

THE EC FOOD CLUSTER AS A TOOL FOR POLICY

A Presentation to
Institute for Food Technology
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THE START-UP OF THE CLUSTER

- In FP7 food projects funded in the Regions of Knowledge and Research Potential research programme components of FP7 were made use of to form a Food Cluster
- Established early in 2008 the Food Cluster Initiative is a research capacity-building pilot initiative - a tool for building research capacity for enhanced cooperation between European regions

THE START-UP OF THE CLUSTER

- FINE (Food Innovation Network Europe), an FP6 project, was the prototype.
- FINE laid the basis for a European network of cooperating food regions delivering 14 new interregional cooperation projects

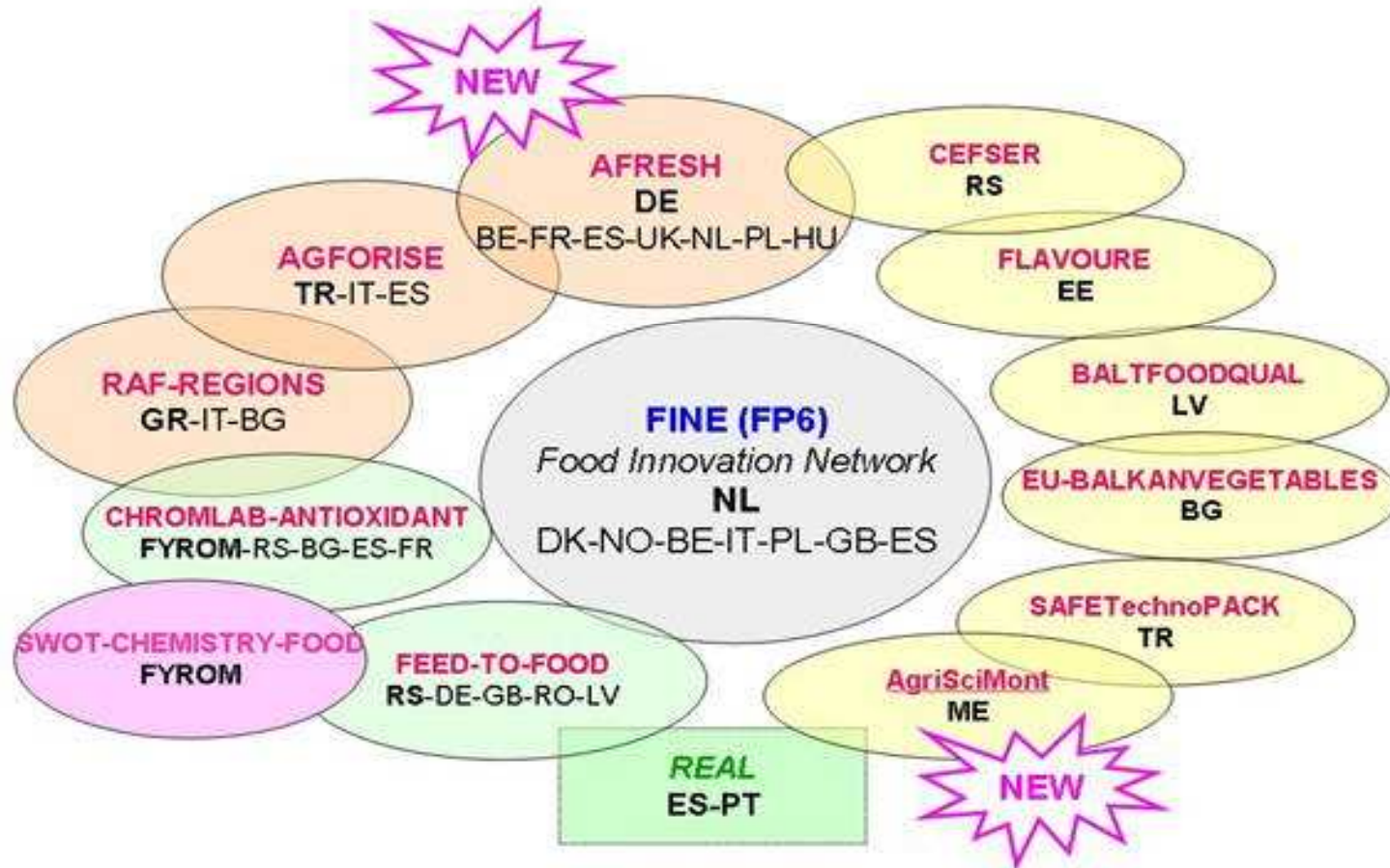
THE CONTENT OF THE CLUSTER

- The original members of the Food-Cluster were promising projects with different angles on agro-food related topics
- **FINE, RAF-REGIONS, BALTFoodQUAL, SAFETechnoPACK, EU-BALKANVEGETABLES, CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANT, FEED TO FOOD, AGFORISE, CEFSER, FLAVOURE**
- Others have joined since so **REAL, AGRISCIMONT** and soon **AFRESH** are now involved

THE FOOD CLUSTER Geography



THE FOOD CLUSTER Projects



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTNERS

- regions represented from:
 - new Member States such as Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria;
 - older ones such as France, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, UK, Greece and Italy;
 - associated countries such as Turkey, Serbia, and Macedonia.
- Partners consist of universities, regional authorities, businesses etc.

OBJECTIVES

- to achieve a more complete EU network of regions which have ambitions in the food sector
- to find a way of bringing all players together so that successful and less experienced operators are integrated into a viable and successful Cluster
- to develop ways of involving the current project partners in potential successful projects in the future

THE FP7 REGKNOW AND REGPOT PROGRAMMES

- **Regions of Knowledge** provides support to research-driven regional clusters with the objective of contributing to strengthening the research effort of European regions. In particular it does this by supporting the development across Europe of regional research driven clusters that associate universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities.
- The **Research Potential** activity aims to stimulate the creation of the European Research Area through existing or emerging research of high quality at a regional level. The objective is to enhance the full integration of the convergence regions and outermost regions into the EU RTD activities.
- The funding schemes are Coordination and Support Actions. They do not provide funding for research, development or demonstration activities

Projects and the Cluster

