



# FOODNET

Food in Eco Network

Food in Eco Network – internationalization  
and global competitiveness of European SMEs  
in Food and Eco Logistics Sector

## D 3.1 Success factors for an EU meta- cluster

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The main objective of the project is to establish FoodNet as a sustainable strategic partnership, providing actual and business relevant value to their partners (e.g. clusters and clusters' members, SMEs). The Deliverable D3.1 "Success factors for an EU meta-cluster" presents the findings of survey of critical success factors for an EU meta-cluster conducted within clusters' managers, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders. It defines the framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership building.

The report is structured into 7 distinguished parts:

- Approaches of EU cluster policies;
- Instruments supporting clusters development;
- Approach of a meta-cluster;
- Critical analysis of the success factors for meta-cluster. A survey of critical success factors for an EU metacluster was performed, considering the foreseen mission of the FoodNet at the proposal stage, based on a critical analysis of the cluster success factors, indicators of cluster excellence, best practices and cluster success stories, studies and research work, EU policies (ECCP, Cluster Excellence, cluster collaboration framework conditions etc.) and other in regard the applicability for EU metacluster; a survey among cluster managers, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders will be done to prioritize framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership. The survey was conducted together with the research planned in T 2.1;
- Barriers and threats for meta-cluster;
- Key drivers for FoodNet sustainability;
- consequently, the report ends with conclusions that emphasize the barriers and threats for FoodNet sustainability.

The findings presented in this report will be integrated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The idea of an European meta-cluster in food for fostering the internationalization of the activities of its members is not of an absolutely novelty, but the key factors for success seems not to be correctly defined yet, as at the moment, previous initiatives are not entirely successful.

This sector of activity is, probably, one of the most sensitive areas in European economy, both through its interest at national, European and world-wide level, as well as through the complex problem that its proper operation generates.

The European agri-food sector is currently facing major challenges, whose solving requires a concentrated effort not only at the central level, but also national and regional ones. Appropriate technical equipping of rural territory, localities and rural dwellings, the use of local natural resources in the economic circuit, the protection of the environment and nature and, as an effect, an acceptable standard of rural life, is now a desideratum.

The inclusion into the agro-industrial supply chains of agricultural producers and logistic companies takes into account the context of the development of modern agriculture, being the main element around which an overall vision is to be built. In the alternative, it is necessary to ensure a decent standard of living for producers and to ensure the protection of the environment.

Given that the rural economy in general and agriculture in particular represent a huge market for the upstream and downstream industries, it directly contributes to the development of non-agricultural branches as well as to the sectors related to agriculture.

According to the European Commission's document "Community Framework for State Aid, Research and Development and Innovation", clusters are groups of independent enterprises operating in a specific field and area for the purpose of stimulating innovative activities by promoting intensive interactions, sharing facilities, exchanging experience and knowledge, and contributing to technology transfer, networking and dissemination of information among enterprises.

In this context, FoodNet meta-cluster aims to work towards better complementarity at local, regional, national and European level, in line with the challenges identified and assumed by the European Commission, the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry, in the document "The concept of clusters and cluster policies and their role for competitiveness and innovation. Main statistical results and lessons learned".

The challenges relate to the need for better coordination between different community instruments in support of cluster activities, new cluster support requirements at local, regional, national and European level. The European Commission draws attention, in these directions, to stringent requirements to better prioritize Member States' national policies towards cluster compatibility at trans-national level, to provide Member States and regions with fair, neutral and reliable information

on clusters, promote better and more practical collaboration at Member State level, better integrate innovative SMEs in clusters and increase cluster management quality across Europe.

The FoodNet meta-cluster is to be able to generate benefits for the target group involved. For FoodNet meta-cluster target groups, engagement will increase the quality and efficiency of their work on modern and non-traditional methods of production, processing, processing and marketing, but also by better understanding of the economic environment related to product quality for the market, thus helping to increase comparative advantages.



### 3. APPROACHES OF EU CLUSTER POLICIES

According to the vision of European Union, “Clusters are groups of specialised enterprises – often SMEs – and other related supporting actors that cooperate closely together in a particular location. In working together SMEs can be more innovative, create more jobs and register more international trademarks and patents than they would alone”<sup>1</sup>. As being recognised as cluster, an initiative involves three main types of actors: private, public and academic.

Starting from this definition, European Union designed a cluster policy support initiatives that is to be developed through the European Cluster Observatory by model demonstrator regions pilot projects and the cluster stress test tool, conceptual outlines and descriptions of what modern cluster policy comprises, notably with regard to facilitating regional structural change and the development of emerging industries.

The information from this specific chapter is based on the public information offered by EU on its official website on sections related to cluster policy at EU’s level. The information were selected and commented based on the specific needs of the future Food Network meta-cluster which have to be created in frame of the project Food in Eco Network – internationalization and competitiveness of European SMEs in Food and Eco Logistics sector.

#### 3.1. The European Cluster Observatory<sup>2</sup>

The European Cluster Observatory is facilitating practical cluster policy-making that makes better use of the transformative power of innovation, by applying the so-called 'demonstrator approach' (the Smart Guide to Service Innovation describes the demonstrator approach in more detail and provides practical examples of tools and instruments). This approach follows a recommendation of the Expert Panel on Service Innovation in the EU, which suggests starting from a specific challenge, problem or opportunity of an individual region, metropolitan area or Member State, and then working back towards finding, testing and 'demonstrating' potential solutions in practice, using innovation as a key driver to stimulate entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Commission services have selected six model demonstrator regions based on an open call for expressions of interest for regions wanting to demonstrate the development and implementation of modern cluster strategies to foster entrepreneurship in emerging industries, facilitating SMEs’ access to clusters, and supporting SME internationalisation through clusters.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster_en)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.clusterobservatory.eu>

The European Cluster Observatory will provide advisory support to these six regions in the form of an assessment report, a regional survey, benchmarking, a peer review, and a final policy briefing. The support will be tailored to the needs of each region and its actors to address their specific challenge or opportunity through innovation and under real-life conditions. The objective is to showcase modern cluster policies in practice that aim to support emerging industries and foster economic growth.

### **3.2. The European Stress Test for Cluster Policy<sup>3</sup>**

The Self-Assessment Tool for a “European Stress Test for Cluster Policy” offers a preliminary analysis of whether cluster policies are geared towards improving framework conditions and supporting cross-sectoral cluster collaboration with a view to facilitating structural change and the development of emerging industries.

Modern cluster policy should follow a systemic approach that integrates different policies and programmes under a joint strategy, as championed by the smart specialisation approach. In this sense, cluster policy is to be seen as a strategic framework policy that goes far beyond merely offering support for networking activities and setting up cluster organisations that manage networking activities among companies. It requires to break out of “policy silo-patterns” overcoming sectoral, regional and departmental silos which promote vertical measures (that e. g. target only one industrial sector and neglect the potential that develops from cross-sectoral collaboration) by horizontally integrating with other “policy silos” through the development and implementation of joint measures under a joint strategy.

The tool allows to spot possible disparities between the weaknesses of individual parts of the regional eco-system as identified by the Regional Ecosystem Scoreboard, the priorities of your regional policy and the extent to which these individual policy orientations may be perceived as elements of good cluster policy. It consists of two sets of questions:

- The first set of questions asks questions on the regional policy priorities to establish whether your regional policy already follows a “systemic approach” in terms of to which extent policies and programmes promote cluster development through vertical measures and horizontal integration.
- The second set of questions has a specific focus on cluster policy by analysing to which extent it meets the characteristic of good cluster policy in terms of analysis, strategy and action.

### **3.3. The Cluster Policy Guide<sup>4</sup>**

The Smart Guide to Cluster Policy is a new tool for policy-makers and practitioners to support industrial modernisation, SME growth and smart specialisation. The Guide was presented at the Smart Regions

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster/observatory/cluster-policy/stress-test\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/cluster/observatory/cluster-policy/stress-test_en)

<sup>4</sup>

<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/16903/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native>

conference on 2 June 2016, and is the latest publication in the series of Guidebooks on supporting SME policy through structural funds.

The new Smart Guide to Cluster Policy is a practical guide targeting regional authorities and stakeholders interested in "how to make better use of clusters for promoting regional industrial modernisation, supporting the growth of SMEs and encouraging smart specialisation".

The Smart Guide explains what cluster and cluster policies are and what they are not, what makes them successful and why they matter. It presents eight Do's and Don'ts and showcases four Smart Cluster Stories, several cluster programme examples and practical instruments implemented by regions as part of modern cluster policies.

This Guidebook is the result of the collaboration of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and was prepared with the support of the experts of the European Cluster Observatory. It provides input and guidance for the discussions and actions to be taken in the context of the launch of the Smart Specialisation Platform on Industrial Modernisation.

The Smart Guide to Cluster Policy is currently available only in English, but will also be made available in most EU languages.

## 4. INSTRUMENTS SUPPORTING CLUSTERS DEVELOPMENT

The EU supports the cluster. Clusters have beneficial aspects for the companies that make them up as well as the region where they are located (there have been cases with negative impacts of the cluster). Clusters can receive financial but also technical aid.

### 4.1. The European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) and The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA)

The European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) is a result of part of the EU efforts to create more world-class clusters across the EU by strengthening cluster excellence. It was launched in 2009, by the European Commission under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme. To continue the successful work of this pan-European initiative which involved 13 partners from nine European countries ESCA - The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis was established by one of the partners, VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik GmbH, to offer practical advice to cluster management organizations. Today, ESCA is a network of cluster experts from more than 30 countries.

Clusters are complex and dynamic structures that are subject to continuous change. Strong clusters can promote economic growth through leveraging the innovation and business potential of a region. New employment opportunities, new products and services, new companies, new R&D activities and new patents can be the result of activities within a cluster. A professional cluster management can contribute to such a development through projects and services that tap into the cluster's potential. The European Cluster Excellence Initiative, initiated by the European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, developed methodologies and tools to support cluster organisations to improve their capacities and capabilities in the management of clusters and networks. Being members of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative 13 project partners from nine European countries - all well experienced in the field of cluster management and support - created a uniform set of cluster management quality indicators and developed a quality labelling system for professional cluster management with the aim to get this methodology and proof of quality accepted all over Europe.

ESCA offers two types of services:

- promotes cluster management excellence through benchmarking and quality labelling of clusters and cluster management organizations. ESCA has been mandated by the European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI) to organise the assessment process,
- supports cluster policy makers and programme owners with advice on cluster programme development.



**Figure 1 : Labels of labelling of clusters and cluster management organizations<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) (The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA))

For the highest level of quality, Gold label, the audit process includes 6 steps, a full assessment is conducted by experts and the label is awarded to cluster organisations reaching at least 80 % of the overall theoretical maximum of all indicators together. GOLD Label is valid for two years. The cluster manager as well receives a written feedback on possible improvements of cluster management, based on the results of the on-site assessment. The indicators used for evaluation includes a set of indicators of quality<sup>6</sup>:

### 1) Structure of the cluster

The audit evaluates if the well-structured and that the members are committed to the cluster organisation and also confirmed their participation in a written form. In its field of activity, the cluster should represent a critical mass of companies. A quality management cluster is the one which:

- is dominated by so-called committed cluster participants,
- number of non-committed participants < 90 % of all participants,
- $\frac{1}{2}$  < of the committed cluster participants shall be businesses,
- research organisations and/or universities among its committed partners.

### 2) Typology, Governance, Cooperation

There is no universal model; in fact the cluster organisation has to be adapted according to the realities of the moment. Anyway, the process of decision making has to be transparent and to clearly assume the role of each participant.

A quality management cluster is the one which assures:

- the personnel responsible for managing the cluster shall be well qualified for the required management tasks to be performed (minimum threshold of a mixture of education, work experience and skills in management, communication and leadership),
- continuous training of cluster staff (budget, types of training, training time),
- accurate description of role and function for each employee,
- within one year, the cluster management team must have been in direct contact with at least 20 % of the cluster participants,
- within one year at least 15 % of the cluster participants shall be involved in bilateral and/or multilateral co-operation activities with each other,
- the cluster organisation shall maintain good co-operation contacts with stakeholders and organisations of institutional innovation support and service providers, etc. on a regular basis.

### 3) Financing Cluster Management

A quality management cluster is the one which:

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<sup>6</sup> European Cluster Excellence Initiative (ECEI): The Quality Label for Cluster Organisations (Cluster Management Excellence Label GOLD – Proven for Cluster Excellence) Criteria, Processes, Framework of Implementation. Authors: WORKING GROUP 2 OF ECEI [https://www.cluster-analysis.org/gold-label-new/processes-of-application-assessment-and-award/copy\\_of\\_IntroductiontoGOLDassessment.pdf](https://www.cluster-analysis.org/gold-label-new/processes-of-application-assessment-and-award/copy_of_IntroductiontoGOLDassessment.pdf)

- has sufficient resources for a successful operation,
- has a secured financial situation with diversified sources for financial income allows a concentration of the core work of managing the cluster and its activities.

#### **4) Strategy, Objectives, Services**

This element is considered to be crucial for the management excellence, in terms of both sustainability and adaptability.

A quality management cluster is the one which:

- involves companies in the process of strategic analysis,
- the cluster's strategic challenges shall be outlined in a documented format, describing the previous analysis, the strategic options for the participants of the cluster and the way in which the cluster organisation plans to support them in the long, medium, and short term, stating aims and objectives
- shall have available and develop further a written action and implementation plan with measurable targets and dedicated budgets.
- an easy-to-use tool for day-to-day financial controlling and reporting system for the cluster organisation's activities on at least quarterly basis shall be in place
- available and develop further a written action and implementation plan with measurable targets and dedicated budgets
- a process to review und update the documented cluster strategy and the strategic challenges for the cluster and the according implementation plan for the cluster organisation shall be foreseen at least every two years, either due to requirements of any public funding or due to intrinsic strategic planning cycles (If no review of strategy was done during the past two years, a review must be planned for the near future (< 6 months)
- there shall be a controlling system in place and be used to monitor the performance of the cluster organisation on a regular basis (at least annually)
- a cluster manager should identify those strategic issues which are specifically important for the cluster strategy
- shall provide a certain spectrum of services for the cluster participants with significant intensity in its 3 most important fields of activities
- the cluster organisation must have fulfilled at least 50 % of the targets set in the cluster organisation's performance monitoring system or in the annual implementation plan in the last 12 months
- the cluster organisation management should facilitate cooperation between cluster participants rather than being the driver and being involved directly in all activities (initiating and implementing a structure of working groups)
- actions to be considered are for the communication: Newsletters, Information campaigns, trade fair participations, press releases, active (with presentation) participation in conferences and other "important" events in order to promote the cluster as well as the cluster organisation
- must initiate and regularly update its web presence, only part of the website is available in English, part of the website incomplete: products -> bakery and milling / milk processing / meat processing / ... and consulting.

