

foodpaths

FEEDBACK FROM SOCIETY

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Feedback from society

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Executive summary

FOODPathS has been discussing with stakeholders how a “prototype” of a partnership for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) should look like, involving them in workshops, mirror groups, interviews, etc. From this process, FOODPathS partners have already collected useful feedback but, before delivering and publicly presenting the partnership prototype (in May 2025), there is still room to collect opinions from stakeholders that have not been reached so far, asking them also aspects relevant from appropriate communication, dissemination and exploitation actions. For this reason, **an online survey** was designed and launched by FOODPathS: **running from June to September 2024, 60 respondents** – mainly representing stakeholders of the European food systems – provided their feedback about their experience in working in partnerships and how a SFS Partnership should be shaped, highlighting elements that could prevent or motivate them to have an active role in it.

Overall, the majority of respondents were **researchers** (42%, but a fair differentiation among all the typology of stakeholders was observed), **acting mainly at national** (37%) **or EU level** (30%), and **that has already working in a partnership** (67%). The ones already involved in such initiatives declare **they are working in 2-4 partnerships at the same time** (47,5%), **operating mainly at EU level** (30%), including also R&I EU-funded projects in such definition. Anyway, in the partnership they are involved in, **respondents contribute mainly to the definition of its long-term strategy** (28%) **and/or influence its decision/advocate for the stakeholders they represent**. In these partnerships, **respondents are mainly collaborating with other researchers** (18%) and **SMEs** (14%), but also with a larger variety of stakeholders. In general, **they are satisfied about working in partnership** (3,9/5). Finally, **the 63% of respondents are aware of the existence of FutureFoodS**, the ongoing European Partnership Sustainable Food Systems.

Lessons learned by FOODPathS

Data collected through the survey were analysed by FOODPathS partners, triggering reflections and possible follow-up actions. Thanks to this internal analysis process, the following lessons learned were identified and will be used to finalise the creation of the FOODPathS' SFS Partnership prototype.

Partnership definition and meaning: One out of three respondents explained partnerships mentioning collaborative projects or networks, showing an understanding of the “partnership” meaning in a broad sense. Meanwhile the EC definition of R&I Partnership is quite strict (and related to specific and pre-defined cases, i.e., co-funded partnerships, institutionalised partnerships, etc.), FOODPathS has a broader and more inclusive mission: indeed, the project is asked to create a prototype of a R&I SFS Partnership open to all food systems actors, being as inclusive as possible. **The survey defined a context where, besides the R&I Partnerships of the EC (FutureFoodS, Agroecology Partnership, etc.), stakeholders are working together to transform the European food systems through living labs, policy councils, EU-funded R&I projects and many more initiatives. They cannot be excluded from the “partnership” definition because not falling in the description provided by the EC:** on the contrary, they should be considered as “a different level of partnerships”, that should dialogue and interact with the institutionalised initiatives of the EC. Considering this and the mission of ensuring the inclusivity of all food systems actors, **FOODPathS can play the role of connecting this different level of partnerships with the formal ones built by the EC:** this will provide complementary knowledge and expertise, contributing to the achievement of impacts and EU policies; ensure a continuous dialogue between institutional actors and the rest of the food systems stakeholders; create an environment to test case and experiment collaborative solutions, that can be then shared, transferred and upscaled elsewhere.

Collaboration is the most relevant benefit for working in a partnership: Three out of five of the benefits perceived to work in a partnership are about collaboration with other actors, for instance to co-create new solutions, achieve outcomes together that would be harder (or impossible) to address alone and for enlarging the network. In order to realise this, **an ideal partnership requires a good collaborative environment, that, together with the provision of a funding mechanism, prioritise the openness of participation:** indeed, three out of the 5 most important aspects to work on when establishing a partnership are a transparent governance system, an inclusive process to set it up and the involvement of all actors. Such results show a strong request for an open and inclusive environment to ease the realisation of long-term collaborations.

A minor role for public and private investors in a partnership: According to results, investors, both public and private, are at the end of the list of the stakeholders that should have a prominent role in a SFS Partnership. This raises critical concerns. The first one is procedural: if the funding mechanism is the priority when setting up a partnership, then it is quite strange that investors have not a key role. **This scarce consideration for these actors is in contrast with the concept of inclusivity. Moreover, it could raise doubts on the collaborative spirit of such a partnership.** Indeed, researchers could be perceived as the ones that should do the job of

transforming food systems using money received, meanwhile investors should only provide funds to make this happen. Of course, this is an extreme and provocative case, but the implications of these results should be further investigated and being considered as a red flag for the establishment of a proper collaborative environment. Finally, this unbalance in the perceived importance of stakeholders should **push FOODPathS to investigate more the success factors, lessons learned and issues faced by other partnerships that have a prominent role of public and private investors**, such as the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU).

A wide range of stakeholders are willing to support with their (different) expertise: Although the 62% of respondents expressed interest in having a role in the future partnership, they prefer mainly to be of support, being consulted (39%) or being taken into account as potential members of the Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB, 33%). These numbers confirm the **existence of a wide range of voices outside the SFS Partnership that want to participate somehow in the food systems transformation**. However, considering the limitations that the R&I Partnership set by the EC could have (in terms of participation rules, organisational limitations – i.e., the number of people that could be involved in a SAB –, resources, etc.) it is important to not waste this knowledge and commitment. In this context, **FOODPathS could keep playing the role of the collector of such voices and the bridge with the SFS Partnership, even after the ending of the project**. At the same time, data shows that only 16% of preferences from respondents are expressing interest in participating in the governance of the partnership, sensibly lower compared to data about supportive roles. The reasons behind this difference should be investigated.

Recommendations for FutureFoodS

Besides the lessons learned, data collected through the survey triggered the definition of some recommendations to be shared with FutureFoodS (as well as with other partnerships or large collaborative initiatives), and that the partnership consortium might consider to take into account for improving its own work.

- **Ensure transparency and openness to stimulate the participation in the partnership:** respondents that have never joined a partnership indicated the lack of transparency and opportunities as main reasons. This could be addressed improving communication about the partnership scopes and activities, also providing more information about its funding mechanisms, how to contribute, etc.
- **Increasing opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the partnership work:** from the survey, it emerges that stakeholders of the food systems are moved by a strong willingness to support the partnership activities. To take advantage of this, FutureFoodS could clarify and promote what are the “entry points” for food systems actors to provide their feedback and ideas, establishing a structured and continuous dialogue. In this case, a reflection on how to realise this and with which methodology and tools could be started, also taking advantage from the work conducted by FOODPathS (i.e., best practices collected through the mapping of case studies, results from the Mirror Group meetings, etc.). Activities implemented would also address the stakeholders’ request for more transparency and openness.
- **Reduce the burden for participation:** another obstacle to the stakeholders’ participation is constituted by the lack of resources (46% of cases, an additional 24% of replies indicated the presence of fee or economic contribution to join as a barrier). Even if this is not an issue entirely in the hands of the partnership, maybe it would be worth to explore if there is any other ways to work together with food systems actors and/or make a more effective use of resources to ease their participation.
- **Consider suggestions received for improving the SFS Partnership SRIA:** even if some of the R&I topics suggested by the respondents are already covered by the SRIA and some of them are out of the scope of the SFS Partnership (i.e., soil health), FutureFoodS might have a more punctual look at the proposals received, in order to improve and enrich future calls for funding or to consider joint activities with other partnerships and initiatives.
- **Communication activities to increase awareness on FutureFoodS and its impacts:** even if >60% of respondents already know the concept of partnership, one out of three have never heard about FutureFoodS. For this reason, additional communication activities could be conducted to improve the visibility of FutureFoodS. Among communication activities suggested (that are quite classical, i.e., newsletters and participation in events) respondents proposed to run social media campaigns. This could allow FutureFoodS to reach a wider audience and inform them about the scopes of the initiatives carried out and the long-term impact it could generate in the society.

1. Introduction

FOODPathS aims to design a prototype for the future Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Partnership in Europe. This prototype will offer a concrete pathway on how the future Research and Innovation (R&I) Partnership should function from 2024 onwards, covering all its components with recommendations based on the experience gained during the FOODPathS project. The Prototype will include co-funding strategies, a governance model, Modus Operandi, a sustainability charter, a strategic research and innovation agenda (SRIA), and a series of co-creation cases, among others. Potential trade-offs of proposed activities, including effective communication, dissemination and exploitation strategies will be proposed as examples to be pursued.

In this context, **FOODPathS conducted a survey among stakeholders of the food systems** to assess their experience in working in partnerships, their motivations and barriers in doing that and their willingness to commit (and with which role) to the SFS Partnership. **Running from June to September 2024, the survey collected 60 replies** and this data were analysed by FOODPathS partners to define lessons learned, potential follow-up activities to be implemented for the development of the SFS Partnership prototype (to be presented in May 2025) and recommendations for FutureFoodS (and other partnerships) to improve its work.

This document is composed of 8 chapters. In addition to the executive summary (that presents in brief the main insights of this document) and this introduction, §3 clarifies the objectives of the survey, meanwhile §4 provides an overview of the target audiences that were identified as main respondents by the consortium: the following one (§5), it presents the survey structure (integrally available in Annex I) and activities implemented by partners to promote it and collect replies. Results are presented in §6 (but all the data are consultable in Annex II), and they serve as a basis for the analysis and definitions of lessons learned and recommendations (§7). Finally, the last chapter (§8) provides an overview of the next activities to be implemented by FOODPathS, and how the consortium will use the results of the survey.

2. Objectives

From the start of the FOODPathS project, the project consortium has engaged with stakeholders on the question: how a “prototype” of a partnership for Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) should look, involving them in workshops, mirror groups, interviews, etc. Through this process, FOODPathS partners have collected useful feedback. However, before delivering and publicly presenting the partnership prototype (in May 2025), there is still the need to obtain further input from stakeholders on some specific aspects. For this reason, an online survey was designed and launched by FOODPathS, with the aim to investigate more in detail the stakeholders’ interests in working in R&I partnerships (and if they are currently doing this), what can motivate or prevent them to join a partnership, their willingness to join the SFS Partnership and in which role.

More specifically, through the survey, FOODPathS aimed to:

- Collect feedback that should be considered in the finalisation of the SFS Partnership prototype
- Understand how to get transition towards SFS in motion in a collaborative way, thus creating a “snowball effect”
- Investigate stakeholders’ feelings about being involved in collective actions and local, national, EU-wide or global Research and Innovation Partnerships that strive to reach sustainable outcomes
- Understand how to improve the communication between an ideal Partnership and society
- Also hear the voices of stakeholders not involved in previous rounds of consultations organised by FOODPathS

3. Target audiences

FOODPathS aimed to collect feedback from a variety of stakeholders working in the food systems, ensuring a wide spectrum of perspectives. For this reason, when promoting the survey, partners tried to reach mainly actors that could play a “representative” role (i.e., associations, advocacy entities, networks, etc.) for specific categories of the food systems (NGOs, researchers, farmers, etc.). Moreover, FOODPathS tried to prioritise the collection of feedback from entities that had not been involved in previous FOODPathS consultation activities. With this in mind, partners implemented specific communication activities to engage the defined target audiences, presented in Chapter §5.3.

In any case, the survey was published and made accessible online, on the FOODPathS website, leaving the possibility to anyone to participate and have their say. The survey represents an additional tool to focus groups, mirror groups, workshops, webinars, and other activities implemented by FOODPathS to collect as many voices as possible.

4. “Feedback from society” survey

4.1. Survey preparation

The survey was designed in a collaborative way by INRAE, ICLEI, ZonMw, FZJ, EFFoST (co-authors), under the coordination of EUFIC.

To kick-off the discussion, a very first draft was prepared by EUFIC and shared with co-authors in March 2024: feedback and comments provided were used to further develop and refine the survey. Three online meetings were held with all the co-authors to ensure the survey was thorough and well-constructed: they focused on the formulation of the questions, the most suitable typology to use (multiple choice, open end etc.) and more.



Following this approach, the survey was improved in three additional rounds of revisions, till the definition of a final version (beginning of June 2024).

Then, questions were transferred to EUSurvey, chosen as a platform to conduct the online consultations because of its compliance with the GDPR requirements, as well as for other technical aspects (possibility of organising a wide range of question types, user-friendly aspects, etc.). After a round of testing, **the survey was publicly launched online on June 10th, 2024.**

4.2. Survey structure

The survey structure was built to guide the respondent along a specific path, starting from the assessment of its knowledge about what is a partnership, till its willingness of being involved (and how) in the SFS Partnership. This was realised thanks to the grouping of topics in consecutive sections, each of them using different typologies of questions: mandatory or optional, multiple choice, single choice, rating, open end. The full survey, with all the questions and options, is available in Annex I. Questions were organised in the following sections:

- **About FOODPaths**

Providing the basic information about the project, and its purpose for conducting this survey.

- **General information about participants**

This section includes multiple-choice questions to assess the profile of the respondent, understanding which type of organizations they represent.

- **Your experience in working in partnerships**

After a short definition of a 'partnership' (complemented by the presentation of two exemplary cases), this section includes questions to understand if the participant had experience in working in such initiatives and further explores the reason for not being involved yet or, if involved, what type/level/role it was and the overall satisfaction. It also asks to all participant if they are aware of FutureFoodS, the ongoing SFS Partnership.

