foundation	Sector	N° of cluster members	Stage of development	Legal status
Regional food cluster – Taste good. South Bohemian	South Bohemian Region	Czech Republic	www.chutnahezkyjihocesky.eu	2009	Food processing industry	21	Developing cluster (At least one year successful (effective) operation, Export, High value added)	Public equivalent body (profit-oriented)

							focus)	
Czech brewer's cluster	South Bohemian Region	Czech Republic	/	2008	Food processing industry	16	Developing cluster (At least one year successful (effective) operation, Export, High value added focus)	Private profit-oriented organisation
Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce, Upper Austrian Food Cluster	Upper Austria	Austria	www.lebensmittel-cluster.at	2000	Food processing industry	244	Advanced cluster (At least three years successful (effective) operation, Export, High value added focus, Track record)	Public equivalent body (non-profit)
NUTRIBIOMED Cluster	Lower Silesia	Poland	www.nutribiomed.pl	2007	Food processing industry,	35	Developing cluster (At least one	Cluster has no legal status – legal representative is Public

					Health sciences, Production technologies		year successful (effective) operation, Export, High value added focus)	equivalent body (non-profit)
Parco Tecnologico Padano	Lombardy Region	Italy	http://www.tecnoparco.org	2001	Food processing, Health sciences, Agro & food BIOTECH.	27	Advanced cluster innovation (At least three years successful (effective) operation, Export, High value added focus, Track record)	Public equivalent body (non-profit)
PharmAgora Quality of Life Cluster	Central Transdanubian Region	Hungary	www.pharmagora.hu	2007	Health sciences	24	Advanced cluster (At least three years successful (effective))	Private profit-oriented organisation

							operati on, Export, High value added focus, Track record)	
Egerfood Food Safety and Technolo gy Develop ment Cluster	Northern Hungary	Hung ary	http://www.ektf.h u/ret/			North ern Hung ary	Hungary	http://www.ek tf.hu/ret/
Network bioactive plant foods	Baden- Württem berg	Germ any	www.netzwerk- bpl.de	2010	Functio nal Food	24	Develop ing network (3 years of public funding, transitio n to privatel y finance d organiza tion)	Cooperation agreement

Other clusters with a significant potential overlap in the participating regions / countries

1.3 Overview of existing meta-cluster and networking activities

foodclusterinitiative

<http://www.foodclusterinitiative.eu/what/objectives>

The European FOOD CLUSTER Initiative is a scheme designed to establish European clusters of coordination in order to enhance regional research capacity building and regional economic development with significant impact at local level.

What do the 31 regions cooperating in the FOOD CLUSTER initiative have in common?

They all work on food production and food research, helping companies with research and development. This network of 12 projects from FP6, FP7 and Interreg all have a basis strengthening regional research capacity and developing regional policies to transfer knowledge to companies.

Why do regions cooperate in the field of food research?

Why do these 31 regions cooperate? Linze Rijswijk from Food Valley explains: “The European Union does not have a central research strategy like the US or China. Europe has to cooperate to compete globally”. He continues: “Although food production and research is often fragmented across Europe, we have a lot of common problems. Is it not strange that we spend so much money on research to cure food related diseases like obesity and diabetes, when we do not invest in innovation to develop healthy food to prevent such diseases?” Unlike the pharmaceutical sector the food sector invests very little in research: only a quarter percent of output is invested in R&D.

The companies, research institutes and regional governments cooperating in the Foodcluster want to invest in healthier, safe, more sustainable and tastier food products. Building on the diversity that European regions bring. Different European regions have varying capabilities and specializations to develop knowledge and technology. Therefore they cooperate. The Food Cluster Initiative is a learning platform for regional policies and innovation instruments, but also a platform to develop new interregional research and development projects.

Regions represented in the clusters are drawn not only from Member States such as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria France, Germany, Denmark, Spain, UK, Greece and Italy, but from associated countries such as Turkey, Serbia, and FYROM as well.