## 5) Achievements and Recognition

A quality management cluster is the one which: the direct impact achieved is only comparable on the basis of success stories and media appearance. Tools for assessing customer satisfaction shall be in place to give an indication if the expectations of the cluster's stakeholders and participants are fulfilled.

### 4.2. The European Cluster Collaboration Platform<sup>7</sup>

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) is an action of the Cluster Internationalisation Programme for SMEs funded under COSME launched by DG GROW of the European Commission in 2016. The ECCP provides networking and information support for clusters and their members aiming to improve their performance and increase their competitiveness through trans-national and international cooperation.

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform is a service facility aiming to provide cluster organisations with modern tools. These tools allow to:

- make efficient use of networking instruments (search/find potential partners and opportunities),
- develop collaboration trans-nationally (within Europe) and internationally (beyond Europe),
- support the emergence of new value chains through cross-sectorial cooperation,
- access the latest quality information on cluster development,
- improve their performance and increase their – as well as their members' – competitiveness.

The ECCP addresses primarily the needs of cluster management, but its rich content is useful for both the SME cluster members and for the cluster policy makers at regional, national or international level. Although the European cluster organisations, by their number and long history of development, make an important part of the platform, ECCP is open and connected to the whole world, with a special focus on certain specific third countries of strategic interest (see "International Cooperation").

Being at the service of cluster organisations, with a unique offer of facilities and tools to create a favourable environment for collaboration to emerge and develop, ECCP aims to become the leading European hub for international cluster cooperation, building cluster bridges between Europe and the world.

### 4.3. Enterprise Europe Network<sup>8</sup>

The Enterprise Europe Network helps businesses innovate and grow on an international scale. It is the world's largest support network for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with international ambitions. The Network is active in more than 60 countries worldwide. It brings together 3000 experts from more than 600 member organisations – all renowned for their excellence in business support.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

The Enterprise Europe Network helps companies to innovate and grow internationally, though:

- international partnerships, offering expertise, contacts and events to connect you with the right international partners to grow your business,
- advice for international growth, offering expert advice for growth and expansion into international markets,
- support for business innovation, offering solution-driven services to help you turn your innovative ideas into international commercial successes.

#### **4.4. Other European Cluster-Related Initiatives**

**European Business and Innovation Centre Network.** EBN is a network of around 150 quality-certified EU|BICs (business and innovation centres) and 70 other organisations that support the development and growth of innovative entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs. EBN is also a community of professionals whose day-to-day work helps these businesses to grow in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way.

<http://www.ebn.eu/>

**The new European Commission portal on SME Internationalisation.** This site is an EU initiative to help European companies seeking to do business with countries outside the EU by providing practical help. The portal hosts a database containing information on hundreds of service providers (at regional, MS and EU levels) to support SME internationalisation activities as well as Information on funding possibilities and the instruments direct and indirect that exist in the framework of several EU programmes (relevant programmes in 25 priority third country markets) - Overview of EU Instruments contributing to the internationalisation of European enterprises

<https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/smeip/>

**The European Foundation for Cluster Excellence.** European Cluster Excellence Initiative is a network of around 150 quality-certified EU|BICs (business and innovation centres) and 70 other organisations that support the development and growth of innovative entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs. EBN is also a community of professionals whose day-to-day work helps these businesses to grow in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way.

<http://www.ebn.eu/>



## 5. APPROACH OF A META-CLUSTER

### 5.1. Definition

Accepting the cluster definition of Michael E. Porter (1998) as being a “geographic concentration of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions in particular fields that compete but also cooperate”, a meta-cluster can be defined as a trans-regional network of cluster, which focuses on the same or complementary specific technological field or sector. A meta-cluster consists of at least three clusters in three different regions<sup>9</sup>.

A meta-cluster is a form of clusters collaboration on regional/national/international scale for taking advantages of the clusters potential to foster economic development, competitiveness and innovation. A meta-cluster is designed to bring multiple benefits for clusters and their members. International collaboration of clusters brings access to new markets, new knowledge, technologies and infrastructure, enlarges the customer base and improves the overall innovation milieu<sup>10</sup>.

### 5.2. Organisation and development

A meta-cluster is not just a simple replication at a bigger scale of a cluster initiative; it has to take into consideration some specific elements that make clusters work together. Even if, at the first sight, clusters are more opened to work together the significant internal differences among them (in frame of structure, objective, mission, vision, history etc.), make their collaboration not to be so facile, as all these elements have to be compatibilized by all partners in order to achieve a common, greater, goal of the meta-cluster.

There are, anyway, a number of possible tools to develop a meta-cluster initiative based on competitive approach (see table 1 and 2).

As can be observed from the European experiences in designing, creating and running meta-clusters, there is not a universal template to be used, there are just opportunities realised and used, even in frame of European/regional projects, or in frame of private initiative based on business competitiveness.

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<sup>9</sup> Alberto SORACI, "The R2I experiences as starting point for Research and Innovation: a meta cluster development", UNIMED GENERAL ASSEMBLY, Rome, 21 October 2015, <http://www.uni-med.net/general-assembly-2015/ga-presentations/alberto-soraci/>

<sup>10</sup> MAGHRENOV Report Summary, Project ID: 609453, Funded under: FP7-INCO, Country: Netherlands. Final Report Summary - MAGHRENOV (Convergence between EU and MAGHREB MPC innovation systems in the field of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RE&EE) – A test-bed for fostering Euro-Mediterranean Innovation Space (EMIS) [https://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/199706\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/199706_en.html)

	Objectives	Possible outcomes	Risks	Entities involved	Key caveats
Cluster mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To prepare an economy-wide outline of specific nuclei of economic activities within the overall economy;</li> <li>- To define the linkages, externalities and synergies that bind the entities into a cluster;</li> <li>- To begin the process of discovering possible gaps and weaknesses that limit the competitiveness at both cluster and economy levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motivation to look at the elements of the business environment that hinder a cluster's balanced development;</li> <li>- Insights into a cluster's performance relative to peers and competitors;</li> <li>- A deeper understanding of clusters as the location of related activities, not just the concentration of companies in a single segment of the value chain.</li> </ul>	/	Government economic policymakers, industry specialists, cluster leaders, facilitators, and donors.	Each cluster has to identify the activities in which it must be strong to achieve high productivity and deliver on its specific value proposition. The list of activities for a cluster provides an indication of the impediments to competitiveness that the intervention will attempt to remedy; it should not be interpreted as a benchmark that needs to be met equally by all clusters.
Product and Market segmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of the key products and market segments in which a cluster is currently and potentially active;</li> <li>- Team-building;</li> <li>- Generation of a consensus regarding a cluster's key problems.</li> </ul>	Insightful analysis of the potentials of success and the impediments.	Failure to perform due diligence by crosschecking information.	A facilitator, current and potential cluster members, and representatives of policymakers and donors as observers.	Members may not be fully aware of the basis of the competitiveness and success factors of rival clusters.
SWOT	Focus the discussion on the perceived state of the clusters with regard to competition in local and export markets.	A consensus on SWOT among stakeholders that will help define strategies to include in the initiative.	The analysis may be vague; cluster members' engagement may be shallow	A facilitator, current and potential cluster members, and representatives of policymakers and donors as observers.	It has limitations: it does not prioritize issues; it may not capture an accurate reflection of global markets; it is static and does not demonstrate causality; and it does not explain what causes the weaknesses.
GAP Analysis	To help steer the focus to issues outside the cluster—competition is	Generic insights into a cluster's major drivers of success	Failure to do due diligence by crosschecking	A facilitator, current and potential cluster members, and representatives of	Local firms may not be fully aware of the basis of competitiveness and the key success factors of industries

	outside the country not inside the room		information, particularly regarding international competitiveness.	policymakers and donors as observers.	outside their own country. Sometimes, local firms not historically exposed to global competition have a higher self-image than warranted. This tool provides a high Delphi value in terms of collective local expertise, but it needs to be quantified by rigorous industry benchmarking and verified by global industry experts.
Porter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ascertain a cluster's strategic efficiency;</li> <li>- To determine the long- and short-term implications of competing in certain product and market segments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A clear understanding of the attractiveness of a cluster in selected product/ market segments;</li> <li>- An indication of the impediments to competitiveness that should be removed by the cluster initiative.</li> </ul>	Overly pessimistic views of the business environment and public policies.	A facilitator, current and potential cluster members, and representatives of policy makers and donors as observers.	This approach provides a means to evaluate potential profitability of a product, service, industry, or cluster. However, this potential is not a final determinant of profitability because firms within the same industry may use different business models to achieve varying returns on revenues or assets
Value Chain Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess linkages within the value chain of production;</li> <li>- Develop alternative strategic options and scenarios.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectively engage all stakeholders in the value chain;</li> <li>- Broaden cluster composition.</li> </ul>	Information generated may be too vague if not conducted with a strategic mind.	/	This is a relatively broad tool, which offers a bird's eye view of a cluster's operations. To develop definitive business strategies, it needs to be complemented with tools such as competitive positioning, which bring more precision to the analysis.
Market Trends Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To pin down the potential product and market segments that a cluster may be missing;</li> <li>- To assess and anticipate the performance of regional and global markets in terms of product, price, volume, and market share.</li> </ul>	/	/	/	This analysis gives excellent insights into the cluster's international competition but does not fully answer the question: "What prevents my competitors from taking my customers?"

Competitive Positioning Analysis <sup>e</sup>	To analyze key cluster products and services on attributes decisive to desired market segment vis-à-vis their competitors. This analysis helps inform cluster stakeholders about opportunities to reposition the cluster, preferably to higher value-added market segments or into the lowest cost position. The product scope analysis that is part of this tool helps determine product position in terms of complexity, variety, and value addition. The cost benchmarking element helps prioritize and structure key areas for improvement and helps set quantifiable and achievable goals.	/	/	This analysis can provide a general strategic direction but does not outline specific actions and should be complemented with other resources, such as market research. Sometimes, obsessive cost benchmarking will limit a cluster to imitating, not innovating.	/
Old and New Institution for Collaboration	To identify whether a cluster has institutional and/or social capital to sustain collective action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reform of existing government and/or private sector institutions;</li> <li>- Creation of necessary new institutions;</li> <li>- Stronger focus on the process of economic reforms and not just their content;</li> <li>- Stronger focus on regional institutional capacity and not just on the central government.</li> </ul>	/	/	Efforts of external organizations such as international donors to create institutions may face limitations. Institution-building is a long-term effort that has to deal with lack of trust among local partners, especially at regional levels. The experience in how to achieve this remains limited.

**Table 1: Tools to develop a meta-cluster-bases competitiveness initiative<sup>11</sup>.**

<sup>11</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org>

	Objective	Milestone	Key decision
Cluster Mapping and Initial Competitiveness Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish cluster-economy embeddedness;</li> <li>- Bring key actors within clusters together around shared interests;</li> <li>- Test appropriateness of longer-term project.</li> </ul>	MOUs (memorandum of understanding) signed between selected clusters and government.	Continue or not with long-term cluster competitiveness initiative.
Diagnostics and Strategy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build cooperation and raise strategic sites;</li> <li>- Apply industry diagnostics and produce sound strategy</li> </ul>	Formal presentation of industry strategies to cluster constituents	Cluster representatives must formally sign off
Implementation of Strategic, Policy, and Institutional Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement strategic projects, mobilize investment, and improve the business environment;</li> <li>- Mobilize cluster leaders to initiate productive public-private dialogues for implementation of policy and strategic initiatives.</li> </ul>	Strategic and policy initiatives being implemented	Choice of investment funding sources
Post-Initiative Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cluster undertakes post-initiative projects;</li> <li>- Continuation of long-run investments.</li> </ul>	Cluster organization continues after the intervention.	Choice of organizational modality

**Table 2: A broad process to develop a cluster initiative<sup>12</sup>.**

<sup>12</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org>

In the process of sharing the same values, the members of the meta-cluster have to assume together a common vision, a common mission and a set of objectives to be followed by all members. Based on the level of commitment, the entities member of meta-cluster can agree to take or not on any binding legal form, based on that organisational form that would better serve the mission and interests of the meta-cluster.

Regarding the internal organisational structure, there is, also, no template to be applied, but a number of common agreed and assumed principles, as are:

- Decision transparency,
- Representatives,
- Common consent of all participating clusters,
- Clear standards and indicators for: sustainability, financial status, new members' admission etc.

The following bodies, anyway, exists, in a form of another, to any meta-cluster organisation:

- Board of Representatives/General assembly of associates,
- Board of directors,
- Manager/Coordinator (and the management team),

completed by any other specific bodies, as are:

- Board of advisors,
- Regional/Functional/Product (service) HQ etc.

### 5.3. Lessons to be learnt

There can be consulted a number of meta-clusters initiatives around the world and especially in Europe, most of them being relatively young, but still offering lessons to be learn from their experience.

#### The European FOOD CLUSTER Initiative

<http://www.foodclusterinitiative.eu>

The European FOOD CLUSTER Initiative was a scheme designed to establish European clusters of coordination in order to enhance regional research capacity building and regional economic development with significant impact at local level. The 31 regions cooperating in the FOOD CLUSTER work on food production and food research, helping companies with research and development. This network of 12 projects from FP6, FP7 and Interreg all have a basis strengthening regional research capacity and developing regional policies to transfer knowledge to companies.

