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&
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FOOD-cluster initiative

FIRST OUTCOMES
and an example of a SUCCESSFUL SWOT-ANALYSIS

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CONTENT

Towards a more complete **EU network of regions** with ambitions in food

The **food sector** is the largest manufacturing sector in Europe, employing 4.3 million people and has a very strong regional dimension and impact.

Food production and research and innovation in food have an impact on all citizens in Europe; as food is not only the starting point of our health but also part of our identity.

Cooperating, ambitious Food regions can learn from each other, strengthen the EU Food research area and increase the competitive advantage of the EU by building interregional projects based on their regional strengths.

The FOOD-CLUSTER initiative (with support of the FINE partners) will **further develop and extend this already existing FOOD-network and make it sustainable by supporting the development of new regional research driven clusters,** by more coordinated investments at regional level through exchanges on regional policies, and by helping companies to benefit from research infrastructures in Europe.

The Food Cluster strengthens EU Food research driven regions by:

- **promoting diversity and excellence** of food production and food research in European regions
- **interregional cooperation and learning**, between clusters, regions and projects to increase performance, innovation and technology transfer
- **developing interregional projects** in order to invest in combined regional strengths to create excellence in the European Research Area (ERA), with use of Research Framework Programmes (now FP7), the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the Structural Funds (SF).

The CONCEPT

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.

The basic **concept behind the Food-Cluster initiative is to connect the new FP7 food projects with the Food Innovation Network Europe (FINE) to set up a European Food Cluster.** FINE is a network of regional research driven food clusters (comprising interacting science, industry and government components) sharing a vision of connecting to each other. The objectives of the partnering FP7 projects range from setting up new research infrastructures, connecting companies and other research organisations to these, to developing new cluster organisations with the help of other regions as well as entirely new research projects.

In relation to these new projects there is indeed a case for thinking both about **clustering regionally** in terms of development aims and for **clustering scientifically** on the basis of **derived impact objectives**.

The Food Innovation Network Europe (FINE) is an **emerging network of strong food regions** gathered together with the ambition of increased RTD investments through activation of stakeholders and development of regional strategies and the **development of strategic interregional collaborative projects.**

All FINE-regions have common regional characteristics: a food sector playing an important role in the regional economy; the presence of a strong agricultural sector and other specialized suppliers of the food industry; a high level of food-related knowledge in the region; the presence of public support for the food industry and **local networks linking the different actors together.**

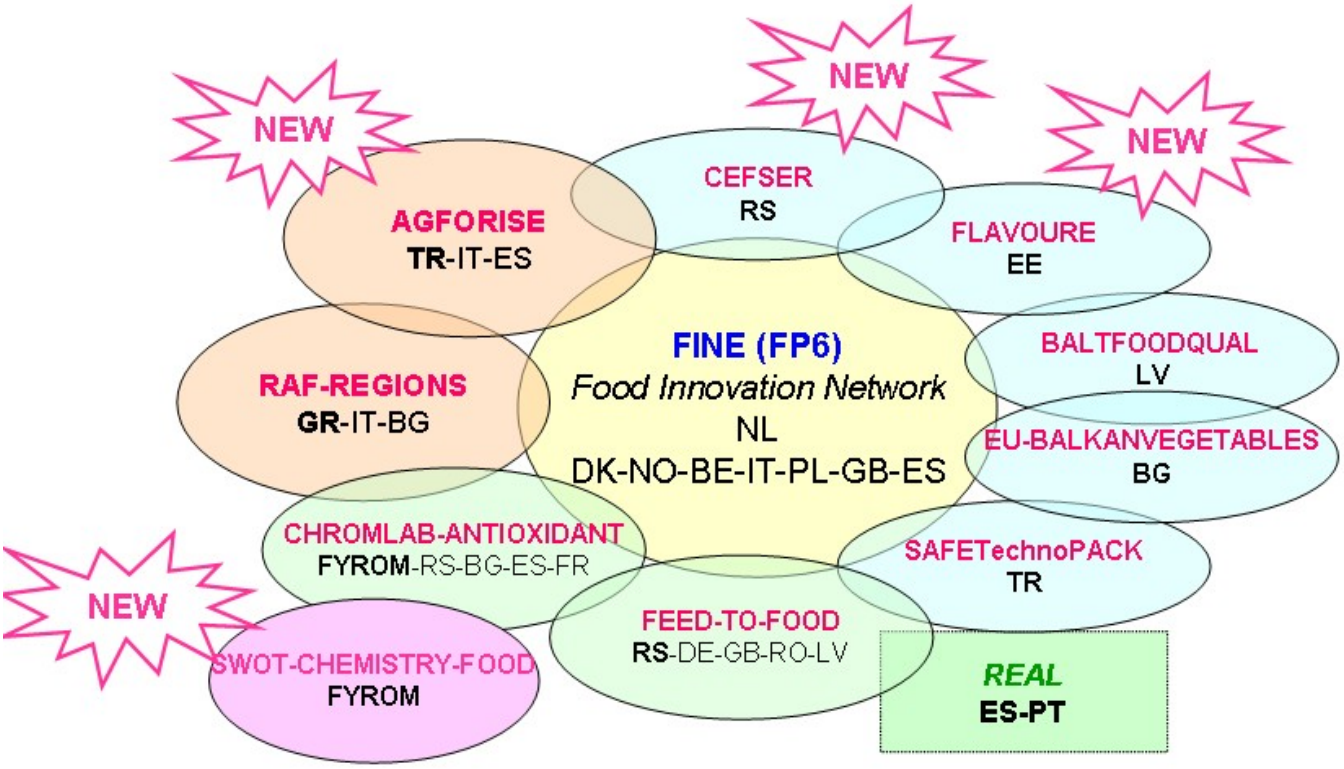
FINE has been identified as the prototype network for starting the Food Cluster Initiative since it is seen as a successful example of building an interregional network of clusters. The development of the FINE network was funded through 'Regions of Knowledge 2' between 2005 and 2007.