Cooperating, ambitious Food regions can learn from each other, strengthen the EU Food research area and can increase the competitive advantage and welfare of the EU by building interregional projects on an EU level based on regional strengths. Moving towards this increased European coverage will involve joining EU “hotspots” of food production and research clusters, learning from each others strengths and weaknesses, defining regional strategies, investing in the strengths through integral use of national and regional funding (FP7/CIP/SF etc.) as a basis for establishing EU consortia founded on regional strengths in Food science – in fact building the ERA in Food.

Participating projects

In 2007, the Food Cluster has been launched with the ambition of involving different EU funded research projects within an exchange of knowledge and experiences, learning about each other's strengths and weaknesses, defining regional strategies and investing in the strengths through integral use of national and regional funding (Research Framework Programmes, Structural Funds, Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, etc.) as a basis for establishing EU consortia in food science - in fact building the ERA in Food.

Projects participating the Food Cluster Initiative

FINE project

FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK EUROPE

In the Food Innovation Network Europe (FINE), European food clusters are **combining their efforts to make the European food sector more competitive** through innovation and cooperation.

The aim of the FINE network is to enhance the investment in Research and Technological Development (RTD) and to strengthen the cooperation within and between food clusters.

RAF-REGIONS

Bringing the Benefits of Research to AgroFood SMEs of the Regions of Central Macedonia, Puglia and Pazardjik.

The overarching objective of RAF- REGIONS is to **increase the overall capacity of the Regions of Central Macedonia (Greece), Puglia (Italy) and Pazardjik (Bulgaria)** in enhancing science and technology based economic development, focusing on the AgroFood Sector.

www.rafregions.eu

AGFORISE

AGroFOod clusters platform with common long-term Research and Innovation Strategy towards Economic growth and prosperity.

The overall objective of AGFORISE Project is to create a common dialogue platform and a joint action plan among the Agrofood clusters that will maximise capacity for research and benefit from research infrastructure through complementariness and synergy, so as to contribute for sustainable development, prosperity, economic growth and global competitiveness of the regions.

www.agforise.eu

AFRESH

AFRESH – Countering diet-related diseases through competitive regional food and physical activity clusters – clusters platform with common long-term Research and Innovation Strategy towards Economic growth and prosperity.

AFRESH aims at developing a research agenda for reducing diet- and physical inactivity-related (chronic) diseases, such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and various types of cancer, by developing innovative products and services within the field of nutrition and physical activity.

Instrumental for this is collaboration on an EU wide platform for new research and innovation in the combined field of healthy food and physical activity.
website: www.afresh-project.eu

BALTFoodQUAL

To contribute to the realization of the full research potential of the enlarged European Union by unlocking and developing existing research potential in one of the convergence regions – the Baltic.

Long-term objectives of the project:

To stimulate realization of full research potential of the enlarged European Union by unlocking and developing existing research potential in one of the convergence regions – Baltic.

www.sigra.lv/baltfoodqual

SAFETechnoPACK

Improving the scientific and technological research capacity of food institute on safety and technology food packaging.

TUBITAK Marmara Research Center (MRC) Food Institute (FI) in Turkey aims to become one of the leading food science and technology institutes in the EU. In order to achieve its aim FI has analysed its weak points, and identified food packaging technologies as one of them.

www.safetechnopack.org

EU-BALKANVEGETABLES

Balkan vegetable research centre for transfer of European knowledge, research and practice

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE of the project is to revive and reinforce the Maritsa Vegetable Crops Research Institute (VCRI) to become a leading horticultural research centre in the Balkan region disseminating information on the recent achievements in the European Research Area (ERA) in this scientific field.

www.balkanvegetables.eu

CEFSEr

Reinforcing research potential in the Laboratory for Chemical Contaminants at the Faculty of Technology towards the establishment of the Centre of Excellence in Food Safety and Emerging Risks.

CEFSEr is the FP7 project dedicated to the reinforcement of research capacities at the Laboratory for Chemical Contaminants in Food and the Environment (LabCHEMCONT) at the Faculty of Technology, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, in order to become a unique Western Balkan Country (WBC) Centre of Excellence in Food Safety and Emerging Risks.