- Proposals evaluated in the usual way. Successful projects join Cluster if topic compatible. So Cluster involvement comes after the usual proposal evaluation. Other projects might join the Cluster by other routes or funded differently so critical mass grows in this way.
- At Cluster meetings SWOTs undertaken and strategic action plans devised; time /facilities provided for development of new ideas and projects; presentations made on relevant policy, business and regional administrations; project progress reports; visits
- Project coordinators and partners encouraged to work together and pursue other forms of funding instrument as well as developing new proposals for FP7 - synergies
- Crucial conditions for fulfilling Cluster objectives are to “break new ground” by putting new people together and catalysing the generation of ideas both as projects and more widely

FOOD CLUSTER EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA

- **Transfer of good practices through inter-regional partnerships**
- **Strengthening the research effort of European regions**
- **Reinforcing the capacity of regional actors to participate in wider FP7 activities**
- **Development of regional research driven clusters that associate universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities in order to foster innovation – the triple helix**
- **Integration with strategies arising through other instruments**
- **Enhancing the full integration of the convergence regions and outermost regions into the EU RTD activities**

STATED PROJECT OUTCOMES

- **People-related/professional enhancement**
- **Enhancement of institutional facilities**
- **Communication and awareness development**
- **Commercial benefits/technology transfer**
- **Improvements in collaboration/cooperation**
- **Research project development for future funding**
- **Sectoral strategy development (agrofood)**

- Unexpected outcomes with scientific or policy benefits
- The aggregate project SWOT/SOR benefits

EXPECTED CLUSTER OUTCOMES

- **DIRECT:** S&T-related outcomes; Regional outcomes; Agrosector outcomes
- **INDIRECT:** Clusters can be marketing tools, enhance awareness, increase investment, widen horizons e.g. to embrace other clusters, stimulate new product development in businesses, generate new projects etc
- An important benchmark for the success of the Cluster is likely to be a demonstration of increased involvements in good quality proposals to other areas of **FP7** and in particular increased involvements and **synergies** with the **CIP** and **structural funds** as a result of the start made in research capacity-building

ABOUT SYNERGIES

- **Cohesion and competitiveness** are linked so the EU has to endeavour to create cohesion through a range of strategies if it is to be competitive globally
- **Three key instruments** support this:
Cohesion policy funded through the Structural Funds;
The research Framework Programme (now FP7);
The Competitive and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)
- The effectiveness of these requires **synergies** of action by national and regional authorities as well as regional actors.