Participating FP6 / FP 7 projects

FP 6	**FINE**	Food Innovation Network Europe
FP7	**RAF-REGIONS**	Bringing the Benefits of Research to AgroFood SMEs of the Regions of Central Macedonia, Puglia and Pazardjik
	BALTFOODQUAL	Unlocking Animal Food Quality Research Potential in the Baltic Region by developing the Scientific and Technical Capacities of the Research Institute "Sigra"
	EU-BALKANVEGETABLES	Balkan Vegetable Crops Centre for transfer of European knowledge, research and practice
	SAFETechnoPACK	Improving the Scientific and Technological Research Capacity of a Food Institute on safety and technology of Food-Packaging
	CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANTS	Reinforcement of the Western Balkan Research capacity for food quality characterization
	FEED-TO-FOOD	Reinforcement of the FEED-TO-FOOD Research Centre at Institute for Food Technology of the University of Novi Sad
	AGFORISE	AGroFOod clusters platform with common long-term Research and Innovation Strategy towards Economic growth and prosperity
	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
	FLAVOURE	Food and feed Laboratory of Varied and Outstanding Research in Estonia
	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
ERDF	**REAL**	Galician – North Portugal Food Network

'Research-driven and capacity building' CLUSTER

of the participating projects



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BG	Bulgaria
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
ES	Spain
FR	France
FYROM	Macedonia
GR	Greece
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
RS	Serbia
TR	Turkey
UK	United Kingdom

*The country of the coordinating entity is indicated in **bold** in the schematic representation of the FOOD-CLUSTER.*

Developing & Coordinating the FOOD-Cluster

To realise this ambitious initiative, 2 independent external experts, an **economic development expert** and a **policy analyst** are involved as cluster coordinators. The former is responsible for establishing the cluster in terms of its content, while the latter for the impact assessment, policy positioning and overall coordination.

1. Economic development expert

Prof. Dr. Xavier GELLYNCK

The overall objective of the economic development expert with specialisation in the food science sector is to **integrate current and emerging regions of food knowledge in new EU wide projects**. At the end of a period of three years, the current initiatives should be integrated in new initiatives (read projects) based on mutual expertise and competences to strengthen the European Research Area in Food research.

The **establishment of the European food cluster** started with the integration of the new projects (February 2008) into FINE. To facilitate this integration process, the new projects underwent a SWOT analysis to allow the regions to **establish a clear strategic view of their regions from the perspective of both policy makers and knowledge centres/business community** and also from the perspective of their own strengths in relation to other regional food clusters.

