



1<sup>st</sup> official meeting of the **FOOD-CLUSTER**  
held on 11-12 February 2008 CDMA and SDME – Brussels

Outline record of the meeting

Day 1

CDMA venue

- 1 The structure of the meeting and the practical arrangements involved were described supported by a paper providing details on security procedures, refreshment etc; the two strategic elements of the meeting namely the Cluster and its development and the start-up of the individual FP7 projects; the involvement of the FINE partners; coordinators role during the afternoon individual project start-up meetings; and the “report-back” presentations at the end of the first day.
- 2 A presentation was made on the objectives of a cluster (See 08/1-2) in which one of the coordinators (XG) described what a cluster is (with some examples); why have one; the objectives and activities of a food cluster (including desired outcomes); the role of the experts involved; and the objectives of this first meeting.
- 3 This was followed by a presentation describing a successful example of the practical aspects of organising a cluster (FINE -see 08/1-3). This described those involved in the network and their ambitions for building a lasting network; defining regional policies with stakeholders; exchanging regional innovation instruments; building regional food clusters; exchanging strengths and weaknesses in R&D; and developing inter-regional R&D and innovation projects. The presentation went on to explore the enlargement of the FINE concept to embrace the new regional food projects in FP7 and what that meant for the future.
- 4 The Commission outlined the benefits of a kick-off meeting and what it should achieve such as a stated beginning of the project, an outline of goals and individual roles and responsibilities, a clarification of expectations and creation of commitment of those involved in achieving outcomes.(See 08/1-4). Practical implementation issues were described such as the structure of the grant agreement, the roles of those involved and reporting. More specifically contractual issues were identified as were the roles of the project coordinator, the consortium and the project officer. Reporting requirements both during and at the end of the project were also noted.
- 5 One cluster coordinator (XG) gave a presentation on the need for a SWOT/SOR analysis as an initial project activity (See 08/1-5). This covered the appropriate steps in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategy; strategy

formulation in EU-funded projects and strategic orientation as a method for prioritising strategies. This needed to achieve a focus in establishing at whom the strategies should aim, what are their strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats (SWOT) and which S and W are important in facing the O and T. The work plan therefore required the implementation of a SOR by each partner and comparison of these SORs to devise a strategy. The training session the following day was intended to provide the necessary guidance on approach and methodology.

A lunch break followed and description of project start-up meeting room locations for the afternoon sessions and finalisation of the arrangements for the evening social event.

### SDME venue

- 6 During the first part of the afternoon each new FP7 project held a start-up meeting (except for those with limited representation that decided to combine). These meetings ran concurrently. The Cluster coordinators circulated where possible between the individual project meetings in order to gain an impression of the content and organisation at project level. Other areas of discussion included timings, financial arrangements, institutional and project management responsibilities, equipment acquisition, work package structures, involvement of science-based companies and SMEs, SWOT/SOR resource costs versus science in home institution, and regional definitions, characteristics and administrative features.

### Plenary session - CDMA

- 7 The meeting reconvened in plenary session and the new FP7 project coordinators provided a short report-back on their respective start-up meetings. This was followed by discussion and comments on the activities of the first day. The meeting closed at 17.30.

The majority of attendees were present for a dinner at Brasserie-Restaurant Quartier Leopold during the evening.

### Day 2

#### The SWOT/SOR Training Session - CDMA

- 8 An outline description of the SOR instrument and its theoretical basis were provided in a presentation by one of the Cluster coordinators (XG). (See 08/1-8) This was followed by a description of an example (FINE) of using the instrument in an analogous situation (See 08/1-9) The approach to using the SOR instrument was further described step by step by one of the Cluster coordinators (XG). (See 08/1-10)
- 9 The practical exercise of applying the SOR instrument to a relevant area of the work of the Cluster was then initiated and the task worked on for a 2+ hour period. After the lunch break the results of the exercise were examined and analysed and future practical arrangements discussed. (See 08/1-10). (Some attendees had to leave mid-afternoon as a result of travel constraints).

- 10 A short paper was presented by a Cluster coordinator (KH) on how the work of the cluster might be coordinated, how its outcomes might be assessed and their impacts portrayed both overall and in relation to policy considerations (See 08/1-11 attached)
  
- 11 In discussion the principal outcomes from the meeting were seen as (i) the value of creating awareness of, and involvement in, SWOT/SOR; (ii) recognising both internal and external communication as continuing activities; (iii) programming visits to the different project locations when the research involved was being undertaken; (iv) devising methods for assessing outcomes and impacts as the work was implemented and the reasons why these were achieved; (v) bringing in outside regional inputs at future meetings. Importantly a schedule was proposed for further assessment of the SWOTs to be prepared for each project with a draft analysis submitted by 1 July so that there could be feedback before the second meeting in September when a SWOT table for each project should be presented.