- **Features of an ideal partnership**

This section contains multiple-choice questions that explore participants' views of an ideal partnership, such as the elements that should be emphasized and the benefits of joining it. Even if the survey is focusing on food systems sustainability, this section refers to a generic partnership.

- **SFS Partnership shape**

This section explores respondents' views on how a R&I SFS Partnership should look like, investigating on its main elements (i.e., R&I priorities, motivations to join a partnership, etc.).

- **Your potential involvement**

The purpose of this section is to understand if the participant would be interested in participating in an SFS partnership, with which role, as well as the reason for not joining it.

Finally, beside a thanksgiving message, the survey concludes presenting the privacy policy, the FOODPaths communication channels (website, social media and the Sustainable Food Systems Network – SFSN) and the possibility to register to the FOODPathS database for receiving news.

4.3. Survey promotion

The survey was promoted using different channels. First of all, FOODPaths' partners activated their networks, sending direct emails or promoting it through their channels. For this purpose, a "communication kit" containing visuals, social media messages, and an email template was prepared by EUFIC and shared with all partners. Moreover, the survey was promoted online by EUFIC, through the FOODPathS website, SciFoodHealth LinkedIn and X accounts, the Sustainable Food Systems Network (SFSN), and a mailing sent to all the people registered to the FOODPathS database. The survey was shared also within online communities, such as the CLEVERFOOD's Food2030 Networks platform (including its social media channels) and the [TABLE debates forum](#) (a community involving diverse stakeholders of food systems). Finally, any other FOODPathS activity was used for promotional



scopes, such as a FOODPathS webinar and the Global Mirror Group meeting, where the survey link was shared with participants. The following table summarise the online promotion of the survey.

	Items	Date	Responsible
Website content	News-FOODPathS.eu	10.06	EUFIC
	News-Food2030 platform	09.07	By ICONS
	In homepage		EUFIC
Social Media posts	1 st posts on SciFoodHealth Link&X	24.06	EUFIC
	Repost		By ANIA
	Food2030 account	July + early September	By ICONS
	Follow up posts	9 Sept.	EUFIC
	FoSSNet LinkedIn	17.09	EUFIC
	Reminder posts	19.09	EUFIC
	Reminder post	24.09	EUFIC
SFSN	1 st post	3.07	EUFIC
	2 nd post	2 Sep	EUFIC
	Reminder	19.09	EUFIC
Newsletters	Foodpaths database mailing/newsletter	3.09	EUFIC
	Eufic members newsletter	27.08	EUFIC
Inclusion in other materials	Foodpaths:1 st Webinar follow up email	June	ZonMw
	Global Mirror group invitation mails	Sep	ICLEI
Others	TABLE Community forum: https://community.tabledebates.org/	22.08	EUFIC

Table 1 - List of online promotional activities

5. Feedback from the society

In this chapter, the main highlights from the survey are presented, meanwhile the full data can be found in Annex II.

The “persona”

Overall, the “**persona**” – a synthesising of the average respondent emerging from data collected from the survey – **is a researcher (42%), acting mainly at national (37%) or EU level (30%) that has already worked in a partnership (67%).** The ones already involved in such initiatives declare that **they are working in 2-4 partnerships at the same time (47,5%), operating mainly at EU level (30%),** including also R&I EU-funded projects in such definition. Anyway, in the partnership they are involved in, **respondents contribute mainly to the definition of their long-term strategy (28%) and/or influence their decisions/advocate for the stakeholders they represent.** In these partnerships, **respondents are mainly collaborating with other researchers (18%) and SMEs (14%),** but also with a larger variety of stakeholders. In general, **they are satisfied about working in partnership (3,9/5).** Finally, the 63% of respondents are aware of the existence of FutureFoodS, the ongoing European Sustainable Food Systems Partnership.

Working in partnership

The majority of respondents represent the academic world, declaring to come from or represent to research

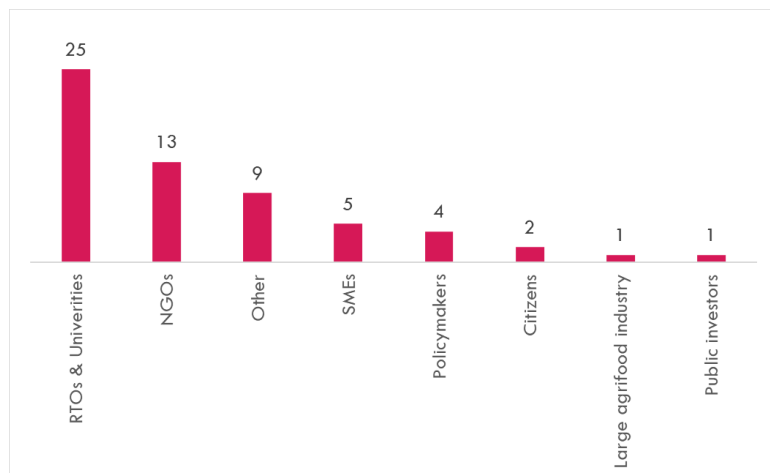


Figure 1 - Which type of actor do you represent?

centres or universities (42%, Figure 1). The rest of respondents are fragmented among a variety of different actors, with a predominance of NGOs. The ones that identified themselves as “Other” were asked to provide more information: they declared to be European Technological Platform representatives (2), consultants (2), policymakers (2) and one representative of a Public Association. Other two respondents could have been categorised within the options RTO & Universities and SMEs.

After this question, the survey showed to respondents a definition of “partnership”¹, together with a couple of examples applied to food systems (the BIOEAST

initiative and the *Pole Mer Mediterranee*, mapped by FOODPathS as case studies), in order to investigate if they are working or have worked in the past in any partnership. The large majority of respondents (67%, Figure 2) replied positively, showing a certain popularity of the partnership concept among them.

The 33% (20 respondents) that has never been involved in such initiative was questioned further about the reasons. Among the explanation provided, there is the **lack of awareness about what is a partnership, the lack of opportunities in being involved in any of them, the scarcity of information available and, finally, the impossibility of being involved in the design or establishment of the partnership**. In any case, among them, only the 40% (8 out 20) considered the possibility to join a partnership.

Further investigations were conducted also among respondents that worked or are working in partnerships, to better understand in which ones they are and with role. As a result, **most of them are currently working in 2-4 partnerships at the same time** (19 respondents, 48%); at the same time, data shows a similar number of respondents involved in 5-10 partnerships (9 people) or in just 1 (8 people), meanwhile, only 4 people are working in more than 10 partnerships. However, when asked to mention some of the initiatives they are involved in, some respondents showed a wide interpretation of the term – still in line with the definition provided. Indeed, beside partnerships in line with the European Commission’s definition of R&I Partnerships (such as FutureFoodS, PRIMA, EIT Food, etc.), they also considered the R&I EU-funded projects falling in this category, mentioning some of them. Despite this, **the partnerships most declared by respondents were the Agroecology Partnership, EIT Food and FutureFoodS**. Moreover, several other examples, operating at national or local level, were mentioned as well. Overall, **respondents expressed a good level of satisfaction in participating in partnerships (3.9/5)**².

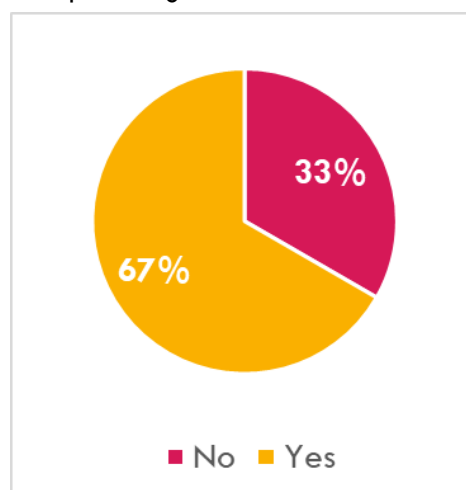


Figure 2 - Having read the description of what we mean by “partnership”, do you think you have ever worked in a partnership?

As a following question, the role that they have in such partnerships were investigated (Figure 3, next page). It emerges that, among all the different activities they are contributing to (they had the possibility to choose more options), **respondents are mainly contributing to the long-term strategy of the partnership** (28% of replies)

¹ A partnership is “characterized by shared goals, common purpose, mutual respect and willingness to negotiate and cooperate, informed participation, information giving and shared decision making” (Casey, 2008).

² Where 1 is corresponding to “not satisfied” and 5 to “completely satisfied”.

and influencing the decisions or advocating for the stakeholders they represent (24%). Only in a few cases they are also contributing to the partnership budget (10% of replies)³.

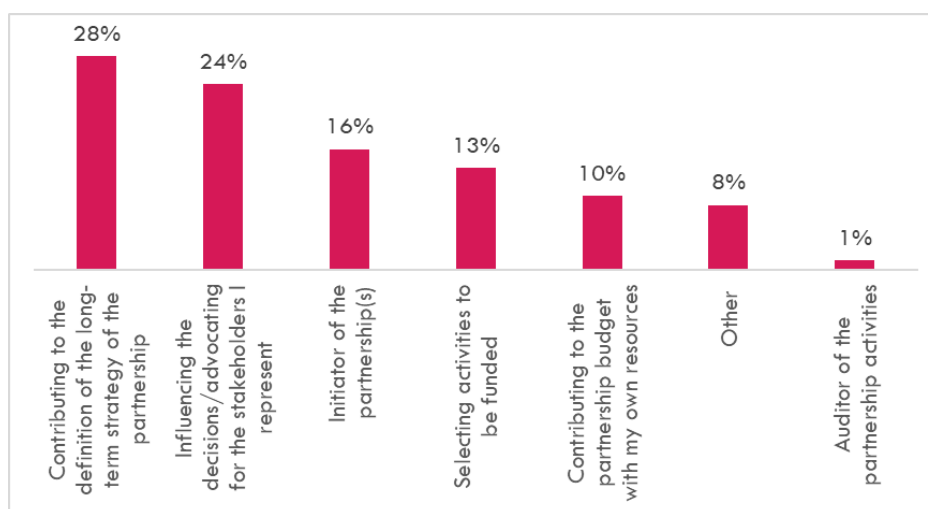


Figure 3 - Considering all the partnerships you are involved in, what is your main role?

Finally, respondents that have declared to have experience of working in partnerships provided an overview about the typology of stakeholders active in such initiatives. Figure 4 (below) highlights the huge variety of actors involved in the partnerships, with a predominance of academic entities, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

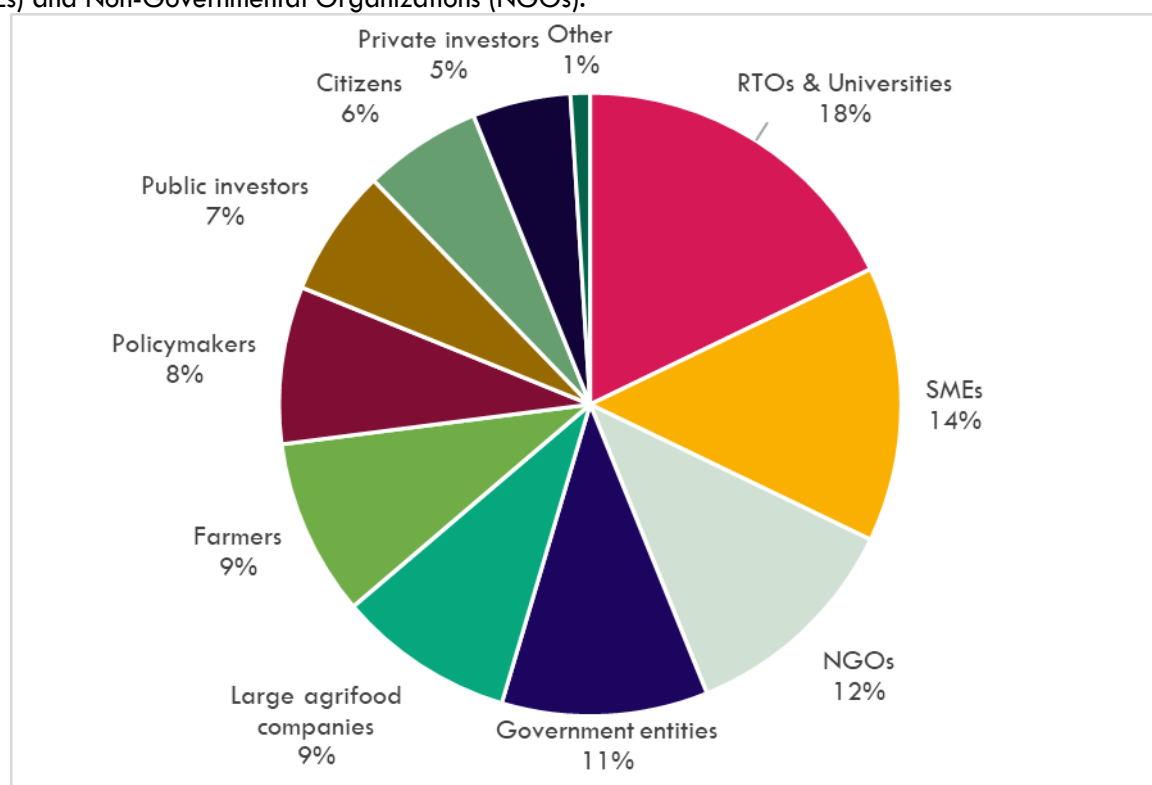


Figure 4 - Which other actors are involved in your partnership(s)?