2. Policy analyst and impact assessment expert

Dr. Keith A. HARRAP

The **impact of individual projects** (the FP7 Coordination Actions) and of the **overall European food cluster** needs to be taken account of in any **performance assessment.** So there is a need to develop appropriate benchmarks and a methodology for their analysis

Objectives will be defined that reflect the individual project actions and the **European food cluster** at a macro level. It will not be sufficient simply to confirm upgrading of a particular S&T resource or reinforcement of the capacities of an institute at a specific geographical location as justification for, or outcome of, establishing a **European Food Cluster.**

Relevant **benchmarks will be devised for assessing impacts** on S&T/research capabilities, the agrofood sector(s), for the regionalities involved and the inter-linking of all of these features in order to gauge the impact of the **European food cluster** as a coordinated entity. So at least the following factors will need to be analysed and assessed:

- ***S&T- related outcomes***
  training skills/improvement; scientific mobility; academic achievements and outputs; enhanced research facilities; continuing and developing collaboration

- ***Regional and Europe-wide 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

*It is envisaged that the **European Food Cluster** **will develop further over time through acquisition of future relevant projects / actions**.*

*The **assessment factors** therefore might also require development/additions as the cluster grows and embraces new features.*

First OUTCOMES

The Food-Cluster started by defining a **two-step Strategic Orientation (SOR[1])**, based on the SWOT-analysis[2] methodology

- first, **EU strategic objectives** for the European food industry as a whole were developed and,
- second, **all partners formulated strategic objectives** for their own regional food RTD infrastructure, involving local stakeholders.

The first step was implemented in February 2008. A group of 35 participants, partners in the Food-Cluster, joined for **identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats** and came to conclusions about the **main strategic objectives for the EU food industry**. In general the EU food industry is considered to have the necessary strengths to seize the available opportunities, but considerable efforts are required to eradicate serious weaknesses which could prevent this and to defend itself against serious threats.

More specifically, **three objectives** were put forward.

1. Respond to the growing consumer demand for healthy food by reinforcing the available expertise in functional foods and quality assurance.

The **increasing consumer demand for healthy products** was identified as the most important opportunity. This demand includes two aspects: the demand for products with additional health attributes (e.g. Omega 3) and the demand for products that counteract health problems (obesity, allergies, etc.). It is argued that the EU food industry has available the right skills and knowledge on functional foods to develop new products and the expertise in quality assurance which together create advantages in responding to this demand. However, successful product development might be hampered by a **lack of R&D capabilities in food companies** as a result of low private sector R&D investment and the poor innovation absorptive capacity of many firms.

2. Reinforce the high labour productivity and marketing skills available to foster market growth in emerging economies.

The **emerging economies** in other parts of the world are perceived both as a threat and as an opportunity. They pose a serious threat as cheap labour costs generate a competitive disadvantage for the EU food industry. However, the increasing buying power in these economies offers great opportunities for market

[1] **S**trategic **O**rientation **R**ound
[2] **S**trenghts, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats

growth. The Strategic Orientation reveals that the capability to derive benefit from this economic growth is linked to our own labour productivity and our marketing skills. With respect to labour productivity, it is apparent that **labour intensive food companies in the EU will not be able to compete with emerging economies.** Alternatively, further increasing labour productivity is considered the main strength in remaining competitive with respect to labour costs. To benefit from the growing buying power in these economies, European marketing skills offer potential to enter these markets successfully. So, attention should be paid to the **capacity to adapt to new markets** – something that is identified as a weakness.

3. Enhance the general RTD capacities of food companies in order to enable them to derive benefit from innovation support and to find innovative solutions to counter present (global) threats.