FLAVOURE

Food and feed LABORatory of Varied and OUTstanding Research in Estonia

Joining forces, increasing collaboration, transferring research results to practice and making a maximum use of research potential are cornerstones of the European Research Area. Food and Feed quality and safety is a crucial topic for consumers' health today. A high quantity of means and competencies are concentrated on this issue.

AgriSciMont

AgriSciMont - Fostering a Science-based Development of a sustainable Montenegrin Agriculture

The AgriSciMont project aims at strengthening the Biotechnical Faculty's in Podgorica already excellent research capacity through technological enhancement of human resources, partnership and a reorganisation around 3 interdisciplinary research areas (food and feed safety, agro biodiversity conservation and agro-analyses) to converge towards excellence on "Fostering a Science-based Development of a Sustainable Montenegrin Agriculture".

<http://www.agriscimont.me/gallery.php>

FEED-TO-FOOD

The Centre for FEED AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS (FAP)

An organizational unit within the Institute for Food Technology (FINS) at the University of Novi Sad.

The only scientific- research unit specializing in a wide range of issues related to feed technology in Serbia. Furthermore there is no similar organization in the former-Yugoslavia Republics, other Western Balkan countries (WBC) and Member States (MS) in the region. FAP is well positioned in Serbia and in the region, but seeks recognition as an equal partner in Europe as a whole.

www.feed-to-food.uns.ac.rs

CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANT

Western Balkan Countries produce authentic healthy agricultural products, for example fruits, wine and herbal teas.

Local research institutes can help to make better use of health aspects of these foods when promoting the products and promoting the agricultural resources of authentic foods in the region in general.

For this, more research has to be done on the health promoting food constituents and the capacity to do this research has to be increased. In the CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANT project, the human and material capacity of three laboratories in the region for chemical characterization of the antioxidant compounds in food is increased.

chromlab.pmf.ukim.edu.mk

SWOT-CHEMISTRY-FOOD

Evaluation of the Research Capacity and development of a strategy for further growth in chemistry in general and in food science in particular.

The Institute of Chemistry at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius has international recognition and visibility by publishing the results of research in scientific journals and collaboration with research groups from European universities.

It is nominated as a potential centre of excellence by the Ministry of Education and Science of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

www.chemistryfood.pmf.ukim.edu.mk

REAL

North Portugal - Galicia food-processing innovation and technological development network

The aim of REAL is to elaborate a combined innovation and development strategy between Galicia and the North of Portugal, which involves the productive sector and integrates the existing capacities, allowing to prepare a socioeconomic area to answer nowadays challenges, and positioning profitably in the EU food-processing sector.

FCUB-ERA

Reinforcement of the Faculty of Chemistry, University of Belgrade, towards becoming a Center of Excellence in the region of WB for Molecular Biotechnology and Food research

The main objective of the project is to build the research capacity of the FCUB in the area of food research and molecular biotechnology to a level of excellence similar to that observed in the EU and to make research at FCUB better coordinated, efficient, innovative and attractive to the best of scientists, and hence, establish better opportunity for integration into the ERA..

Website: <http://www.fcub-era.rs>

Coordinator: Dr Tanja Ćirković Veličković, associate professor

Contact: tcirkov@chem.bg.ac.rs

Baltfood

The Baltic Sea Region Food Cluster: Innovation and Competitiveness in Action

The food industry has developed into a highly competitive and strong industrial sector within the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). The idea is networking among the business and scientific communities in the food industry.

The overall aim of this project is to foster innovations and to take the food industry to the next level. The baltfood project will bring business and science closer together to meet the challenges of the future.

Website: www.baltfood.org

foodRegio

The foodRegio initiative was launched in the Lübeck region by companies and organizations from within the Schleswig-Holstein food industry.

Our goal is to use joint projects to make the situation for the food industry in the North even more commercially attractive, both for those who have already chosen this as their optimal location and for those are still looking.

Website: www.foodregio.de

FOOD4GOOD

FOOD4GOOD cluster gathers mainly production companies with a technologically advanced and modern machine park

The cluster main goals are: Establishment of the common production and trade strategy; research on functional food; Designing and launching traditional food with modified ingredients; Registration of new nutritional statements; Popularising of new and traditional products of modified ingredients; Cooperation with foreign clusters.

