Ref. Ares(2025)4899640 - 19/06/2025

LOWINFOOD

Multi-actor design of low-waste food value chains through the demonstration of innovative solutions to reduce food loss and waste

GA No. 101000439

D6.9 Synergies with other projects

WP6 - Type of deliverable: Report - Dissemination level: Public - Due date: 28 February 2025

HISTORY OF CHANGES after the first submission of the deliverable on 28/02/2025		
Date	***Change description***	***Reference to the EC request***
18/06/2025	*Section 3.3 amended*	*Following a remark of reviewers, the new section 3.3 specifies more in detail the how sister projects cooperation allowed to exploit better EU investment.*

Contact(s) of the deliverable's lead beneficiary:

Luca Falasconi (UNIBO) Email: luca.falasconi@unibo.it

Authors

Luca Falasconi (UNIBO), Claudia Giordano (LUKE), Elisa Carloni (UNIBS), Gianluca Di Fiore (CNR), and Clara Cicatiello (UNITUS)

LIST OF PARTNERS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO PRODUCE/REVISE THE DELIVERABLES:
This report was developed with the contribution of representatives from the following partners: **UNIBO, ELH, UNITUS, JHI, BOKU, LUKE**, whose inputs to the activities implemented in collaboration with the sister projects have enabled the achievement of the results presented in this report.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

LOWINFOOD Consortium

N.	Full name of the organisation	Short name	Country
1	Università degli Studi della Tuscia	UNITUS	Italy
2	Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna	UNIBO	Italy
3	Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet	SLU	Sweden
4	FH Munster University of Applied Sciences	ISUN	Germany
5	The James Hutton Institute	JHI	United Kingdom
6	Universitaet Fuer Bodenkultur Wien	BOKU	Austria
7	Tampereen Korkeakoulusaatio SR	TAU	Finland
8	Charokopeio Panepistimio	HUA	Greece
9	Osterreichisches Okologieinstitut	AIE	Austria
10	Elhuyar Fundazioa	ELH	Spain
11	Matomatic AB	MATO	Sweden
12	Unverschwendet GmbH	UNV	Austria
13	Akademie Deutsches Baeckerhandwerknord GGmbH	ADB	Germany
14	Foresightee (terminated on 30/01/2023)	FOR	Belgium
15	Leroma GmbH	LER	Germany
16	Mitakus Analytics UG	MITA	Germany
17	Kitro SA	KITRO	Switzerland
18	Regione Emilia Romagna	RER	Italy
19	Pianeta Cospea srl	PICO	Italy
20	Cogzum Bulgaria OOD	COZ	Bulgaria
21	Uppsala Kommun	UPP	Sweden
22	Recuperiamo srl	REG	Italy
23	Antegon GmbH	FT	Germany
24	Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della piccola e media impresa Associazione di Viterbo e Civitavecchia	CNA	Italy
25	Assemblee des Regions Europeennes Fruitieres Legumieres et Horticoles	ARE	France
26	L.V.L Anonymi Emporiki Toyristiki Kksenodoxeiaki Kataskevastiki Etaireia	BLU	Greece
27	Iridanos-Inabelos Anonymi Etaireiatouristikes Ksenodoxeiakes Kai Agrotikes Epixeiriseis	THA	Greece
28	Luonnonvarakeskus (started on 01/11/2023)	LUKE	Finland

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Table of contents

Summary **4**

Introduction to the deliverable **5**

1. Cooperation approach **6**

1.1 Creating the Cooperation and Collaboration Network (CCN) 7

1.2 Engaging New Members and Strengthening Cooperation 7

1.3. Collaborative Definition of Common Activities 8

2. Sister Projects Cooperation Group **9**

2.1 Building a Collaborative Framework 9

2.2 Data Privacy and GDPR Compliance 16

2.3 Formation of Working Groups 16

2.3.1 Evolution of Working Groups 18

2.3.2 Mapping Innovations, Co-Creation, and Value Chain Assessment Methodologies 18

2.3.3 Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform (formerly SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform) 19