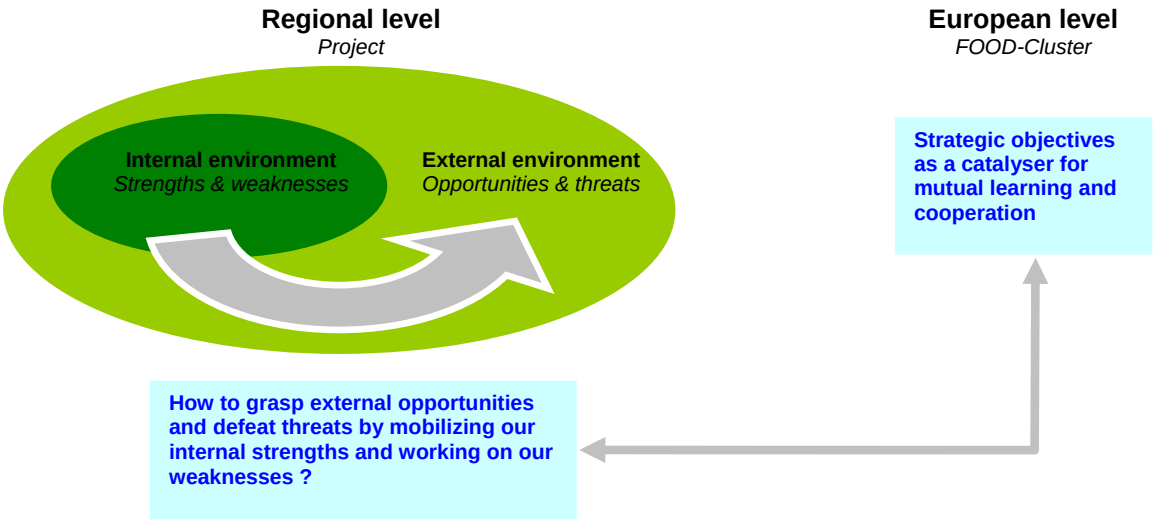
The Strategic Orientation revealed **two major weaknesses of the EU food industry** which have been associated with several opportunities and threats. The **two weaknesses relate to the R&D capabilities of companies:** large parts of the industry exhibit a poor level of private investment in R&D and in addition their absorptive capacity is poor, (defined as the capacity to detect and absorb external knowledge and apply it to commercial ends). The respondents indicate that these two weaknesses are serious factors which hamper deriving benefit from public innovation support. Furthermore, it is perceived that **inadequate R&D capabilities make the food industry incapable of finding innovative answers** to some of the current global threats, in particular climate change and depletion of fossil energy sources as well as a continued lack of knowledge about the exact health effects of GMO's.

The above analysis resulted in a **set of objectives at the EU level**. In the next step, **each of the Food-Cluster regions will come up with particular objectives at the regional level**.

These **regional strategies** will be used to **complement the EU-wide strategy** as a tool for exploration, dialogue between the clustered projects and in the end delivering a positive contribution to the objective of bringing EU food expertise together in the ERA.

Strategic orientation is organized in each of the projects as an initial project activity. First of all, it has the goal of enabling each of the 16 regions to express their strategic orientation on the European stage in order to better grasp regional communalities and differences. This contributes to the final objective of fostering mutual learning and cooperation between European food research projects. The second goal is to support each of the projects in underpinning their activities by an explicit strategic vision on the development of their region. These goals are illustrated in Figure 1.

Goal of Strategic Orientation



This analysis is done since all projects in the FOOD-Cluster have a clear interest in food science and the way that regional policy can foster it.

Each region has now finished its strategic orientation, whereby a group of regional stakeholders discusses how the region should deal with the identified strengths and weaknesses in order to grasp the present opportunities and defeat threats.

This results in the formulation of about three strategic objectives which are considered crucial for fostering food science and related policy actions, respectively.

Steps in Strategic Orientation

Step 1. What can our project do for our regional food sector?	
Vision/mission	Objectives
Step 2. Where are we now?	
Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats	
Internal audit	External audit
Step 3. To which goals should our project contribute?	
Strategic Orientation (SOR)	
Strategic objectives	

CENTRAL MACEDONIA

- an example of a successful SWOT analysis -

One of the most striking cases is the **SWOT analysis of Central-Macedonia** developed in the frame of the FP7 project RAF Regions (www.rafregions.eu):

*The **region of Central Macedonia** is situated at the north of Greece. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Central Macedonia is 17.456,2€ per inhabitant, 77.9% of the EU-27 average (2005, Eurostat). The **AgroFood sector is particularly advanced** in the Region of Central Macedonia, both in terms of the primary agricultural production as well as the manufacturing food industry. A significant number of companies with intense exporting characteristics- mainly towards the EC- are active in the region. The AgroFood industries accounts for approximately 30% of the gross and value added in the regional industry.*

Map of the region of Central Macedonia (Greece)