Website: www.food4good.pl

Contact: kontakt@food4good.pl

Centre of innovation and technology of packaging food products

Centre of innovation and technology of packaging food products- European Competence Agreement is Cooperation association, which works for the benefit of connected participants: enterprises, research units and business environment institutions.

The main aims of project are initiating and implementing pro-innovation actions in creating a new standard of raw materials and food product flow in the industry chain, knowledge transfer and technology, multiple feedback in the process of packaging food products, combined with IT system, automatic identification technologies and optimize usage of resources.

website: www.ribs.org.pl

contact: e.osinska@ribs.org.pl

BaSeFood

BaSeFood (Sustainable exploitation of bioactive components from the Black Sea Area traditional foods) is a collaborative FP7 research program which aims to contribute in establishing a rationale for integrating the concepts of health promoting foods and traditional foods, in order to create the knowledge base for a sustainable economic development in the area of production and processing of tradition-based healthy foods.

Website: www.BaSeFood-fp7.eu/

Contact: adriana.dascultu@unibo.it; dantuono@agrsci.unibo.it

CAPINFOOD

CAPINFOOD aims at building the capacity of institutions supporting innovation in the food sector and promoting public awareness on benefits of innovation, making the sectoral innovation easier through transnational cooperation of the national food technology platforms and related institutions.

Contact: szilvia.gergely@tetalap.hu; katalin.kalai@tetalap.hu

Website: www.capinfood.eu/

Cluster of Innovation in Agribusiness

Cluster of Innovation in Agribusiness aims to transfer the knowledge into business, increase the efficiency of technology and knowledge transfer between participants in the cluster, and consequently increase the innovative potential of the Mazovia region.

Contact: malgorzata_szczupska@sggw.pl; pawel_grzelak@sggw.pl

Website: www.wne.sggw.pl/category/citwa/agroklaster/english/

1.4 Matchmaking of cluster needs across the CE region

The matchmaking started with the “Benchmarking Conference” pointed out the existence of several needs from the involved cluster. Some of these turned out to be common and could be better answered by a meta-cluster strategy.

The main emerging needs related to different topics and were the following:

International dimension of the clusters and marketing strategies: low level of cooperation in EU; few international projects run by the clusters, few links with other clusters or meta-clusters in Europe; lacking of tools for promoting cluster activities and services at the International level

Engagement of business partners: missing industrial partners; need for collaboration with industry clusters for building more partnership between our SMEs; lack or low Involvement of large companies (large companies do not need current services offered by clusters in some cases); Low economic power of members comparing to the multinational companies; Low level of exchange with job community (I.e. SMEs for training activities)

Cluster management: No 100% self financing, Limited regional/national support for the cluster basic expenses (i.e. manager, office, organization of meetings etc.); Limited contribution/involvement of business partners in the life of the cluster;

Innovation and finance: Lack of capital for innovations, problems to find money for innovations; Continue innovation in a difficult economic situation; Lower demand for new products with added value ; Economic crisis and its impact on demand Hard way to attack new markets; troubles in the scalability of business ideas; changing procedures and conditions when applying on and using support of EU funds

Legislative issues: Comply with EFSA regulation

Common keywords

Some “demands” coming from some of the already involved clusters seems to be possibly covered by other clusters. In fact the involved clusters share different common “keywords” related with the specific sub-fields of interest.

One of the main common keywords seems to be **food safety and products and services for safer and healthier nutrition**. Based on discussion held the following sub-topics were **mentioned**:

1. research on bio-safety, health, nutrition and environment
2. agrofood and biotech with a particular emphasis in the use of technologies such as genomics, proteomics and other –omics based.
3. diet supplements, nutraceuticals, and biomedical preparations based on natural resources,
4. biotechnology, food, cosmetics, and pharmacy industry.
5. health industry (agro-food and pharmaceuticals)
6. combining food raw materials with pharmaceuticals to have better efficacy with less toxicity
7. preservation of sensoric profiles in logistics chain from production to consumer

2. Meta-Cluster strategy and objectives

2.1. Meta-Cluster Vision and Mission

Clusters have the potential to affect competition in three ways: by increasing the productivity of the companies in the cluster, by driving innovation in the field, and by stimulating new businesses in the field.