2.3.3.1 A Collaborative Approach to Innovation 20

2.3.3.2 Framework for Feeding the Platform with Project Outcomes 21

2.3.4 Communication and Dissemination Activities 22

2.3.4.1 Key Joint Communication and Dissemination Actions 23

2.3.5 Cooperation Plan and Workshop 24

2.3.5.1 Key Outcomes and Initiatives 25

3. Conclusions **26**

3.1 Objectives of Cross-Project Synergies 26

3.1.1 Strengthening Cooperation Across the RUR-06-2020 and RUR-07-2020 Projects 26

3.2 Impact of the Cooperation Framework 27

3.3 Maximizing EU Investment and Stakeholder Benefits 27

3.4 Lessons Learned and Best Practices for Collaboration Among Sister Projects 28

3.4.1 Key Considerations for Effective Collaboration 29

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Summary

The LOWINFOOD project aims to support the European transition towards a circular and waste-conscious agri-food system by fostering collaboration with European and international initiatives tackling food loss and waste (FLW). The collaboration establishes a structured approach for engaging with other projects—both ongoing and past in particular those funded through RUR-07-2020 (Reducing food losses and waste along the agri-food value chain) and RUR-06-2020 (Innovative agri-food value chains: boosting sustainability-oriented competitiveness)—to develop and implement joint activities.

The plan defines two main components:

- Framework for Cooperation: A strategy to facilitate collaboration with key stakeholders in the FLW sector.
- Implementation of Joint Activities: Collaborative selection of initiatives to exchange knowledge, identify challenges, and share best practices.

The Cooperation and Collaboration Network (CCN) serves as the main platform for these efforts, fostering synergies and ensuring coordinated action across the food supply chain.

This report, ultimately, is a continuation of Deliverable 6.3, which outlined the activities related to the identification of the project's network. In this report, the joint activities carried out by the sister projects within the CCN will be presented.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Introduction to the deliverable

To foster a European transition towards a circular and waste-conscious agri-food system, the LOWINFOOD project was committed to building synergies with European and international initiatives tackling food loss and waste (FLW). By collaborating with these initiatives, the project sought to develop and implement joint activities that align with shared priorities.

This document will provide a summary of the joint efforts and collaborative projects undertaken as part of this network, detailing partnerships with both ongoing and completed European FLW initiatives that have contributed to the network.

The purpose of this Cooperation Plan was to establish a structured approach for engaging with other projects—whether from the same or previous funding calls—or other programs and initiatives working towards reducing FLW. The ultimate goal was to create a coordinated effort to minimize food losses and waste at different stages of the food supply chain.

This plan defines the mechanisms through which common activities are identified and executed within the Cooperation and Collaboration Network (CCN). The process was divided into two main areas:

- Framework for Cooperation: A predefined strategy set at the project's inception to facilitate collaboration with key players and experts in the FLW field.

- Implementation of Joint Activities: collaborative selection of actions to be implemented within the CCN, aimed at exchanging experiences, identifying challenges and gaps, sharing best practices, lessons learned, key drivers of change, and exploring future scenarios.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

1. Cooperation approach

The first step in fostering collaboration was identifying key European projects and initiatives focused on food loss and waste (FLW). Among these were projects funded under RUR-07-2020 (Reducing food losses and waste along the agri-food value chain, e.g., FOODRUS) and RUR-06-2020 (Innovative agri-food value chains: boosting sustainability-oriented competitiveness, e.g., FAIRCHAIN, CO-FRESH, and PLOUTOS).

Figure 1: Logos of the 5 sister projects

Acting on recommendations from the European Commission's Project Officers, these five initiatives established a structured partnership—the Sister Projects Cooperation Group—to facilitate knowledge-sharing and the development of coordinated activities. Regular meetings were held to strengthen collaboration and align efforts toward common goals.

To expand beyond this initial core group and create a broader collaborative ecosystem, additional European projects and initiatives relevant to FLW prevention, sustainable food systems, and circular economy were identified. Project coordinators, including those already part of the Sister Projects Cooperation Group, were then invited to join the Cooperation and Collaboration Network (CCN), with the objective of fostering larger-scale cooperation and collective action.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

1.1 Creating the Cooperation and Collaboration Network (CCN)

The CCN was established as a dynamic network connecting European projects that had previously worked—or were actively working—on FLW-related challenges. Its primary goal was to develop a shared learning environment where members could exchange insights, discuss obstacles, and highlight best practices.