*The **SWOT analysis** reveals that, among the main challenges the AgroFood sector of Central Macedonia faces, is the valid assessment of the technology and know-how needs of the SMEs with regard to the introduction of agro-biotechnologies in the production process. SMEs face competition from foreign companies that already have introduced biotechnology methods and products. In order to keep up with the competition, SMEs need to proceed with **significant technology investments in cooperation with research institutes and technology providers.***

*The **methodology used for the development of the SWOT analysis** for the AgroFood RTD sector in Central Macedonia comprised 3 phases:*

1. ***Collection of the opinions** of the RTD entities and SMEs through the use of dedicated profiling questionnaires. Approximately 10 RTD entities and 10 SMEs responded;*

2. ***Selective use of information** from a similar SWOT analysis prepared for C. Macedonia in the framework of the study "Technological Foresight in Central Macedonia";*

3. ***Brainstorming with experts** from the Regional Food Cluster of C. Macedonia (developed through the RAF Regions project, i.e. Euroconsultants S.A., INA-CERTH, FING and Regional Authority of C. Macedonia) for the finalisation and refinement of the SWOT analyses presented below. One SWOT was prepared by and for the Food related RTD actors and a second one for the Food SMEs:*

Example of SWOT analysis of Food RTD actors in Central Macedonia

Strengths	***Weaknesses***
1. *Well equipped and high standard technical research infrastructure.*	***1.*** *Poor functioning links between the industry, the RTD entities and the primary sector (agriculture)*
2. *Highly skilled RTD personnel*	***2.*** *Not enough start ups and spin- off companies due to a risk aversion*
3. Experience and well developed network of partners from long-term participation in international projects	***3.*** *Low visibility of the regional RTD entities and their established capacities*
4. *Developed structures and initiatives in support of innovation, i.e. Thessaloniki Innovation Zone, Regional Innovation Pole of Central Macedonia, private incubators, technology parks, etc.)*	***4.*** *Different perspective on research between the RTD entities and the industry complicates joint research projects*
5. *Capacity to act as main RTD actor in the Balkan region*	***5.*** *Low adaptation of the university curricula to cover current research and market needs*
Opportunities	***Threats***
1. *Existing and future European, National and Regional R&D programmes*	***1.*** *Bureaucracy barriers and administrative burden associated with European and National RTD programmes*
2. *Strong networking between National RTD entities on specific food research themes*	***2.*** *Lack of strategic vision in national and regional RTD initiatives*
3. *Increasing demand for new innovative food products and processing technologies*	***3.*** *Brain drain accompanied by failure to attract foreign and Greek highly competitive researchers*
4. *Adequate supply of well educated researchers in the scientific area*	***4.*** *Limited national financing for R&D for joint research with the industry*
5. *Strong interest of society in the agro food sector as food price and demand increase worldwide*	

Example of SWOT analysis of Food SMEs in Central Macedonia

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
1. *Product & Process quality*	***1.*** *Low capacity and/ or willingness to invest in RTD activities*
2. *Strong agricultural and food manufacturing sector/ Market positioning*	***2.*** *Inadequate penetration in well- developed markets*
3. *Management capacity at the executive level*	***3.*** *Low commitment and focus to innovation and to take over of entrepreneurial risk/ low private funding of RTD*
4. *Product diversification*	***4.*** *Inadequate networking with RTD entities and exploitation of Innovation opportunities*
5. *Internationalization of activities in the neighbouring countries through the utilisation of the geographical position and the road network and telecommunication infrastructure of the Region*	***5.*** *Inflexible organisational structures*
Opportunities	**Threats**
1. *Capture of opportunities to make visible and to exploit the regional/ national product identity*	***1.*** *Competition coming from countries based either on product price or product quality/ innovation*
2. *Existing and future European, National and Regional R&D programmes*	***2.*** *Bureaucracy and regulation barriers*
3. *Increasing export trends and foreign direct investments in the broader SE Europe*	***3.*** *insufficient structural support to adapt to the new regulations, norms and priorities (including environmental ones)*
4. *Research, technology & innovation in many areas (food, biotechnology, energy, environment, ICT, health, marketing, logistics, etc.) that can bring efficient solutions*	***4.*** *Insufficient financial and other incentives addressed to the sector*
5. *Improvement of the regional and national road network and telecommunications infrastructure*	***5.*** *Lack of political long-term commitment to the sector*

The partners of the Food Cluster of Central Macedonia are confident that the ***SWOT analysis and the Strategic Orientation Rounds provide a useful methodology and tool for identifying the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats with regard to the strategy to be implemented*** *for maximizing the positive and eliminating the negative effects.*

The **example of Central Macedonia** **illustrates some of the conclusions** which are **similar to all regions participating in the Strategic Orientation**.