The meeting closed at 16.30.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Agenda item

- 08/1-2                    Objectives of a cluster  
*(See e-mailed pdf document provided by Bert Vermeire 07.02.08)*
- 08/1-3                    The practical aspects of organising a cluster (FINE)  
*(See E-mail provided by Linze Rijswijk on 4.12.07  
Re:FOOD CLUSTER pre-information meeting*
- 08/1-4                    Commission guidance  
*The benefits of a kick-off meeting – Paper provided below as e-mailed by  
Irmela Brach 29/01/08.  
NOTE: This is not an official Commission paper.*
- 08/1-5                    The need for a SWOT as an initial project activity  
*(See e-mailed pdf document provided by Bert Vermeire 07.02.08)*
- 08/1-8                    The theoretical basis of the SWOT  
*(information to follow)*
- 08/1-9                    FINE - a practical example of a food sector SWOT  
*See E-mail provided by Linze Rijswijk on 4.12.07:  
SWOT FINE  
Attachment: D2.1 AND D2.2 SWOT\_Food\_RTD\_POLICY\_FINAL.zip*
- 08/1-10                   SWOT Training Session  
*(information to follow)*
- 08/1-11                   Cluster coordination, outcomes, impacts and policy  
*Outline paper provided below*

## The benefits of a kick-off meeting

To thoroughly understand the role of the kick-off meeting on the success of a project, we must be clear about the purpose(s) of this first project meeting. A kick-off meeting has four basic functions:

- a) **Publicly state the beginning of the project;**
- b) **Outline the project goals as well as the individual roles and responsibilities of team members;**
- c) **Clarify the expectations of all parties;**
- d) **Create a commitment by all those who influence the project's outcome.**

In terms of length, the kick-off meeting may last from a few hours to 1-3 days, depending on the scope and characteristics of each project. Who should attend the kick-off meeting? Well, at least the 'core team' should be present, but quite often it also involves most of the team. The ideal number of attendees, however, should not exceed 15 people. Generally speaking, this is a gathering of the project team, executive management, stakeholders, and other parties who need to officially recognize the commencement of the project. Project managers know that the kick-off meeting can be understood as a perfect ice-breaker situation where all attendees also gain a common understanding of the project's objectives and priorities.

Although the format of a kick-off meeting varies depending on the size and complexity of each project, it usually consists of several sessions each one focused on a different key topic. For example, some common sessions are the following:

**Business Plan** In this session, the topics discussed mainly involve determining how much money is to be made from the project and what are the levers to make that money. It is important to use the business plan as a decision-making tool.

**Project Charter or Project Framework** This session includes determining what the project statement is (its scope, definition and objectives), and who are the stakeholders (the client, management committees, etc). The general schedule, budget and activities are also discussed. The project manager usually goes over the project charter, including the project background, description, milestones and timeline, etc, with the objective of aligning the project with the reality.

**Team Charter** This session obeys to the purpose of clarifying who the project manager and key project members are, and who does what on the team.

Generally, the project manager introduces the organization chart along with the roles and responsibilities of each project team member. It is crucial to clearly explain what is expected of all the concerned parties, i.e. quality, plant, procurement, legal, controller, etc. Typically, the program quality manager is involved and the team decides on a number of key procedures, i.e. change control management.

**Master Planning** This is a reasonably high-level type of planning that usually does not comprise more than 50-100 tasks. It is not a detailed planning, but includes all the tasks that are necessary for the completion of the project, from the beginning until its closure.

**Risk Analysis** This session involves a thorough assessment of all the risks that the project team members might face in order to accomplish the project goals. It involves identifying those factors that could jeopardize the success of the project and develop ways to overcome them, as well as a corrective or preventive action plan if needed.

**Team building** It is always a good idea that the kick-off meeting ends with some kind of team-building activity or exercise aimed at teaching some rules for efficient teamwork. This task is best handled by an experienced facilitator and is usually a combination of physical and mental agility with an emphasis on teamwork.

Some project management experts believe that in those cases in which the project team has no responsibility on profit, there is no point in having a **Business Plan** session. Given that the start of a project is an important event, notification of the kick-off meeting's occurrence should be formal and in writing. It is a common practice for one or more designated attendees to take notes during the meeting and then write a short document or 'minutes of meeting' with a summary of all topics and issues discussed during the meeting as well as the conclusions reached. This document should be distributed to all meeting participants.