Membership in the CCN required active engagement in joint initiatives designed to explore key issues such as structural barriers, emerging trends, effective mitigation strategies, and forward-looking scenarios for FLW reduction. By fostering cross-project collaboration, the network aimed to enhance mutual learning, amplify impact, and drive sustainable solutions across the food value chain.

1.2 Engaging New Members and Strengthening Cooperation

To formalize membership, an official invitation letter was prepared and sent to prospective participants. This document outlined the purpose of the CCN, the benefits of joining, and a roadmap for involvement, including an overview of proposed collaborative activities.

Interested projects were required to sign the invitation letter as a formal commitment to active participation in the CCN community, engaging in cooperative efforts, knowledge exchange, and the joint development of initiatives aimed at tackling food waste.

Once a critical mass of projects had joined the CCN, the initiative was formally introduced to the European Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, a key body coordinated by the European Commission. This platform plays a crucial role in supporting EU institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders in defining measures to prevent food waste, sharing effective solutions, and assessing long-term progress.

Recognizing its strategic influence in food waste prevention, the CCN anticipated that the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste might be interested in collaborating with the network or, at the very least, leveraging insights from its research and activities.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

1.3. Collaborative Definition of Common Activities

To facilitate knowledge exchange and promote the adoption of effective strategies, LOWINFOOD and the other CCN members were invited to engage in a series of joint activities aimed at sharing methodologies, best practices, lessons learned, and key recommendations. These activities were initially outlined in consultation with the Sister Projects Cooperation Group before being presented to the broader network.

The proposed areas of collaboration included:

- Building an Expert Community on FLW → Establishing a dedicated network of professionals and researchers focused on food loss and waste.
- Developing Common Methodologies → Standardizing approaches for quantifying food waste and losses, assessing sustainability from environmental, economic, and social perspectives, integrating citizen science, and incorporating gender analysis into FLW studies.
- Dissemination and Knowledge Sharing → Leveraging multiple communication channels, such as:
    - A shared digital platform for exchanging information.
    - A compilation of best practices from various projects.
    - Webinars and joint events to enhance project visibility and promote collaboration.
    - Social media engagement, including a Twitter presence and LinkedIn networking group.
    - Cross-promotion of newsletters for increased outreach.

To assess the level of interest and commitment among participating projects, the Cooperation Team designed and distributed a survey. This questionnaire aimed to collect detailed insights on each project's willingness to contribute to specific activities, as well as to identify any additional collaborative initiatives that members wished to propose.

Over time, the CCN consolidated and documented the most effective best practices and lessons learned derived from its members' FLW-focused projects, ensuring that successful approaches and insights were preserved and made accessible for broader implementation.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2. Sister Projects Cooperation Group

As outlined in Task 6.5 of the LOWINFOOD Grant Agreement (*Favour networking among research and innovation projects on FLW reduction*), the project committed to fostering collaboration with other European initiatives addressing FLW. Particular emphasis was placed on engaging with projects funded under RUR-07-2020 (*FOODRUS*) and RUR-06-2020 (*FAIRCHAIN, CO-FRESH, and PLOUTOS*) to enhance visibility, maximize impact, and create opportunities for cross-project cooperation.

Recognizing the potential for collaboration, the European Commission's Project Officers encouraged these five projects to organize a dedicated meeting to explore synergies, define joint activities, and frame them within a structured Action Plan. Acting on this recommendation, the coordinators held an initial meeting on November 10, 2020, where they officially established the Sister Projects Cooperation Group. This initiative also involved key partners responsible for Cooperation, Communication, and Dissemination within the respective projects.

2.1 Building a Collaborative Framework

From the outset, all members of the Sister Projects Cooperation Group emphasized the importance of knowledge exchange, identifying synergies, and leveraging shared expertise to drive meaningful progress. During the first meeting, each project was introduced, and participants discussed strategies for fostering cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable food systems.

