



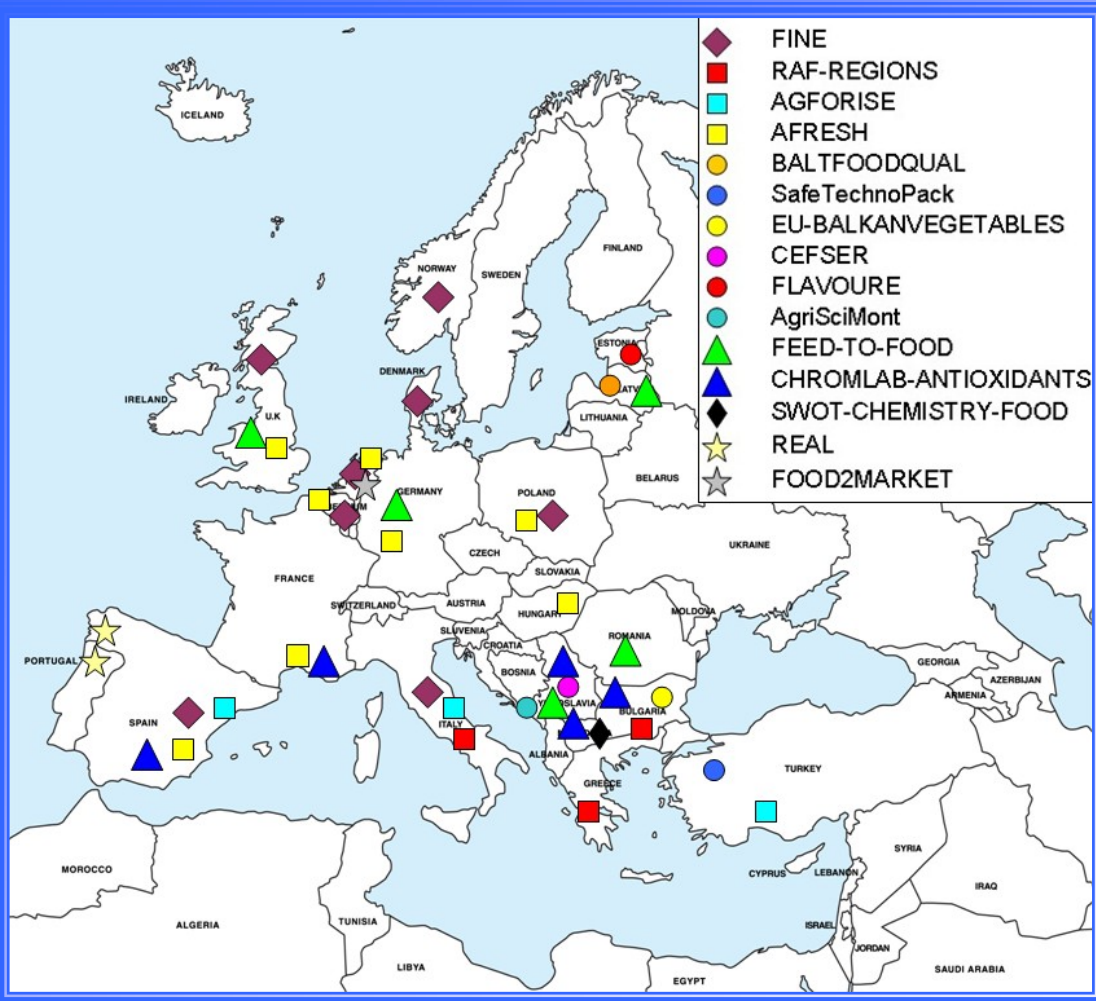
EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

European
Research Area

7th Framework
Programme

Regions of Knowledge
&
Research Potential

FOOD-cluster initiative



European 'research driven and capacity building' Cluster
of cooperating regions with the ambition

to

build the **ERA in FOOD**,

using regional, national and Community funding (FP7/SF/CIP)

to

define **regional strategies** and invest in combined **regional efforts**

to

strengthen excellence in the ERA.