In any case, **all respondents of the survey were asked if they were aware that the European Commission and Member States were launching a Sustainable Food Systems Partnership (FutureFoodS): the majority (63%) replied positively**, however, more than 1 out of 3 respondents is not aware of such initiative.

³ According to the explanations provided, under “Others” there are replies that can be easily redistributed in the options provided in the question, without changing the results showed in Figure 3.

Features of a partnership

Before focusing on the shapes and characteristics of an ideal SFS Partnership, people were questioned about the elements to work on for establishing it and the benefits they would gain from their participation.

Regarding the **first elements to focus on when building a partnership**, they prioritised the following options⁴:

1. **Funding** to support activities of actors external to the partnership governance (i.e., open calls, tenders, etc.) – 15%
2. A **clear and transparent governance** (i.e., to the public, to stakeholders, etc.) – 12%
3. A **democratic and inclusive decision process** (i.e., possibility of voting and being elected to the governing boards) – 12%
4. A **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda** (SRIA, a document containing the long-term R&I priorities for the Partnership) – 12%
5. **Involvement of both public and private entities** (i.e., public administrations, companies etc.) – 9%

Moreover, they replied that they the most important benefits they want to gain when joining a partnership are:

1. **Co-create new solutions** with other stakeholders – 18%
2. Contributing to have an **impact** (on society, environment, etc) – 16%
3. **Networking** – 15%
4. Being able to **achieve outcomes my organisation cannot achieve alone** – 15%
5. **Funding** – 12%

The SFS Partnership shape

Respondents were questioned about aspects concerning an ideal partnership on Sustainable Food Systems, being asked to provide insights on the research priorities, the motivations and barriers for joining the partnership and the communication channels that might be used. Data in this section is not referring yet in the potential involvement of respondents in the partnership (presented later).

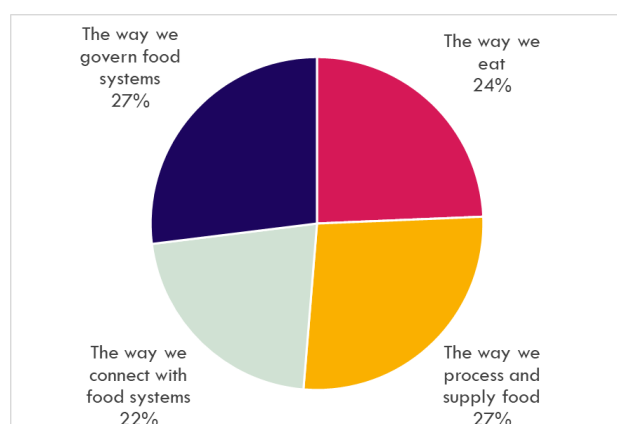


Figure 5 - What is the most urgent research topic which the Partnership should focus on to transform the food system?

In terms of research and innovation (R&I) priorities, respondents were almost equally divided among the ones identified by the current SRIA of the European SFS Partnership for People, Planet and Climate⁵, as showed by Figure 5.

Respondents had also the possibility to provide additional topics that – in their opinion – were not already covered by or falling in the provided categories of Figure 5.

The suggestions received⁶ could be summarised in the following topics:

- **Cross-cutting topics** to the 4 SRIA priorities:
 - Technical cross-cutting mechanism connecting all 4 topics and realise synergies, learnings between them and that could be applied
 - Digitization and data-based approaches

⁴ Options were provided in the survey in a casual order and participants could choose up to 3 statements.

⁵ SCAR, Sustainable Food Systems Partnership for People, Planet and Climate - Strategic Research And Innovation Agenda (SRIA), January 2023

⁶ In total, 19 replies were provided. The topics reported here are a result of re-elaboration and summary of the replies provided, that are integrally reported and consultable in Annex II.

- Change the way we teach about food
- **Impact**
 - Effects of climate change on the food structure and quality
 - Economic impact of proposed changes
- **Changing the way we develop and formulate food**
- **Policy dialogue**
 - The income situation or importance of improved policy coherence to support a meaningful transition to sustainable food systems
 - Create and channel value in the right direction: introduction of incentives and/or penalties
- **Acting at local level**
 - Supporting local food policy councils
 - Locally farming, locally process and locally market of products

Other suggestions were touching topics out of the scope of the SFS Partnership (i.e., soil health or primary production).

In terms of **motivations**, respondents listed the following options as **the most important ones to stimulate them in taking an active role in a SFS Partnership**:

1. **Working together with other stakeholders** for reaching sustainable solutions together – 28%
2. **Funding opportunities** for the organisations/stakeholders I represent – 24%
3. **The possibility to influence actions/decisions of other stakeholders** (i.e., policymakers, companies, etc.) – 21%
4. **Networking opportunities** – 21%
5. A commitment to **address a societal challenge** (i.e., climate change, food waste reduction, etc.) – 19%

Speaking about the **barriers**, respondents declared that the following ones are **the most important factors that might discourage them in having an active role in a SFS Partnership**:

1. **Lack of resources in my organisation** (i.e., small staff, not enough budget to dedicate to this activity, etc.) – 46%
2. The **presence of a fee/economic contribution for joining** the Partnership, that will be used to guarantee its financial sustainability – 24%
3. The **feeling of not being concerned to intervene at higher scales** (national, EU and international) – 10%
4. The **governance structure** (rules, government bodies, etc.) – 10%
5. The **active involvement of stakeholders from certain sectors or with certain priorities** in the Partnership governance – 7%

Participants were asked to identify **what are the stakeholders that should have a prominent role in a SFS**

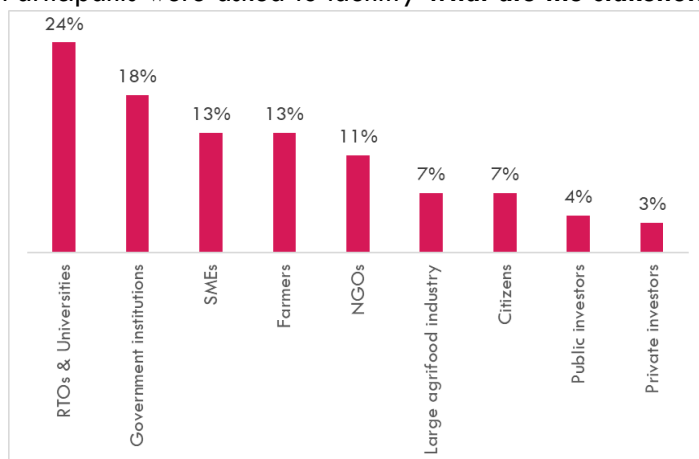


Figure 6 - What kind of stakeholder should have a prominent role in the Partnership SFS?

Partnership: according to them, **representatives from the academic sector should be the most important ones** (24%). After them, respondents declared that government institutions should have a key role, **meanwhile public and private investors are at the bottom of the list**, chosen in the 4% and 3% of cases. It must be reported that, from an analysis of data, around half of respondents of each category (researchers, NGOs representatives, etc.) selected themselves as an actor with a prominent role in the SFS Partnership (respondents had the possibility to select up to 3 options): then, the result achieved by RTOs and universities should also be read having in mind that the majority of respondents are representing the academic sector.

In terms of **communication channels**, respondents suggested that the most suitable ones to reach the ones they represent are:

1. Regular online **newsletters sent by the Partnership** – 30%
2. **Social media campaigns** – 25%
3. Organisation of **dedicated meetings/events with my members/entities** I represent – 22%
4. Participation in **conferences** – 20%
5. Participation in **large fairs and events** – 20%

Your involvement in the SFS Partnership

From a general discussion about the ideal SFS Partnership, the survey tried to investigate the willingness of respondents in having an active role in it, why and which one.

Overall, **the majority of people expressed their willingness of having a role in the SFS Partnership (62%)**, with only one respondent explicitly saying that is not interested. In any case, **one out of three people declared they do not know yet if they will be interested or not**.

People expressing their willingness to work in the SFS Partnership were asked to **explain the reason of their interest**, that can be summarised in the following four categories⁷.

- **To contribute with expertise and knowledge** (36%) they have on the food systems, both on an individual base or to bring the perspective of a group of stakeholders
- **The entity represented by the responded has an interest in the topic** (24%), because, for instance, it is in line with the entity's mission
- **Collaborating and sharing with other actors** (20%): willingness to co-create solutions and work in partnership, connecting with other initiatives (i.e., research in agriculture)
- **The topic/initiative is perceived as important** (20%), but without expressing any reference to specific actions they would like to undertake

In line with the motivation given, **respondents declared that in the SFS Partnership they would like to have a consultative role**.

Indeed, they expressed their willingness to be consulted (39%), in a more informal way, or being considered as a potential candidate for a Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB, 33%), to be consulted through a more formal process. Only in the 3% of cases, they expressed their availability in contributing to the SFS Partnership budget.

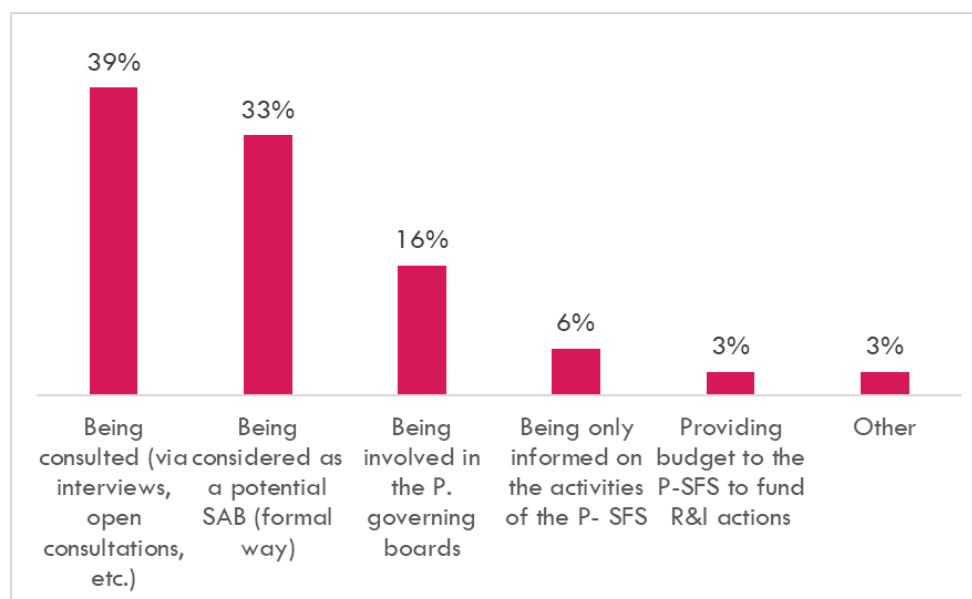


Figure 7 - Which role would you have?

⁷ In this question, 25 replies were collected.

6. Lessons learnt and recommendations

From the analysis of results, FOODPathS partners have extracted some assumptions and lessons to be used in the finalisation of the SFS Partnership prototype; they are presented together with possible follow-up actions to be implemented in the next months. Moreover, some other recommendations were elaborated and, in addition to the development of the prototype, they could be of interest for FutureFoodS, in case the initiative would consider potential improvements to the partnership structure and functioning.

6.1. Lessons learnt by FOODPathS

Partnership definition and meaning

One out of three respondents explained partnerships mentioning collaborative projects or networks, showing an understanding of the meaning in a broad sense, wider than the R&I Partnership definition given by the EC⁸. Such evidence has triggered FOODPathS partners to discuss the reasons behind this: is it because of the complexity of the topic? Because of the scarce clarity of the definition and examples provided in the survey? Should the “partnership” definition have been provided with more concrete and understandable examples? What is the role that FOODPathS should play in this context?

First of all, it should be clarified that, meanwhile the EC definition of R&I Partnership is quite strict (and related to specific and pre-defined cases, i.e., co-funded partnerships, institutionalised partnerships, etc.), **FOODPathS has a broader and more inclusive mission:** indeed, the project is asked **to create a prototype of a R&I SFS Partnership open to all food systems actors, that is as inclusive as possible. For this reason, the replies received are completely in line with the expectations** (and the definition of partnership provided in the survey): besides the R&I Partnerships of the EC (FutureFoodS, Agroecology Partnership, etc.), **stakeholders are working together to transform the European food systems through living labs, policy councils, EU-funded R&I projects and many more. Such initiatives cannot be excluded from the “partnership” definition** because they are not falling in the description provided by the EC: on the contrary, **they should be considered as “a different kind or level of partnerships”, that should dialogue and interact with the institutionalised initiatives of the EC.** Considering this and the mission of ensuring the inclusivity of all food systems actors, **FOODPathS can play the role of connecting this different level of partnership with the formal ones built by the EC:** this will provide complementary knowledge and expertise, contributing to the achievement of impacts and EU policies; ensure a continuous dialogue between institutional actors and the rest of the food systems stakeholders; create an environment to test case and experiment collaborative solutions, that can be then shared, transferred and upscaled elsewhere.