Given that all five projects were required to develop a Networking or Cooperation Plan, several shared activities were proposed to streamline collaboration:

1. **Establishing a Shared Cloud Repository** → A centralized platform where all projects could store and share working documents related to joint efforts.
2. **Creating the "Cooperation_RUR06-07" Expert Community** → A **stakeholder database** encompassing key players across the food value chain, enabling stronger connections between partners.
3. **Leveraging the Smartchain Platform** → Utilizing and co-developing the Innovative Food Value Chain Platform as a shared repository for project results.
4. **Coordinating Innovation Mapping** → Facilitating the exchange of technological innovations between projects to avoid duplication and identify complementary approaches.
5. **Aligning Methodologies** → Establishing common frameworks for:
    a. Value chain assessment (LCA, impact evaluation, mapping methodologies).
    b. Food loss quantification.
    Co-creation methodologies.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

6. **Enhancing Communication and Dissemination** → Coordinating outreach efforts through:
    a. A common hashtag and social media presence.
    b. Dedicated sections on project websites to highlight **Sister Projects**.
    c. Cross-promotion of newsletters and events.
    A best practices toolkit for communication and networking strategies.

7. **Defining Key Sister Projects Activities** → Developing a structured roadmap of cooperative, communication, and dissemination efforts to ensure synergy across projects while avoiding redundancies.

Table 1: Main activities included in sister projects' Work Plans related to Cooperation and Communication and Dissemination.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Nov 2020	COOP	Sister project cooperation group and thematic workshop creation	FOODRUS, LOWINFOOD, CO-FRESH, FAIRCHAIN and PLOUTOS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Nov 2020 Jan 2021	COOP	Cross fertilisation with other projects and community building (workshop)	FAIRCHAIN	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Jan 2021	COOP	FLW Projects Map: Compilation of European and international projects and initiatives in the field of food waste & losses (workshop)	FOODRUS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Feb 2021	COOP	Establishment of a "Cooperation and collaboration Network" and its networking body (workshop)	FOODRUS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Mar 2021	COOP	Mapping methodologies of existing agri-food value chains workshop	CO-FRESH	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Apr 2021	Com & Dis	First of quarterly external newsletters	FAIRCHAIN	Regular articles on sister project activities
May 2021 Feb 2024	COOP	Implementation of the Joint activities included in the Cooperation Plan (workshop)	FOODRUS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
May 2021 Feb 2024	Com & Dis	Dissemination of the Joint activities via communication tools: social media, website, newsletters,…	FOODRUS	Use common tools among the partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06: common newsletter, common results repository (smartchain platform),…
May 2021	COOP	Green week event "Collaborative and circular food systems to reduce pollution and improve health (whorshop)	FOODRUS	ACR+, UD, Sister projects cooperation group
May 2021	COOP	Thematic Workshop (online) on Methodology for assessing and developing a framework to map and assess innovative agri-food value chains	CO-FRESH	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Jun 2021	COOP	Thematic Workshop (telematic) on Methodology on Co-creation of innovative agri-food value chains in an integrated mode considering a systemic approach to the whole value chain	CO-FRESH	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Jun 2021	COOP	Farm, Foods, Folks – Reshaping agrifood EU policies (whorkshop)	FAIRCHAIN	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-04
Sept 2021	Com & Dis	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on food waste and food losses Workshop	FOODRUS	ACR+, UD, FOODRUS partners, Advisory Board, CCN members
Oct 2021	COOP	List of selected projects for collaboration and activities	LOWINFOOD	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Jan 2022	COOP	Implementation of the innovation platform	FAIRCHAIN	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Feb 2022	COOP	1st CCN webinar: Knowledge Transfer and expertise learning	FOODRUS	ELIKA, ACR+, G!E, CCN members
Mar 2022	COOP	Innovation dynamics in agri-food value chains	LOWINFOOD	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Sept 2022	COOP	Policy Recommendations - Support the transition to a more sustainable future in agri-food value chains	PLOUTOS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-06
Oct 2022	Com & Dis	The mid-term public conference, with a full day dedicated to all projects	FAIRCHAIN	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-04
Nov 2022	COOP	Joint participation in EFFosT conference. Special session: Innovations for food producers and food SMEs: How to encourage putting innovations into practice	FOODRUS	UD, involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Dec 2022	COOP	Joint participation in the Copa-Cogeca event	FOODRUS	Support in sharing the invitation and participation in the Workshops organised by RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Jan 2023	COOP	Sustainable Food Systems Webinar Series: Food upcycling and food waste recycling – what is it all about?	FOODRUS	AU, Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Feb 2023	COOP	Cooperation session (2nd webinar)	FOODRUS	ELIKA, FOODRUS partners, CCN members
Feb 2023	COOP	Sustainable Food Systems Webinar Series: Food waste prevention through reuse and upcycling	FOODRUS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Oct 2023	COOP	First policy roundtable on legal and economic barriers to food waste prevention and reduction	FOODRUS	ACR+, participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Oct 2023	COOP	Sister project joint event	FOODRUS, LOWINFOOD, CO-FRESH, FAIRCHAIN and PLOUTOS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Nov 2023	COOP	Roundtable on Policy Issues for the Development of (Short) Value Chains	CO-FRESH	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Jan 2024 Feb 2024	Com & Dis	FOODRUS: Reducing Food Waste triple event: National replication workshop, Regional replication workshop and open doors workshop	FOODRUS	ELIKA, AIN, ARC, Participation of common stakeholders and partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Jan 2024	COOP	Policy roundtable on legal and economic barriers to food waste prevention and reduction	FOODRUS	ACR+, participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Feb 2024	Com & Dis	Innovations in Agro-Food Industry event	FOODRUS	Co-organization by FOODRUS and COFRESH partners
Feb 2024	Com & Dis	Innovations in Agro-Food Industry event	CO-FRESH	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Mar 2024	Com & Dis	Final Event	CO-FRESH	Joint final events of FOODRUS and CO-FRESH. On CO-FRESH final event, joint sister project session about policy briefs
Mar 2024	COOP	Compilation of Cooperation activities	FOODRUS	Participation of involved partners from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Mar 2024	Com & Dis	Final event	FOODRUS	Joint final events of FOODRUS and CO-FRESH. On FOODRUS final event, sister project cooperation session with the participation of representatives from RUR-07 and RUR-06 sister projects
Aug 2024	Com	WP4 final conference - Scotland- final conference with fish supply chain stakeholders and policymakers in Scotland	LOWINFOOD	Invited partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07