There is a large number of partners participating the Food Cluster Initiative:

- FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK EUROPE (FINE), European food clusters are combining their efforts to make the European food sector more competitive through innovation and cooperation.
- RAF-REGIONS (Bringing the Benefits of Research to AgroFood SMEs of the Regions of Central Macedonia, Puglia and Pazardjik). The overarching objective of RAF- REGIONS is to increase the overall capacity of the Regions of Central Macedonia (Greece), Puglia (Italy) and Pazardjik

- (Bulgaria) in enhancing science and technology based economic development, focusing on the AgroFood Sector. [www.rafregions.eu](http://www.rafregions.eu)
- AGFORISE - AGroFOod clusters platform with common long-term Research and Innovation Strategy towards Economic growth and prosperity. [www.agforise.eu](http://www.agforise.eu)
  - AFRESH – Countering diet-related diseases through competitive regional food and physical activity clusters – clusters platform with common long-term Research and Innovation Strategy towards Economic growth and prosperity. [www.afresh-project.eu](http://www.afresh-project.eu)
  - BALTFoodQUAL. To contribute to the realization of the full research potential of the enlarged European Union by unlocking and developing existing research potential in one of the convergence regions – the Baltic. [www.sigra.lv/baltfoodqual](http://www.sigra.lv/baltfoodqual)
  - SAFETechnoPACK. Improving the scientific and technological research capacity of food institute on safety and technology food packaging. [www.safetechnopack.org](http://www.safetechnopack.org)
  - EU-BALKANVEGETABLES. Balkan vegetable research centre for transfer of European knowledge, research and practice. [www.balkanvegetables.eu](http://www.balkanvegetables.eu)
  - CEFSEr. Reinforcing research potential in the Laboratory for Chemical Contaminants at the Faculty of Technology towards the establishment of the Centre of Excellence in Food Safety and Emerging Risks.
  - FLAVOURE. Food and feed LABoratory of Varied and OUTstanding Research in Estonia Joining forces, increasing collaboration, transferring research results to practice and making a maximum use of research potential are cornerstones of the European Research Area. Food and Feed quality and safety is a crucial topic for consumers' health today.
  - AgriSciMont. Fostering a Science-based Development of a sustainable Montenegrin Agriculture. <http://www.agriscimont.me/gallery.php>
  - FEED-TO-FOOD. The Centre for FEED AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS (FAP). FAP is well positioned in Serbia and in the region, but seeks recognition as an equal partner in Europe as a whole. [www.feed-to-food.uns.ac.rs](http://www.feed-to-food.uns.ac.rs)
  - CHROMLAB-ANTIOXIDANT. Western Balkan Countries produce authentic healthy agricultural products, for example fruits, wine and herbal teas. [www.chromlab.pmf.ukim.edu.mk](http://www.chromlab.pmf.ukim.edu.mk)
  - SWOT-CHEMISTRY-FOOD. Evaluation of the Research Capacity and development of a strategy for further growth in chemistry in general and in food science in particular. [www.chemistryfood.pmf.ukim.edu.mk](http://www.chemistryfood.pmf.ukim.edu.mk)
  - REAL. North Portugal - Galicia food-processing innovation and technological development network. The aim of REAL is to elaborate a combined innovation and development strategy between Galicia and the North of Portugal, which involves the productive sector and integrates the existing capacities, allowing to prepare a socioeconomic area to answer nowadays challenges, and positioning profitably in the EU food-processing sector.
  - FCUB-ERA. Reinforcement of the Faculty of Chemistry, University of Belgrade, towards becoming a Center of Excellence in the region of WB for Molecular Biotechnology and Food research <http://www.fcub-era.rs>
  - Baltfood The Baltic Sea Region Food Cluster: Innovation and Competitiveness in Action. [www.baltfood.org](http://www.baltfood.org)
  - foodRegio. The foodRegio initiative was launched in the Lübeck region by companies and organizations from within the Schleswig-Holstein food industry. [www.foodregio.de](http://www.foodregio.de)

- FOOD4GOOD cluster gathers mainly production companies with a technologically advanced and modern machine park. [www.food4good.pl](http://www.food4good.pl)
- Centre of innovation and technology of packaging food products- European Competence Agreement is Cooperation association, which works for the benefit of connected participants: enterprises, research units and business environment institutions. [www.ribs.org.pl](http://www.ribs.org.pl)
- BaSeFood (Sustainable exploitation of bioactive components from the Black Sea Area traditional foods) is a collaborative FP7 research program which aims to contribute in establishing a rationale for integrating the concepts of health promoting foods and traditional foods, in order to create the knowledge base for a sustainable economic development in the area of production and processing of tradition-based healthy foods. [www.BaSeFood-fp7.eu/](http://www.BaSeFood-fp7.eu/)
- CAPINFOOD aims at building the capacity of institutions supporting innovation in the food sector and promoting public awareness on benefits of innovation, making the sectoral innovation easier through transnational cooperation of the national food technology platforms and related institutions. [www.capinfood.eu/](http://www.capinfood.eu/)
- Cluster of Innovation in Agribusiness Cluster of Innovation in Agribusiness aims to transfer the knowledge into business, increase the efficiency of technology and knowledge transfer between participants in the cluster, and consequently increase the innovative potential of the Mazovia region [www.wne.sggw.pl/category/citwa/agroklaster/english/](http://www.wne.sggw.pl/category/citwa/agroklaster/english/)

The main emerging needs related to different topics are the following:

- **International dimension of the clusters and marketing strategies:** low level of cooperation in EU; few international projects run by the clusters, few links with other clusters or meta-clusters in Europe; lacking of tools for promoting cluster activities and services at the International level.
- **Engagement of business partners:** missing industrial partners; need for collaboration with industry; lack or low involvement of large companies (large companies do not need current services offered by clusters in some cases); low economic power of members comparing to the multinational companies; low level of exchange with job community (i.e. SMEs for training activities).
- **Cluster management:** no 100% self-financing; limited regional/national support for the cluster basic expenses (i.e. manager, office, organization of meetings etc.); limited contribution/involvement of business partners in the life of the cluster.
- **Innovation and finance:** Lack of capital for innovations, problems to find money for innovations; continue innovation in a difficult economic situation; lower demand for new products with added value; economic crisis and its impact on demand; hard way to attack new markets; troubles in the scalability of business ideas; changing procedures and conditions when applying on and using support of EU funds.

#### **The CLUSTER COORD FOOD METACLUSTER**

It was designed to follow a set of common goals:

- Foster International R&D cooperation projects;
- Sharing skills, services, facilities and technologies;
- Connecting enterprises and R&D institutions concerned with common topics;
- Sharing tools and ideas for a better cluster management;



- Spreading excellence, exploiting results, disseminating knowledge;
- Improving scalability and up-scaling of the R&D projects;
- Develop common Promotional / marketing activities.

The meta-cluster expectations were:

- Boosting the completeness of research-driven clusters in the domains of digital agenda and resource efficient technologies Europe-wide and globally, unlocking new business opportunities for participating SMEs.
- Build sustainable partnerships between academia and business within clusters and transnationally across clusters and regions, facilitating the knowledge transfer from academia to business in order to develop novel services, products and processes.
- Contribution to the development of smart specialisation strategies of regions through R&D and Innovation in the field of digital agenda.
- New private & public investments in R&D and Innovation at regional level driven by regional strategies based on business needs, access to finance facilitated for SMEs, synergies created with other EU and national funding sources.
- Create an innovation friendly ecosystem in the regions through close and sustainable collaboration and networking between universities, research centres, business, local policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Include more European regions into the European Research Area (ERA) while involving relevant regional stakeholder for the design of research agendas.

The reality proves that the meta-cluster was not a successful one, the updated information about it is missing and the website (<http://www.foodclusterinitiative.eu/>). Now belongs to a Chinese mining machineries production company.

### **The ClusterCooP Project**

[www.clustercoopproject.eu](http://www.clustercoopproject.eu)

The ClusterCOOP project aimed at enhancing framework conditions for effective transnational cluster cooperation in Central European countries. The project ran between 2 April 2011 and 31 March 2014. The partnership consisted of 10 partners:

- Ministry for National Economy Hungary,
- Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic,
- Investment and Business Development Agency, CzechInvest,
- Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic,
- Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency,
- Piemonte Region,
- University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- The City Office of Rzeszów,
- MAG – Hungarian Economic Development Centre,
- Inno AG

Project activities were focused on the following three areas:

- Enhancement of existing and creation of new synergies among national/regional cluster policies and funding;
- Facilitating emerging industry development;
- Promotion of the flow of information between, and providing a common knowledge base for clusters of CE to facilitate their networking and cooperation.

The reality proves that the initiative was not a successful one, the updated information about is missing and the website ([www.clustercoopproject.eu](http://www.clustercoopproject.eu)) now is unavailable.

#### **ICT Meta Cluster. Central Baltic ICT - Export Meta Cluster**

<http://database.centralbaltic.eu/project/21>

<https://www.facebook.com/ICTMetaCluster/>

The ICT Meta Cluster project addresses these export efforts in a focused, innovative and cost efficient way. Partners of the project are all strong ICT clusters and linked organisations:

- Fiber Optic Valley ([www.fiberopticvalley.com](http://www.fiberopticvalley.com))
- Acreo Swedish ICT ([www.acreo.se](http://www.acreo.se))
- Latvian IT Cluster ([www.itbaltic.com](http://www.itbaltic.com))
- Estonian ICT Cluster ([www.itl.ee](http://www.itl.ee))

The overall objective of the project is to create and validate a complete value chain which will give the 400 ICT-oriented companies of the ICT Meta Cluster the required resources to (1) generate first sales of their products and services at new markets outside the EU and EFTA (starting with Brazil, Canada and Azerbaijan), (2) expand those within the respective countries and regions, (3) prepare for further development over the globe. The goal is to generate sustainable sales for ICT products and services from participating meta-cluster SMEs to new markets outside of EU and EFTA.

The unique idea of the project is to provide a one-stop-shop toolbox approach for involving and supporting SMEs, including

- SME scouting
- Export market analysis
- SME matchmaking
- Feasibility studies
- Necessary adaptation of products and services
- SME coaching
- Export services
- Living Lab for testing products and services
- Business development.

All of this is in an organised way, on the same conditions for all participating SMEs. The meta cluster jointly targets more than 400 SMEs with an ICT-component in their offering currently listed by the project partners (150 in Estonia, 150 in Sweden and 100 in Latvia). The described set of tools will help all participating SMEs to increase their competitiveness on the new markets.

The project approach is to give SME's a single point of contact during sales to new markets designated to deliver support through the whole business/development process chain. This setup is unique and gives SME companies possibilities to focus on their core business and at the same time do a successful entry on new markets. The clusters also exchanges experiences of SME export in a structured way through workshops and a shared information forum. The initial plan has been to focus on Brazil, Canada and Azerbaijan for the establishment phase and their respective regions for expansion. In these countries the participating project partners have already established relations and identified potential for market growth.

Project is ongoing, results so far compared to goal:

- 50 companies have been coached and evaluated (120)
- 30 companies involved and supported in the process (30)
- 3 companies with on-going sales outside EU after the end of the project (9).

### **Alps4EU**

<http://www.alps4eu.eu/>

Alps4EU aimed to overcome clusters initiatives fragmentation and favour the emergence of meta-clusters, applying a macro-regional vision and driving Alpine area clusters to be more competitive in the European scenario for the benefit of the Alpine Space's economy.

The objective of Alps4EU was to connect clusters in the Alpine region more closely and to overcome their fragmentation by specifically strengthening cluster initiatives, favouring the emergence of trans-regional meta-clusters. Moreover, the Alpine clusters' competitiveness needs to be enhanced and clearly positioned as a European cluster, enjoying worldwide recognition, for the benefit of the region's economy. The project concentrated on clusters in four key sectors: Energy and Green Tech; Mechatronics and Engineering; Chemistry and New Materials; ICT. The aim of the project was to be reached by developing a trans-regional cluster strategy addressing policy makers, cluster managers and industry partners.

Concrete measures within the project were:

- Supporting clusters in their internationalisation (e.g. by joint transnational projects and the exchange of knowledge, resources, people and best practices);
- Initiating inter-cluster cooperation (e.g. by company missions);
- Ensuring visibility through professional coordination and positioning of the Alpine cluster initiatives on a European level (e.g. in European cluster initiatives and networks).

Within the Alps4EU activities, feedback in meta-clusters was collected e.g. by surveys carried out and interviews with EU projects. Hence, the activities of a meta-cluster:

- Should go beyond inter-cluster cooperation: not only reach a critical mass but also and mainly provide added value services that a single cluster could not have.
- Would strongly contribute to increase the cooperation culture and needs, but it has to be supported by national policies.
- Could play an important role in consolidating the positioning of our clusters towards stakeholders (European commission, ministries, etc.)

- Before cooperating, clusters should know very well their reciprocal competencies (generic data are not enough).

The following requirements for establishing a meta-cluster were mentioned:

- Commitment of cluster managers and members, establishing trustful (personal) partnerships;
- Sharing a common vision and commitment about the objectives and activities of the cooperation;
- Knowledge of potential and synergies of involved clusters as well as strengths and weaknesses of the different participants in order to fully exploit the competences;
- Funding /Finances sources: cluster cooperation needs additional investment, such as efforts, energy and time. To accept this fact while acknowledging the opportunities that lie in the international cooperation is the basis for international cluster collaboration activities.

### **Northern Transylvania Clusters Consortium**

<http://transylvanianclusters.ro/>

The most important cluster associative structures in the North West Region of Romania signed a formal collaboration protocol in 2015. Members of the Consortium represent 258 entities, in the economic, research and innovation and public administration field. The companies represented by these clusters have more than 18,000 employees and a cumulative turnover of 1.3 billion euros. They are:

- AgroTransilvania Cluster [www.agrocluster.ro](http://www.agrocluster.ro)
- Cluster Mobilier Transilvan [www.mobiliertransilvan.ro](http://www.mobiliertransilvan.ro)
- iTechTransilvania Cluster <http://itech.aries-transilvania.ro>
- CLUSTER TREC - Transylvania Energy Cluster [www.trec-cluster.ro](http://www.trec-cluster.ro)
- Cluster Gusturi Transilvane [www.gusturi-transilvane.ro](http://www.gusturi-transilvane.ro)
- Transilvania LifeStyle Cluster [www.transilvanialifestyle.ro](http://www.transilvanialifestyle.ro)
- Clusterul de Industree Creative Transilvania [www. http://creativetransilvania.ro](http://www.creativetransilvania.ro)
- Tourism Cluster Transilvania (in process of adjuration)

The main objective of the collaboration is to:

- act as a consortium, to become more visible and to prioritise the interests of the sectors they are represents in the region: agri-food, ITC, furniture, renewable energy , lifestyle, gastronomy, creative industries and tourism,
- sustain some public policies relating cluster policies,
- common actions to promotion,
- identifying and use common resources to sustain research , innovation, internationalisations and trans-sectorial projects.

Members decided to make periodically common decisions and to make the public and the presidency of the Northern Transylvania Clusters Consortium is rotating for one year among managers of the cluster members.

There is no fee for members and there is not, yet, a legal structure, but it proved to be successful in:

- organising major common cluster related conference every year (including match to match events, participants from EU, national and regional bodies etc.),
- creating and implementing common projects into the region (in frame of Operational Program Administrative Capacities, Operational Program Human Competences, Operational Program Regional: Smart Specialisation in Northern Transylvania etc.).

#### **Romanian Cluster Association (CLUSTERO)**

<http://clustero.eu/>

CLUSTERO joins 42 of the most active Romanian clusters in fields such as: agri-food, textiles, renewable energy, electronics and software, machine building, wood and furniture etc. The CLUSTERO approach is not normative nor binding, nor seeks in any way to hinder free association of SMEs and the creation of new clusters; on the contrary, it wishes to strengthen the clustering phenomenon in Romania by introducing qualitative and quantitative standards based on national and European practice. In addition, CLUSTERO is available to all who wish to obtain this recognition by providing expert support.