When an 'industrialization' process is included in the project, often a second kick-off meeting is held. Also known as '**plant kick-off**', this meeting starts when the industrial project team begins to take possession of a project; that is, at what is called 'tool launch' - when the project team starts placing massive orders to suppliers in order to 'build the plant'. This concept is also applicable to IT projects, where a large number of orders is placed to purchase servers, peripherals and other large equipments.

### **Some Final Thoughts**

By now, we hope that the vast majority of us agrees on that the kick-off meeting is probably the most important project meeting held during the life of the project.

Not only it is the first time that the entire project team is gathered but also, it is a great opportunity for the project manager to meet his team and gain commitment from it.

In this article we have intended to provide you with some basic and practical guidelines on the key themes or topics that a successful kick-off meeting should cover. Nevertheless, you should keep in mind that since each project is unique, slight modifications to these guidelines might be needed in order to perfectly adjust them to your specific project. Finally, even though some discussion and exchanging of points of view are involved in the process, a kick-off meeting should be a clarifying and enriching experience for all parties involved.

## **THE EUROPEAN FOOD CLUSTER**

### **SUMMARY OF POLICY AND IMPACT COMPONENTS**

#### **COMPONENT A – AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

- Strengthening EU Food research driven clusters by interregional cooperation
- Defining Regional Food RTD strategies
- Making the EU regional food RTD infrastructure landscape transparent
- Investing in the combined regional strengths to create excellence in the European Research Area by defining a mutual strategy and developing interregional projects.

The overarching **aim** in developing and coordinating a European Food Cluster (EFC) is to achieve a more complete EU network of regions which have ambitions in the food sector.

#### **COMPONENT B – ORIGINATION**

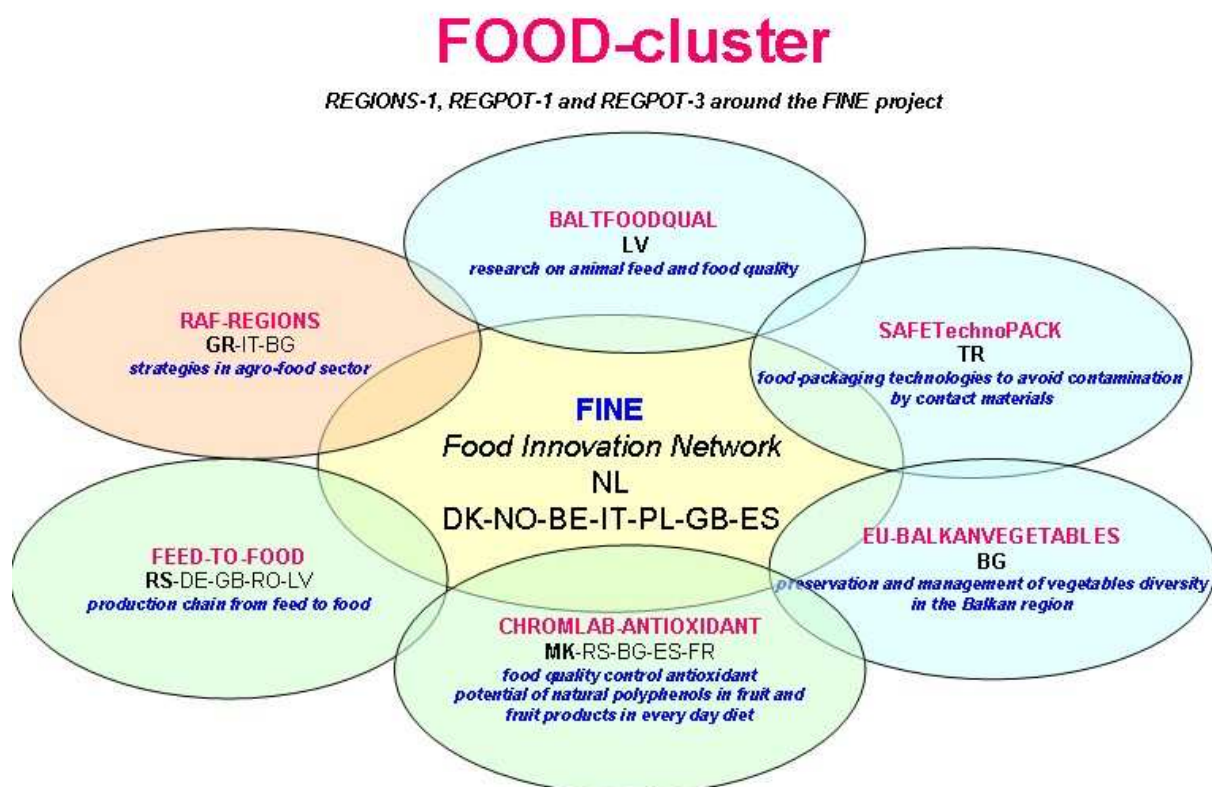
The 7th Framework Programme extends its regional dimension through various dedicated activities such as:

***Regions of Knowledge*** providing support to research-driven regional clusters. Its objective is to contribute to strengthening the research effort of European regions, in particular by encouraging and supporting the development, across Europe, of regional "research driven clusters" associating universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities.

***Unlocking Research Potential*** a scheme that is part of the efforts to stimulate the creation of the ERA by unlocking existing and emerging excellent research potential at regional level. Its objective is to enhance the full integration of the convergence regions and outermost regions of the enlarged Europe into the EU research and technology activities. The aim is to strengthen research entities and researchers in these regions to successfully participate in the 7th RTD Framework Programme.



## COMPONENT C – CLUSTER SCHEME (CONCEPTUAL)



The **planning, coordination and development of the wider EUROPEAN FOOD-CLUSTER** needs to take all the new project objectives into account as must its **planned overall impact assessment**.

## COMPONENT D – CLUSTER OBJECTIVES (AMBITION)

- Making the EU regional food RTD infrastructure landscape transparent.
- Investing in combined regional strengths in the Food ERA by defining mutual strategies.
- Defining Regional Food RTD strategies to create research driven clusters, within the perspective of the EU Food research landscape.
- Further interregional cooperation based on regional strengths to create excellence in European Research Area in Food.

## **COMPONENT E – CLUSTER PROGRESSION (DEVELOPMENT)**

- Development of the **policy objectives** and **direction** of the European Food Cluster including follow-up and forward look;
- Consideration of the **impact** of the cluster and how to measure it – through developing benchmarks.

The factors involved here are both external and internal and include:

### ***External factors***

The policy features to be recognised

The potential from other actors and stakeholders (CIP, structural funds, national/regional funds)

Information dissemination

Outcomes occurring – including the deliverables produced

Performance benchmark development

Impact occurring now or potentially from the Cluster overall

### ***Internal factors***

The features and players in the FP7 projects

The modes of working and realisation “on-the-ground”

The real and potential inter-relationships in the FP7 projects

The management aspects of the component projects

The characteristics of the host institutions involved

The objectives of the individual project components

The processes being used

The content involved in each individual cluster component

The outputs foreseen and their delivery

The outlook for each component of the cluster

Coordination internally and externally

## **COMPONENT F - BENCHMARKS FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Impact factors that need to be taken into account include:

### ***S&T- related outcomes***

training skills/improvement; scientific mobility; academic achievements; enhanced research facilities; continuing collaboration

### ***Regional outcomes***

enhanced networking; links to business; improvements in overall capabilities; management effectiveness; dissemination features; socio-economic indicators; quality of life indicators; policy/regulation development

### ***Agrosector outcomes***

links to business and business type; innovative contribution and new/enhanced product/process developments; user orientations and relevance; job creation; regional/ national/ international linkages; unforeseen impacts

## **APPENDIX**

An old example (2002) of a scored matrix approach to assessment of Impact attributes in several fields of Commission FP4 international cooperative research is attached. The scores were judged by an expert panel using project report data and were grouped under (A) Partnership outcomes and (B) Project outcomes and included the following features:

### A Partnership outcomes

A1 training skills/improvement; A2 scientific mobility; A3 academic achievements; A4 enhanced research facilities; A5 continuing collaboration; A6 enhanced networking; A7 links to business; A8 improvements in overall capabilities; A9 management effectiveness; A10 other

### B Project outcomes

B1 objectives fulfilled; B2 relevance of findings; B3 innovative contribution; B4 user orientation; B5 dissemination of results; B6 unforeseen impacts; B7 impact potential (impact created subdivided as follows and as short term/ long term): B8 socio-economic; B9 industrial; B10 job creating; B11 enhancing quality of life; B12 fostering international cooperation; B13 developing policy and regulation; B14 other

Scoring basis was: 1 (green) excellent; 2 (blue) good; 3 (yellow) reasonable; 4 (red) poor. The colour coding provided a rapid visual assessment of the attributes of the programme area.



Annex 2 IMPACT OVERALL SCORES -Panel FC.htm