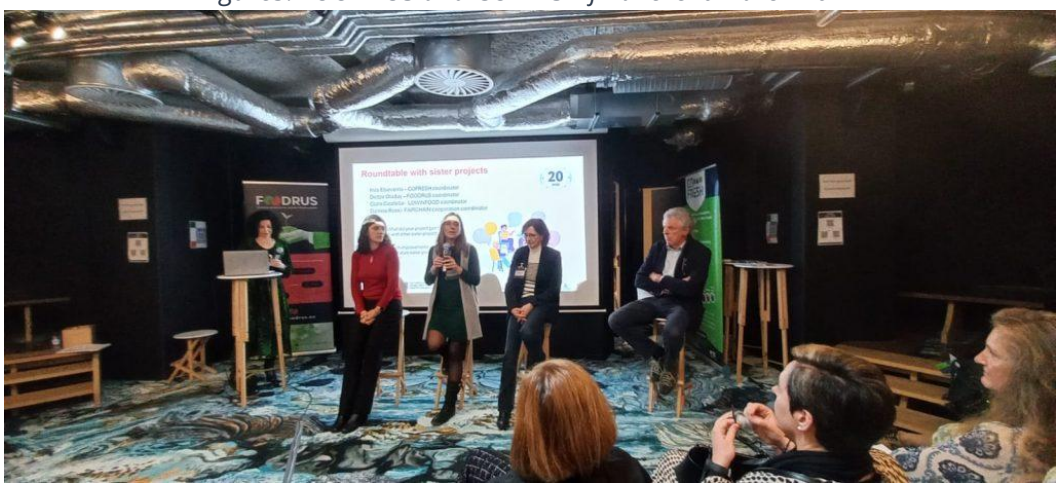
LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Date	Type of Activity	Activity	Project in charge	Required Collaboration from Sister projects
Aug 2024	Com	WP4 final conference - Germany- Program of the final conference with fish supply chain stakeholders and policymakers in Germany	LOWINFOOD	Invited partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Sept 2024	Com	Final two-day Conference	LOWINFOOD	Invited partners from RUR-06 and RUR-07
Oct 2024	Com & Dis	Final Event	FAIRCHAIN	Participation of involved partners from RUR-06 and RUR-05

