



Creating a sustainable future for European food systems: the FOODPathS project

The food sector in Europe is facing numerous crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, hunger and malnutrition, increasing food prices and food and packaging waste. As outlined in policies such as the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, these challenges hinder the transition towards sustainable food systems. To address these issues and avoid trade-offs for stakeholders, coordinated action is needed among various actors and experts.

One proposed strategy is the establishment of the European Partnership for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) for People, Planet and Climate. This ambitious research and innovation (R&I) programme, developed under the Horizon Europe framework, is expected to receive around €600M from 2024 to 2031. The programme is based on a strategic research and innovation agenda (SRIA) developed by the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) Strategic Working Group on Food Systems, along with experts and stakeholders from across Europe, through an open consultation. However, this is not enough on its own. All actors, including funding agencies, food chain actors, researchers and civil society organisations, must work together to create the right environment for the partnership to succeed. This is the main goal of FOODPathS, a Horizon project that

aims to create the necessary environment for the partnership to operate and achieve its expected impact.

The project

The FOODPathS project aims to tackle the challenges facing the European food system by creating a powerful network of diverse public and private entities. "FOODPathS will catalyse collective actions that lead to future sustainable food systems in Europe—at the same time, we want to reinforce the rich cultural food heritage of EU member states in a sustainable way!" said Hugo de Vries, a research director at INRAE and project coordinator of FOODPathS. The project relies on a wide network of networks, including local and national governments, civil society organisations, universities, research organisations and other actors.

The relation between the EU partnership and FOODPathS

The SFS partnership is still under construction and is expected to be officially launched in 2024. The actors who will build it will be selected under the Horizon Europe call for funding in 2023 (FARM2FORK-01-9: *European Partnership on sustainable food systems for people, planet and climate*, recently published). It is expected that, in the first instance, ministries and funding agencies will join forces and launch open calls in late 2024 or 2025 based on the SRIA that will be finalised in early 2023.

Between now and 2025, FOODPathS will be the main actor paving the way for the partnership. After supporting the SRIA development in collaboration with the European Commission and the SCAR, and promoting stakeholder participation in the open consultation, the project will propose a 'prototype' of how the future partnership could work, ensuring that all voices are heard, potential trade-offs are forecast and handled, and a governance model is defined.

Funders Forum: engaging the future funders

Considering the Horizon Europe call, which will close in April 2023, the main focus of the FOODPathS project is creating consensus among the partnership and, in particular, finding funders willing to contribute to it. This was the main scope of the first Funders Forum event.

On 29 November, over 100 attendees representing ministries, funding agencies and various research community members came together for the first Funders' Forum. The forum provided a great opportunity for interaction and discussion, with attendees having the chance to ask questions and provide their perspectives.

One key topic discussed was the transformation of food systems and the ability of the future partnership to achieve its ambitious goals by 2030. The aim is to mobilise all relevant actors to work across disciplines and integrate systemic approaches into the implementation of

future research and innovation. A second Funder's forum took place in Brussels on 8 February, where stakeholders continued the conversation regarding funding mechanisms and agreed to meet again in Autumn in 2023.

Other FOODPathS contributions to the partnership

FOODPathS is not only paving the way for the European partnership on sustainable food systems, but is also taking steps to create an appropriate environment for the partnership within society. For example, FOODPathS will explore existing living labs focused on food systems and create a hub where they can exchange resources, knowledge and lessons learned. "Food matters to all citizens, hence why its successful transition is in the hands of all," says Hugo de Vries.

In addition, the project will create a network of higher education centres working on food systems throughout Europe to improve collaboration among disciplines and countries and train the next generation of researchers and professionals to tackle the challenges of the food system via systemic approaches.

Finally, FOODPathS will support the establishment of mirror groups at the European and international levels to engage with civil society and citizens and ensure their involvement in the partnership creation process. These groups will provide a framework for discussions around the research and innovation actions of the partnership and ensure that no one is left behind.

Your engagement

FOODPathS has a busy three years ahead as it works to engage a growing number of stakeholders interested in transforming European food systems. The project would be delighted to have you as a partner and celebrate the launch of the partnership prototype at a European festival in 2024. Join us in creating a sustainable future for food systems in Europe!

PROJECT SUMMARY

The FOODPathS project will support the development of a European partnership for sustainable food systems (SFS) for people, planet and climate under the Horizon Europe framework. It will propose a 'prototype' for its governance, ensuring that all voices are heard, and potential trade-offs are handled, thus creating consensus among the partnership and finding funders willing to contribute to it.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The FOODPathS consortium comprises 17 partners from 11 EU countries and represents a diverse and extensive network of networks, including local and national governments, civil society organisations, universities, research organisations, companies and other actors in the food systems. The consortium will work to grow this network by integrating more actors in the partnership prototype development.

PROJECT LEAD PROFILE

FOODPathS is coordinated by Hugo de Vries, Research Director at INRAE (France) and member of its Scientific Directory Team 'Food, Nutrition and Bioeconomy'. He is past-president of EFFoST (European Federation of Food Science and Technology), task leader in the SCAR Working Group on Sustainable Food Systems, and member of the FAO-led International Sustainable Bioeconomy Working Group.

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FUNDING

This project has received funding from the European Union.



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This article is part of the collaboration between Eufic and the PRj, as members of its editorial board. Eufic - The European Food Information Council, is a non-profit organisation, established in 1995. Eufic's mission is to provide engaging science-based information to inspire and empower healthier and more sustainable food and lifestyle choices.