*First of all, most regions express the opinion that the **right quantities of resources for food science are available**: there exist a large number of scientists operating in these fields and there are public initiatives aiming at fostering food research and innovation.*

*However, nearly all regions consider the **interaction between industry-based research and public food research as insufficient or not effective.** Furthermore, despite the efforts made by public initiatives to close this gap, they are rarely successful in this task.*

*Particular threats observed in new member states are the **high bureaucracy and brain drain.***

*The industry does not seem to grasp the potential that innovation offers as they are overburdened with everyday challenges and do not dedicate adequate resources to technology and innovation. **Inadequate public and private funding for RTD are also negative factors for innovation.** Most importantly the **lack of strategic vision in national and regional RTD initiatives** hinders their success.*

During the SWOT and SOR exercise, it was noted that there is a **natural tendency for the regional RTD actors and SMEs to exagerrate their positive aspects or strengths to some extent while down playing their weaknesses**. The use of validated and comparable statistical data and the indication of certain discrepancies during the SWOT exercise helped to diminish the bias effect.

In the next stage, the **formulation of strategic objectives** through Strategic Orientation, the regions will find out which of the opportunities and threats are a priority and which strengths and weaknesses should be mobilized in order to grasp or defeat them, respectively.

The **SWOT analyses led to a synthetic insight in food science and regional policy in the FOOD-Cluster regions**.
This will serve as a frame of reference for the project activities and as a basis for exchange and understanding with other regions within the FOOD-Cluster.

The Food Cluster members' general feeling is that expressing and discussing each other's standpoint indeed contributes to **interaction and mutual learning between EU funded projects.**

SYNTHESIS of regional FINDINGS

Looking at the **conclusions of the different regions,** a number of similarities in their findings can be observed:

1. Reinforce external linkages of the food industry to grasp new consumer trends

The **link with suppliers is of vital importance for the food company** to introduce new, alternative or better quality raw materials. Furthermore, suppliers from non-food sectors are also important for innovation: examples are biotechnology, chemistry, and packaging. Collaboration within the chain is considered important for SMEs[3] especially, as it will enable them to **overcome disadvantages due to limited economies of scale and to compete with large players.**

New consumer trends are considered important, but clear solutions for anticipating them are not always present. Demand for functional foods, for example, is perceived as the main opportunity by virtually all regions, but none of the regions classifies it as a current strength. Furthermore, **a market opportunity for food safety is perceived**, as this gives a head start for Europe in competition on the global market. However, d**oubts are raised on how this can be valorised in the consumer market**.

2. Reorienting RTD on food marketing within an enlarged European market

The enlargement of Europe has reshaped the European market. **Most strategic orientations identify several opportunities and threats** in this respect. Although findings cannot be generalised simply, the following trends are clearly present.

For new Member states, the development of marketing channels to the old member states is a major opportunity. Furthermore, **an offensive strategy is justified by the strong price competitiveness of their food industries**.

On the other hand, these regions are also convinced that growth can only be continued if price competitiveness goes hand in hand with increasing productivity, technological renewal and improving quality and innovation.

Most SORs implemented in old member states, choose a defensive position. These regions choose to compete on quality and identity, in order to be able to face more price competitive actors. The present market position of typical, regional

[3] **S**mall and **M**edium **E**nterprise

products and internationally established brands is perceived to be an important tool.

3. Regional policy action for increasing benefit from EU funding schemes

Regional strategies are unanimous in the importance they give to EU funding as an initiator of food RTD infrastructure development. Especially in the new member states there is the expectation that EU will be the engine of modernization.

Further, it is striking that **several regions seem to expect impetus from EU policy where regional research policy fails**: regional and national funding schemes are associated with a high administrative burden and several SORs indicate that regional policy lacks a clear vision on technology transfer. As such, the EU is also considered important as a platform where regional policy-makers are stimulated to develop research policy.