Figure 2: Sister projects event October 2023

Figure3: FOODRUS and COFRESH final event March 2024



LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2.2 Data Privacy and GDPR Compliance

As part of their collaborative work, the Sister Project Coordinators also addressed compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). To ensure proper data handling and processing within research activities, all members agreed to implement a privacy policy aligned with GDPR requirements.

2.3 Formation of Working Groups

During subsequent meetings held on January 27, 2021, and March 3, 2021, the Sister Projects Cooperation Group formalized a series of Working Groups (WGs), each dedicated to specific aspects of the collaboration. These groups involved partners from across the five projects, ensuring a **structured approach** to joint activities:

WG1. RUR06-RUR07 Community → A network encompassing all project partners (**Led by ELIKA – FoodRUs**).

WG2. Co-Creation Methodologies → Exploring participatory approaches for food waste solutions **(Led by UD and BCC – FoodRUs)**.

- **Food Loss Quantification** → A specialized subgroup within this WG (Led by UD – FoodRUs & LOWINFOOD).

WG3. Value Chain Assessment → Coordinating methodological approaches for evaluating sustainability and supply chain impacts (**Led by UD – FoodRUs**)

WG4. Innovation Platform → Focused on technological development and innovation sharing **(Led by G!E – FoodRUs).**

WG5. Communication and Dissemination → Managing outreach and public engagement strategies (**Led by the different projects in a shared and rotating manner**).

WG6. Cooperation Plan and Workshops → Overseeing collaborative initiatives and organizing joint events (**Led by ELIKA and ACR+ – FoodRUs**)

Each **Working Group** met regularly to discuss progress, refine strategies, and coordinate their respective activities. Following each meeting, a **rotating WG leader** compiled key findings and reported them to the **monthly Sister Projects Cooperation Group meeting**.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Table 1: List of the 6 Working Groups and members of each Sister Project

Working Groups (WG)	Working Group member - EU Sister Project
RUR06 - RUR07 Community	Daniel Rossi -FAIRCHAIN Francesca Marino – FAIRCHAIN Aikaterini Kasimati – Ploutos Mónica de Prado – FoodRUs Edelbis López Dávila – CO-FRESH Claudia Giordano - LOWINFOOD
Co-creation methodologies	Ariane Voglhuber – FAIRCHAIN Ainhoa Alonso – FoodRUs Laura Vazquez – FoodRUs José Mª Gil – CO-FRESH Ernst Johannes Prosman – Ploutos Giulia Bartezzaghi – Ploutos Sandra Cesari de Maria – Ploutos Elisa Carloni - LOWINFOOD
Value chain assessment (framework and methodologies)	Anne Verniquet – FAIRCHAIN Karin Östregren – FAIRCHAIN Silvia Scherhaufer – LOWINFOOD Nazli Koseoglu – LOWINFOOD Claudia Giordano – LOWINFOOD Gianluca di Fiore – LOWINFOOD Frank Berkers – Ploutos Federica Ciccullo – Ploutos Giulia Bartezzaghi – Ploutos Sandra Cesari de Maria – Ploutos Manuel Amador – FoodRUs Montse Guerrero – FoodRUs Marianne Thomsen – FoodRUs Zuzana Palková – FoodRUs Anthony Rouault – CO-FRESH Alexandre Moreno - CO-FRESH
SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform	Michael Bregler – CO-FRESH Caspar Winkelmeyer – CO-FRESH Christoph Cotillon – FAIRCHAIN Gemma Cournuau – FAIRCHAIN Luis Mayor – FAIRCHAIN Katherine Flynn – FAIRCHAIN Nikos Marianos – Ploutos Daniel Lissoni – FoodRUs Gianluca di Fiore – LOWINFOOD Luca Falasconi - LOWINFOOD