Every participating region has already strong collaboration structures between government, industry and knowledge institutes. The partners are involved in many European projects. By making use of the complementary strengths of every region, the competitiveness of Europe in the field of agrofood in the global markets can be strongly enhanced.

In each of the participating clusters we find specialized knowledge and world class research. However, this specialized knowledge is not even fully perceived by the scientific community, let alone the wider public. On a very general level we can identify innovative specialized knowledge in agrofood chain-related ICT services, in sustainability, in open innovation and other areas. The importance of these centres of excellence will not be discovered in full until structured benchmarking and co-operation processes start. The clear ambition of the participating regions is to construct a strategic vision that identifies how they could optimize their position in the knowledge economy. The activities aim at identifying R&D and innovation activities which can best be developed competitively in the regions concerned and at implementing the policies necessary to pursue this vision. The entire Food meta-cluster process supports smart specialization by (i) elaborating market niches and (ii) identifying and building up critical mass, addressing the cluster’s industry and SME members. It strives to strengthen strengths and contributes to Europe’s development of worldclass clusters. The project fosters excellence at all levels mentioned in the proposal and thus strengthens the competitive advantages. Building communication and co-operation networks raise the best resources

available and thus lift the competence level in all participating regions. Thus, the Food meta-cluster will become synonym for a strategic vision identifying what makes regional knowledge bases unique and distinctive.

The final goal of the meta-cluster is to deepen the relationship between the leading agrofood cluster regions in Europe and to work in partnership with them to unlock their innovative potential and create opportunities for pan-European innovation.

The CLUSTER COORD FOOD METACLUSTER has the following common goals:

- 1. Foster International R&D cooperation projects**
- 2. Sharing skills, services, facilities and technologies**
- 3. Connecting enterprises and R&D institutions concerned with common topics**
- 4. Sharing tools and ideas for a better cluster management**
- 5. Spreading excellence, exploiting results, disseminating knowledge**
- 6. Improving scalability and up-scaling of the R&D projects**
- 7. Develop common Promotional / marketing activities**

The CLUSTER COORD FOOD METACLUSTER aims at identifying R&D and innovation activities which can best be developed competitively in the regions concerned and at implementing the policies necessary to pursue this vision.

2.2. Expected impact in the Central Europe region

Cooperating, ambitious Food regions can learn from each other, strengthen the EU Food research area and can increase the competitive advantage and welfare of the EU by building interregional projects on an EU level based on regional strengths. Moving towards this increased European coverage will involve joining EU “hotspots” of food production and research clusters, learning from each others strengths and weaknesses, defining regional strategies, investing in the strengths through integral use of national and regional funding (FP7/CIP/SF etc.) as a basis for establishing EU consortia founded on regional strengths in Food science – in fact building the ERA in Food.

Partner regions have acknowledged the need to develop synergies between pilot projects funded under the different policy instruments (RoK, RegPot, Europe INNOVA and PRO INNO Europe14, FTN and other INTERREG and URBACT projects). To pursue this objective, the proposed workplan foresees fostering cooperation at regional level between the above mentioned organisations involved in the implementation of the different EU funding instruments. The meta-cluster is an important impetus to receive further funding from regional entities for “food industry” related projects, and, consequently, to implement the meta-cluster mission. The meta-cluster takes up a planned focus of the new programme period of joint research and development 2014-2020, HORIZON 2020. Under the Societal Challenges chapter Food Security has been identified as a key issue with the specific objective “to secure sufficient supplies of safe and high quality food and other bio-based products, by (i) developing productive and resource-efficient primary production systems, (ii) fostering related ecosystem.