CLUSTERO offers to its members:

- Enhancing innovation and internationalization, by supporting the members by means of organizing business reviews and innovation audits at the level of cluster SMEs;
- Supporting excellence, by specific trainings with renowned international organisations such as France Clusters, Business Upper Austria, Lucia Seel Consulting etc.;
- Fostering international exchange, by organising an international annual conference as well as other regional and international events.

CLUSTERO has a legal form, a formal organisational structure and each of the member pay a fee to be part of the association. The financial status of CLUSTERO is completed by diverse projects where it is participating. Its success rely in its close relation with its members and the local, national and European institutions, bodies and authorities, intermediating the relations of its members with and being a effective lobby institution of cluster policies.

## **6. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS FACTORS FOR META-CLUSTER**

### **6.1. Objective**

A survey of critical success factors for an EU meta-cluster was performed, considering the foreseen mission of the FoodNet at the proposal stage. Based on a survey among cluster managers, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership will be defined. The survey was conducted together with the research planned in T 2.1.

### **6.2. Target group**

The target group for the survey consists of European clusters' managers and business organisations interested in collaboration for innovation, market up-take, marketing and internationalization of competitive products, services, technologies in the field of food and eco-logistics.

For identifying the European clusters it was used the information available at the European Cluster Collaboration Platform, which is an open community aiming to become the leading European hub for international cluster cooperation, building cluster bridges between Europe and the world ([www.clustercollaboration.eu](http://www.clustercollaboration.eu)) and other sources, as are contacts of previously run projects or collaboration, national databases (as CLUSTRO, in Romania).

As the European Cluster Collaboration Platform reunites 844 entities (mostly from EU), a selection of the most relevant clusters (in frame of the project), was realized, selecting 57 entities from the sector of agriculture, food, transportation, and they were distributed accordingly (Annex 2). The list of these selected entities was completed by each partner with information related to the identification of potentially interested cluster (desk research) from national databases (as it is CLUSTERO – Association of Romanian Clusters, for instance) and/or cluster known from anterior experiences.

Where it was relevant, additional cluster managers from other sectors (as IT, furniture, tourism, green energy, creative industry) were interviewed and consulted, starting from the idea that the information on a key success elements of a sustainable EU meta-cluster could to be find on the experiences of other cluster managers, no matter the sector. In total, a number of 134 clusters were contacted by the partners of the consortium.

For companies the target population of the survey consists in European representatives of companies (SMEs) dealing with food and eco-logistics. This target group is assumed to support the Partnership (as associated members) in terms of creation of the FoodNet, contribution to the definition and implementation of internationalisations strategy. This was done by their contribution to FoodNet surveys with their organisation views and knowledge, networking with other associated members and member organisations, supporting innovative projects in the field, participation to international FoodNet conferences, participation to the trainings, sharing challenges, experiences and successes,

supporting communication, awareness raising and promotion of the “Food in Eco-Network” concept. In total, a number of 703 entities were contacted by the partners of the consortium.

Another group constitute the supporting organisations which will benefit from the project results, outcomes and promotion, communication and networking activities, by being informed on the results and by being invited to join the FoodNet meta-cluster.

### 6.3. Methodology

For each group of respondents a separate version of the questionnaire and cover letter adjusted to each target group and their role in the Partnership were developed.

Due to various types of information to be gathered different types of questions were designed: multiple and single choice, closed, half-open and open. It was also designed in a way to take to the respondent no more than 10-15 minutes.

As explained above three types of questionnaires were designed and applied:

- A questionnaire for clusters managers
- A questionnaire for food producers – exporters
- A questionnaire for logistic services providers

**The questionnaire for cluster managers** (in some cases differentiated for agricultural/food cluster managers and logistic cluster managers, as for Poland), was created based on the analysis of critical success factors for an EU meta-cluster, considering the foreseen mission of the FoodNet, indicators of cluster excellence, best practices and cluster success stories, studies and research work, EU policies applicable for FoodNet meta-cluster. A number of 52 cluster managers answered to the interview, either using online questionnaire, or face-to-face, or by phone.

The questionnaire (Annex 1 and Annex 2) reunites the elements of a potential sustainable successful cluster (or meta-cluster on this specific case) and includes the following parts:

- Introduction: explaining the goal of the project and the survey
- Identification of the respondent. Contact details including name of the organization, general information, name and surname of contact person, e-mail address and direct telephone number
- Structure of the cluster
- Governance of the cluster
- Financing of the cluster
- Strategy, Objectives, Services of the cluster
- Achievements and Recognition of the cluster
- Statement of interest to join the Partnership, expected benefits of cooperation within FoodNet

The questionnaire was applied by each partner of the FoodNet Consortium in their countries and on the designated countries, as agreed within the consortium:



- (LODZ): Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Austria
- (LIV): Belgium, France, Netherlands, Great Britain, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg
- (LLA): Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark
- (COEX): Spain Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Malta
- (ATC): Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Slovenia

**The questionnaire for food producers – exporters** (adjusted to country specificities by each partner based on the general questionnaire approved by Partners – Annex 3), was created as a survey of needs and interests of food exporters in the field of exporting to non-EU countries. The lists of producers includes ones from the sector of meat and edible meat offal, preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants, preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastry cooks' products, beverages, spirits and vinegar, cereals, sugars and sugar confectionery, edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers, vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included, miscellaneous edible preparations, dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included, Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes. beverages, spirits and vinegar.

The questionnaire includes the following general parts (slightly adapted by each partner to national specificities):

- Introduction: explaining the goal of the project and the survey
- Identification of the respondent. Contact details including name of the organization, general information, name and surname of contact person, e-mail address and direct telephone number
- Questions regarding the groups of products the companies export/plan to export, their volume, required export certificates, institutional support (used for Task 2.1)
- Questions regarding the third countries to which the goods are exported, exporting benefits and barriers, transport means used, organisation of transport (used for Task 2.1)
- Statement of interest to join the Partnership as associated member, expected benefits of cooperation within FoodNet.

**The questionnaire for logistic services providers** (adjusted to country specificities by each partner based on the general questionnaire approved by Partners – Annex 4), was created as a survey of needs and interests of logistics services companies in the field of transporting to non-EU countries and to prioritize framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership. A number of 111 companies answered to the interview, either using online questionnaire, or face-to-face, or by phone.

The questionnaire includes the following general parts (slightly adapted by each partner to national specificities):

- Introduction: explaining the goal of the project and the survey
- Identification of the respondent. Contact details including name of the organization, general information, name and surname of contact person, e-mail address and direct telephone number



- Questions regarding the operated countries to which the companies deliver the goods, transport means used and barriers faced; exporting benefits and barriers, transport means used, organization of transport (used for Task 2.1)
- Statement of interest to join the Partnership either as cluster member or associated member, expected benefits of cooperation within FoodNet.

The administration of the survey was based on the specificities of the partners and the countries they are coming from. From the beginning, the questionnaire was created online and uploaded into a platform where the potential respondents could answer online. Also, where necessary, the questionnaire was translated into national languages.

The links to the online surveys are presented below:

- FOODNET - Questionnaire Cluster Managers:

[EN] [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18ISIC1kunXdeDRJ8nlG9mg0tvk\\_9n3x\\_EyWvC2MBNw/edit?usp=drive\\_web](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18ISIC1kunXdeDRJ8nlG9mg0tvk_9n3x_EyWvC2MBNw/edit?usp=drive_web)

[FR] <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1LQOstn6pRE2HldktgKZjGlooHDDP1peWOiIKQqUR91M>

[RO] [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1B25mtq3zE7-k-67HVMFOkMbXx2ibP4dU\\_il84HVvaSI/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1B25mtq3zE7-k-67HVMFOkMbXx2ibP4dU_il84HVvaSI/edit)

- FOODNET - Questionnaire for Logistics Cluster Managers:

[EN] <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/Q7A7S9U1U9B3F2J7W>

[PL] <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/A1A3L5L7W5W9T9J1O>

- FOODNET - Questionnaire for Food Cluster Managers:

[EN] <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/L9W6A1V6V7P0F0M9H>

[PL] <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/C9Z9N5X2F7F9Y5J8J>

- FOODNET - Questionnaire for Logistics companies

[EN] [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WDOKliLqMk\\_nnJ88h6pht7xRMiXJLTrn7G7ElNrscp0/edit?usp=drive\\_web](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1WDOKliLqMk_nnJ88h6pht7xRMiXJLTrn7G7ElNrscp0/edit?usp=drive_web)

[FR] <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1BiSi0caj9B53wuHhGIOZ0AZsIOL1VyiXRIP5brx1wtc>

[PL]: <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/P4A1U1X9W4H0O4A6A>

[RO] <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1sCqK8-Mw6GC4NGN0M8Wyhx33y0ZxGmKiIS81jBILbc/edit>

- FOODNET - Questionnaire for Food companies

[EN] [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zNXZMc\\_ysdr4Wrkts-xzVN7R63JfrO-ihxjrZTQjmNM/edit?usp=drive\\_web](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zNXZMc_ysdr4Wrkts-xzVN7R63JfrO-ihxjrZTQjmNM/edit?usp=drive_web)

[FR] [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dIG\\_AQstY2A6R6u-NtFPIYqkY1VDUa67F0UKmTi2zuM](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1dIG_AQstY2A6R6u-NtFPIYqkY1VDUa67F0UKmTi2zuM)

[PL]: <https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/W8C3M9V5R2F1A2S2T>

[RO] <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1mNbKQdidxzVvRK-9gQkiwZAGzJcEkQP1gjFt1w18rY/edit>

The research was, firstly conducted with the use of quantitative method – computer assisted web interviews (CAWI) - a technique where the respondent completes a questionnaire script provided on a webpage. CAWI surveys differ from a ‘traditional interview’ by the fact that respondent fills in the questionnaire without an interviewer support and stimulation. The link to standardized questionnaires is e-mailed to potential respondents who are requested to fill them out online. The questionnaire is displayed on a computer screen when respondent enters the survey link and her/his answers are automatically sent and stored in a common database. This method was completed by additional methods for assuring a better communication with respondents: by phone, by Skype, by face to face.

The message exchanged between the respondent and the researcher has a written form: the respondent reads the questions by himself/herself and circles the answers. Because of increase of acculturation of survey research in the recent years, this effective technique poses as an efficient alternative to their more expensive relatives — the telephone survey and the personal interview. This method was used in FoodNet as a first contact survey to reach a wide database of clusters and other organizations crucial for task realization.

Several advantages make an on-line questionnaire an efficient and popular research technique.

- Convenience for a respondent. In terms of time, duration and a place of an interview. The questionnaire is available 24 hour per day and it's a type of self-administered survey, where normally the respondent goes at his or her own place, and in most cases he/she selects a place and time to complete the interview. In this way it allows the respondent to fill it out at their own convenience so he/she may not feel rushed. Moreover it can be ceased whenever a respondent feels disturbed and be continued when more convenient circumstances emerge. Aforementioned ‘convenient circumstances’ as well as the lack of presence of an interviewer foster also the sense of anonymity - the task may be performed without any pressure caused by third person’s supervision.
- Graphical attractiveness. It is of utmost importance to make a questionnaire attractive to a respondent if we would like to have him engaged and, afterwards, satisfied by the outcome. Survey services facilitate creation of really user-friendly and graphically attractive tools that stimulate further participation and prevent from being bored. The FoodNet first contact survey has been designed by means of a professional tool for survey creation (Survio, Google).
- Easiness to conduct. On-line questionnaire can be distributed easily around the world in order to reach where an interviewer would never be able to reach. Therefore, a great number of people may be involved into the survey pricelessly and effortlessly.
- Relatively inexpensive. By eliminating the need for an interviewer - no interviewers to recruit, train, monitor and compensate - or an interviewing device such as computer programme, there can be significant savings in cost.
- Widely dispersed sample. One can reach with the exact same instrument a widely dispersed sample and specific segments of the population to be easily targeted/reached. E-mail surveys are a good method for reaching groups whose e-mail addresses are known or can be compiled fully and accurately as it is in the case of the FoodNet project. Nevertheless one should be equally aware of disadvantages of this technique which are relevant for FoodNet project case:

- Lack of controllability during the filling-in process. While, on one hand, 'convenient circumstances' foster a sense of anonymity, on the other it causes that the respondent is out of control. It may results in irrelevant answers, untrue answers.
- Low level of returns. Which means that only few people tend to answer to an invitation (approximately 10%). Thus a massive effort have to be done in order to realize the sample assumed.

The process of conducting online survey in FoodNet project includes:

- sending the invitation emails including the cover letter and link to the questionnaire to elaborated database of contacts. The introductory letter from the Project Coordinator of the Food In Eco Network (FoodNet) was sent to respondents to explain the objective of the project and the financing institution and the invitation to find more about the projects and to become, into the future, partner of the meta-cluster,
- the respondent clicks on the link to answer the questionnaire,
- finished questionnaires are marked as complete with no need of extra control,
- project Partners analyse the results,
- project Partners take further actions if the response rate is low, but, as it is known that the response rate in above 10% for an email invitation to respond to an online survey, the application of the survey was completed with phone/Skype interviews and face-to-face interviews.

A number of actions were taken in order to make the best of advantages and minimize the risks of disadvantages influence. Great effort was taken in order to ensure an assumed level of return. This includes:

- preparation of an up-to-date and large database of clusters and business organisation from key sources at European (i.e. ECCP, as explained before) and national level; all contact details were public data (available on respective organization web site) or gathered via face to face meetings by the project Partners,
- preparation of a detailed cover letter to explain the FoodNet project, especially in terms of project goal, Partnership ambition, reason why project Partners need cluster and business organisation members, what kind of activities would be required from them, conditions to join the Partnership and the support received from the European Commission,
- sending reminding e-mails,
- doing reminding phone calls to all clusters and companies from a database.

## **6.4. Results and Discussions**

As the final objective of this report is to identify the barriers and threats for FoodNet sustainability, so the findings will be integrated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement as a constitutive document for the partnership, the responses of the survey were unitary analyzed, without omitting the main specificities of the countries and regions, also.

