

1. PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY

Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project (For the final period, include the conclusions of the action)

Agro-food is a key industry for societies around the world with the quality and safety of food products being one of the most crucial issues. We live in a world where society expects always more to be done on environmental protection, and on providing nutritional and healthy food. To achieve this, we need to have an effective network oriented on long-term goals and supported by good logistics system. This challenge had been taken by Food In Eco Network meta-cluster established in December 2018 within the framework of FoodNet project (Food In Eco Network –Internationalization And Global Competitiveness Of European SMEs In Food And Eco Logistics Sector) and co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union in the frame of "Clusters go International" call for the project proposals under Grant Agreement No.783395. The aim of FoodNet project was to establish and sustain after the end of the project an EU wide meta-cluster as a long term European Strategic Cluster Partnership-Going International (ESCP-4i) supporting clusters and business network organisations, their SMEs and other cluster members collaborating for innovation, market-uptake, and marketing of competitive products, services and technologies in the field of food and eco-logistics and support SMEs in global competition.

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far (For the final period please include an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination)

The activities to achieve this objective were taken up by 5 Partners from 5 European countries, 3 logistics clusters - LODZistics Logistics Business Network of Central Poland (LODZ) being the project Coordinator, Logistics in Wallonia from Belgium, Latvian Logistics Association and 2 food clusters: AgroTransilvania Cluster from Romania and Coexphal - Association of Fruit and Vegetable Producer Organisations of Almeria from Spain. The project duration was 24 months and it lasted from December 2017 until December 2019 during which the Consortium has achieved all of the planned specific objectives.

The work had been scheduled around 5 work packages, two general ones which lasted throughout the whole project - one related to the project management (WP1) and one to dissemination & communication activities (WP5) and three others devoted to laying the ground for meta-cluster set up (WP2), establishment of meta-cluster and its organisation (WP3) as well as elaboration of cluster strategy for going international together with a roadmap that should support implementation of the strategy (WP4).

At the beginning of the project intensive communication activities had been planned. Dissemination approach and strategy, project branding had been described to guide the Partners in effective dissemination as well as to ensure a distinctive look and feel across a diverse set of communication tools, ranging from the website, through social media (Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FoodNetProject/>, Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FoodNetProject>, LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/foodnet-project/>) ECCP profile <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/escp-profiles/foodnet> to promotional materials (poster, roll-up leaflets, document templates), to meet the information needs of the project's target audiences and ensure wide impact of the project results.

A first step in laying the ground for the meta-cluster set up was to perform survey about interests, needs, obstacles concerning internationalisation of food activities, expected future benefits from the

cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster as well as possible barriers and threats, success factors for meta-cluster and key drivers for FoodNet sustainability. In order to collect this information a questionnaire had been designed and sent to food and logistics companies with a focus on SMEs in 5 European countries participating in the project as well as to identified clusters from EU countries and third markets. The survey supported Consortium in shaping strategy of meta-cluster and allowed to select 3 priority target markets for internationalisation strategy development which in the next step had deeply analysed and described: People's Republic of China (PRC), United States of America (USA) and Canada, Middle East Region (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq). Moreover analysis had been performed on key product groups of crucial importance for the cluster. In the course of the project final decision was made on the initial main groups of products companies are producing and are interested to export outside the EU: dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included (HS Code 04), edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers (HS Code 07), edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or Melons (HS Code 08), Cereals (HS Code 10), vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included (HS Code 14) and beverages, spirits and vinegar (HS Code 22). The above-mentioned markets and products were selected based on identification of the meta-cluster's food production and processing SMEs' offer; initial analysis of all potential markets' food demand, and appropriateness of the meta-cluster's food production and processing SMEs production to the demand; in-depth analysis of markets interested in the products of the meta-cluster's food production and processing SMEs, using SWOT and PEST methods; analysis of the interest of the involved producers, based on a previously run survey among them and identification of common interests among the clusters' networks, so to increase the impact of the Joint Internationalisation Strategy.

Simultaneously Partners performed analysis on organization and funding of meta-cluster and final decisions including strategic goals of FoodNet, organisation structure, decision making, authorities of the FoodNet organisation and financial aspects had been made and included in the Partnership Agreement. Moreover set of templates had been elaborated and are available on the project website: the templates for statement of interest, application form, letter of intent and non-disclosure agreement. FoodNet is intended to be a meta-cluster, so it is designed to be a consortium dedicated mostly to clusters, but that not excludes partnerships with other entities. Having said that there are three types of the organisations forming the FoodNet meta-cluster: (1) Funding members - clusters that have set-up the meta-cluster and as the first signed the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement; (2) FoodNet Meta-cluster partners (full members) - clusters represented through cluster organizations, food, logistics and other industry clusters or similar business network organizations; (3) FoodNet Meta-cluster associated members - other organisations and individuals such as R&D organisations, universities, public organisations, policy makers, experts, individual SMEs and large companies which are not members of a particular cluster but clearly support the mission and objectives of the FoodNet Meta-cluster.

The agreement on the meta-cluster structure and ambition was followed by 1st FoodNet conference organised by the LODZISTICS cluster in Łódź on the 15th November 2018 where 72 representatives of business and supporting institutions of Polish logistics and food sector had a great opportunity to share their knowledge, experience and expectations related to the future development of their sectors as well as to establish cooperation during matchmaking session. During the conference, Memorandum of Understanding for FoodNet Meta-cluster, officially establishing Food in Eco Network Meta-cluster had been presented and signed.