To unlock this potential, the capacities of researchers to initiate and manage EU funded research projects should be enhanced. Furthermore, different SORs see an important role for regional policy makers to act as facilitators for attracting funding to their regions.

4. Strengthen multidisciplinary research in RTD centres to address the industry's need for applied knowledge effectively

In the pursuit of innovation, food companies need knowledge which connects insights from different scientific disciplines with the requirements determined by emerging market opportunities. For RTD centres to fulfil this industry need, the following priorities have been put forward. **Research actors should reinforce their focus on areas of interest to the industry**. Providing financial incentives for researchers to work with industry is a promising instrument to stimulate this. Further, **to offer solutions to the industry, different scientific disciplines should be gathered around these areas of interest.**

However, RTD centres should also take initiatives aimed at policy makers and companies. In several SORs, **a lack of policy attention to applied research has been identified**. Here, **researchers should actively support policy makers in the development of research strategies**. Further, measures should be taken to create an open attitude in companies towards RTD collaboration (demonstration projects). Some SORs see a potential, mediating role of industry-leaders and innovators to bridge the gap with industry (networking activities). These measures are already included in the activity range of some regional policy makers, but in the SORs it is argued that RTD centres should also take such initiatives.

5. Investing in human capital by regional policy makers

Brain drain is another issue which is perceived to be important, specifically in new member states. The main causes which have been identified are the low wages of researchers and the low perceived attractiveness of a research career and of the research institutes amongst young people.

The SORs come up with **two recommendations to counter brain drain.** First, it is important to **promote and support the present leading-edge research capabilities** thereby maximising the chances of increasing both attractiveness and wages. Furthermore, it would be better to **dedicate efforts to expertise in selected areas,** rather than focusing on the entire RTD infrastructure.

We can point out that the SORs reveal that **broadening the resource base of regional food RTD infrastructure is vital for innovation in the Food Cluster regions**. In particular the **extent of financial resources and knowledge resources are identified as main challenges.**

The analysis also reveals the **pivotal role of regional policy**. Many regions place their hope on EU funding because regional or national instruments are not sufficient, or even fail. However, regional policy is also perceived as a crucial element in bringing these funds closer to the regional actors. This demonstrates that r**egional policy initiatives and European funding should go hand in hand.** Regional policy makers should contribute with their understanding of local dynamics and their communication channels. Europe, in turn, contributes with instruments for companies and RTD centres to develop research areas of strategic interest. The downside of this is that where regional policy fails, Europe fails.

The **individual regional strategies** will be used to **complement the EU-wide strategy** as a **tool for exploration, dialogue between the clustered projects** and in the end delivering a positive contribution to the objective of bringing EU food expertise together in the ERA.

The **strategic orientation exercise is organized in each of the projects** as an initial project activity. First of all, it has the goal of enabling each of the participating regions to **express their strategic orientation on the European stage** in order to better grasp regional communalities and differences.

This contributes to the **final objective of fostering mutual learning and cooperation between European food research projects**.

The second goal is to **support each of the projects in underpinning their activities within explicit strategic vision on the development of their region**.

An OUTLOOK
on expected OUTCOMES from the FOOD-Cluster

The **EU Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs has a central focus to promote the knowledge economy especially through R&D and resulting innovation**. The Food Cluster is an intrinsic part of this scenario. Three key instruments support this: Cohesion policy funded through Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, the Research Framework Programme (now FP7); and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). The effectiveness of these requires **synergies of action** by national and regional authorities as well as regional actors.

So **Commission policy priorities include building a European Research Area (ERA)** by contributing to increased R&D capacity; improving performance in R&D and innovation, which inter alia includes underpinning the development of innovative clusters; supporting technology transfer especially from universities and research centres to SMEs and between SMEs; helping public R&D institutions to connect with the local business community (for example through networking); promoting national, regional and interregional innovation strategies; **promoting innovation and innovative clusters.**

The **outcomes from the Food Cluster at a macro level** need to be assessed in the context of these overall policy and strategic objectives of the Commission. So this means that the Food Cluster needs to show effective performance to:

- Increase R&D capacity
- Improve performance in R&D and innovation
- Support technology transfer
- Connect R&D institutions with the local business community
- Promote innovation and innovation strategies

More specifically at the level of FP7 Coordination and Support Actions that fund the Food Cluster projects that are described in this brochure the Cluster will need to demonstrate effectiveness in achieving :

- transfer of good practices through interregional 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;
- integration with strategies arising through other instruments
- enhancing the full integration of the convergence regions and outermost regions into the EU RTD activities

An important **Commission benchmark** for the success of the Food Cluster is the demonstration of **increased involvement in good quality proposal submissions.**, to other areas of FP7 and in particular increased involvements and **synergies with the CIP (Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme) and SF (Structural Funds)** as progress currently being made in research capacity building.