Analysis of the questionnaires indicates the following conclusions, which, together with the other information from the report, lead to the key findings included into Chapter 8:

1. The reasons of lack of cooperation in sector of internationalisation of food activities are mainly related to:
  - the fear of losing know-how or fusion,
  - the lack of mutual understanding (cultural, linguistic, legislative etc. barriers),
  - costs of joining and maintaining cooperation,
  - sometimes lack of knowledge about such initiatives.
2. Clusters represented by respondents are financed by:
  - members fees (100%)
  - commercial activities (27%)
  - aid money (5.4%)
  - assistance programs offered by the local/regional/national government (37.8%)
  - local/regional/national projects (62.2%)
  - EU projects (10.8%)
3. It was seen, that all respondents considered that FoodNet meta-cluster should be financed both by national and EU funds with support of other sources like membership fees, additional sources of financing not being seen as a viable solution, except on some specific activities (18.9%).
4. The structure of FoodNet meta-cluster should consist of: FoodNet General Assembly of Associates, Board of Directors, cluster managers and advisory board.
5. Respondents, both representing clusters and/or its individual members declare their willingness to receive more information about cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster
6. Regarding future benefits from the cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster the surveyed entities proved to be have high expectations, including, among others:
  - joint projects (67.6%)
  - penetrating new markets (73.0%)
  - integration on the export value chain (45.9%)
  - contacts to new customers (81.1%)
  - description of legal regulations in target countries (29.7%)
  - advice on the optimization of the packaging and transportation of goods (18.9%)
  - a better voice for negotiation/lobby (83.8%)
  - to provide assistance in gathering specific and detailed market research data; packaging specifics (traditions), volumes of specific product groups sold (not represented, but sold) (16.2%)
  - preparation of profiles of potential partners (importers) who are aware of import requirements in their country (48.6%)
  - preparations of visits to potential partners (67.6%)
  - being part of a well-recognized brand in an export market would be an advantage (67.6%)

## 7. BARRIERS AND THREATS FOR META-CLUSTER

The critical interpretation of information in the SWOT Analysis of the FoodNet meta-cluster leads to the conclusion that both weaknesses and threats can be countered with very good chances of success through the strengths of the meta-cluster and the opportunities at its disposal.

Like any other entity, the FoodNet meta-cluster is not shielded from the influences of political, economic, social, technical, environmental, and legislative factors - whether local, regional, national or transnational, and their knowledge to enhance the positive effects and diminish the negative ones is a desideratum of its members.

Advantages (+)	Disadvantages (-)
strengths (S)	weaknesses (W)
<p>Consortium of entities, research institutions, universities, companies from various fields, but with common interests and with expertise and experience in the development of the sector.</p> <p>Strategic alliance at national and European level, created and driven by the need to achieve positive results in economic activity.</p> <p>Positive image transfer from FoodNet meta-cluster members to FoodNet meta-cluster, among consumers, business partners and the general public.</p> <p>Distinct and strong identity at the European level.</p> <p>Clear positioning on the market by the intention to act jointly to solve specific problems in order to make the sector more efficient.</p> <p>Open to new research, innovation, technology transfer and FoodNet meta-cluster members' growth, thanks to the opening to the market of the majority of SME members focused on continuous adaptation to market and consumer demands.</p> <p>Strategic and long-term alliances with public administration and education and research institutions.</p>	<p>Insufficient information, knowledge, and skills at the level of FoodNet meta-cluster members regarding the practical way in which a FoodNet meta-cluster operates. Improvement actions: Involvement of FoodNet meta-cluster members, along with executives, in specific actions specific to each member's competencies.</p> <p>Limited experience of some members in attracting funds for punctual projects. Improvement actions: Jointly, under FoodNet meta-cluster coordination, projects involving members.</p> <p>Limited experience of some members in developing joint development projects, and implicitly working in a complex team. Improvement actions: Involvement of FoodNet meta-cluster members, along with executives, in specific actions specific to each member's competencies.</p> <p>The "youth" of FoodNet meta-cluster, and implicitly the reduce level of interaction among members. Improvement actions: Above all, use of executive management experience in related activities until sufficient experience has accumulated.</p> <p>Relatively low coverage of the sector, through the possible founder members, especially with regard to the agri-food sector, which is</p>

<p>A highly qualified permanent team with experience in conducting studies and implementing development and investment projects, having a positive attitude towards addressing FoodNet meta-cluster issues and its members.</p> <p>Transparency in making decisions by consulting all members in the process of strategic decisions.</p> <p>Active involvement of all members in the process of ensuring FoodNet meta-cluster revenue through membership fees.</p> <p>Accepting new members within the FoodNet meta-cluster is a decision of the majority of members and not of the executive management team.</p>	<p>represented in Europe by a very high number of farmers. Improvement actions: Promote the positive image of the FoodNet meta-cluster and positive example, personally in attracting new members..</p> <p>Insufficient coverage of the value chain, especially with regard to some inputs for agriculture and the food industry, but also in terms of opening up to end consumers. Improvement actions: Attract new members especially in sensitive areas. Since its inception, the FoodNet meta-cluster should expanded to related, productive sectors that provide inputs and services to the FoodNet meta-cluster's sector.</p> <p>The large number of members leads to a slowdown in decision-making, through the need for consultation and expression of all FoodNet meta-cluster members. Improvement actions: continuous and transparent information of the FoodNet meta-cluster members, so that the meeting time reduces the time to understand the issue subject to adoption.</p> <p>Some of the members, which are SMEs, would have limited resources and skills, but a short-term vision of the business in the direction of survival. Improvement actions: Integration of point-to-point visions into a common strategy where everyone finds their distinct place and increases resource efficiency by integrating them into a value chain.</p> <p>Insufficient experience of young members within the executive team of the FoodNet meta-cluster to cover the lack of leaders at the time of their unavailability. Improvement actions: Gradual involvement in decision-making and delegation of authority to gain the necessary skills through their own experience.</p> <p>The existence of a single point of contact for the FoodNet meta-cluster and more specialized persons for specific actions. Improvement actions: Use of the FoodNet meta-cluster members' offices as information points on the</p>
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	joint activity and the organization of the headquarters activity's permanence
strengths (S)	weaknesses (W)
<p>The land, agricultural and food potential of Europe, which is insufficiently exploited compared to the results that can be obtained.</p> <p>Positive long-term prospects for business development in the agri-food sector, national and European level (generated by the gradual increase in consumption of agri-food products, especially in Europe and Asia).</p> <p>Global consumer trends and developments in the food market make it possible for local food companies to create a medium and long-term strategy.</p> <p>The consumption of processed and innovative food products is increasing worldwide and, by streamlining production processes, the percentage of transport costs in the total cost is increasing, thus there is a tendency to orientate production based on geographical indication inputs.</p> <p>The availability of food security opportunities, the availability of products, their specific taste, their sustainability combined with the current trend of increasing the visibility of product traceability and increasing the attractiveness of geographical indication products will generate an increase in demand for agri-food products which FoodNet meta-cluster members can offer them.</p> <p>Increasing the effectiveness of FoodNet meta-cluster members' activity through joint work as a team by directing a wider and more diverse beach of consumers.</p> <p>More efficient use of resources currently used by FoodNet meta-cluster members by integrating into the FoodNet meta-cluster 's shared value chain and implicitly reducing unit production costs.</p> <p>More efficient use of unused resources (including labour) at this time by FoodNet</p>	<p>Lack of adequate agri-food infrastructure in the area to ensure a balanced presence of universities, research institutes, public agencies, SMEs and producers. Countermeasures: Develop a complete network and promote it to stakeholders and the general public by participating in profile events.</p> <p>Insufficient knowledge of the agricultural and agri-food sector in the area, in particular due to the aggressive fragmentation of the land fund that generates production instability in qualitative and quantitative terms. Countermeasures: Running a "Farmer Chance" study to determine sector opportunities and determine the concrete possibilities of using the resources available to develop associative productive forms.</p> <p>The fierce and unfair competition on the European market of multinational companies, especially in terms of pricing and selling policy, by strengthening well-built networks integrating the entire value chain. Countermeasures: Integrating the FoodNet meta-cluster members' value chain to reduce production costs and raise funds for development.</p> <p>Low bargaining power in front of large outlets, especially at supermarkets and hypermarkets. Countermeasures: Develop a brand promoted locally and regionally, to be known and appreciated by consumers and thus demanded by stores. Alternatively, specialized stores with local, traditional products and FoodNet meta-cluster certificates will be created.</p> <p>Lack of state-of-the-art production technologies that FoodNet meta-cluster members have, leading to higher production costs. Countermeasures: Joint use of human, financial and capital resources to attract major investments to add value to several FoodNet meta-cluster members.</p>



<p>meta-cluster members by opening up common development opportunities.</p> <p>The possibility of accessing business finance financing funds that are only available to associative forms.</p> <p>Easier access to innovation, development, research by immediately accessing the final results of the research activity of the specialized members (universities, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry).</p> <p>Easier access to skilled and highly qualified workforce through universities.</p> <p>The facility for investment or development projects in partnership, given the partnership already created.</p> <p>Modifying the Common Agricultural Policy for the 2021-2028 budget period by increasing the interest in environmental measures that will be difficult to respect for small producers not integrated into associative structures.</p> <p>Apart from this FoodNet meta-cluster there are no other similar associations grouping at same scale in Europe.</p>	<p>The agri-food sector, and, implicitly, FoodNet meta-cluster members suffer from a shortage of technologically experienced and experienced staff. Countermeasures: Compatibility of the practical requirements with those provided by universities and schools and facilitating access to the labour market by FoodNet meta-cluster members of university graduates from partner universities.</p> <p>Increasing pressure from European and national government agencies to over-regulate "food safety" and hygiene and consumer health issues. Countermeasures: Anticipating, through studies and research results, these regulations and preparing the transition period in time for their practical application.</p> <p>Conservative attitude of the agri-food sector towards innovative technologies and their development and implementation requirements (ISO, HACCP certification, etc.). Countermeasures: Promote FoodNet meta-cluster and business partners the need for quality certification and the development of future relationships, especially to those partners that have high quality, certified standards.</p> <p>The media campaign on obesity, diabetes and other food-borne illnesses affects the image of the industry, especially new products that are unknown to consumers. Countermeasures: Promote your own brand, associated with a picture of quality and food safety.</p> <p>Possible aggravation of competition with other associative forms of the FoodNet meta-cluster or similar form that will develop in the later period. Countermeasures: Develop skills and abilities generated by the experience of engaging in such structures that offer a comparative advantage over newly created structures.</p>
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In conclusion, it can be said again that there are necessary prerequisites not only for the survival of the cluster, but also for a harmonious development in the short, medium and long term.



## 8. KEY DRIVERS FOR FOODNET SUSTAINABILITY

As the intention of the FoodNet meta-cluster is to become a sustainable network of clusters and third partners, its key drivers for sustainability are to be comply with the European policy of cluster excellence, so, the proposals to be integrated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement are based on the criteria of quality used by the European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) for auditing cluster management excellency.

The findings on this chapter are based on the survey run by the members of the project, online, by phone, by Skype, or by face to face individual and/or focus group meetings. Each finding was analysed, evaluated and formulated based on the European policy on the field of cluster initiatives, on the promises of value of the project and on the experiences of the project members.

### 8.1. Structure of the FoodNet meta-cluster

Regarding the structure of the FoodNet meta-cluster, for its sustainability it is necessary to take into consideration some important issues that have to be clearly stated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement:

- **Commitment.** The most important aspect of the structure of the metacluster is to assure a high level of commitment among its members. If not, the very existence of the FoodNet meta-cluster will be in danger. Each of the members of the FoodNet meta-cluster should not only add value to the meta-cluster, but they have to feel they gain advantage (commercial, image, information, education, lobby) by being part of this the associative structure. The commitment has to be express in a written form with clear obligations and rights for each part.
- **Representatives.** For being accepted as a valuable initiative FoodNet meta-cluster should assume a critical mass of members that are representative for the sector or, at least, could be considered an important player on their specific area of operating. It is important to emphasize the companies inside of the meta-cluster.
- **Openness.** Related to the issues of representatives, the FoodNet meta-cluster has to be open for new potential members and to promote itself as a valuable partner. There should not be any restriction in terms of countries of residence, size, number of members etc. In the same time, the criteria for accepting new members have to be clearly stated and to assure a real evaluation of the candidates in at least 3 stages:
  - an written/online application (including financial indicators, structure of the entity, a letter of intention and a written document that it accept the common values and documents of the FoodNet meta-cluster) validated by the Manager of the FoodNet meta-cluster
  - a validation from Board of Directors (with simple majority)

- a validation from General Assembly of Associates (with simple majority)
- **Membership.** Being a meta-cluster, the FoodNet has to be an associative form of clusters, so the clusters have to be main actors. In the same time, it has not to be neglected the fact that in the process of creating a valuable international value chain, there are some other possible members (authorities, facilitation bodies, companies, research/academia etc.), that can have a positive influence, and their participation is desirable. Different types of members can be identified:
  - *Founding member*, the ones that will found the meta-cluster and will be the first to sign the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement.
  - *Full member*, the clusters that will become, in time, members of the FoodNet meta-cluster. They will have full wrights, similar with founding member
  - *Associated member*, any entities that are not a cluster but intends to became a member of the FoodNet meta-cluster. They will have full wrights, similar with associated member
- **Transversal.** For increasing the chance of success and sustainability, the FoodNet meta-cluster has to assure, as soon as possible, transversal advantage and services for its members and not being limited to internationalisation of food products to third countries. The FoodNet meta-cluster has to show, also, openness to entities outside of this value chain, as are the ones from transversal sectors: ITC, gastronomy, tourism, financial, assurance to mention a few.

## 8.2. Typology, Governance, Cooperation of the FoodNet meta-cluster

Regarding the way of running FoodNet meta-cluster, the process of decision making has to be known and accepted by its members, presented on written documents assumed by each member.

**Roles.** The way of involvement of members in internal decision making processes of the FoodNet meta-cluster has to be clear stated. The general terms & conditions or statutes (regulating the constitution and termination of partnership, rights and duties of participants. etc.) should be documented.

**Transparency.** The decisions have to be communicated in real time, so all the members consult and comment on them. In case that a decision requires a validation of Board of Directors or of General Assembly of Associates they have to be announced at least 1 week in advanced (with at least 2 remembering message) and at least 48hours in case of extraordinary cases.

**Flexibility.** Having in mind the large distance among the members, a platform of online decision making (and communication) is to be created. Also, on the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement is has to be stipulated that decision making process could be done online in case of some specific issues as are: validating new members, validating participation of new projects, consultations etc.

**Bodies.** A multilevel organisational decision making process has to be stipulated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement, including the following decisional actors:

- *General Assembly of Associates.* Includes all members: founding, full and associated. Each of them have one vote and it is represented by one person appointed in written documents by the member which is representing. At least one regular has to be meeting held, at least every 12 months (at the end of the year to presenting report of activity of the ending year and to approve the activities for the next year).
- *Board of Directors.* They are representing the interests of the members, are not part of the management team and take decision in field of strategic orientation, new members acceptance, new project involvement, budget control etc.). They are appointed by General Assembly of Associates
- *Manager.* It takes day by day decisions of the meta-cluster and represents it in relation with third entities. He is appointed by General Assembly of Associates
- *Advisory Board.* A scientific and professional body of international experts supporting the manager in specific strategic actions. They are appointed by General Assembly of Associates

**Hubs.** Being an European meta-cluster, FoodNet has to be organised at national level (and where is the case, at regional level). The national HQ should:

- act a national contact point of FoodNet meta-cluster
- adapt the general activities of the FoodNet meta-cluster to national specificity
- make lobby in the interest of FoodNet meta-cluster at national level
- represent the all members at national level (finding new markets, partners and projects)

**Legal form.** At the beginning, the FoodNet meta-cluster should be created a volunteer association of members, as an initiative of clusters, but not having a legal status until a certain level of maturity is achieved. In this case it will be more flexible in attracting new members and in adopting decision. Anyway, the association should be assumed in a written document and, also, it has to be stipulated that, as soon as possible, the FoodNet meta-cluster will become a legal entity, so it can be more reliable for third partners and for applying for projects by itself.

