



**7th Framework Programme - Capacities - Regions of
knowledge**

Call FP7 - REGIONS - 2010 - 1

Project Proposal

Framework

Changes in both population demographics and life span demand that European public health policies focus on **healthy ageing**, if countries are willing to continue providing social and economic benefits to their citizens. The relationship between diet, health and lifestyle is now a key priority for most EU governments. Indeed, food is the main non-genetic contributor to age- and lifestyle-related diseases including: obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, hyperglycemia and a range of cancer types. These diseases are becoming increasingly significant causes of disability and premature death, and they lead to increase healthcare and other indirect costs. Therefore, the main targets of the EU members are the promotion and optimization of human health through a well balanced diet, the contrast of nutritional deficiencies and the control of foodborne diseases. This is a challenge that involves the policy makers, research centers, companies and consumers.

The agro-food industry should face this challenge by creating innovation and developing value-added food products, (including functional foods), in addition to those classified as food for specific nutritional purposes. In the same way, the research entities, thanks to the progress in **life and nutritional sciences**, can and will increasingly provide significant insights to understanding the mechanisms which underpin the physiological functionality of food components. Effective research-industry partnerships are imperative and will offer **benefits to the consumers** through more personalized nutritional advices for high-risk groups and health claims based on sound scientific evidence. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the research infrastructures, to boost RTD investments, to improve cooperation networks' and to enhance technology transfer.

The European agro-food sector is overwhelmingly populated by SMEs with a medium-low-intensity production technology. Such relatively poor record for innovation requires measures to be identified, developed and implemented for overcoming existing barriers to **knowledge transfer**. These measures aim to support the improvement of the competitiveness of agro-food SMEs by systematically identifying, adapting and exploiting tailor-made mechanisms in order to enhance the innovation capabilities of SMEs and to increase their participation into research projects and exploitation of research results. Finally, the future **competitiveness of health-related european economy** will be ensured through the measures said above and through the identification and promotion of the RTD areas which are recognized as being of crucial importance for the creation of new international markets or for the maintenance of existing markets.

Besides, the cross-disciplinary approach of the Food&Health RTD activities strongly contributes to developments of the **European Research Area** (ERA). This role is recognized and supported through targeted actions such as the European Technology Platform (ETP) on Food for Life and the related Joint Technology Initiative, which give significant attention to the topic "Food and Health", further confirmed by the Lead Market Initiative related to it. These actions establish relevant relationships within the Knowledge-based Bio-economy area and they provide a focus for links with the ETP Nanomedicine and the Innovative Medicines Initiative.

Overall Objective

Strengthening the overall capacity of the partner regions to promote the health of citizens and economic development by enhancing the RTD potential in life and nutritional sciences.

Purpose

Supporting the development, cooperation and integration of three Food&Health Research-driven clusters in order to boost their ability in addressing global health issues related to nutritional/food aspects, to strengthen the business competitiveness within the international markets, to contribute to the growth of the European Research Area and to have more and better RTD investments at regional level.

Targets

- ❖ Promoting common strategies to strengthen the Food&Health RTD regional policies which authorities and industry can integrate into their economic development plans as a basis for increased and more focused use of the Structural Funds as well as other funds for RTD investments and activities.

- ❖ Assisting the agro-food SMEs in monitoring, identification and selection of new knowledge and technologies from market oriented research activities related to the theme of Food&Health.
- ❖ Encouraging the exchange among partners of the best practices concerning the measures, methodologies and tools for the promotion of the knowledge transfer and the creation of innovation support services.
- ❖ Identifying more effective ways of sharing RTD facilities between companies and research organizations in order to develop a common strategy for economic exploitation of the cross-disciplinary Food&Health RTD.
- ❖ Mentoring regions with a less developed research profile in order to enhance their ability to setting up and developing regional research-driven clusters, through capacity building initiatives.

Activities

- ❖ Increasing the level and effectiveness of participation in the RTD Framework Programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), in close cooperation with the ETP on Food for Life, PRO INNO Europe and Europe INNOVA.
- ❖ Analyzing for each region the Food&Health RTD policies, plans, activities - their evolution and their impact -, public and private actors, infrastructures and facilities.
- ❖ Examining the economic development policies, technology opportunities and specific business needs of agro-food SMEs related to the Food&Health RTD activities.
- ❖ Making a SWOT analysis of the regions concerned in terms of their capacity to transfer and exploit the knowledge produced by Food&Health RTD.
- ❖ Defining a common reference framework for embedding synergies within the Key Thrust 1 Improving health, well-being and longevity of the ETP on Food for Life, the JTI and the LMI linked.
- ❖ Preparing an international cooperation strategy with Research-driven Clusters from third countries, identifying possible partnerships on specific RTD projects and innovation support services.
- ❖ Establishing a **Joint Action Plan** that outlines the strategy of partners to promote economic development driven by the Food&Health RTD activities, specifying the duties, responsibilities, tools and possible funds available at Community, national and local level. The JAP will include the design of some measures such as:
 - Selection of relevant collaborative research projects, increasing researcher mobility, improvement and sharing RTD infrastructure and facilities.
 - Enhancement of the skills and knowledge transfer between business entities and between research entities and business entities, in particular SMEs, through networking.
 - Increase in availability of, and access to, organizational and technological innovation support services, including advances services for the internalization of SMEs.
 - Facilitation of access to private and/or public funding for RTD and innovation, including through the implementation of pre-commercial procurement.
 - Definition of feasibility and action plans for boosting the growth of regional research-driven clusters with a less-developed research-profile.
 - Providing clear, concise and reliable informations on trends, opportunities and research results for the benefit SMEs collected by technology consultants.
 - International cooperation activities, such as visits, conferences, workshops, exchange of cluster' staff, in order to finalize the definition of the international strategy.