What is the FOOD-cluster initiative?

Research and innovation are crucial in addressing the major issues facing the EU and its partner countries and upholding economic growth, social responsibility and sustainable development.

In 2007, the **FOOD-cluster initiative** was launched with the ambition of involving different European Community funded research projects in an **exchange of knowledge and experiences**. The idea was to learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses, define regional strategies and invest in strengths through **integral use of national and regional funding** (such as the Framework Programmes, Structural Funds and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme) as a basis for establishing **EU consortia in food science**.

WHO is participating ?

The FOOD-cluster is currently composed of **15 projects with 43 partners** funded under the **Regions of Knowledge & Research Potential** and the **INTERREG** programmes.

Participating countries are **EU-27, the Western Balkan Countries and Turkey**.

In order to **contribute to the objectives of the FOOD-cluster**, interested participants / clusters / networks, key stakeholders, managing authorities, scientific teams etc. can **join anytime**.

The Food cluster links promising projects with different angles on agrofood-related topics, notably strategies in agrofood sector, quality of animal feed, contamination of food packaging, vegetable diversity, antioxidants in fruit and others.

In the initial project stage, the cluster was supported by the experience of the best-practice project '**Food Innovation Network Europe**' (FINE), funded under FP6.

WHAT has been achieved so far?

The Food cluster started by defining a two-step strategic orientation:

- **EU-level strategic objectives** for the food industry were developed as an exercise;
- all regions performed **strategic orientation in their own region**, involving local stakeholders.

The first step was implemented in February 2008. A group of 35 participants, partners in the Food cluster, joined up to **identify SWOT** and drew conclusions about the **main strategic objectives for the EU food industry**.

In general, the EU food industry is considered to have the necessary strength to seize the available opportunities, but considerable efforts are required to eradicate serious weaknesses and to defend itself against serious threats, such as climate change or cheap labour costs in emerging economies.

What is still to be achieved?

The FOOD-cluster has still to develop appropriate benchmarks and a methodology for impact analysis at both levels, the **individual impact of the food cluster** and the **European Food cluster overall** that need to be assessed in results and performance. Relevant benchmarks will have to be devised for assessing impacts on fields like research capabilities, the agrofood sector and linkage of the features in order to see the European Food cluster as a coordinated entity.

Accordingly, three factors have to be analysed:

- **S & T-related outcomes** such as improved skills, mobility, academic achievements, enhanced research facilities, continued collaboration;
- **regional and Europe-wide outcomes** such as enhanced networking, links to business, improvement in overall capabilities, management effectiveness, dissemination features, quality of life, economic indicators, policy development;
- **agrosector outcomes** such as links to business type, innovative contributions, new or enhanced products, process developments, job creation, user orientation and new linkages.

A **constant and schematic monitoring process** will allow the outcomes at project level to be collated and later to be aggregated on a macro level for the overall European Food cluster.

Given the main goals of the projects funded under FP7, the Food cluster projects will need to **demonstrate effectiveness in achieving**. This consists, for example, in the **transfer of good practice** through interregional partnerships, enhancing research efforts of the regions or **reinforcing capacities of regional actors** to participate in FP7 projects and other EU funding programmes, or integrating all sector stakeholders.