### 8.3. Financing FoodNet meta-cluster Management

Assuring the financial resources for existence and sustainable development of the FoodNet meta-cluster is a crucial aspect that should be included into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement.

**Membership fees.** Small amount of membership fee has to be asked for the beginning. As the FoodNet meta-cluster will be just a promise of value for its members, they have not to be forced to pay large amount of money for being part of this initiative. Anyway if no fees are require, the level of commitment of the members will be limited. It can be stipulated that only members that already payed the fee have the right to vote and if they are not paying for 2 consecutive years they will lose their status of members.

**Services fees.** For specific services that can assure a competitive advantage on the market, the members can pay additional fees (for instance for training, for participating to fairs, economic mission,

conferences organised by the FoodNet meta-cluster). The types and level of fees will be specific depending on the event and it will be assumed on a written contract.

**Projects.** One major task of the FoodNet meta-cluster will be to assure its development based on attracted funds, as are national, regional, European, private projects etc. The participation of the FoodNet meta-cluster has to be approved by decisional bodies with clear limits of co-financing.

**Other sources.** There are some other possibilities for financing the FoodNet meta-cluster, as are sponsorship, aids, donations, and commercial services. Their possibility is to be included into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement.

#### 8.4. Strategy, Objectives, Services of the FoodNet meta-cluster

A first form of Strategic Plan of the FoodNet meta-cluster has to be developed, to be consulted and agreed by the parts that will sign the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement. This Strategic Plan should be created for at least 5 years and it should be adapted periodically (at least one in 2 years) and have to include a set of common valued assumed by all members.

**Vision.** This statement indicates how the FoodNet meta-cluster sees itself in a future. It can be assumed to be: “To become the main active and viable partner for cluster and a good practice model for European associative work in field of Food in Eco Network”.

**Mission.** His statement, also, indicates what the mission what to become in a nearest future: “To become an Integrator Pole of commercial, research, innovation, technological transfer and sustainable development of the European agri-food sector (supporting the sustainable competitiveness of the agro-industrial sector by internationalisation)”.

**Objectives.** A general objective has to be accepted by the members of the FoodNet meta-cluster, and this is “To support the sustainable competitiveness of the agro-industrial sector by internationalisation”. A set of specific objectives are to be designed, including:

- Enhance internationalisation capacity in the field of agri-food ;
- Increasing the competitiveness of the European agri-food sector;
- Encourage the creation and / or development of associative structures;
- Integration of producers, logistic companies and associative structures into the value chain;
- Supporting the development of local and regional initiatives;
- Enhance RDI capacity in the field of Bio-economy.

**Services.** As a collaborative form, the FoodNet meta-cluster has to provide to its members a set of services that are valuable for them and which have the potential to increase the attractiveness of the FoodNet meta-cluster by assuring the members an competitive advantages on market and, also, a feeling of belonging to this meta-cluster:

- *Lobby.* The lobbying activity has to be carried on at European and national level for sustaining their interests, their legislative initiatives and their needs.

- *Training.* The training has to be designed specific to their needs (penetrating new markets, assuring the cargos. logistic information, legislative issues etc.).
- *Information.* The management body of the FoodNet meta-cluster has to constantly look for valuable information on events, financial possibilities, fairs, matchmakings, legislative news etc. and to make them available for the all members, selected on their expectations and needs.
- *Partners.* The members of the FoodNet meta-cluster have to commit that they will consider the other members as being strategic partners for any potential projects, partnerships, commercial activities etc.
- *Events.* The FoodNet meta-cluster has to organise (or co-organise) at least one per year a conference for bringing together decisional makers from Europe, third countries, doubled by a session of C2C, B2C or B2B matchmaking.
- *Fairs.* The FoodNet meta-cluster has to facilitate the participation of the members (at least by organising, finding partners, providing information etc.) to specific fairs that could bring to the members a market competitive advantage.
- *Prize.* Annually, he FoodNet meta-cluster should offer a prize for the person/institution that helped the most the activity, visibility, image of the FoodNet meta-cluster.
- *Sign of quality.* The FoodNet meta-cluster have to aim that, as soon as possible, to be able to create, assume and evaluate products in order to offer them a sign of quality (FoodNet Quality label) which could offer to the products a higher visibility and, consequently, premium prices and/or a higher demand from consumers.

### 8.5. Achievements and Recognition of the FoodNet meta-cluster

Finlay, the FoodNet meta-cluster has to be visible as a distinct associative initiative, and into Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement have to be included a set of objectives which the members have to follow:

**Media.** The events of the FoodNet meta-cluster have to be clear identified into publications, press, and media. Annually, at least one such publication has to appear in each countries of the meta-cluster.

**Success stories.** The success stories of the FoodNet meta-cluster have to be shown and distributed to all members and all partners of the FoodNet meta-cluster as soon as they are done. Success stories includes commercial partnerships created, projects run, evens run under the umbrella of the FoodNet meta-cluster.

**Survey.** At least one per year, the management team has to run a member and partners satisfaction assessment. This survey has to critically observe the weaknesses and the threats of the FoodNet meta-cluster, so they can be remediated though adaptation of Strategic Plan or simply by adjusting the way of decision making and communication processes.

**Platform.** Some information user-friendly exchange communication platform and tools have to be designed, implemented, updated and maintained by the management team of the FoodNet meta-cluster, but by each of the members.

**Visual identity.** A set of visual identity elements have to be designed for any internal and external document in frame of the FoodNet meta-cluster. Any communication channel have to use them for increasing the visibility of the FoodNet meta-cluster.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

It has to be mentioned the fact that the three types of questionnaires serve to the same general goal, but serve for different specific objectives. So, the questionnaire designed for cluster managers besides the role of observing the interests for exporting to the third countries (in case of cluster from specific sectors of agriculture, food, logistic, transportation and related services), aimed to realize the success key factors for an European meta-cluster.

Summarizing, the results of the survey indicate that clusters and its members are clearly interested in the FoodNet initiative. Respondents defined expectations from the future cooperation in FoodNet meta-cluster, mainly in the area of previously identified barriers. On the other hand they are valuable source of knowledge from the gained experience.

In fact, there were observed high expectations regarding the benefits of the cluster initiative and the FoodNet cluster (confirming the need to develop the FoodNet programme), most of the companies producing and/or exporting appreciated that they can easily double the volume of international trade if the future meta-cluster would offer them the informational support.

Regarding the internationalisation strategy, it was observed that personal experiences were very important decisional factors. While some of interviewed companies which, at the moment, are not exporting outside EU, replied that they are focusing on national market only or are not interested to export outside EU, a bigger number of respondents proved to be open and prepare to export in the nearest future, especially if they are would receive some help from others, a future meta-cluster included.

Regarding the meta-cluster organisation there is convergence in the perception of the potential meta-cluster structure (1 representative of each member, leaders of thematic areas, working groups).

Finally, it can be concluded that the identified barriers and threats for FoodNet sustainability previously outlined, leads to a valuable proposals so the findings to be integrated into the Food in Eco Network Partnership Agreement as a constitutive document for the partnership.

## Annex 1. Questionnaire for Food Cluster Manager

<b><u>Questionnaire for Cluster Manager</u></b>						
<p>Dear interviewer,</p> <p>Thank you for accepting to support the consortium of the Project “Food in Eco Network” project financed by the EU programme COSME (representing 5 EU countries: Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Spain) on its way to improve the potential of European food market clusters by making business and logistics processes more sustainable.</p> <p>In order to observe and analyse the critical and the key drives success factors for an EU meta-cluster we ask you to support us, by answering this survey, created on already well-recognised indicators of cluster management excellence, best practices and cluster success stories previously investigated.</p> <p>The main objective of the result of the survey is to create and sustain 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.</p> <p>The information contained in the questionnaire will be summarised and available for the members of the project and we will offer to you.</p> <p><b>Completing this survey will take around 5-10 minutes.</b></p>						
<b>Name of the Cluster:</b>						
<b>General information regarding the Cluster:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Profile of the cluster</li> <li>- Number of members</li> <li>- Location (region, country)</li> <li>- Quality label (according to The European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis (ESCA) Bronze, silver, gold</li> <li>- Other relevant information</li> </ul>						
European Cluster Collaboration profile ( <a href="https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/">https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/</a> ) Y/N If yes, please provide the link:						
<b>Date:</b> <b>Name of person:</b> <b>Position:</b>						
<b>Please check if you want to receive more information about cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster</b> <b>Y/N</b>						
<b>1. Structure</b>						
<b>1.1</b> How many committed cluster participation are you (put a cross in the right case)? ( <i>a cluster participant is committed if it actively contributes to the activities of the cluster</i> )						
[0-29]	[30-69]	[70-109]	[110-169]	[170-239]	[240-300]	+300
<b>1.2</b> What is the composition of cluster participant?						
Composition of cluster participant				Number		



a) SMEs				
b) Non SMEs participants				
c) Universities				
d) Government agencies				
e) R&D institutions				
f) Others				
<b>1.3</b> How many of stakeholders closely linked to the cluster are based at a distance of up to approximately 150 km or 1.5 hours from the headquarters or from regional representations (if any) of the cluster or network organization?				
No one	Less than 25%	25-50%	50-95%	More than 95%
<b>2. Governance</b>				
<b>2.1</b> What is the month and year of your cluster creation?				
.....				
<b>2.2</b> Which is the legal form of the cluster?				
.....				
2.2 a. Is there any additional cooperation contract signed? Y/N				
If yes, please provide details.....				
2.2. b. What legal form would you recommend for a meta-cluster?				
.....				
<b>2.3</b> How many full time employee have your cluster (the question is referring to cluster management entity, not the amount of all members)?				
.....				
<b>2.4</b> Which of the following knowledge the management employees have?				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University education</li> <li>- Work experience in the private sector, including experience in cluster organizations or especially in cluster management</li> <li>- Leadership and management skills</li> <li>- Social competence including intercultural competence</li> <li>- communication skills</li> <li>- project management competence</li> <li>- Language skills English</li> <li>- Language skills in at least one foreign language (except English)</li> <li>- Knowledge of the relevant sector and / or relevant technical knowledge of &gt; 3 years due to education and / or work experience</li> <li>- Cluster management and policy-related training</li> <li>- Other: .....</li> </ul>				
<b>How often they are trained by the cluster?</b>				
Not at all	Less than 1 time/year	1-2 times/year	At least 2 times/year	
<b>2.4 a</b> How many employees have left cluster management in the past 24 months?				
Not at all	a quarter – 1/3	1/3-a half	More than a half	
<b>2.4 b</b> How fact the vacant positions should have been re-occupied?				
Less than a few days	Less than a month	A month-six months	More than six months	
<b>2.5</b> How many of the closely related actors have left the cluster during last 24 months?				

No one		Less than 5%		5-10%		More than 10%	
<b>2.6</b> How often do you contact you members?							
Not at all		Less than 1/year		Between 1/year and 1/month		Every month	
<b>3. Financing</b>							
<b>3.1</b> The financial situation of the cluster is guarantee ...?							
Not at all		Less than 6 months		6 months-1 year		1 year-2 years	
						At least 2 years	
<b>3.2</b> How are operations of your cluster financed? Please give indicative breakdown of different sources in %							
Financial sources				% of the financing in this year		Increasing/decreasing comparing with last year	
Public funding							
Chargeable services							
Membership fees							
Other private sources							
Projects / EU and national funds							
<b>3.3</b> How a meta-cluster should be financed ? <i>Please select YES or NO</i>							
Financial sources				% of the total budget		Increasing/decreasing (trend for next years)	
Public funding							
Chargeable services							
Membership fees							
Other private sources							
Projects / EU and national funds							
<b>4. Strategy, Objectives, Services</b>							
<b>4.1</b> How often are the members were involved in the process of strategy development?							
No one		Less than 25%		25-50%		More than 50%	
<b>4.1. a) Which methodological tools were used in the development of the strategy</b> .....							
<b>4.2. Who finally approve the strategy development?</b> - the manager - board of directors - general assembly - external entity - other.....							
<b>4.3</b> How often are the strategy adapted?							
Not at all		More than 4 year		1-4 years		Annually	
<b>4.4</b> How important are the following issues into the strategic document?							