Possible follow-up actions:

- Discuss in more detail the role that FOODPathS can have in ensuring the dialogue between the EC R&I Partnerships and the large variety of different partnerships of stakeholders currently ongoing, with the aim to ensure the largest inclusion possible of all different voices. The discussion will also elaborate more on how this role could be played by FOODPathS after the closure of the project (November 2025)⁹.
- Improve the communication about the different shades of “partnership”, with the aim to clarify the topic for the food systems actors and stimulate further reflections. This can be done through the realisation for new communication materials (i.e., a glossary on the website, a factsheet, etc.) or it could be addressed through the activities that FOODPathS is currently developing, such as webinars and podcasts.

⁸ “European Partnerships bring the European Commission and private and/or public partners together to address some of Europe’s most pressing challenges through concerted research and innovation initiatives. They are a key implementation tool of Horizon Europe, and contribute significantly to achieving the EU’s political priorities. By bringing private and public partners together, European Partnerships help to avoid the duplication of investments and contribute to reducing the fragmentation of the research and innovation landscape in the EU.” EC, *European Partnerships in Horizon Europe*, [EC website](#), November 2024.

⁹ Moreover, this is also in line with the comments received from the EC’s independent reviewers when assessing FOODPathS’ activities in its first 18 months.



- Examples of partnerships provided by respondents could be taken into account and, in case, increase the number of case studies already mapped by FOODPathS.

Collaboration is the most relevant benefit for working in a partnership

Three out of five of the benefits perceived to work in a partnership are about collaboration with other actors, for instance to co-create new solutions, achieve outcomes together that would be harder (or impossible) to address alone and for enlarging the network. Such evidence is completely in line with what already emerged from other FOODPathS activities (i.e., in the mapping of case studies) and other surveys or interviews asking for the added values of European collaboration¹⁰. In order to realise this, **an ideal partnership requires a good collaborative environment, that, together with the provision of a funding mechanism** (the first element to focus on), **it should prioritise the openness of participation**: indeed, three out of the five most important aspects to work on when establishing a partnership are a transparent governance system, an inclusive process in its set-up process and the involvement of all actors¹¹. Survey results show a strong request for an open and inclusive environment to ease the realisation of long-term collaborations.

Possible follow-up actions:

- Further discuss the concrete actions and requirements to establish a collaborative environment (through next workshops and Mirror Group meetings).

A minor role for public and private investors in a partnership

According to results, investors, both public and private, are at the end of the list of the stakeholders that should have a prominent role in a SFS Partnership. This raises critical concerns.

The first one is procedural: **if the funding mechanism is the priority when setting up a partnership, then it is strange that investors have not a key role**. Unless the governmental institutions (in the second position in the list of most relevant stakeholders) are automatically considered also as the ones that should fund partnership activities. Even in this case, there is a scarce consideration for the private investors, including foundations, and it is in contrast with the concept of inclusivity.

The lack of perception in the relevance for investors (that can ensure the budget for the R&I activities) **compared with the one that researchers should have** (the actors that should be involved in the implementation of R&I activities) **could raise doubts on the collaborative spirit of such a partnership**. Indeed, researchers could be perceived as the ones that should do the job of transforming food systems using money received, meanwhile investors should only provide funds to make this happen. Of course, this is an extreme and provocative case, but the implications of these results should be further investigated and being considered as a red flag for the establishment of a proper collaborative environment. This is also contradictory to the latest evolvments of the EU Partnership instruments as such, since only recently research performing organisations are meant to be part of e.g. co-funded partnerships, which have in the past been formed solely by research funding organisations.

Finally, this unbalance in the perceived importance of stakeholders should push a future FOODPathS **to investigate more the success factors, lessons learned and issues faced by other partnerships that have a prominent role of both public and private investors**, such as the Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU).

Possible follow-up actions:

¹⁰ This feedback is common in almost all surveys done in the past with ERA-Net partners and funded projects, as well also in the impact assessment of such initiatives (please, see: *Analysis of ERA-NET Cofund actions under Horizon 2020*, EC DG-RTD, 2016), Moreover, this is emerging also in the results of the FOODPathS mapping activities (*Report of mapping results*, D2.1), published also in the scientific article *Co-creation for the transition to sustainable food systems: insights from 52 case studies in Europe*, H. de Vries et al., *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 14 August 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2024.1399275>

¹¹ Also in line with results contained in the FOODPathS deliverable *Report on trade-offs and co-benefits* (D7.1, 2023) and in the article *Towards sustainable food systems: a review of governance models and an innovative conceptual framework*, M. Donner, M. Mames and H. de Vries, *Discover Sustainability*, 16 November 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-024-00648-x>

- Investigate how partnerships have succeeded in achieving a more balanced participation of actors, in particular of the public and private investors.
- Further discuss how to raise awareness among food systems actors about the importance of the role of public and private investors.

A wide range of stakeholders are willing to support with their (different) expertise

Although the 62% of respondents expressed interest in **having a role in the future partnership, they prefer mainly to be of support**, bring consulted (39%) or being considered as potential members of the SAB (33%). This is in line with the motivations gathered concerning the interest they have in the topic and the willingness in sharing their knowledge.

Again, **this confirms the existence of a wide range of voices outside the SFS Partnership that want to participate somehow in the food systems transformation.** However, considering the limitations that the R&I Partnership set by the EC could have (in terms of rules of participation, organisational limitations – i.e., the number of people that could be involved in a SAB –, resources, etc.) **it is important to not waste this knowledge and commitment. In this context, FOODPathS can keep playing the role of the collector of such voices and the bridge with the SFS Partnership, even after the ending of the project.** Thanks to this, FOODPathS can represent a safe environment for discussing, testing and piloting options and solutions.

At the same time, **data shows that only 16% of preferences from respondents are expressing interest in participating in the governance of the partnership, sensibly lower compared to data about supportive roles.** The reasons behind this difference should be investigated. Of course, the effort required, and the scarcity of resources can represent barriers for a more intense commitment, however, there could be other explanations (i.e., the lack of information on roles and rules in participating in the partnership governing system, the lack of involvement of certain stakeholders in the partnership creation phase, etc.).

Possible follow-up actions:

- Discuss and plan actions to ensure the connection and the exchange between the SFS Partnership and the food systems stakeholders, also reflecting on the role that FOODPathS can play.
- Investigate the reasons behind the low interest in taking a role in the partnership governance participation.

6.2. Recommendations for FutureFoodS

Survey results inspired also reflections on possible actions that might be considered by the ongoing SFS Partnership to improve its own work. The are resumed in the following points:

- **Ensure transparency and openness to stimulate the participation in the partnership:** respondents that have never joined a partnership indicated the lack of transparency and opportunities as main reasons. This could be achieved through improvement in communication about the partnership scopes and activities, also providing more information about its funding mechanisms, how to contribute to it, etc.
- **Increasing opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the partnership work:** from the survey, it emerges that stakeholders of the food systems are moved by a strong willingness to support the partnership activities. To take advantage of this, FutureFoodS could clarify and promote what are the “entry points” point for food systems actors to provide their feedback and ideas, establishing a structured and a long-term dialogue. In this case, a reflection on how to realise this and with which methodology and tools could be started, also taking advantage from the work conducted by FOODPathS (i.e., best practices collected through the mapping of case studies, results from the Mirror Group meetings, etc.). Activities implemented would also address the stakeholders’ request for more transparency and openness.
- **Reduce the burden for participation:** another obstacle to the stakeholders’ participation is constituted by the lack of resources (46% of cases, an additional 24% of replies indicated the presence of fee or economic contribution to join as a barrier). Even if this is not an issue entirely in the hands of the partnership, maybe it would be worth to explore if there are any other ways to work together with food systems actors and/or make a more effective use of resources to ease their participation.

- **Considering suggestions received for improving the SFS Partnership SRIA:** even if some of the R&I topics suggested by the respondents are already covered by the SRIA and some of them are out of the scope of the SFS Partnership (i.e., soil health), FutureFoodS might have a more punctual look at the proposals received, in order to improve and enrich future calls for funding or to consider joint activities with other partnerships and initiatives.
- **Communication activities to increase awareness on FutureFoodS and its impacts:** even if >60% of respondents already know the concept of partnerships, one out of three has never heard about FutureFoodS. For this reason, additional communication activities could be conducted to improve the visibility of the partnership. The top 5 actions rated by the respondents are quite “classical” (newsletters, meetings with stakeholders’ representatives and networks, presentations in events and participation in fairs) but, among these, there is the suggestion to run social media campaigns. In this case, in addition to a more formal and institutional LinkedIn account, FutureFoodS could aim to reach a wider audience using other social media platforms to inform about the scopes of the initiatives carried out and the long-term impact it can generate in the society. Moreover, this could help also to clarify what is the meaning of a R&I Partnership in the EC jargon.

7. Conclusion and next steps

The survey represented an additional consultative tool implemented by the FOODPathS project, complementing other means such as workshops, case studies mapping, Mirror Groups, etc. Running in a crucial moment (one year before the launch of the partnership prototype and in the first months of FutureFoodS), the survey supported FOODPathS with new points of views and insights, that can be used in the last stages of the SFS Partnership prototype definition.

On one hand, **the survey highlighted once again the widespread willingness of stakeholders to contribute and support the works of a partnership committed to transforming the food systems through research, innovation, policy and education.** Being aware of the limitations that an EC's R&I Partnership under Horizon Europe can have, as well as the lack of resources of stakeholders, the results of the survey let emerge the need of overcoming these barriers and connecting the different voices and needs of the food systems actors. In such a context, **FOODPathS can facilitate the discussion among stakeholders, gather expertise and experience from all voices in the food systems, and be a safe environment to test-case new solutions to improve the functioning of the partnership prototype:** results can be then transferred to the SFS Partnership to improve their work and activities. These considerations should be further discussed by FOODPathS, in order to shape the role that it could play in the future and how, in particular after the project closure.

On the other hand, **the survey helped to raise new or refine existing questions that should be still addressed by FOODPathS before officially launching the SFS Partnership prototype** (foreseen in May 2025). Indeed, results will be shared and used to guide the last stage of the discussion with stakeholders (starting from the workshop “*FOODPathS to the Sustainable Food Systems we envision*”, that will take place in Budapest on 3-4 December 2024). Moreover, results were also discussed in terms of improvement of FOODPathS activities, such as the communication ones, inspiring potential updates of the plans (i.e., in the topics for the webinars episodes and the podcast series).

Finally, the survey helped also to trigger a FOODPathS internal discussion on if all the voices from food systems were adequately represented and consulted, opening up the door to possible additional investigation activities in the next months and years.



Annex I – The survey

In this annex, the full structure of the survey is reported. Additional information about the typology of each question is reported at the beginning, in parentheses and in purple. The optional replies are mentioned: when not explicitly mentioned, the question should be considered mandatory.

Building a Partnership for Sustainable Food Systems: your feedback

About FOODPathS & this survey

This survey is run by the FOODPathS project (funded by the European Union through the Horizon Europe Programme), which aims to prepare the ground for the future Partnership on Sustainable Food Systems (Partnership SFS). This Partnership will play a crucial role in reaching the sustainability ambitions stated in the Farm-to-Fork Strategy and its overarching EU Green Deal, through the funding and implementation of research and innovation (R&I) initiatives. Indeed, the Partnership will have a budget) and a funding mechanism to select R&I projects through open calls (i.e., Horizon Europe, CBE JU, etc.), based on priorities defined in a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). In the selected R&I projects, the Partnership will unite many different actors at local, regional, national, European and global levels, to jointly make the transition towards SFS a success both locally and EU-wide.

More concretely, FOODPathS is building the prototype of the future Partnership, including the topics on which the Partnership focuses, which activities they support, where these activities can be performed and when. For more information about the project, you can visit the website (www.foodpaths.eu) and read this [short leaflet](#).

The survey

With this survey, we would like to know your opinions about working in partnerships and your ideas on how a European Partnership aiming to transform the food systems should look like, such that it will also be of interest for you to participate. The information gathered will help us to better develop the Partnership SFS and to have a better understanding of how to involve and motivate stakeholders.

General information about your organisation

[Multiple choice, max 1] Which type of actor do you represent?

- Large agrifood industry
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Research centres and universities
- Farmers
- NGOs
- Policymakers
- Citizens/civil society
- Private investors (i.e., banks, foundations, etc.)
- Public investors (i.e., development agencies)
- Other (Specify)

[Multiple choices, max 1] At which level is your organisation mainly acting?

- Local/regional
- National
- EU
- International
 - If “National” option is selected: Which country?



Your experience in working in partnerships

What do we mean by “Partnership”?

A Partnership is “characterized by shared goals, common purpose, mutual respect and willingness to negotiate and cooperate, informed participation, information giving and shared decision making” (Casey, 2008).

Currently, there are several examples of “partnerships” at local/regional, national, European and global level that are working together to transform the food systems. For example, one of these is the [BIOEAST Initiative](#), which gathers policymakers and researchers of Eastern European countries collectively having the goal of developing and sharing a bioeconomy vision with their member states and national strategies. They have collectively set up a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and foster transparent communication on their functioning and actions. Another example, at smaller level, is represented by the [Pole Mer Méditerranée](#), that unites different stakeholder groups in the French Mediterranean Basin: they all share a blue economy vision and join forces in sustainability-oriented projects.

[Yes/No question] Having read the description of what we mean by “partnership”, do you think you have ever worked in a partnership?