Expected IMPACT

Boosting the competitiveness of research-driven clusters in the domains of digital agenda and resource efficient technologies Europewide and globally, unlocking new business opportunities for participating SMEs

Build sustainable partnerships between academia and business within clusters and transnationally across clusters and regions, facilitating the knowledge transfer from academia to business in order to develop novel services, products and processes

Contribution to the development of smart specialisation strategies of regions through R&D and Innovation in the field of digital agenda

New private & public investments in R&D and Innovation at regional level driven by regional strategies based on business needs, access to finance facilitated for SMEs, synergies created with other EU and national funding sources

Create an innovation friendly ecosystem in the regions through close and sustainable collaboration and networking between universities, research centres, business, local policy makers and other stakeholders

Include more European regions into the European Research Area (ERA) while involving relevant regional stakeholder for the design of research agendas

2.3. Short SWOT analysis of Meta-Cluster

Strenghts	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<i>strong R&D network especially for the use of .omics technology for valorization of raw materials and food derived products</i>	<i>Lacking of tools for promoting activities, services at the International level</i>	<i>New EU policies (S3 strategy, Cluster policies etc.)</i>	<i>Continue innovation in a difficult economic situation</i> <i>Comply with EFSA regulation</i>
<i>Common key words</i> <i>Functional food</i> <i>Food safety</i> <i>Healthy nutrition</i> <i>.omics based science</i> <i>food biotechnologies</i>	<i>No 100% self financing, Limited regional/ national support for the cluster basic expenses (i.e. manager, office, organization of meetings etc.)</i>	<i>LC could win in the convenience / Functional Food more profile. Especially for the 50 + segment is evident potential for development</i>	<i>Lower demand for new products with added value</i> <i>Very intensive changing procedures and conditions on using EU funds on national level</i>
<i>Good networking skills for R&D new</i>	<i>missing industrial</i>	<i>Other metaclusters and networks</i> <i>The world Expo2015 in Milan</i>	<i>Economic crisis and its impact on demand Hard way to attack new markets</i>

<i>project,</i>	<i>partner,s need for collaboration with industry clusters for building more partnership between our SMEs</i>	<i>Changing procedures and conditions when applying on and using support of EU funds</i>
<i>Broad range of competence in the cluster, covering services like:</i>	<i>Low Involvement of large companies. Large companies do not need current services offered by the LC in some cases,</i>	
<i>management, marketing, law, R&D, technology transfer, production, logistics etc</i>	<i>Low economic power of members comparing to the multinational companies</i>	
<i>Offering good technical skills and competences.</i>	<i>Lack of capital for innovations, problems to find money for innovations</i>	
<i>Balanced structure of membership (production, R&D, production innovations, technology,</i>	<i>Low level of cooperation in EU; Few international projects; Few links with other cluster in Europe.</i>	
<i>Direct links to R&D, universities etc</i>	<i>Lack of large firms in the cluster; troubles in the scalability of business ideas;</i>	
<i>Good networking in the SME sector.</i>	<i>Limited contribution /involvement of business partners in the life of the cluster</i>	

3. Organization structure of Meta-Cluster

3.1. Legal form of Meta-Cluster

The already involved participants agreed on the meta-cluster being a “light” organization that should combine the following elements:

- It has to be cheap, not financially expensive for members;
- It has to be operational, ensuring the possibility to operate quickly
- It should easily allow the entrance new members or the exit of old ones

As for the legal form, the participants committed themselves to form a **consortium through a cooperation agreement**. This Strategic Plan is integral annex to the cooperation agreement. No fees are expected to be paid by members.

3.2. Organizational structure (chart) of Meta-Cluster

The organizational structure of the metacluster will be formed by 4 key elements

1. One steering committee
2. One meta-cluster manager (coordinator)
3. Project leaders
4. Regional Clusters focal points

1. Steering committee

Each regional cluster will appoint one representative for the Meta-Cluster. Those representatives will form the Steering Committee and will meet regularly for telephone conferences (i.e. once a month) and possibly one personal meeting per year (e.g. during the annual meeting.)

Decisions of SC are to be made by negotiations and finding the solution which is acceptable for all members.

The task of the SC will be:

- definition and approval of the annual workplan, including tasks, roles and budget
- ensurance of the activities maintaining their relevance with the project plan and objectives
- review & evaluation of cluster progresses
- resolution of technical, administrative / contractual issues not yet resolved by other means
- preparation and agreement on changes in METACLUSTER COOPERATION AGREEMENT

2. One meta-cluster manager (coordinator/facilitator)

One responsible Meta-Cluster “Manager” coming from the participating members for the period of one year that coordinates the activities. The holder of this position changes every year – unless SC jointly decides otherwise.