Internationalisation				
Not at all	Very low	average	High	very high
Partner: dealer / distributor				
Not at all	Very low	average	High	very high
indicators for monitoring the activities (number of events, newsletters, projects initiated, etc)				
Not at all	Very low	average	High	very high
Achieving the objectives				
Not at all	Very low	average	High	very high
Objectives related to value chain				
Not at all	Very low	average	High	very high
<b>5. Achievements and Recognition</b>				
<b>5.1 How press reports were documented for the past 12 months?</b>				
Regional/national				
No one	Less than 10	10-29	At least 30	
international				
No one	Less than 5	5-9	At least 10	
<b>5.1 In the past 24 months, how many a comprehensive satisfaction survey have been conducted?</b>				
No one	one	two	More than two	
<b>5.3 What kind of future benefits does Your Cluster and/or Cluster members expect from cooperation in the a meta-cluster. Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.</b>				
Type of benefits		YES	NO	
a) training				
b) joint projects				
c) group insurance				
d) contacts (email, phone) to anyone responsible for business contacts in national institutions				
e) contacts (email, phone) to new customers (e.g. retail in non-EU countries)				
f) lists and standards for local documents in foreign country (with translation)				
g) description of legal regulations in target countries				
h) support in registration procedures in target countries				
i) consultancy regarding export costing				
j) advice on the optimization of packaging and transportation of goods				
k) support in the registration and obtaining licenses and escort certificates in target countries				
l) support in raising funds for export development				
m) assistance in building strategies and promotion campaigns in target countries				
n) case studies of companies that conduct export activities				
o) databases containing current legal regulations or links to data sources				

p) other, please specify .....				
<b>6. Food and Logistics</b>  Please continue only if you cluster / members are interested in: agriculture, food, logistics, transportation, international trade intermediation. The survey will require additional 7 minutes.  Continue? Y/N If N, the survey ends here.				
<b>6.1. Which of the following product groups do your Cluster members export or do want to export outside the EU? Mark the appropriate column</b>				
Group of products	Cluster members already export	Cluster members want to export		
a) fresh products				
b) frozen products				
c) organic/bio products				
d) processed food products				
e) dried products				
f) products for animals				
g) beverages				
h) meat and meat products				
i) milk and milk products				
j) diet supplements				
k) cereal products				
l) other (please specify) ..... ...				
<b>6.2. How much are your Cluster members exporting the following product groups outside the EU monthly? Please specify the quantity using a single measurement unit</b>				
Group of products	The exported amount with specified measurement unit			
a) fresh products				
b) frozen products				
c) organic/bio products				
d) processed food products				
e) dried products				
f) products for animals				
g) beverages				
h) meat and meat products				
i) milk and milk products				
j) diet supplements				
k) cereal products				
l) other (please specify) ..... ...				
<b>6.3. Do the products that Your Cluster members export outside the EU require special certification and / or licenses? Please choose YES or NO</b>				
Non - EU country	YES	NO		
< Country 1>				
<Country 2>				

<Country 3>		
<b>6.4. If You choose YES, please, comment certification / licensing process (problems, difficulties, help of domestic or foreign institutions)</b>		
<b>6.5. Which institution did help members of Your Cluster with expansion outside the EU? (E.g. manufacturer, distributor, operator, competitor, public institution). Please list them.</b>		
<b>6.6. Are members of Your Cluster currently working with institutions / organizations serving help regarding reaching clients outside the EU? Which one? Please list them.</b>		
<b>6.7 How do you evaluate the possibility of expanding the range of products that members of Your Cluster export?</b> (Please mark on the scale of 1-5) The description of the values on the scale is to be determined		
This is not possible		It is very probably
1	2	3
4	5	
<b>6.8. To what countries outside the EU do members of Your Cluster export your products? Please list them.</b>		
<b>Please, name <u>three key countries</u> members of Yours Cluster export your products to.</b>		
<b>6.9. Please, specify the main non-financial reasons that motivated members of Your Cluster to start exporting outside the EU? Please list them.</b>		
<b>6.10. What barriers do members of Your Cluster face exporting goods outside the EU?</b> <i>Choose Yes or NO.</i>		
Barrier	YES	NO
a) lack of knowledge regarding the market		
b) legal barriers		
c) lack of language skills		
d) lack of business partners in the target country		
e) lack of knowledge of how to export		

f) the inability to assess the reliability of a partner						
d) other, please specify						
.....						
.....						
.....						
.....						
<b>6.11. What kind of transportation members of Your Cluster use to export goods outside the EU?</b>						
<i>Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.</i>						
Transport type				YES	NO	
a) sea transport						
b) road transport						
c) railway						
d) air						
e) combined (multimodal)						
<b>6.12. How members of Your Cluster export goods outside the EU?</b>						
<i>Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.</i>						
Form of freight				YES	NO	
a) FTL (Full Truck Load)						
b) FCL (Full Container Load)						
c) LCL (Less than Container Load)						
<b>6.13. How do members of Your Cluster organize transportation of exported goods outside the EU?</b>						
<i>Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.</i>						
Organization of transport					YES	NO
a) we use an external shipping company						
b) we organize transport by ourselves						
i) we use our own transport fleet						
ii) we use our own shipping						
c) we use the services of logistics operators						
<b>6.14. Please, assess the risk of following adverse events for members of Your Cluster related to exports outside the EU based on members' previous experience? (Please mark the scale of 1-5)</b>						
lack of punctuality						
very low					very high	
1	2	3	4	5		
damage of goods in transit						
very low					very high	
1	2	3	4	5		
lack of appropriate transport conditions						
very low					very high	
1	2	3	4	5		
currency fluctuations						
very low					very high	
1	2	3	4	5		
fluctuations of commodity prices						
very low					very high	
1	2	3	4	5		
.....						

very low				very high
1	2	3	4	5

**6.15. How would you rate the Cluster or Cluster members' current cooperation regarding exports to countries outside the EU with business partners? (Please mark an indication of the scale of 1-5)**

Partner: manufacturer

very low				very high
1	2	3	4	5

Partner: dealer / distributor

very low				very high
1	2	3	4	5

Partner: shipping company / operator

very low				very high
1	2	3	4	5

Partner: other institution, please, name

very low				very high
1	2	3	4	5

**6.16. Does the Cluster or Cluster members cooperate with other entities to export outside the EU? Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.**

Type of entity	YES	NO
a) producer group		
Please list the names of		
.....		
.....		
.....		
b) cluster initiative		
Please list the names of		
.....		
.....		
.....		
c) purchasing group		
Please list the names of		
.....		
.....		
.....		
d) manufacturers outside the producer group		
Please list the names of		
.....		
.....		
.....		
e) other		
Please list the names of		
.....		
.....		
.....		

**6.17. If you do not cooperate with other entities in the export of goods outside the EU, please indicate the cause. Please select YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.**

Cause	YES	NO
-------	-----	----

a) the cost of joining and maintaining cooperation		
b) lack of knowledge about such initiatives		
c) the fear of losing the know-how		
d) doubts		
e) other reasons (please specify)		
.....		
.....		
<b>6.18. What are the existing benefits for Your Cluster and/or Cluster members from exporting goods to countries outside the EU? Please choose YES or NO. Possible more than one answer.</b>		
Type of benefits	YES	NO
a) financial		
b) positive influence on corporate image		
c) humanitarian (supporting the community)		
d) developing through market diversification		
e) other, please specify .....		



## Annex 2. Questionnaire for Logistics Cluster Manager

### FOODNET - Questionnaire for Logistics Cluster Managers

Dear Sirs,

*This survey is implemented within the framework of "Food in Eco Network" (FoodNet) project financed by the EU programme COSME. The project is carried out by a consortium of 5 clusters from Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Spain. Its aim is to create an EU-wide meta-cluster and support clusters, their SMEs and other member organisations in collaboration for innovation, market up-take, marketing and internationalization of competitive products, services, technologies in the field of food and eco-logistics – and support SMEs in global competition.*

*We conduct this survey among cluster managers, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders aiming to prioritize framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership.*

*The survey will take you approximately 15 min.*

*Please provide your answers before 13th July 2018.*

*We guarantee that the survey is anonymous. Your responses will be aggregated and analyzed without reference to any cluster / organization.*

*Thank you in advance for your participation and thoughtful answers.*

*Kindest regards,*

*FoodNet team*

#### 1. Name of the cluster

Podpowiedz do pytania: *In national language and in English (if applicable)*

#### 2. General information regarding the Cluster

#### 3. Respondent's contact details

Podpowiedz do pytania: *Please provide your name, surname, telephone and e-mail address (in case we have some further questions)*



#### 4. To/from which countries members of your Cluster transport the goods?

Podpowiedz do pytania: *Select one or more answers*

- ☐ Europe
- ☐ Middle East
- ☐ Central Asia
- ☐ Asia
- ☐ Africa
- ☐ North America
- ☐ South America

#### 5. What barriers do members of Your Cluster face when transporting goods outside the EU?

6. What kind of transport do members of Your Cluster offer to transport goods outside the EU?

Podpowiedz do pytania: Please select YES or NO. More than one answer possible

Sea transport	<input type="radio"/>
Road transport	<input type="radio"/>
Railway	<input type="radio"/>
Air	<input type="radio"/>
Combined (multimodal)	<input type="radio"/>

7. Please, assess the risk of following adverse events for members of Your Cluster related to transporting goods outside the EU based on members' previous experience.

Podpowiedz do pytania: Please use the scale from 1 to 5 where 1-very low, 5-very high

Przypisać: 5 punktów

Lack of punctuality	<input type="text"/>
Damage of goods in transit	<input type="text"/>
Lack of appropriate transport conditions	<input type="text"/>
Currency fluctuations	<input type="text"/>
Fluctuations of commodity prices	<input type="text"/>

8. Are Your Cluster and/or Cluster's members interested to receive more detailed information about cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster?

Podpowiedz do pytania: Select one answer

☐ YES
 ☐ NO
   
☐ If Yes, please indicate the e-mail address

9. What kind of future benefits does Your Cluster and/or Cluster's members expect from cooperation in the FoodNet meta-cluster?

Podpowiedz do pytania: More than one answer possible.

Trainings	<input type="radio"/>
Joint projects	<input type="radio"/>
Group insurance	<input type="radio"/>
Contacts (email, phone) to person responsible for business contacts in national institutions	<input type="radio"/>
Contacts (email, phone) to new customers (e.g. retail in non-EU countries)	<input type="radio"/>
Lists and standards for local documents in foreign country (with translation)	<input type="radio"/>
Description of legal regulations in target countries	<input type="radio"/>
Support in registration procedures in target countries	<input type="radio"/>

Consultancy regarding export costing	<input type="radio"/>
Advice on the optimization of packaging and transportation of goods	<input type="radio"/>
Support in the registration and obtaining licenses and escort certificates in target countries	<input type="radio"/>
Support in raising funds for export development	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance in building strategies and promotion campaigns in target countries	<input type="radio"/>
Case studies of companies that conduct export activities	<input type="radio"/>
Databases containing current legal regulations or links to data sources	<input type="radio"/>

10. How, in Your opinion, should FoodNet meta-cluster organizational structure look like?

Podpowiedz do pytania: *Select one answer in each row*

	YES	NO	Do not know
FoodNet General Assembly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FoodNet President / vice President	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leaders of the thematic areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Task groups for particular challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cluster manager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cluster office (agency) and/or with regional offices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How FoodNet meta-cluster should be financed?

Podpowiedz do pytania: *Please indicate % of the position as a part of total budget needed for FoodNet meta-cluster*

☐ Other...

12. How are operations of Your Cluster financed?

Podpowiedz do pytania: *Please give indicative breakdown of different sources in %*

### Annex 3. Questionnaire for food producers – exporters

#### ***A SURVEY OF NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF FOOD EXPORTERS IN THE FIELD OF EXPORTING TO NON-EU COUNTRIES.***

The survey of companies is implemented within the framework of the “Food in Eco Network” project financed by the EU programme COSME. The project is carried out by a consortium representing 5 EU countries; Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Spain. The project aims to improve the logistics processes of food raw materials and final products, thereby contributing to the export and sustainability of food companies

The information contained in the questionnaire will be summarised and available for members of the project.

**Interview date, Interviewer name, surname, position:**

#### **1. Company Name**

#### **2. Company's business line**

<b>2.1. Food processing and export of products</b>	
<b>2.2. Importing ingredients for food processing from non-EU countries</b>	

In case of both activities, please provide same level detailed information need for export and import.

Comments (if needed)

---

#### **3. Respondent**

Name, surname \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What kind of food products does your company export (wants to start exporting)?**

HS code	Type of products *	Fresh	Frozen	Processed
01	Live animals			
02	Meat and edible meat offal			
03	Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates			
04	Dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included			
05	Products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included			
07	Edible vegetables and certain roots and tubers			
08	Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or melons			
09	Coffee, tea, maté and spices			
10	Cereals			
11	Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten			
12	Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and fodder			
13	Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts			
14	Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included			
15	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes			
16	<a href="#">Preparations of meat, of fish or of crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates</a>			
17	Sugars and sugar confectionery			
18	Cocoa and cocoa preparations			
19	Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastry cooks' products			
20	Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants			
21	Miscellaneous edible preparations			
22	Beverages, spirits and vinegar			
23	Residues and waste from the food industries; prepared animal fodder			
24	Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes			
x	Other, please, specify			

**5. Amount of food products for the export**

Which of the following product groups the Company had exported at 2017-2018 or plans to export at 2018-2019 outside the EU? Please insert **indicative export amount** (TEUR) per one year at the appropriate column.

(TEUR)

HS code	Product group (Harmonised System)	Existing export per one year (2017 or 2018)	Planning to export (2018 or 2019)
01	Live animals		
02	Meat and edible meat offal		
03	Fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates		

04	Dairy produce; birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included		
05	Products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included		
07	Edible vegetables and certain roots and		
08	Edible fruit and nuts; peel of citrus fruit or		
09	Coffee, tea, maté and spices		
10	Cereals		
11	Products of the milling industry; malt; starches; inulin; wheat gluten		
12	Oil seeds and oleaginous fruits; miscellaneous grains, seeds and fruit; industrial or medicinal plants; straw and fodder		
13	Lac; gums, resins and other vegetable saps and extracts		
14	Vegetable plaiting materials; vegetable products not elsewhere specified or included		
15	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; animal or vegetable waxes		
16	Preparations of meat, of fish or of crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic invertebrates /		
17	Sugars and sugar confectionery		
18	Cocoa and cocoa preparations		
19	Preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk; pastrycooks' products		
20	Preparations of vegetables, fruit, nuts or other parts of plants		
21	Miscellaneous edible preparations		
22	Beverages, spirits and vinegar		
23	Residues and waste from the food industries; prepared animal fodder		
24	Tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes		
x	Other, please, specify		

#### 6. Food export destinations (non -EU countries only).

To which of the following regions/ countries the Company has exported at 2017-2018 or plan to export at 2018-2019 outside the EU? Please insert indicative export amount (TEUR) per one year at the appropriate column

(TEUR)

Please, specify the country:	Existing export per one year (2017 or 2018)	Planning for export (2018 or 2019)

#### 7. Describe the type and the most popular size/volume of the goods required for the export delivery

Average weight of single cargo (kg or MT)	
Average single cargo volume (m3)	
Average single load size (m)	

Type of packaging	x	Average number per cargo
Package		
Palette		
Box		
Others (please, name)		

**8. How often does your company need freight for the export?**

Every day	
1-3 times per week	
1 per week	
2-3 times per month	
Once per month	
Other	

**9. What types of transport does your company use to transport exported products? Select the appropriate options.**

Transport code	Type of transport	x
10	Maritime transport	
20	Railway transport	
30	Road transport	
40	Avio	
50	Small parcel delivery service	

**10. What factors are important for your company for planning freight and choosing a service provider for export?**

Please, arrange all the factors below, marking "6 to 1", where the most important is the "6-MAX", the less important "1 - MIN".

Shortest delivery time as soon as possible	
Lower costs as far as possible	
Drafting documents fluently and of good quality	
Maintenance of the quality of the products to be delivered according to the standards for production and the regulation of the beneficiary country	
Using the most environmentally friendly and lenient means of transport	
Delivery using type of delivery and service provider recognised and respected by customer (beneficiary)	

If there are other factors that are not listed, please describe them

**11. Please, specify which countries your company exports to (wants to start exporting)?  
From all named, specify 3 main target countries?**

---

**12. Can your company's foodstuff be combined in one package with other food without creating risks for its quality? Select the appropriate option.**

Yes, with any kind of own or other producer food	
No, cannot be combined with other products	
Partly. Can be combined with other own products	
Partly. Can be combined with other own products and other producers' products	

If you replied "partly", please specify which product types.