Science and Markets

- **Science Push** new innovations, methods, products originating from research effort that can create new or enhanced markets in various ways on different timescales – can be very long term
- **Market Pull** understanding needs and concerns with issues that scientific effort should address whether commercial, regulatory, social or other policy requirements – often current.
- **How or whether to match these** in the food sector and through Food Cluster input

POSSIBLE NEEDS AND FEATURES

- **Distinguish between need for archives of information and generating new ideas**
- **“Scientific development “ does not always reflect needs of a user**
- **Linkages should not just be unidirectional**
- **The EU is not simply a source of funding but has global strategic objectives**
- **Business needs to be close to the culture of research**
- **Regional policy thinking needs to be involved with and embrace the relevance of research**
- **Involvements with the international world can stimulate new ideas**
- **Soil fertility, water, environmental effects are areas of agrofood impact**
- **Dissemination and communication are vital both between different types of stakeholders and between those with similar interests**
- **Making use of existing events to disseminate new initiatives and ideas**
- **The newly established Food Cluster website should feature as an important tool in the future (www.foodclusterinitiative.eu)**
- **Individual project websites are important for communicating between those with similar interests at a regional level.**

EXAMPLES OF OTHER RELEVANT STUDIES

Promoting change through research: the impact of research on local government - The study sought to understand both the ways in which research influenced policy and practice and also the kinds of changes that were influenced by research

Dissemination of research outputs within local authorities was often patchy. Front-line officers in particular did not have ready access to research findings that could help develop their practice

There was a variation in the effectiveness with which research was conducted and coordinated, and the extent to which a culture existed that positively supported and encouraged research

EXAMPLES OF OTHER RELEVANT STUDIES

Impact of Research and Innovation Networks on Regional Competitiveness: The Role of HEIs

Universities, firms and regions – different ‘units of observation’ makes it complex

Different levels of scale are important but difficult – nations/regions, organisations, sub-units, groups, individuals and ‘knowledge objects

Key connection needs to be explored between: links ⇒ impacts ⇒ competitiveness

WHAT ARE CLUSTERS?

- Most definitions support the idea that a cluster includes firms and other knowledge-producing agents in a geographically concentrated area with inter-linkages among them
- Most programmes supporting clusters start from a common assumption about the value of agglomeration of firms and the importance of connecting resources in a given place
- National and EU level programmes of cluster support originate from three policy families: regional policy; S&T policy; industrial/enterprise policy. The ultimate goal is to improve competitiveness and innovation capacity

Source: OECD Policy Brief – competitive regional clusters

European Cluster Policy Group definitions

- **Clusters** are geographic agglomerations of companies, suppliers, service providers and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by externalities and complementarities of various types
- **Cluster initiatives** are organised efforts taken by actors in a cluster to increase the cluster's growth and competitiveness
- **Cluster programmes** are organised efforts taken by government to increase the growth and competitiveness of clusters in its constituency
- Clusters are of growing importance in the new global environment in which the Europe 2020 strategy has to succeed; European policymakers cannot afford to ignore their role and should actively explore their potential to modernise and improve economic policies

Take Home Messages

- **The impact of the Food Cluster and its policy context should not just be considered simply in isolation but be looked at as an example of a broader picture from which we can learn and make comparisons.**
- **Crucial conditions for fulfilling Cluster objectives are to “break the box” by putting new people together and catalysing the generation of ideas both as projects and more widely as “seed corn” for the future**
- **Cluster outcomes and impacts can be assessed in different contexts - science; training; business; regional governance; synergies - so there may be different scenarios in which outcomes are seen differently.**
- **If clustering is an important tool for European innovation policy it must be prioritised as a requirement in joint calls or opportunities using the different funding instruments rather than being an “add on” after projects have been evaluated**

Reactions and Inputs

Interesting questions might be:

- *Are the Food Cluster projects too distinct so they do not have enough in common?*
- *Is the Food Cluster simply a network?*
- *Have Food Cluster meetings provided anything additional to what the individual projects would have achieved on their own?*
- *From the beginning Food Cluster meetings embrace economic issues and arguments when many projects were science-based. Was this too ambitious at an early stage?*
- *Are policy impacts too difficult to assess at project level?*
- *The Food Cluster was pushed forward by the Commission. Can it, and should it, continue on its own?*

Comments on the Food Cluster would be welcome and these can be sent to me confidentially at keithharrap@gmail.com

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