- **If no**
 - **[Open end, optional]** Why?
 - **[Yes/No question]** Have you ever considered joining a partnership?
 - No
 - Yes
- **If yes**
 - **[Multiple choices, max 1]** How many partnerships are you involved in?
 - 1
 - 2-4
 - 5-10
 - More
 - **[Open end, optional]** Could you please list some of the partnerships you are involved in? Feel free to add links
 - **[Multiple choices, no limitations]** Considering all the partnerships you are involved in, what is your main role?
 - Initiator of the partnership
 - Influencing the decisions/advocating for the stakeholders I represent
 - Selecting activities to be funded; contributing to the partnership budget with my own resources; auditor of the partnership activities
 - Contributing to the definition of the long-term strategy of the partnership
 - Other (specify)
 - **[Multiple choices, no limitations]** Which other actors are involved in your partnership(s)?
 - Large agrifood companies
 - Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
 - Research centres and universities; farmers
 - NGOs
 - Government entities
 - Policymakers
 - Citizens; private investors (i.e., banks, foundations, etc.)
 - Public investors (i.e., development agencies)
 - Other (specify)
 - **[Multiple choices, up to 3]** On which level/s is/do the partnership(s) you are involved in operate?
 - Exclusively local/regional
 - Mainly local/regional
 - Exclusively national; mainly national



- Exclusively European
- Mainly European; exclusively international
- Mainly international
- All levels
- *[Rating]* What is your general satisfaction in participating in partnerships (averaged across the partnerships you are involved in)?
From 1 (not satisfied) – to 5 (completely satisfied)
- *[Yes/No question]* Are you aware that the European Commission and Member States are launching a Sustainable Food Systems Partnership (called FutureFoodS)?

Features of the Partnership

In this section of the survey, we are asking your opinion on how a partnership should function.

[Multiple choices, up to 3] if you should be asked to set up a Partnership, what elements would you focus on first?

- Funding to support activities of actors external to the partnership governance (i.e., open calls, tenders, etc.)
- A clear and transparent governance (i.e., to the public, to stakeholders, etc.)
- A democratic and inclusive decision process (i.e., possibility of voting and being elected to the governing boards)
- Mechanisms to actively include neglected stakeholders
- A Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA, a document containing the long-term R&I priorities for the Partnership)
- Provide the possibility to contribute to the partnership strategic orientation (i.e., contributing to the SRIA definition)
- Actions to define and address educational needs and skill gaps in the specific sector
- Involvement of both public and private entities (i.e., public administrations, companies, etc.)
- Representation of diverse stakeholder views
- Focusing on multiple/all levels of application (local, national, European, international)
- A mechanism to provide networking opportunities to stakeholders
- Address the existing cultural differences (among stakeholders, countries/regions, etc.)
- Other (please indicate)

[Multiple choices, up to 3] What are the main benefits you expect from joining a partnership?

- Reputation (people's impression of my organisation is more positive thanks to participation in the partnership)
- Visibility (more people know about my organisation)
- Funding
- Networking
- Contributing to have an impact (on society, environment, etc)
- Co-create new solutions with other stakeholders
- Influence strategy/decisions of the partnership
- Increase my organisation's knowledge
- Improve the way my organisation informs citizens
- Being able to achieve outcomes my organisation cannot achieve alone
- Being one of the first to be updated on the main developments in a specific sector
- Other (specify)

SFS Partnership shape

In this section of the survey, we are asking your opinion on how a Partnership on Sustainable Food Systems should look like.

[Multiple choices, up to 2] What is the most urgent research topic which the Partnership should focus on to transform the food system?

- **Change the way we eat** (transition to sustainable, healthy diets)
- **Change the way we process and supply food** (supply-and demand-driven R&I topics reorienting the activities in post-farming and post-fishing to reach sustainable healthy diets)
- **Change the way we connect with food systems** (citizen engagement and consumer trust in reoriented food systems delivering sustainable diets)
- **Change the way we govern food systems** (leverage points for local, national, EU and global transition pathways, public procurement, etc.)

[Open end, optional] Considering the topics you saw in the previous question, do you think there is any priority that is missing"

[Multiple choices, up to 3] What would motivate you to take an active role in a sustainable food systems Partnership?

- Being regularly consulted on the Partnership's SFS long-term strategy
- Transparent decision making
- The fact that the Partnership takes into account the existing European food cultural diversity
- The possibility of being involved in the Partnership since the very beginning (and not only in a later stage when everything is already set-up and decided)
- The possibility of being democratically elected in its governing bodies
- Working together with other stakeholders for reaching sustainable solutions together
- A balanced representation of all relevant stakeholders
- Funding opportunities for the organisations/stakeholders I represent
- The presence of mechanisms to actively include underrepresented stakeholders
- Receiving enough visibility for my entity
- Networking opportunities
- A commitment to address a societal challenge (i.e., climate change, food waste reduction, etc.)
- Increase the credibility of my entity through the participation in a partnership
- The possibility to influence actions/decisions of other stakeholders (i.e., policymakers, companies, etc.)
- Other opportunities (events, networking, education, etc)
- Other (specify)

[Multiple choices, up to 2] What could prevent you from joining a SFS Partnership?

- The active involvement of stakeholders from certain sectors or with certain priorities in the Partnership governance
- Lack of resources in my organisation (i.e., small staff, not enough budget to dedicate to this activity, etc.)
- The feeling of not being concerned to intervene at higher scales (national, EU and international)
- The governance structure (rules, government bodies, etc.)
- The presence of a fee/economic contribution for joining the Partnership, that will be used to guarantee its financial sustainability
- The fact that I could not be involved in the initial establishment of the Partnership (and I do not want to join in a second stage)
- Other (specify)

[Multiple choices, up to 2] What kind of stakeholder should have a prominent role in the Partnership SFS?

- Large agrifood industry
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- research centres and universities
- farmers
- NGOs
- Government institutions
- Citizens
- private investors (i.e., banks, foundations, etc.)
- public investors (i.e., development agencies)

[Multiple choices, up to 4] In your opinion, what are the best communication channels a SFS Partnership should use to reach the stakeholders you represent?

- Regular online newsletters sent by the Partnership
- Inclusion of news items in my own organisation's newsletter(s)
- Social media campaigns
- Organisation of dedicated meetings/events with my members/entities I represent
- Participation in conferences
- Communication provided from an institutional actor (i.e., the national/regional government)
- Giving visibility to my organisation in the governing board of the Partnership SFS
- Partnership SFS Website
- Participation in large fairs and events
- Publication of articles in specialised/sectorial journals (including the ones I publish for stakeholders I represent)
- Being a guest in podcast episodes
- Launch a Partnership SFS podcast
- Publication of articles/news about the Partnership SFS in my website/social media
- Other (specify)

Your potential involvement in the Partnership SFS

[Multiple choices, max 1] When the Partnership SFS will be created, would you be interested in having a role/being involved in it?

- I don't know
- No
 - **If no:** *[Open end, optional]* Why?
- Yes
 - **If yes:**
 - *[Open end, optional]* Why?
 - *[Multiple choices, max 1]* Which role would you have?
 - Being consulted (via interviews, open consultations, etc.)
 - Being involved in the Partnership governing boards
 - Being considered as a potential member of a Stakeholder Advisory Board (being consulted in a structured and formal way by the Partnership governing boards)
 - Providing budget to the Partnership SFS to fund R&I actions
 - Being only informed on the activities of the Partnership SFS

Before submitting...

Thanks very much for having filled in this survey and contributing to shape the European Partnership on Sustainable Food Systems!



If you are interested in FOODPathS, you can follow our activities on our [website](#), on LinkedIn and Twitter (looking for #FOODPathS or on @SciFoodHealth accounts) and on the [Sustainable Food Systems Network](#) community. You can also register to the FOODPathS database and receive information about news, events, publications, opportunities coming from the project.

[Yes/No question, optional] Would you like to register to the FOODPathS database?

- **If yes:** please, insert your email

For information about our privacy practices, please read our Privacy policy [here](#).

You can unsubscribe at any time by clicking the link in the footer of our emails. You can also send as an email to info@foodpaths.eu.

We use Mailchimp as our marketing platform. By clicking to subscribe, you acknowledge that your information will be transferred to Mailchimp for processing. [Learn more about Mailchimp's privacy practices here.](#)

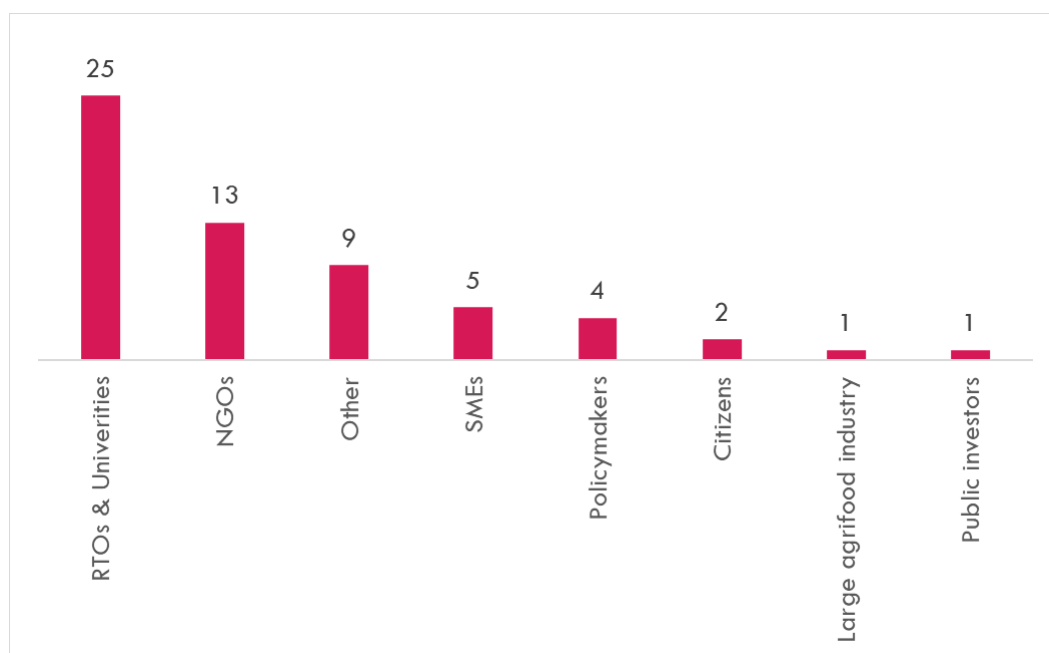


Annex II – Survey results

General information about your organisation

Which type of actor do you represent?

Which type of actor do you represent?	Total
Research centres and universities	25
NGOs	13
Other	9
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	5
Policymakers	4
Citizens/civil society	2
Large agrifood industry	1
Public investors (i.e., development agencies)	1
Grand Total	60



If "Other":

Business and innovation consultants

Citizens, public servants, policy makers

Consultant writer

European technology platform

European Technology Platform (multi actor not for profit private membership platform)

Governmental organisation

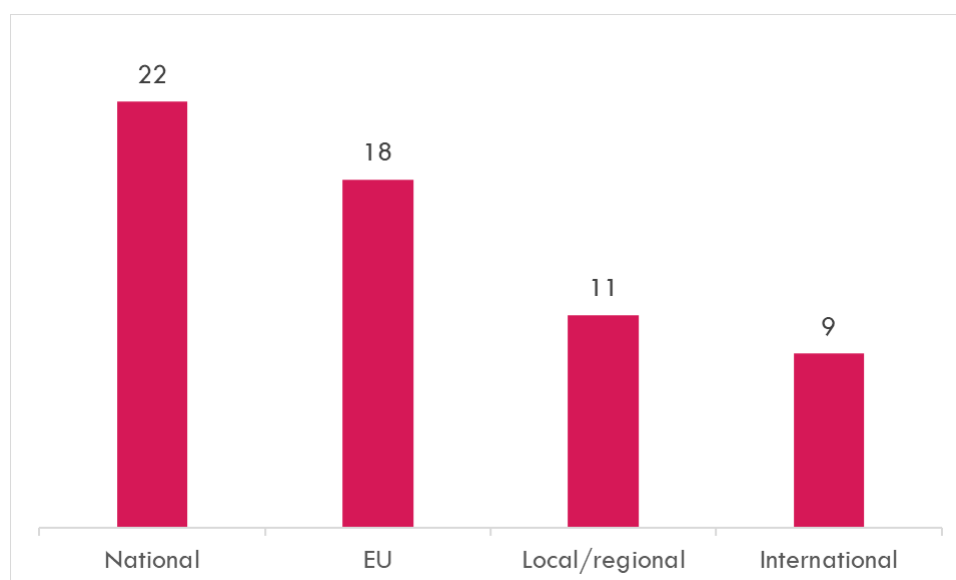


Funded by
the European Union

Private Research Association
Public Association
Startup & open innovation accelerator

At which level is your organisation mainly acting?

At which level is your organisation mainly acting?	Total
National	22
EU	18
Local/regional	11
International	9
Grand Total	60



If at national level, in which country?