ANNEX

FINE

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.

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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.

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BALTFOODQUAL

Unlocking Animal Food Quality Research Potential in the Baltic Region by developing the Scientific and Technical Capacities of the Research Institute "Sigra"

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.

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EU-BALKANVEGETABLES

Balkan Vegetable Crops Research Centre for transfer of European knowledge, research and practice

Maritsa - Vegetable Crops Research Institute

The general objective of the project is to revive and reinforce the Maritsa Vegetable Crops Research Institute to become a leading horticultural research centre in the Balkan region disseminating information on the recent achievements in the European Research Area in this scientific field.

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SafeTechnoPack

Improving the scientific and technological research capacity of a Food Institute on Safety and Technology of Food-Packaging

The main objective of this project is to improve the scientific and technological capacity in food packaging technologies. Specifically, it aspires to improve its research capacity in chemical contamination resulting from the food contact materials, and to develop new food packaging materials using nanotechnology and active packaging technologies.

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CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANTS

Reinforcement of the WBC research capacities for food quality characterization

Institute of Chemistry
University Ss Cyril and Methodius

Western Balkan Countries are predominantly agricultural with a potential for the production of healthy food of authentic origin and specified health promoting composition. To support the appropriate development of food production and quality characterization, this project is aimed at:

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FEED-TO-FOOD

Reinforcement of FEED-TO-FOOD Research Center at Institute for Food Technology of the University of Novi Sad

The Centre for FEED AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS, an organizational unit within the Institute for Food Technology at the University of Novi Sad, is 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. The Institute is well positioned in Serbia and in the region, but seeks recognition as an equal partner in Europe as a whole.

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AGFORISE

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

The overall objective of the 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.

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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

The strategic objective of the project is to reinforce the research capacities of the Laboratory for Chemical Contaminants at the Faculty of Technology/University of Novi Sad, in order to establish a Centre of Excellence in Food Safety and Emerging Risks, strengthening its leading role in the regional research community.

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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.

The main aim of the FLAVOURE project presented by ERIA is to advance capacity for assessment and prognoses of quality risks of food and feed and develop new molecular biological assessment methods.

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SWOT-CHEMISTRY-FOOD

Evaluation of the research capacity ad development of a strategy for further growth in chemistry in general and in food science in particular

Institute of Chemistry - University Ss Cyril and Methodius

In order to make strategies for further development of the research activities, a necessary step to be made is performing a thorough **analysis of the level of the overall research quality and capability** of a research entity. One of the approaches to accomplish this task is to **identify the internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) as well as external factors (opportunities and threats)** affecting its research performance. This assessment should be a basis for **defining strategies for further development** aimed at taking the opportunities and fighting the threats.

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REAL

Galician – North Portugal Food Network

The objective of the project is to perform a structured cooperative knowledge network, to promote the internationalisation and competitiveness through innovation in the food sector in the euro-region.

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Further DOCUMENTATION and CONTACTS

European Commission - Directorate General for Research
Directorate B - Unit B.4
Regions of Knowledge and Research Potential

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detailed information on the individual projects is available upon request:

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European Commission

FOOD-CLUSTER INITIATIVE
FIRST OUTCOMES and an example of SUCCESSFUL SWOT-ANALYSIS

Belgium: EC

2009 — 40 pp. — 21.0 x 29.7 cm

Cooperating, ambitious Food regions can learn from each other, strengthen the EU Food research area and increase the competitive advantage of the EU by building interregional projects on an EU level based on regional strengths.

Moving towards this increased European coverage by creating a **European Food Cluster** involves joining EU “hotspots” as regional food clusters, learning each other's 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 using a **European Food Cluster** to **build the ERA in Food**.

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