

# FOOD-CLUSTER 2008 - 2011

Pre-meeting 29 November 2007, Brussels

DG RTD SDME 1F

## Draft Record of Meeting

(The draft agenda for the meeting is attached at the end of these draft minutes)

### Present

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Reimbursement procedures were dealt with before the start of the business of the meeting.

KAH circulated short papers prepared as inputs to two identified agenda items. (attached)

### 1 Commission inputs on opening the meeting and welcome of participants

RJS made clear the importance of the meeting and the Food Cluster (FCLUS) initiative and its fore-runner position in likely future developments in the FP7 programme where larger and more integrated clusters were likely to be put in place. The involvement of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) under DG ENTR and the instruments of Cohesion Policy (Structural and other funds) were important dimensions to this new position. He provided a vision for the 2008 and in particular the 2009 calls involving a more targetted approach rather than a proliferation of different activities and a proper interface between research and innovation.

JDM stressed the importance of this FCLUS pilot action and that it must succeed. It needed to get off the ground quickly and although the objectives and outcomes were

set the approaches to these through modifications of work programme were always possible. Interaction between projects was needed to give the cluster strength and he attached particular importance to the final conference.

IB explained the concepts leading to the FCLUS initiative, the concept paper that had been prepared and the underpinning position of the FP6 FINE project and its reports. XG was designated as chairing the meeting from this point and KAH agreed to note the major points arising as a record.

## 2 Setting the Scene for FCLUS

- XG led an introductory discussion on the early stages of FINE and explored the familiarity of the present participants with SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) as a management and analytical tool. The extent and intensity of this task was emphasized.
- Briefing on FINE was provided through a presentation by LR and discussion with participants on strategic points arising such as the relationship to policymaking and businesses for the projects involved; trustworthiness between projects and those involved in them; ambitions for the programme overall. This presentation and supporting information has been circulated to participants of the pre-meeting. After a short break the FINE presentation continued with more emphasis on management aspects and the various tools required.
- XG then provided a presentation on the way forward for FCLUS building on the FINE experience. (This presentation is also made available to participants) There was a need to emphasize the inter-twining roles of research, policymaking and business (referred to as the triple helix) and the objective for FCLUS involving (i) identifying regional food competences, (ii) communicating these competences, and (iii) integrating the various regions into EU projects by use as appropriate of the three relevant funding lines. There was discussion about how to do this as far as the new projects in FCLUS were concerned – particularly in relation to policymakers and businesses as it can be difficult to bring in these actors in the countries involved and at a political level there may well be scepticism. RAF-REGIONS however was quite positive in its reaction to emulating the FINE experience. There was also discussion of what constitutes a “region” and it was explained that this can be interpreted quite broadly.

## 3 Presentation of the new projects

After lunch each new project was presented by its representative at the meeting. Each presentation was allowed the same time period (strictly controlled by the chairman) and time was allowed afterwards for brief discussion project by project.

In most cases these presentations have subsequently been e-mailed to participants. IB on behalf of the Commission kept a record for administrative purposes of those that had been made available in this way. The following presentations made were:

- RAFREGIONS
- BALTFOODQUAL
- CHROMLAB
- BALKANVEGETABLES
- FEED-TO-FOOD
- SAFETechnoPAK

In discussion KAH explored some aspects of the outcomes and impacts of the projects through take-up route options and involvements of the necessary stakeholders to facilitate such take-up. The need was stressed to push the activities further than the R&D agenda to create socio-economic and policy impact and demonstrate real added value for this cluster approach. This was unlikely to happen in a passive way so a really proactive approach would be necessary.

Some of the presenters also commented on the anticipated difficulty of getting genuine interest from the required policy-making and business interests. One practical aspect **agreed** here was that the Coordinators would provide on Commission headed paper an appropriate introduction to the cluster endeavour and the particular project concerned – and the necessity of getting real involvement of those at a policy level able to assist in the take-up and potential impacts of the research. However another presenter felt that dedicated technology transfer offices at the institutional level could be relied on to fulfil this task.

Also in discussion XG again developed a commentary on the importance of SWOT analysis and its apparent absence from a number of the presentations. There was discussion as to whether this capability could be bought-in from appropriately experienced professionals. It was **agreed** that this could be a fruitful approach and it was suggested that such persons could be invited to attend the next FCLUS meeting in February 2008.

XG completed a presentation on what FCLUS participants would need to do (see circulated presentation) in order to get it going quickly and maximise its success. LR again referred to the experience in FINE and how this could be made use of. He indicated the need to maintain interest of partners through visits and other food-related initiatives as a pleasurable adjunct to the work involved (e.g. a gastronomic competition).

KAH gave a short resume of the two papers tabled on the conceptual aspect of FCLUS and the policy/coordination and outcome-related aspects for which he had particular responsibility (a descriptive assessment – where are we now? - an evaluative aspect – where do we want to be and how are we getting there? a prescriptive aspect – what has happened as a result and what have we learned?).

#### 4 Next Steps

Contracts for the new projects and for the roles of the coordinators will be in place early next year (2008) so future activities will be on this formal contractual basis. The next meeting of FCLUS was **agreed** for 11 and 12 February to be held at Madou Tower Brussels with the first day largely devoted to the individual project start-up meetings undertaken separately and simultaneously after a short cluster plenary

meeting. The second day would be devoted to SWOT training and Strategic Orientation Round (SOR) preparation. There would then be a final round-up cluster plenary session at the end of the afternoon. XG would provide SWOT briefing material before the meeting. A draft agenda would be prepared by the end of the week 3-7 December 2007.

The second formal FCLUS meeting was **agreed** for 15 and 16 September 2008 when in addition to other agenda items the SOR presentations would be made.

IB would deal with organisational issues, room booking etc. The coordinators were to be responsible for the planning of meetings, coordination management and the setting up of communication procedures. To this effect XG and KAH as coordinators **agreed** to meet on 9 January 2008 in SDME.