At which level is your organisation mainly acting?	Which country?	Total
National	Germany	8
	Italy	2
	Spain	2
	Austria	1
	Czech Republic	1
	Denmark	1
	Estonia	1
	France	1
	Ireland	1
	Kenya	1

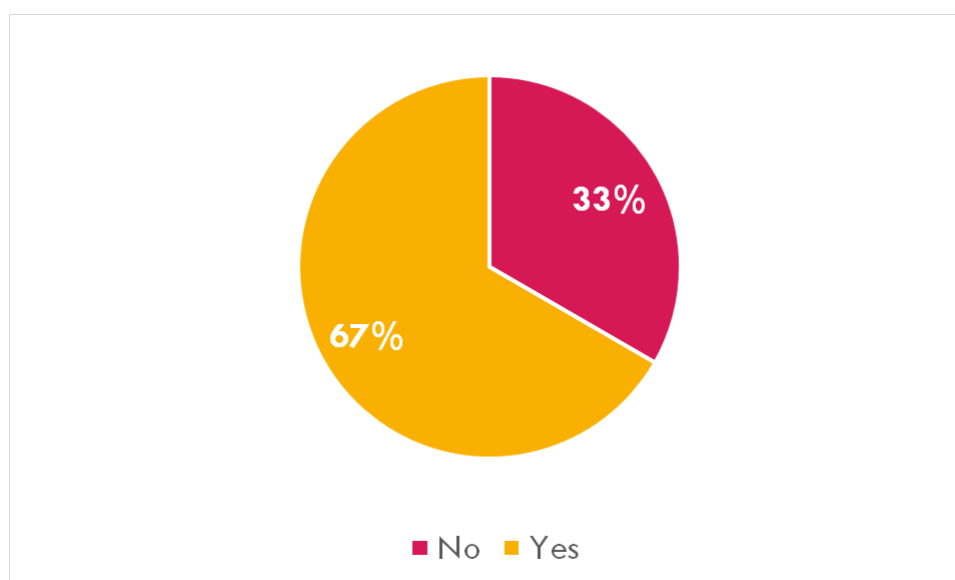


	Slovakia	1
	Slovenia	1
	Switzerland	1
National Total		22

Your experience in working in partnerships

Having read the description of what we mean by “partnership”, do you think you have ever worked in a partnership?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	40	67%
No	20	33%
Grand Total	60	100%



If No; why?

Why?
Era-net
I am a particular
I have worked in a partnership when I was working outside the university. It was a partnership based on agroecological initiatives from catalonia
I participated in a project as a guest researcher in 2016, however I did not know well about the "partnership" as defined above
My organisation is coordinating a network of ngos
No chance at the moment
No opportunity.
None operation in my country, have large projects that seek to transform the food system that involve researchers and industry but policy makers and primary producers and other key actors not partners in such projects. Current partnerships (Agroecology, a

Not enough information

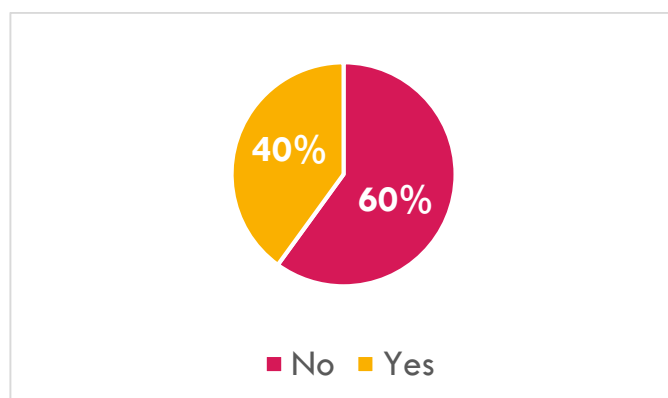
What do you mean by "worked in"? I never participated in designing and running a partnership, but i did participate to actions etc from partnerships

Summary and interpretation of the replies collected:

- Not aware of partnerships as defined in the survey
- No opportunity at the moment
- Partnerships not inclusive in my country: they are run by certain stakeholders (i.e., policymakers and primary producers) that are excluding others (i.e., researchers and industry)
- Not enough information
- Not in the design and running a partnership, but I did participate to actions etc from partnerships

If NO; Have you ever considered joining a partnership?

Have you ever considered joining a partnership?	Total
No	12
Yes	8
Total	20



If YES; Why did you not join it at the end?

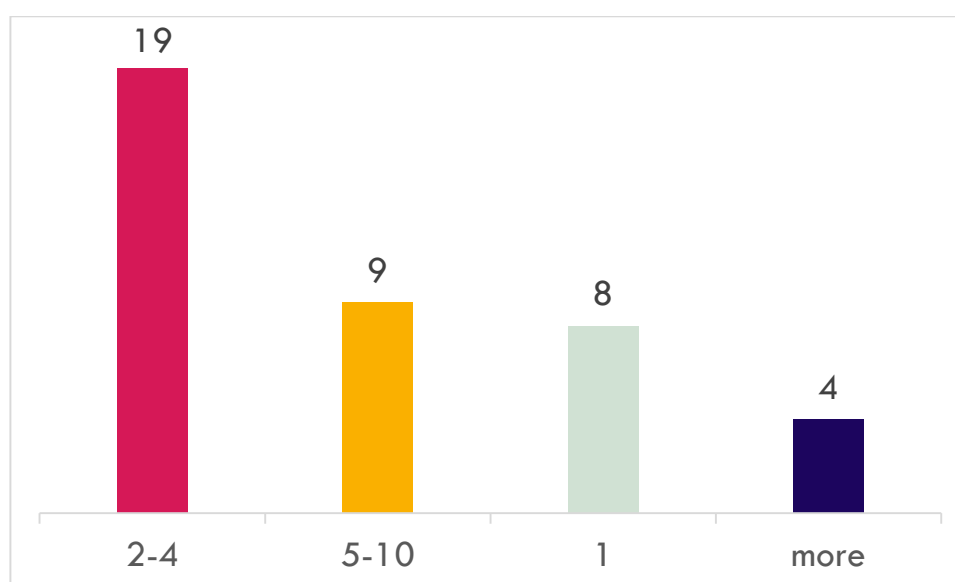
Why did you not join it at the end?
Different sector
It is because of the lack of information
Less resources
No opportunity
No possibilities so far
Not enough information
Other priorities in my work environment
We were not invited.

Summary and interpretation of the replies collected:

- Lack of information
- Lack of resources
- I had other priorities
- I wasn't invited to join

If YES; How many partnerships are you involved in??

How many partnerships are you involved in?	Total
2-4	19
5-10	9
1	8
More	4
Total	40



If YES; Could you please list some of the partnerships you are involved in?

Could you please list some of the partnerships you are involved in? Feel free to add links
AGROECOLOGY (European R&I partnership under Horizon Europe)
Agroecology Partnership
Alaska Food Policy Council, Community Food Webs COP, No More Empty Pots Omaha, FIELD, Wallace Center, FLEDGE,
Animal Health & Welfare, Sustainable Blue Economy, Energy Transition, AAC, National Clusters, S3 / TSSP Programme.
Biodievrsa+, Agroecology
Buy better food

Colead, ITC, PAQI, AQP, ARSO
DIL, WR, KU Leuven, Fraunhofer, AU, AINIA, VUPP; SGGW, etc
EIT Food, LI Food
ERA4Health, AGROECOLOGY
ETP
FOOD2030, Disposable Identities Community
FoSSNet, FOSTER
https://feasts-innovation.eu/ ; https://www.eitfood.eu/ ; https://fermentedfoods.eu/ ; https://www.fermentsdutfutur.eu/
https://innoprotein.eu/
https://www.cohilo.de/de/unser-ansatz/
https://www.wur.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/kennisonline-onderzoeksprojecten-lvvn/kennisonline/regenomics-assessing-the-cost-benefits-of-the-transition-towards-regenerative-arable-farming-in-europe.htm
ICT-AGRI-FOOD, SusCrop, Agriculture of Data, FutureFoodS, Agroecology, ERA-GAS, SusAn
I'd rather not
Impact Diabetes B2B, CDP-CDP
In FUSILLI project, we are 12 cities working on partnership at local level. All of us with the same objective: Transforming the food system. https://fusilli-project.eu/
Increase, pilot projects
INNOPROTEIN (https://innoprotein.eu)
JPI HDHL, JPI FACCE
National and EU research projects
national partnerships in food sector, FutureFoodS, FOODPathS
Navarre360 is the main one I think of personally, but colleagues have more examples
networks focusing on special topics, project partnerships in research and development
Partnership for sustainable public procurement in Europe, to manage a project for short supply chains support, to implement local canteens,...
PRIMA
Producers of fruit and vegetables including their unions.
Professional association, R&D consortium
projects in Food Science
Research projects
ROSETTA, agroBRIDGES, BEATLES
SchoolFood4Change (https://schoolfood4change.eu/) , Rome Food Council; Buy Better Food
The Danish Food Partnership for Health and Climate; The Danish Healthy Food Council; The Danish Wholegrain Partnership; and FutureFoodS
TITAN project (Horizon Europe funded consortium involving mixture of universities, research centres and SMEs)

Urban Food Systems Coalition; Transforming Urban and Rural Food Systems Consortium; OnePlanet; UrbanFresh Consortium; various knowledge partnerships and bilateral/multilateral partnerships

Wir haben es satt (<https://www.wir-haben-es-satt.de/>), Ernährungswende Anpacken

Summary of the replies collected:

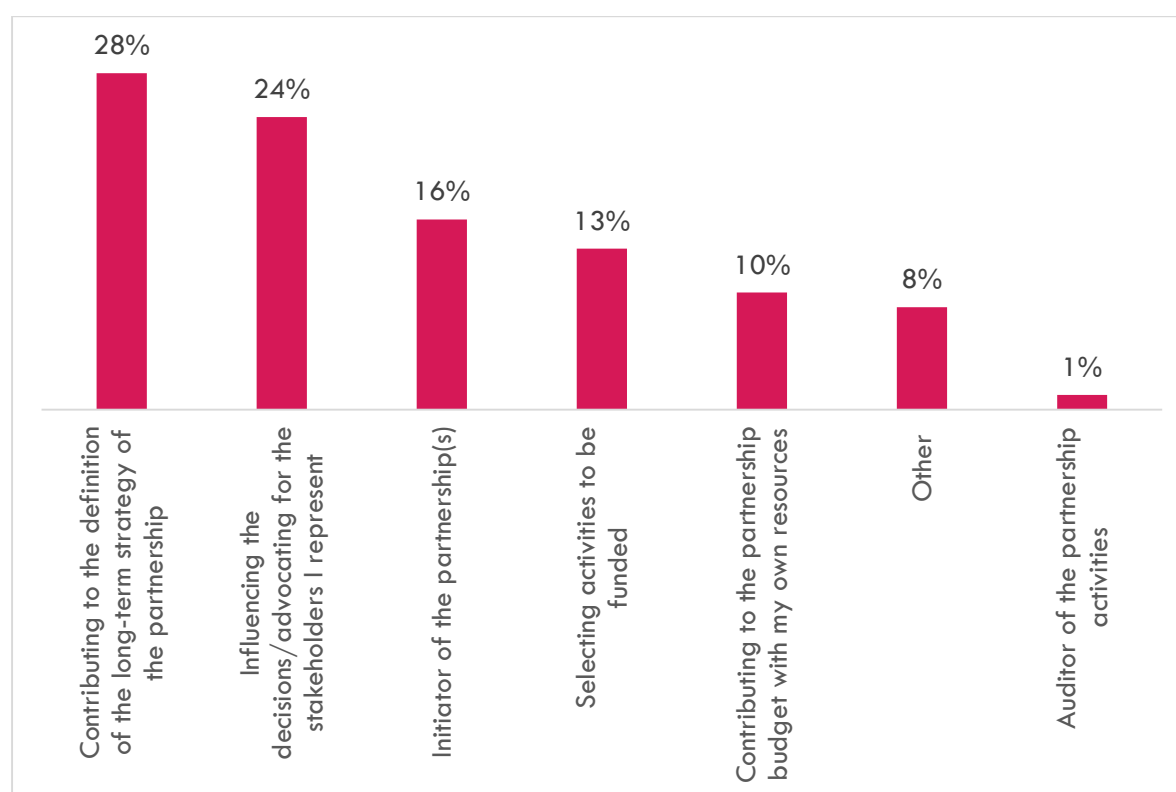
Total replies: 40

Replies that mentioned projects/networks as a partnership (in yellow): 13 (32,5%)

Most mentioned partnerships: EIT Food, Agroecology, FutureFoodS

If YES; Considering all the partnerships you are involved in, what is your main role?