---

**13. Do you already know importing requirements of recipient and destination country?**

---

**14. Please describe your existing export experience in exporting;  
Who is your customer? Type of customer (retailer, wholesaler, etc.)**

---

*Satisfaction with the existing logistics services. Which services are satisfying and which are not?*

---

*Any other relevant data about existing experience.*

---

**15. Describe what other unused solutions can be used to improve food logistics processes?  
How should they be introduced (steps, sequence, necessary preparatory actions, etc.)?**

---

**16. Please describe existing difficulties, bottlenecks that make export difficult for your company or prevent from starting exporting.**

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**17. Is your company willing to co-operate with other companies in order to start exporting?  
What are your needs / interests in this co-operation?**

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**18. Can you take goods from other processing companies to consolidate your cargo (fill a container);**

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**19. Are you willing to add your goods to other exporting companies to consolidate your cargo (fill a container);**

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***Thank you for your participation!***



## Annex 4. Questionnaire for foodstuff logistic service providers

The survey of logistic service companies is implemented within the framework of the “Food in Eco Network” project financed by the EU programme COSME. The project is carried out by a consortium representing 5 EU countries; Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Spain.

The project aims to improve the logistics processes of food raw materials and final products, thereby contributing to the export and sustainability of food companies.

A survey among logistic service companies, food processing companies, SMEs and other relevant stakeholders aims to prioritize framework elements and key drives for successful and sustainable FoodNet collaborative partnership.

FoodNet aims to become an EU-wide meta cluster. A strong, well-organized and developed team of people should lead the FoodNet as any excellent cluster. The organisation of the work, decision-making and authorities and funding sources of the FoodNet organisation will be defined as part of the partnership agreement.

LOGISTICS SERVICE PROVIDER - means EU / locally registered company – logistics service provider for EXPORTER or IMPORTER of foodstuff operations outside EU.

The information contained in the questionnaire will be summarised and available for members of the project.

**Interview date, Interviewer name, surname, position:**

### 1. Company Name

### 2. Company's business line . ? Please mark (X) in the appropriate row

<b>2.3. Transport and logistics</b>	Code	
2.3.1. Storage services – warehouses		
2.3.2. Transportation services		
2.3.2.1. Maritime transport	10	
2.3.2.2. Railway transport	20	
2.3.2.3. Road transport	30	
2.3.2.4. Avio	40	
2.3.2.5. Small parcel delivery service	50	
Other, please write		
2.3.2.6		
2.3.2.7.		
2.3.2.8.		

<b>2.4. Other services</b>	
2.4.1. Company that performs loading and unloading of vessels	
2.4.2. Representative of the company that verifies/surveys loading and unloading of vessels	
2.4.3. Customs broker or declaration services	
2.4.4. Insurance services	

Other, please write:	
2.4.5.	
2.4.6.	
2.4.7.	

Comments (if needed)

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### 3. Respondent

Name, surname : \_\_\_\_\_

Position : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. To what and from what countries does your company have experience to organize delivery of food products?

Please, specify countries:

### 5. Where do you see competitive advantages and strengths of your company? Please, arrange all the factors below, marking "6 to 1", where the most important is the "6-MAX", the less important "1 - MIN".

Short delivery time	
Low costs	
Drafting documents fluently and in good quality	
Maintenance of the quality of the products to be delivered according to the standards for production and the regulation of the beneficiary country	
Using the most environmentally friendly and lenient means of transport	
Delivery using type of delivery and service provider recognised and respected by customer (beneficiary)	

### 6. What information do you need to prepare detailed and precise transportation offer for the Client – Food exporting company ?

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***Thank you for the participation!***

## Annex 5. Database of potential members

Name	Country	Region	Sector(s)	Website
AgroBioCluster	Poland	Mazowieckie	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.agrobiocluster.pl">http://www.agrobiocluster.pl</a>
Innovative Food Cluster FOOD4GOOD	Poland	Mazowieckie	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.food4good.pl">http://www.food4good.pl</a>
NUTRIBIOMED Klaster	Poland	Dolnośląskie	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.nutribiomed.pl/?locale=en">http://www.nutribiomed.pl/?locale=en</a>
Centre for Transport Safety and Vehicle Diagnostics	Poland	Mazowieckie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.klastercentrum.pimot.eu/">http://www.klastercentrum.pimot.eu/</a>
Klaster Inteligentnych Systemów Transportowych	Poland	Mazowieckie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://itsklaster.pl/o-klastrze/">http://itsklaster.pl/o-klastrze/</a>
LODZistics Logistics Business Network of Central Poland	Poland	Łódzkie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://lodzistics.pl/pl/o-nas/">http://lodzistics.pl/pl/o-nas/</a>
Maritime Cluster of Western Pomerania	Poland	Zachodniopomorskie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://klastermorski.com">http://klastermorski.com</a>
North South Logistics & Transport Cluster	Poland	Pomorskie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.klasterlogtrans.pl/">http://www.klasterlogtrans.pl/</a>
POLISH MARITIME CLUSTER	Poland	Pomorskie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://klastermorski.com.pl/">http://klastermorski.com.pl/</a>
Southern Railway Cluster	Poland	Śląskie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://klasterkolejowy.com.pl/">http://klasterkolejowy.com.pl/</a>
Westpomeranian MARITIME CLUSTER	Poland	Zachodniopomorskie	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://klastermorski.org">http://klastermorski.org</a>
Cluj IT Cluster	Romania	Nord-Vest	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.clujit.ro">http://www.clujit.ro</a>
Urban Logistic Cluster Association	Romania	Sud-Vest Oltenia	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://arott.ro">http://arott.ro</a>
AGROFOOD - The Regional Cluster of Food Industry and Products	Romania	Centru	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://agrofoodcovasna.ro">http://agrofoodcovasna.ro</a>
AGROPRO Oltenia Cluster	Romania	Sud-Vest Oltenia	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.adroltenia.ro/clustere/">http://www.adroltenia.ro/clustere/</a>
BIODANUBIUS	Romania	București - Ilfov		<a href="http://www.biodanubius.ro">www.biodanubius.ro</a>
IND-AGRO-POL	Romania	București - Ilfov	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.inma.ro/indagropol">http://www.inma.ro/indagropol</a>
Transylvania Lands Cluster	Romania	Centru	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.transylvania-lands.ro">http://www.transylvania-lands.ro</a>
Food Products Quality Cluster	Latvia	Latvija	Fishing and fishing product	<a href="http://www.ppkk.lv/en/about-ppkk">http://www.ppkk.lv/en/about-ppkk</a>
LATVIAN HIGH ADDED VALUE AND HEALTHY FOOD CLUSTER	Latvia	Latvija	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.vidzeme.lv/en/latvian_high_added_value_and_healthy_food_cluster1">http://www.vidzeme.lv/en/latvian_high_added_value_and_healthy_food_cluster1</a>
Latvian logistics association/ Latvian Supply chain Cluster	Latvia	Latvija	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.lla.lv">www.lla.lv</a>
amec urbis	Spain	Cataluña	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.amec.es/urbis">http://www.amec.es/urbis</a>
Asociación Cluster del Naval Gallego (ACLUNAGA)	Spain	Galicia	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.aclunaga.es">www.aclunaga.es</a>
Basque Mobility and Logistics Cluster, MLC ITS Euskadi	Spain	País Vasco	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.mlcluster.com">http://www.mlcluster.com</a>
Canary Cluster for Transports and Logistics	Spain	Canarias	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.cctl.es">www.cctl.es</a>
Catalonia Logistics	Spain	Cataluña	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.catalonialogistics.com">http://www.catalonialogistics.com</a>
CITET Innovation Cluster for Sustainable Freight Delivery	Spain	Comunidad de Madrid	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.citet.es">www.citet.es</a>

CLUSTER ANDALUCIA SMART CITY	Spain	Andalucía	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.andaluciasmartcity.com">http://www.andaluciasmartcity.com</a>
CTN - Marine Technology Centre	Spain	Región de Murcia	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.ctnaval.com">http://www.ctnaval.com</a>
FOODSERVICE CLUSTER Associació del Foodservice Català	Spain	Cataluña	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.clusterfoodservice.org/cluster-food-service/agN5k4qvK3CCUMEEbF4nA_N3ufla-mo3bbiUwVPbi7sBa3E_yP0_ZiNKM-B75ZjGwx-zWbYhqfyHHqUU6EFSq62XlaBZ0xow">http://www.clusterfoodservice.org/cluster-food-service/agN5k4qvK3CCUMEEbF4nA_N3ufla-mo3bbiUwVPbi7sBa3E_yP0_ZiNKM-B75ZjGwx-zWbYhqfyHHqUU6EFSq62XlaBZ0xow</a>
MAFEX	Spain	País Vasco	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.mafex.es">http://www.mafex.es</a>
PIMEC LOGISTICS	Spain	Cataluña	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.pimec.org">http://www.pimec.org</a>
Railgrup	Spain	Cataluña	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.railgrup.net">http://www.railgrup.net</a>
UNIPORTBILBAO	Spain	País Vasco	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.uniportbilbao.es/Home.aspx?Id=46">http://www.uniportbilbao.es/Home.aspx?Id=46</a>
Cluster de la Acuicultura	Spain	Galicia	Fishing and fishing product	<a href="http://www.cetga.org">http://www.cetga.org</a>
CTN - Marine Technology Centre	Spain	Región de Murcia	Fishing and fishing product	<a href="http://www.ctnaval.com">http://www.ctnaval.com</a>
FEDACOVA	Spain	Comunidad Valenciana	Fishing and fishing product	<a href="http://www.fedacova.org">http://www.fedacova.org</a>
AINIA	Spain	Comunidad Valenciana	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.ainia.es">http://www.ainia.es</a>
AINS cluster Nutrition and Health- Asociación empresarial Innvoadora Nutrición y Salud	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.ainscluster.cat">www.ainscluster.cat</a>
AMEC - Association of the Internationalized industrial companies	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.amec.esd">www.amec.esd</a>
Asociación Clúster Alimentario de Galicia	Spain	Galicia	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://galiciafoodanddrink.org/">http://galiciafoodanddrink.org/</a>
Asociación de Investigación de Industrias Cárnicas del Principado de Asturias (ASINCAR)	Spain	Principado de Asturias	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.asincarc.com">http://www.asincarc.com</a>
CATALONIA BIOMASS CLUSTER	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.clusterbiomassa.cat">http://www.clusterbiomassa.cat</a>
Cluster biotecnològic i biomèdic de les Illes Balears	Spain	Illes Balears	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.bioib.org">http://www.bioib.org</a>
CLUSTER DE ALIMENTACIÓ DE EUSKADI - BASQUE FOOD CLUSTER	Spain	País Vasco	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.clusteralimentacion.com/en">http://www.clusteralimentacion.com/en</a>
Cluster FOOD+i	Spain	La Rioja	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.clusterfoodmasi.es/">http://www.clusterfoodmasi.es/</a>
ETICOM (Asociación Empresarial Eticom, cluster de Economía Digital de Andalucía)	Spain	Andalucía	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.eticom.com">http://www.eticom.com</a>
FEDACOVA	Spain	Comunidad Valenciana	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.fedacova.org">http://www.fedacova.org</a>
FOODSERVICE CLUSTER Associació del Foodservice Català	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.clusterfoodservice.org/cluster-food-service/agN5k4qvK3CCUMEEbF4n">http://www.clusterfoodservice.org/cluster-food-service/agN5k4qvK3CCUMEEbF4n</a>

				<u>A_N3ufla-mo3bbiUwVPbi7sBa3E_yP0_ZiNKM-B75ZiGwx-zWbYhqfyHHqUU6EFSq62XlaBZ0xow</u>
Industrial Transformation Cluster ain	Spain	Comunidad Foral de Navarra	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.ain.es">http://www.ain.es</a>
INNOVACC Associació Catalana d'Innovació del sector carni porcí	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.innovacc.cat">www.innovacc.cat</a>
INNOVI - Catalan Wine Cluster	Spain	Cataluña	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.innovi.cat">www.innovi.cat</a>
Vitartis, Food Industry Cluster of Castilla y León	Spain	Castilla y León	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.vitartis.es">http://www.vitartis.es</a>
Logistics in Wallonia	Belgium	Prov. Liège	Transportation and logistics	<a href="http://www.logisticsinwallonia.be">http://www.logisticsinwallonia.be</a>
Flanders' FOOD	Belgium	Région de Bruxelles-Capitale/Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.flandersfood.com">http://www.flandersfood.com</a>
Wagralim	Belgium	Prov. Hainaut	Food processing and manufacturing	<a href="http://www.wagralim.be">http://www.wagralim.be</a>

## Annex 6. Letter of Invitation for cluster managers (example)



Dear Sirs,

On behalf of Food In Eco Network (FoodNet), a meta-cluster established within the international project (co-funded within COSME programme) I am pleased to invite you to cooperation within this initiative that may be interesting for the cluster you represent.

FoodNet is a long term European Strategic Cluster Partnership for Internationalization (ESCP4i) supporting clusters, their SMEs and other member organisations in collaboration for innovation, market up-take, marketing and internationalization of competitive products, services, technologies in the field of food and eco-logistics – and support SMEs in global competition. FoodNet is free-of-charge open initiative and new members (clusters and supporting organisations) can step-in anytime.

Therefore, on behalf of the FoodNet consortium, you are kindly encouraged to join the Partnership. In case you are interested in cooperation within FoodNet and to know better your needs, expectations and requests related to possible international development of your cluster, we would like to kindly invite you to complete this [survey](#).

The survey is a part of a process of setting up internationalisation strategy and action plan for FoodNet members therefore your participation to this exercise is of special importance. We would be more than happy if you can share your experience and benefit from this exercise.

As FoodNet member you can benefit in a following way:

- visibility of the competences for the cluster, including promotion of your products and services on the FoodNet web page and our social media channels,
- improved feasibility for networking, business collaboration and internationalization with complementary companies / clusters from other EU and non-EU countries,
- participation to mapping studies of complementary solutions in sectors and cross sectoral borders,
- establishment of micro consortia for projects co-financed from other sources, improved position for acquiring co-financing for internationalization activities which is the key objective of FoodNet project.

For more information please visit the project website [www.foodnet-project.eu](http://www.foodnet-project.eu) and do not hesitate to contact me directly: [r.mielczarek@asm-poland.com.pl](mailto:r.mielczarek@asm-poland.com.pl) for any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Remigiusz Mielczarek, Project Coordinator

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Food in Eco Network – internationalization and global competitiveness of European SMEs in Food and Eco Logistics Sector • [www.foodnet-project.eu](http://www.foodnet-project.eu) • [office@foodnet-project.eu](mailto:office@foodnet-project.eu)