A very important achievement of the project was also development of a set of training manuals for clusters and companies on internationalisation issues. 7 training modules have been designed in English, Spanish, Polish, Latvian, Romanian and French which are available online on project website. Additionally based on the training modules in Latvia, Poland, Spain and Romania face-to-

face trainings for current and potential FoodNet members had been organised adjusting the trainings topics in each country to its specific national and regional characteristics and needs.

After setting-up of the FoodNet meta-cluster in November 2018 the project consortium had been working intensively on its development and building an internationalisation strategy including elaboration of the SWOT analysis of FoodNet meta-cluster; confirming the selection of three priority target markets, mapping of existing and needed among FoodNet members competencies regarding 3 selected target markets and preparing concept for the Internationalisation Strategy Plan. With this regard an on-line workshop “The Strategy Impact on target audience” had been organised in May 2019 between the FoodNet members and it was agreed that the FoodNet meta-cluster’s strategic objective is to support the European food sector companies market development and especially internationalisation, which includes identification of external markets, creating favourable paths and preconditions, and provision of knowledge and skills necessary to become globally competitive and perform successfully in the international arena.

The Consortium elaborated also roadmap and marketing recommendations as a key element of internationalisation strategy implementation. The marketing report were meant to propose ideas for unique, niche products and brand proposition including brand development, marketing strategy statement and marketing approach. Whereas the roadmap was aimed at supporting direct implementation and optimisation after the project as well as ensuring sustainability and enhancement of the project results and ensuring impact of methods, tools and good practice on policies and practices around SMEs and cluster effective collaboration and further internationalization.

On November 27th, the final conference of the FoodNet project “How can food and logistics companies work together to conquer new markets?” was held in Liège in Belgium to share the experiences from FoodNet project. The aim was also to sketch the success factors for food companies wanting to tackle far markets such as China, Canada, USA and the Middle East. To cover this broad topic, the organisers gathered around 15 speakers from seven countries who shared their experience. The final conference was an interesting moment and gathered around 50 participants physically and through Facebook Live. This conference took place in the framework of the Riverdating event that gathered more than 300 participants which was an excellent opportunity to share business contacts and knowledge and expand network of clients, suppliers and logistics partners. d

Complementary to the above mentioned activities dissemination had been performed in Partners’ countries as well as in third country markets. Apart from 4 trainings, two conferences, 5 workshops the FoodNet Consortium organised also promotion events in third country markets and participated in many events in targeted and other third country markets. It is worth mentioning that the meta-cluster is not limiting activities to the 3 targeted markets as other potential Partners which may have also interest in other third country markets are invited to join the meta-cluster.

As a result of all these above mentioned actions the FoodNet meta-cluster having already the 5 funding members, acquired 16 additional members (6 full members from Poland, Tunisia, Morocco, Spain and Iraq and 10 associated members from Spain, Poland and Latvia). Additionally, the Consortium were able to gather 46 letters of support throughout the whole project including 21 SMEs, 19 clusters or other business networks and 6 other entities. Strategic vision and organisation of the meta-cluster is set, strategy, marketing recommendations and roadmap is described and therefore the planned next actions to be taken by all meta –cluster members should include further works on meta-cluster development.

More information on the project results and progress can be obtained from the Project Coordinator - LODZistics – Logistics Business Network of Central Poland at office@foodnet-project.eu.

Progress beyond the state of the art, expected results until the end of the project and potential impacts (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

As a result of the project implementation several impacts and expected results can be mentioned:

- knowledge level of partners and their members to enter selected third country markets increased, therefore potentially positively affecting their export capacity: more export countries, increase of export volumes and revenues. It allowed Partners to broaden their spectrum of activity and to enlarge also their international network.
- because the most of food producers, being members of the involved food clusters, are located in rural areas, exports of agricultural foodstuff would have positive impact on revenues of rural SMEs; increase of export volumes would create need for workers, what has socio-economic implications: better paid jobs, decrease of unemployment, more balanced development of rural areas.
- the elaboration of Partnership Agreement, together with a clear set of templates, that are used within FoodNet Meta-cluster to build the partnership and initiate the cooperation among its members, defines a distinct image of the meta-cluster with strong beliefs of the meta-cluster on the economy and society.
- in-depth analysis of meta-clusters functioning had been done allowing the consortium to draw conclusions from previous experiences and creation of new proposals, identification of the need for possible changes, management of changes within the project and tips/learning points for the future.
- 6 cluster and business network organisations joined FoodNet and became full members: North-South Logistic and Transport Cluster from Poland, Competitiveness pole of Bizerte from Tunisia, AGRINOVA Cluster from Morocco, HORTIESPAÑA from Spain, AgroBioCluster from Poland and Youth and Agriculture business network from Iraq).
- 6 organisations became associated members of FoodNet: APROA – Association of Fruit and Vegetable Producers Organisations from Andalusia, PerfectPlus – an SME company from Poland, Warsaw Chamber of Commerce, Polish Economic Society, Latvian Bakers Association, Vidzeme Planning Region from Latvia, Transport and Telecommunication Institute from Latvia, cluster development association – ACCELERATE from Latvia, TransRailCargo Ltd and Latvian Crayfish and Fish Breeders association.
- 48 entities including 23 SMEs, 19 clusters or other business networks and 6 other entities have declared their interest in FoodNet partnership by signing Letters of Intent.

Address (URL) of the project's public website

www.foodnet-project.eu