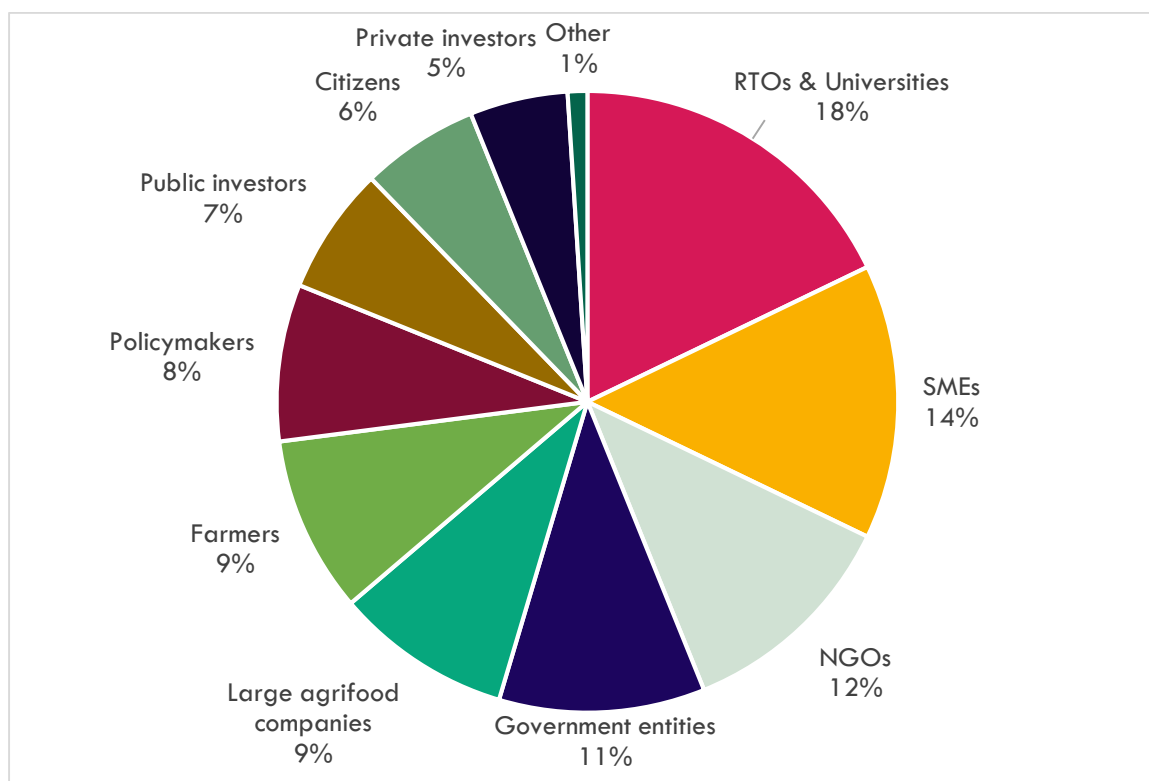
Main role	Sum	Percent
Contributing to the definition of the long-term strategy of the partnership	23	28%
Influencing the decisions/advocating for the stakeholders I represent	20	24%
Initiator of the partnership(s)	13	16%
Selecting activities to be funded	11	13%
Contributing to the partnership budget with my own resources	8	10%
Other	7	8%
Auditor of the partnership activities	1	1%
Grand Total	83	100%



If “Other”:
Providing advice and suggestions
Research
Project management
Moderation of activities ; watch ; fostering collaboration with startups
Evaluating the efficiency and functionality of the innovative actions implemented.
I work for the same unit as Annika Fuchs. I am a funder and member of the coordination teams of AgData and ICT-AGRI-FOOD and am leader of WPs, am involved in writing/updating the SRIA etc.
Voluntary advice and support

If YES; Which other actors are involved in your partnership(s)?

Which other actors are involved in your partnership(s)?	Sum	Percent
Research centres and universities	35	18%
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	28	14%
NGOs	23	12%
Government entities	21	11%
Farmers	18	9%
Large agrifood companies	18	9%
Policymakers	16	8%
Public investors (i.e., development agencies)	13	7%
Citizens	12	6%
Private investors (i.e., banks, foundations, etc.)	10	5%
Other	2	1%
Grand Total	196	100%



If "Other":

Well, what means involved? We involve multifold stakeholders, but beneficiaries are less multifold

Start-ups, consultants, chambers of agriculture

If YES; On which level/s is/do the partnership(s) you are involved in operate?

On which level/s is/do the partnership(s) you are involved in operate?	Count
Mainly European	20
Mainly local/regional	13
Mainly national	11
All levels	7
Mainly international	6
Exclusively local/regional	3
Exclusively European	3

If YES; What is your general satisfaction in participating in partnerships (averaged across the partnerships you are involved in)?

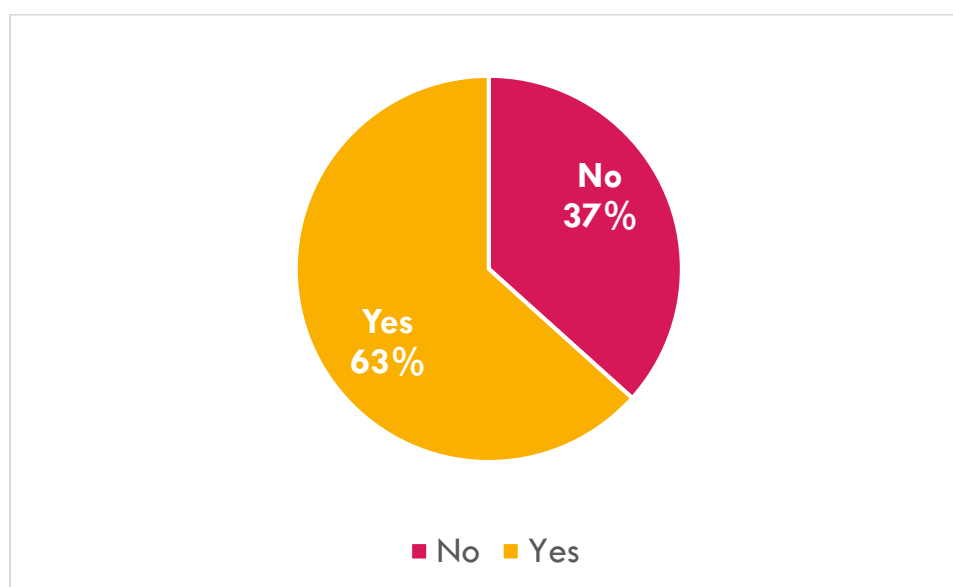
(1: not satisfied – 5: completely satisfied)

Average: 3.9



Are you aware that the European Commission and Member States are launching a Sustainable Food Systems Partnership (called FutureFoodS)?

Are you aware that the European Commission and Member States are launching a Sustainable Food Systems Partnership (called FutureFoodS)?	Total
Yes	38
No	22
Total	60



Features of the Partnership

If you should be asked to set up a Partnership, what elements would you focus on first?

Elements	Count	Percent
Funding to support activities of actors external to the partnership governance (i.e., open calls, tenders, etc.)	26	15%
A clear and transparent governance (i.e., to the public, to stakeholders, etc.)	20	12%
A democratic and inclusive decision process (i.e., possibility of voting and being elected to the governing boards)	20	12%
A Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA, a document containing the long-term R&I priorities for the Partnership)	20	12%
Involvement of both public and private entities (i.e., public administrations, companies etc.)	16	9%
Focusing on multiple/all levels of application (local, national, European, international)	13	8%
Representation of diverse stakeholder views	13	8%
A mechanism to provide networking opportunities to stakeholders	12	7%
Mechanisms to actively include neglected stakeholders	12	7%

Actions to define and address educational needs and skill gaps in the specific sector	7	4%
Provide the possibility to contribute to the partnership strategic orientation (i.e., contributing to the SRIA definition)	6	4%
Address the existing cultural differences (among stakeholders, countries/regions, etc.)	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Total	169	100%

If “Other”:

It is important to talk to ALL stakeholders, including lobbyists (such as associations, large companies and also NGOs), but not necessarily to follow their advice blindly/uncritically. Also the voice of small actors should be heard.

First consult with the potential partners on their priorities and needs.

What are the main benefits you expect from joining a partnership?

What are the main benefits you expect from joining a partnership?	Count	%
Co-create new solutions with other stakeholders	32	18%
Contributing to have an impact (on society, environment, etc)	29	16%
Networking	27	15%
Being able to achieve outcomes my organisation cannot achieve alone	26	15%
Funding	21	12%
Influence strategy/decisions of the partnership	15	8%
Increase my organisation's knowledge	10	6%
Visibility (more people know about my organisation)	8	4%
Reputation (people's impression of my organisation is more positive thanks to participation in the partnership)	7	4%
Being one of the first to be updated on the main developments in a specific sector	2	1%
Improve the way my organisation informs citizens	1	1%
Other	1	1%
Total	179	100%

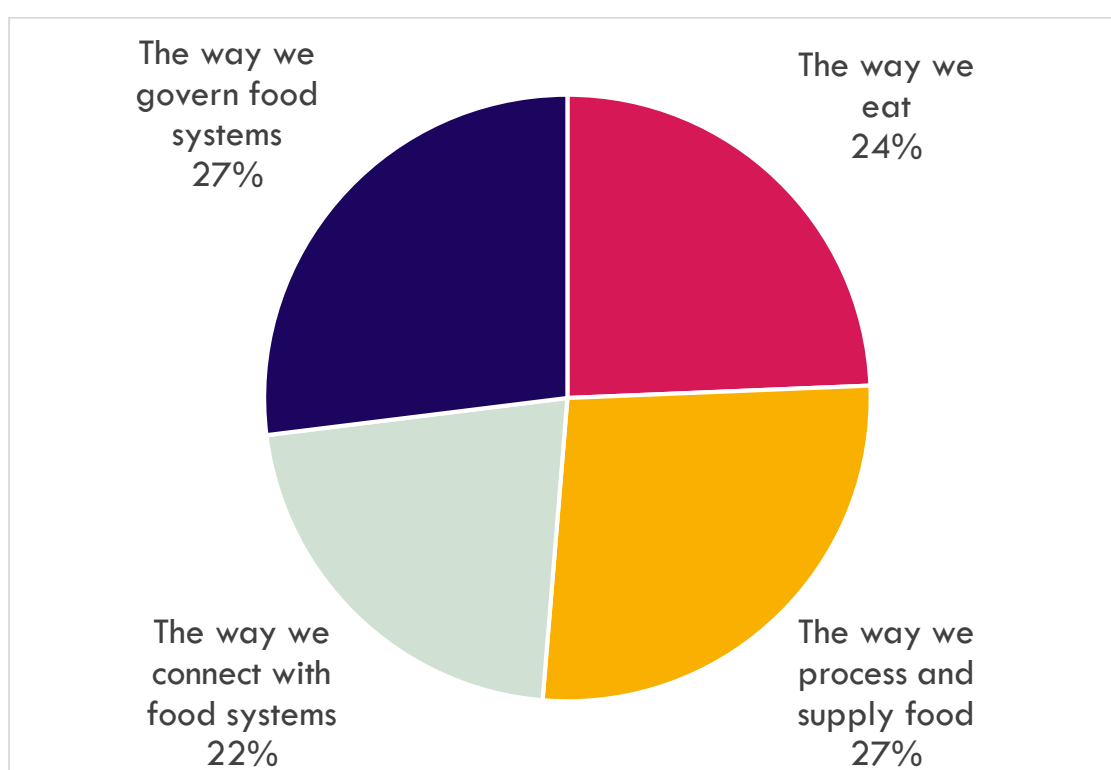
If “Other”:

It is a bit a pity that only 3 answers are allowed here, I would at least have added "Networking" and "Co-Create new solutions with other stakeholders"

SFS Partnership shape

What is the most urgent research topic which the Partnership should focus on to transform the food system?

What is the most urgent research topic which the Partnership should focus on to transform the food system?	Count	Percent
Change the way we process and supply food (supply-and demand-driven R&I topics reorienting the activities in post-farming and post-fishing to reach sustainable healthy diets)	31	27%
Change the way we govern food systems (leverage points for local, national, EU and global transition pathways, public procurement, etc.)	31	27%
Change the way we eat (transition to sustainable, healthy diets)	28	24%
Change the way we connect with food systems (citizen engagement and consumer trust in reoriented food systems delivering sustainable diets)	25	22%
Total	115	100%



Considering the topics you saw in the previous question, do you think there is any priority that is missing?

Considering the topics you saw in the previous question, do you think there is any priority that is missing?
Participation in Agriculture and re-localisation of food consumption and production
Technical cross cutting mechanism connecting all 4 topics and realise synergies, learnings between them and that could be applied
the way we treat our soils.
Digitization and data based approaches
effects of climate change on the food structure and quality
Locally farming locally process and locally marketed to avoid transports over the globe

change the way we grow food - this is where so much of the GHG comes from!!
changing the way we develop and formulate food (increase R&I, facilitate regulation, foster collaboration)
Economic impact of those changes.
The importance of improved policy coherence to support a meaningful transition to sustainable food systems.
Change the way we produce food (agriculture)
increasing the demand for sustainable food products, supporting local food policy councils
With regard to "changing the way we regulate food systems", the subsidy system should be emphasised, in particular the CAP and also taxes on food. This is not just my own opinion, but the result of many years of dialogue with expert advisors. Policy makers need to adapt the policy. It is not productive to try to change consumers' dietary behaviour on a voluntary basis (many consumers cannot afford sustainable food or do not have time to think about it (precarious income situation) or change their behaviour or are not interested in changing it). Educating consumers is not efficient, but addressing policy makers.
Change the way we produce food (transition to food systems that capture more CO ₂ than the one they produce)
I don't know
Change the way we eat cannot happen without changing the way we process and supply food or govern
change the way we teach about food, though that may be included in "change the way we connect"?
Create and Channel value in the right direction: incentives for sustainable practices, penalties
Change the way we produce food

Summary and interpretation of the replies collected:

Some are out of the scope of the SFS Partnership since they are focusing on topics not addressed by the SFS Partnership.