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Working Groups (WG)	Working Group member - EU Sister Project
Communication and Dissemination activities: newsletters/ social media/common hashtag/project webpages/links/toolkit	Luis Mayor – FAIRCHAIN Katherine Flynn – FAIRCHAIN Michael Bregler – CO-FRESH Caspar Winkelmeyer – CO-FRESH Manex Urruzola – LOWINFOOD Dimitra Perperidou – Ploutos Daniel Lissoni - FoodRUs
Cooperation Plan and Workshop	Geneviéve Gèsan – Guiziou – FAIRCHAIN Daniel Rossi – FAIRCHAIN Inés Echeverría Goñi – CO-FRESH Andrea Molero Bondia – CO-FRESH Edelbis López Dávila – CO-FRESH Nikos Marianos – Ploutos Aikaterini Kasimati – Ploutos Mónica de Prado – FoodRUs Nuria Cases i Sampere – FoodRUs Elisa Carloni – LOWINFOOD Clara Cicatiello - LOWINFOOD

2.3.1 Evolution of Working Groups

As the projects advanced, the scope and focus of each **Working Group** evolved to adapt to emerging needs and priorities. Some groups were **restructured** to enhance agility and responsiveness, ensuring that the collaborative framework remained effective throughout the project's lifecycle.

2.3.2 Mapping Innovations, Co-Creation, and Value Chain Assessment Methodologies

As part of the ongoing collaboration, the Sister Projects Cooperation Group agreed to consolidate efforts in sharing methodologies, exchanging innovations, and facilitating knowledge transfer. To support this objective, a series of online workshops was planned to foster discussion and engagement on these topics.

The first of these workshops took place in March 2021, focusing on the "Mapping Methodology of Existing Agri-Food Value Chains". This session brought together members from Working Groups (WGs) 1, 2, and 3, who analzyed different mapping approaches and assessed their relevance across projects. Following the discussions, participants concluded that a dedicated WG on mapping methodologies was no longer necessary, as its activities could be integrated into other existing WGs, optimizing resources and enhancing cross-group collaboration.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

A year later, in March 2022, LOWINFOOD organized another key workshop, titled "Innovation Dynamics in Agri-Food Value Chains". This event attracted approximately 60 participants, who gathered online to explore and discuss a variety of initiatives developed within the sister projects network. Representatives from all five sister projects presented insights into innovations they were testing, implementing, or scaling up, providing valuable case studies and best practices.

Throughout these exchanges, the crucial role of networking and collaboration was emphasized. The discussions highlighted how bringing together individuals with innovative ideas and those capable of supporting their development and expansion is fundamental for driving meaningful advancements in agri-food value chains.

2.3.3 Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform (formerly SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform)

The SMARTCHAIN project was designed to accelerate the transition toward collaborative Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) by introducing innovative business models and practical solutions. One of its key outputs was the development of the SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform, a digital space aimed at fostering innovation and knowledge exchange within agri-food value chains.