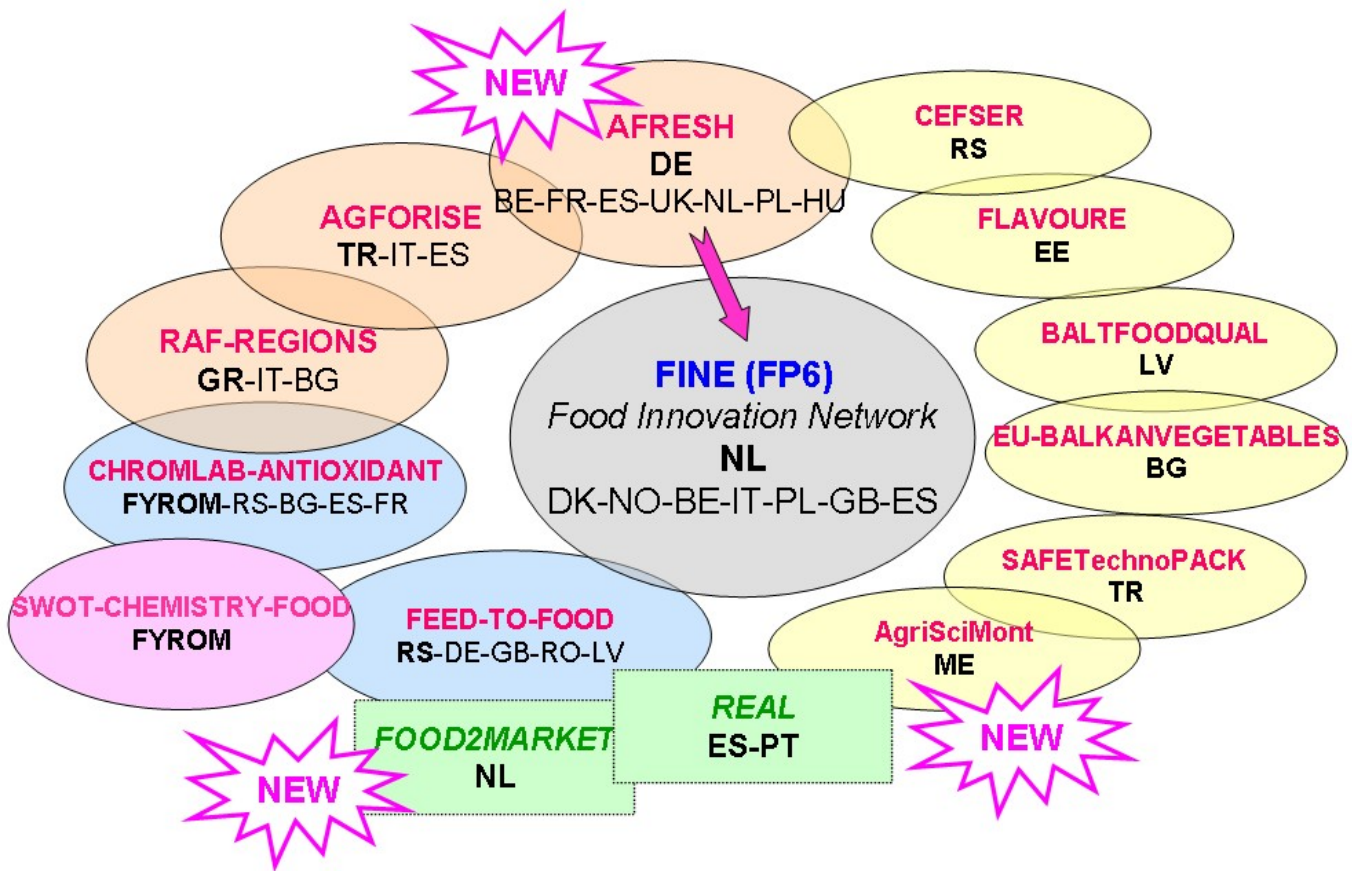
Though the **assessment of the initiative is not finalised**, it might turn out that the network is too heterogeneous to build critical mass or that the funding lines are too small to have a real scientific and economic impact. Regions who just intend to upgrade their labs cannot be compared with those who want to improve the growth potential of their business community.'

Although the FOOD-cluster initiative is rather ambitious and steering towards more effectiveness, the participants are enthusiastic about the achievements already seen in the European Food cluster network and feel it is worth every effort.

What are the future objectives?

A renewed 'coordinating team' of the FOOD-cluster initiative will take over from December 2010 with **new ideas to better support 'pure' research activities** within the cluster to **further enhance integration of all actors into the European Research Area**.

Who are we in 2010?



The European Food-cluster initiative

is a 'pilot' 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.

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