Other topics are clustered in the following way:

- **changing the way we develop and formulate food**
- **Impact**
 - effects of climate change on the food structure and quality
 - Economic impact of those changes.
- **Cross-cutting topics:**
 - Technical cross cutting mechanism connecting all 4 topics and realise synergies, learnings between them and that could be applied
 - Digitization and data based approaches
 - change the way we teach about food, though that may be included in "change the way we connect"?
- **Policy dialogue**
 - The importance of improved policy coherence to support a meaningful transition to sustainable food systems.
 - Create and Channel value in the right direction: incentives for sustainable practices, penalties
 - the subsidy system should be emphasised, in particular the CAP and also taxes on food. Policy makers need to adapt the policy. It is not productive to try to change consumers' dietary behaviour on a voluntary basis (many consumers cannot afford sustainable food or do not have time to think about it

(precarious income situation) or change their behaviour or are not interested in changing it). Educating consumers is not efficient, but addressing policy makers.

- **Acting at local level**
 - supporting local food policy councils
 - Participation in Agriculture and re-localisation of food consumption and production
 - Locally farming locally process and locally marketed to avoid transports over the globe

What would motivate you to take an active role in a sustainable food systems Partnership?

What would motivate you to take an active role in a sustainable food systems Partnership?	Count
Working together with other stakeholders for reaching sustainable solutions together	28
Funding opportunities for the organisations/stakeholders I represent	24
The possibility to influence actions/decisions of other stakeholders (i.e., policymakers, companies, etc.)	21
Networking opportunities	19
A commitment to address a societal challenge (i.e., climate change, food waste reduction, etc.)	19
The possibility of being involved in the Partnership since the very beginning (and not only in a later stage when everything is already set-up and decided)	12
A balanced representation of all relevant stakeholders	11
Being regularly consulted on the Partnership's SFS long-term strategy	7
The presence of mechanisms to actively include underrepresented stakeholders	7
Transparent decision making	6
The fact that the Partnership takes into account the existing European food cultural diversity	5
Increase the credibility of my entity through the participation in a partnership	4
The possibility of being democratically elected in its governing bodies	3
Other opportunities (events, networking, education, etc)	2
Receiving enough visibility for my entity	1
Other	1

If "Other"

propose and pilot some deployment activities and a living lab

What could prevent you from joining a SFS Partnership?

	Count
Lack of resources in my organisation (i.e., small staff, not enough budget to dedicate to this activity, etc.)	46

The presence of a fee/economic contribution for joining the Partnership, that will be used to guarantee its financial sustainability	24
The feeling of not being concerned to intervene at higher scales (national, EU and international)	10
The governance structure (rules, government bodies, etc.)	10
The active involvement of stakeholders from certain sectors or with certain priorities in the Partnership governance	7
Other	3
The fact that I could not be involved in the initial establishment of the Partnership (and I do not want to join in a second stage)	2

If "Other":

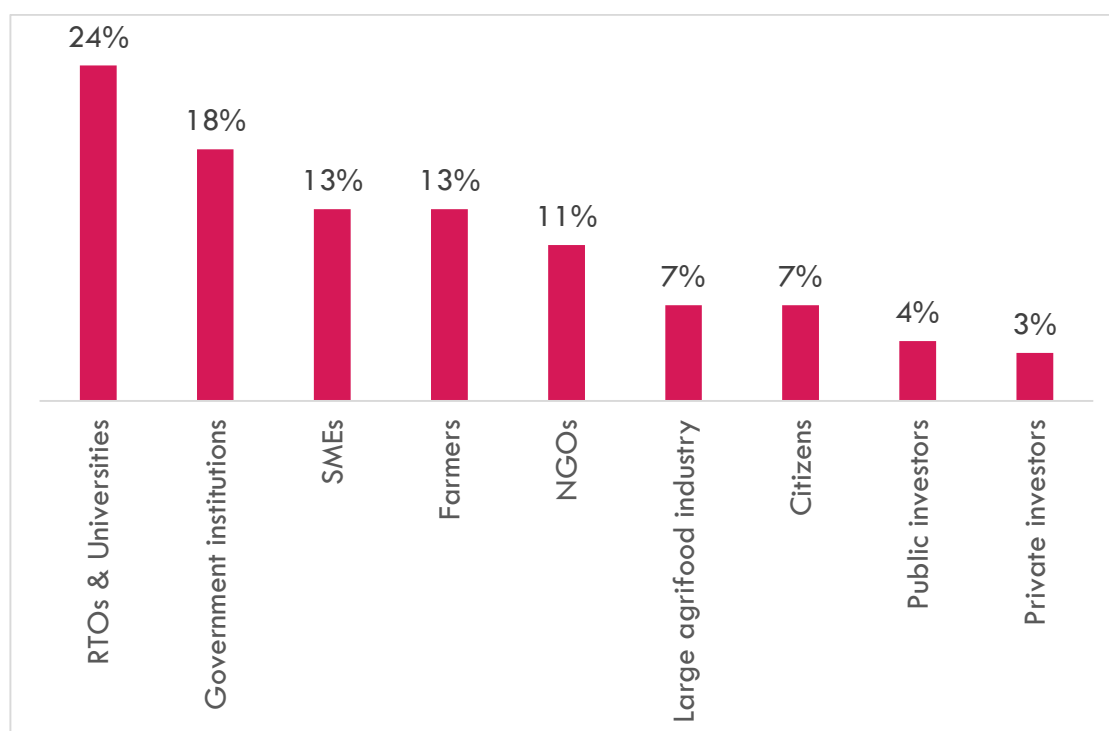
The very bad model developed by EC and the work with REA, which is well known to be complicated and tedious

participation of partners focusing on green washing

The fee would not be an obstacle for me/my organisation but it could impact others and thus influence the composition of the partnership in an undesirable direction.

What kind of stakeholder should have a prominent role in the Partnership SFS?

	Count	Percentage
Research centres and universities	28	24%
Government institutions	21	18%
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	16	13%
Farmers	16	13%
NGOs	13	11%
Large agrifood industry	8	7%
Citizens	8	7%
Public investors (i.e., development agencies)	5	4%
Private investors (i.e., banks, foundations, etc.)	4	3%
Total	119	100%



In your opinion, what are the best communication channels a SFS Partnership should use to reach the stakeholders you represent?

	Count
Regular online newsletters sent by the Partnership	30
Social media campaigns	25
Organisation of dedicated meetings/events with my members/entities I represent	22
Participation in conferences	20
Participation in large fairs and events	20
Publication of articles in specialised/sectorial journals (including the ones I publish for stakeholders I represent)	16
Communication provided from an institutional actor (i.e., the national/regional government)	14
Partnership SFS Website	14
Publication of articles/news about the Partnership SFS in my website/social media	11
Giving visibility to my organisation in the governing board of the Partnership SFS	10
Being a guest in podcast episodes	7
Launch a Partnership SFS podcast	7
Inclusion of news items in my own organisation's newsletter(s)	6
Other	1

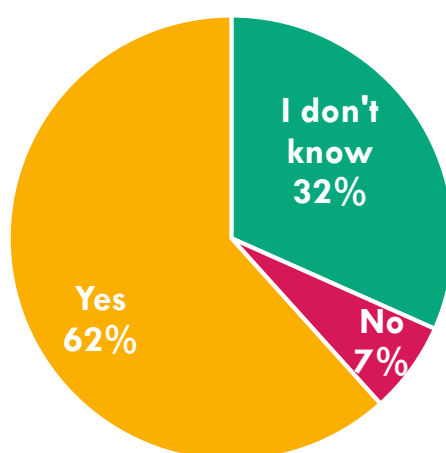
If "Other":

Policy briefs and exchange/advice with policy makers (see also comment above on subsidies and taxes)

Your potential involvement in the Partnership SFS

When the Partnership SFS will be created, would you be interested in having a role/being involved in it?

When the Partnership SFS will be created, would you be interested in having a role/being involved in it?	Count	Percent
Yes	37	62%
I don't know	19	32%
No	4	7%
Total	60	100%



If "No", why?

Different sector

If "Yes", why?

Topic is important to me

Because it is in line with my organisation mission

Networking

Working for together for effective, inclusive agency, co-designed solutions (whole/partial), co-creation-learnings-adaption mechanisms-diversity of knowledge and practices, and deeper, wider impact

I want to apply knowledge and prototype received during Food in Box grant.

funding body

We think we have a pretty good understanding of the stakes and also of solutions that can be deployed to change food systems for the better

To continue on the journey of transforming the food system

I am one of the most experienced food system analysts in the US and have a wealth of pragmatic experience to share in building community food webs. I also have some contacts with EU and



international groups including prior experience with ICLEI and Agriculture in an Urbanizing Society (Wageningen), and would like to cross-pollinate strategic insights and build stronger collaborations internationally.
I would like to learn from people with more expertise than me and help in this very important goal
Because I believe the Partnership will be an important space for fostering meaningful and inclusive change in how we approach the transition to sustainable food systems.
The topic is very interesting for my organization.
to contribute to the overall change in the whole value chain in the European food system
in order to speed up the process of sustainable transformation of our food system
The scope is of extraordinary importance for society and planetary health
Our organisation provides a SRIA for the aquaculture / aquatic foods sector. It will be key to ensure that aquatic foods are adequately and appropriately addressed within any Food Systems Partnership. Blue foods will be a crucial part of any food system, yet are often overlooked. We would seek to highlight industry and aquaculture value chain SRIA priorities to the Food Systems Partnership actors.
I am a member the board of Fondazione Ecosistemi, a leading organisation (not for profit) on sustainable public procurement and sustainable food systems in Italy. We are part of several initiatives at EU levels as well
Championing sustainability, through stakeholder involvement for reduction of food waste and food loss is my passion
I am doctoral researcher so I would love to be part of this research project
Better representation of (national/regional) food industry/craft needs on R&D&I
We are an important actor in the national field
I am keen to use my expertise in a way that has practical benefits for the transition to sustainable food systems
Believe that it presents significant opportunity to effect necessary change in the current food system
I've dedicated the past 5 years to the transformation of Food systems and am about to publish about it. I think I Can bring value in this project.
To bring in my knowledge about sustainable food systems as well as the views (including research and innovation needs) of our 150 member organisations representing the whole organic and agroecological value chain, including consumer and civil society organisations as well as research institutes

Summary and interpretations of results

Comments collected: 25

The comments could be summarised in the following topics:

- **Interest in the topic (24%)**
 - Topic is important to me
 - I am one of the most experienced food system analysts in the US and have a wealth of pragmatic experience to share in building community food webs. I also have some contacts with EU and international groups including prior experience with ICLEI and Agriculture in an Urbanizing Society (Wageningen), and would like to cross-pollinate strategic insights and build stronger collaborations internationally.
 - Because it is in line with my organisation mission
 - The topic is very interesting for my organization.
 - The scope is of extraordinary importance for society and planetary health

- Championing sustainability, through stakeholder involvement for reduction of food waste and food loss is my passion
- **Expertise & knowledge (36%)**
 - We think we have a pretty good understanding of the stakes and also of solutions that can be deployed to change food systems for the better
 - I want to apply knowledge and prototype received during Food in Box grant.
 - funding body
 - I am a member the board of Fondazione Ecosistemi, a leading organisation (not for profit) on sustainable public procurement and sustainable food systems in Italy. We are part of several initiatives at EU levels as well
 - I am doctoral researcher so I would love to be part of this research project
 - We are an important actor in the national field
 - I am keen to use my expertise in a way that has practical benefits for the transition to sustainable food systems
 - I've dedicated the past 5 years to the transformation of Food systems and am about to publish about it. I think I Can bring value in this project.
 - To bring in my knowledge about sustainable food systems as well as the views (including research and innovation needs) of our 150 member organisations representing the whole organic and agroecological value chain, including consumer and civil society organisations as well as research institutes
- **Collaborating and sharing (20%)**
 - Working for together for effective, inclusive agency, co-designed solutions (whole/partial), co-creation-learnings-adaption mechanisms-diversity of knowledge and practices, and deeper, wider impact
 - I would like to learn from people with more expertise than me and help in this very important goal
 - Networking
 - Our organisation provides a SRIA for the aquaculture / aquatic foods sector. It will be key to ensure that aquatic foods are adequately and appropriately addressed within any Food Systems Partnership. Blue foods will be a crucial part of any food system, yet are often overlooked. We would seek to highlight industry and aquaculture value chain SRIA priorities to the Food Systems Partnership actors
 - Better representation of (national/regional) food industry/craft needs on R&D&I
- **Importance of the topic/initiative (20%)**
 - To continue on the journey of transforming the food system
 - Because I believe the Partnership will be an important space for fostering meaningful and inclusive change in how we approach the transition to sustainable food systems.
 - to contribute to the overall change in the whole value chain in the European food system
 - in order to speed up the process of sustainable transformation of our food system
 - Believe that it presents significant opportunity to effect necessary change in the current food system

Which role would you have?

	Count	Percent
Being consulted (via interviews, open consultations, etc.)	26	39%
Being considered as a potential member of a Stakeholder Advisory Board (being consulted in a structured and formal way by the Partnership governing boards)	22	33%
Being involved in the Partnership governing boards	11	16%
Being only informed on the activities of the Partnership SFS	4	6%
Providing budget to the Partnership SFS to fund R&I actions	2	3%
Other	2	3%



Total	67	100%
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If “Other”:		
Part of external call for research projects		
The topic is very interesting for my organization.		

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Funded by
the European Union