His/her role will be:

- establishment and management of the Steering Committee meetings
- ensuring the communication flows within the meta-cluster
- supervision of the different activities implemented by the meta-cluster
- monitoring relevant activities in other current EU projects and effect an introduction into the project if appropriate

He/She will preferably be an experienced cluster manager of one of the regional food cluster involved.

3. Project leaders

Every activity agreed by the SC and developed by the meta-cluster should have a “project leader”. Project leaders are chosen within the SC members. Role of project leaders is to coordinate the joint efforts of the meta-cluster members for the implementation of specific actions/initiatives (i.e. the organization of the annual meeting etc.). These actions/initiatives may require the activation of project teams. Project leaders cooperate closely with Manager to enable the information flow between all members of the metacluster.

4. Regional Clusters focal points

Each member of the meta-cluster will appoint a regional focal point whose main tasks will be to promote active participation in the meta-cluster’s life of local companies, research centers and other regional bodies; to take part in project teams supporting project leaders in the implementation of specific activities. Focal points should make sure that they have the same information, to be able to have equal image in front of the external bodies.

4. Common services and standards defined by Meta-Cluster

4.1. Common quality and services standards defined for Meta-Cluster

The members of the CC FOOD METACLUSTER have decided to set up these standards in a later phase of the cooperation.

4.2. Common marketing services standards defined for Meta-Cluster

The members of the CC FOOD METACLUSTER have decided to set up these standards in a later phase of the cooperation.

4.3. List of meta-cluster activities and services

	Networking support service			Common promotion of meta-cluster services and marketing of cluster services		
	Joint Chart of Services	Annual Exchange Meeting	Regional Focal Point	Meta-Cluster Logo and Website	Participation to relevant regional and international events, conferences, fairs	Regional Focal Point
Finding new clients for products and services of cluster companies						
Finding industrial/commercial partners						
Starting common International R&D projects						
Sharing skills, services, facilities and technologies						
Improving scalability and up-scaling of the R&D projects						
Fostering knowledge exchange between enterprises and R&D institutions concerned with common topics						
Sharing tools and ideas for a better cluster management						
Spreading excellence, exploiting results, disseminating knowledge						

Networking support service

The networking support service will be built around 3 main activities:

1. Joint Chart of Services
2. Annual Exchange meeting
3. Regional Focal Point

1. Joint Chart of Services

The Joint Chart of Services is an on-line tool for facilitating the access to skills, services, facilities and technologies (machines and laboratory instruments, non-conventional analysis systems) for all members of the food clusters involved.

In practical words, companies, research groups and members of the involved clusters in need of a particular type of analysis or service may consult the list of services, facilities and know-how offered by other clusters and thus benefit from it.

The Chart of Services offers the possibility to companies to benefit not only from the services and facilities belonging to their own cluster, but also to take advantages from competencies and laboratories belonging to the other associated clusters.

In this way a food cluster become not only a resource for its own territory, but through the meta-cluster, also a response to the needs of the entire trans-regional system of innovation.

Eventually meta-cluster members could even find an agreement for offering the use of other cluster technologies/services etc at a lower price for meta-cluster members.

Furthermore, the Joint Chart of Services will be an important tool also to assess and share each cluster needs in terms of partnerships sought, development of joint research common topics of research rationalization and maximization of resources and to apply jointly to establish joint ventures or to apply jointly to EU or other public and private fundings.

In a first stage the joint Chart of services will be open only for cluster members and the companies belonging to them. The joint Chart of Services will be built so that each meta-cluster member can upload relevant information and look at what other meta-cluster members offer or seek.

The number of information in the Chart of Service is expected to grow in the course of time.

In a later moment the meta-cluster could agree on making the information contained in the chart of services available to the wider public and especially to other food clusters and meta-clusters

2. Annual exchange meeting

The annual exchange forum on food is a specific request from the involved clusters. During the first exchange forum in Lodi there was a common agreement about the importance of having vis-a-vis meetings in order to know each other and cooperate.

During the first exchange forum in Lodi B2B meetings (between metacluster managers but also between individual companies) were very much appreciated and everybody asked for more opportunities to have other similar events.

Therefore the annual exchange meeting will be the ideal place where is possible to:

- Develop a constructive discussion between those involved;
- Create a climate for achieving partnership between research and enterprises and between enterprises;
- Stimulating the encounter between research and industry (R2B) and between businesses (B2B).

Of course the annual meeting will also be the key moment to discuss about the meta-cluster management, definition of the annual workplan, evaluation of the progress achieved, appointing of facilitator etc.

Although the agenda will be defined every year during telephone conferences, the format of the event could include:

- public conferences open to the wider public of companies, clusters and entities operating in the field of the food industry
- dedicated meta-cluster training sessions or workshops on specific topics in relation with food industry or food cluster policies and management
- B2B and R2B sessions between clusters, companies and research centers
- Steering Committee meeting

The annual exchange meeting will take place preferably in one of the participating cluster members' cities and/or in conjunction with other food related meetings/conferences/fairs etc.

The additional exchange forum will be attended by:

- Food cluster managers already involved
- Individual Companies belonging to those clusters
- Clusters Cord PPs
- Other central and non-central European food clusters or related cluster initiatives

3. Regional Focal Point

One appointed person from the regional-cluster should manage the focal point. The task will consist mainly in receiving/analyzing requests from outside the meta-cluster and addressing them towards the relevant entities in the meta-cluster and viceversa. This service will be delivered only via e-mail.

Common marketing and promotion service

The aim of the activity is to promote the meta-cluster offer outside the network. The service will promote both:

- the metacluster as a whole, in order to attract new clusters from Central Europe regions to join in
- the specificity of each regional cluster and the excellences of the companies and research units belonging to them

The final aim of the common marketing and promotion service is to foster the internazionalization of the regional clusters and their companies, the establishment of commercial or R&D partnerships with countries and regions outside the meta-cluster, the share of added value products and services sold by SMEs and RUs belonging to the meta-cluster in the wider market.

The service will be delivered through:

- Creation of Meta-Cluster Logo and Website (or App) specifying partners' profiles and contacts, aims of the Meta-Cluster, promotion of joint chart of services, joint projects and activities etc. Creation of promotional and dissemination materials (electronic leaflets, e-brochures etc.)
- Participation to relevant regional and international events, conferences, fairs etc. by each cluster manager. The assumption is that each cluster manager regularly attends such events for promoting its own cluster and companies. Therefore the activity wouldn't require an extra budget: each regional cluster manager belonging to the meta-cluster should commit him/herself for promoting the meta-cluster at these events. Every year a list of such events should be drafted and priority event(s) should be identified to be attended, starting with those events usually attended by meta-cluster members.
- One appointed person from the regional-cluster should manage the focal point. The task will consist mainly in receiving/analyzing requests from outside the meta-cluster and addressing them towards the relevant entities in the meta-cluster and viceversa. This service will be delivered only via e-mail

5. Meta-Cluster Financial plan

The meta-cluster will have no membership fees. It will be a light and agile body based on the voluntary work of members. Nevertheless each specific services/ activity of the meta-cluster should have its own budget and external costs should be agreed in advance among meta-cluster members and covered by specific fundings or by the means of own meta-cluster members resources devoted for the life of meta-cluster. The efforts of every partner can roughly range from 3 to 5 working days per year including the monthly telephone conferences, according to the roles each partner is ready to play in the network. (see paragraph. 3.2.)

6. Meta-Cluster Action plan

Below the very concrete next steps that were already decided on are described:

- Setting up a Meta-Cluster Website until 1.6.2013
- Creating a database of the participating clusters and their cluster partners until 30.4.2013
- Monthly skype conference
- Finalization of concrete CC FOOD METACLUSTER schedule (from June 2013 until June 2014) until 31.5.2013.

7. Conclusion

By applying this structured strategic plan, the participating Clusters of the Food-Meta-Cluster have the potential to affect competition in three ways: by increasing the productivity of the companies in the cluster, by driving innovation in the field, and by stimulating new businesses in the field.