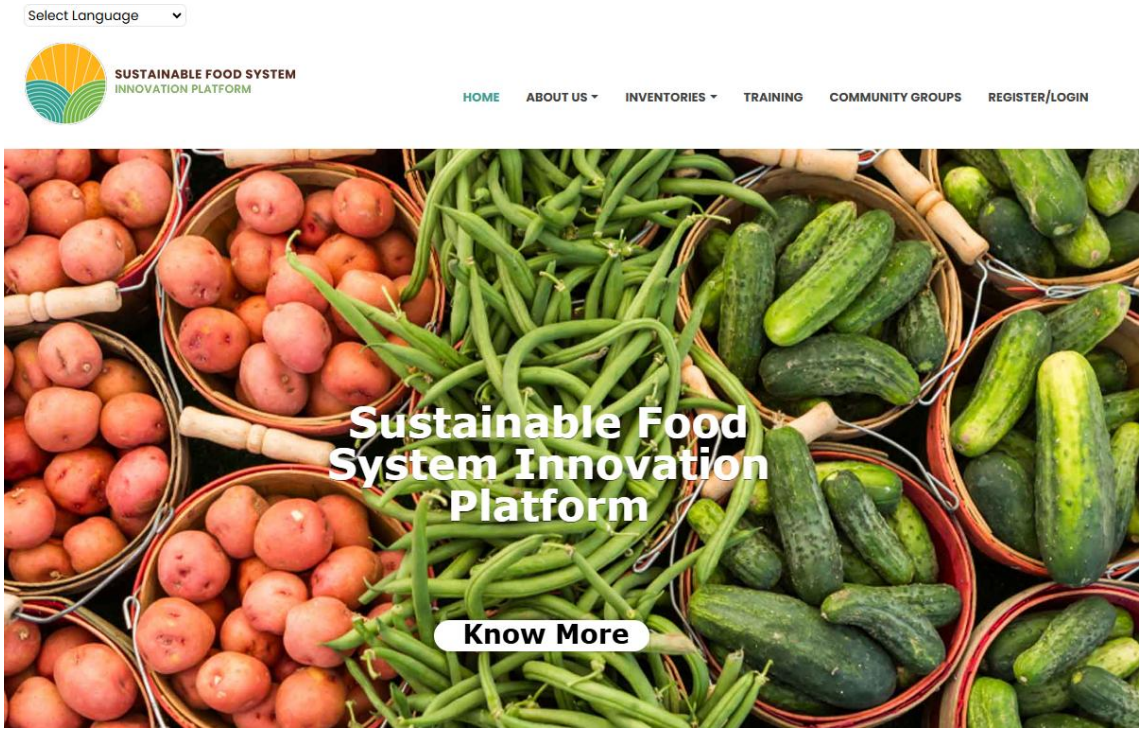
Following the conclusion of SMARTCHAIN in August 2021, the sister projects took over the platform's management and rebranded it as the "Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform." This transition ensured the continuity of collaboration and expanded the platform's role in supporting sustainable and competitive agri-food systems. In this way, the platform remains active even after the conclusion of the projects.

On this platform, users can freely browse or search the database for case studies, initiatives, innovations, practice abstracts, publications, and web links. LOWINFOOD has contributed to the platform with 3 innovations, 5 practice abstracts, and 1 paper.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Figure 4: Platform home page



2.3.3.1 A Collaborative Approach to Innovation

Recognizing that cooperation is essential for success, the five Horizon 2020 sister projects have actively contributed to the platform, using it as a tool to enhance innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness across the food supply chain. Through joint efforts, they have worked to:

- **Share project-driven innovations** in food supply chains.
- **Showcase an inventory of initiatives** and best practices.
- **Develop training materials** to promote sustainability in food systems.
- **Engage a growing network of stakeholders** interested in innovative food value chains.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2.3.3.2 Framework for Feeding the Platform with Project Outcomes

To ensure that results and findings from the five projects are efficiently integrated into the platform, a structured approach was agreed upon:

1. **Innovation Inventory**
   a. Each sister project is required to produce a set of Practice Abstracts for the EIP-AGRI project database.
   b. These abstracts, which highlight key innovations, will be linked to the platform's innovation inventory.
   c. A standardized Word template will be used for submissions, allowing easy publication of all Practice Abstracts as new innovations on the platform.
   Each project retains full control over uploading its own innovations to the inventory.

2. **Publication Database**
   a. A centralized repository for scientific papers, reports, articles, and other relevant publications from the five sister projects and external sources. Various formats (e.g., PDFs, PowerPoint presentations) are accepted to facilitate knowledge-sharing.

3. **Video Section**
   a. A dedicated area within the Resources section will be created to host all videos produced by the five sister projects.
   b. This section will complement the existing Publications and Web Links resources. Each project must ensure that individuals appearing in its videos have provided GDPR-compliant consent forms before publication.

4. **Expanding the Network**
   a. To broaden the platform's impact, it was agreed that similar projects focusing on innovative and sustainable agri-food value chains, food loss, and food waste reduction—both ongoing and future—should be invited to contribute.

5. **Future Development of the Platform**
   a. The platform will undergo continuous improvements to better align with the evolving needs of different projects.
   b. Enhancements will focus on usability, accessibility, and increasing its overall impact, ensuring that it remains a valuable resource for research, innovation, and industry collaboration.

By maintaining and expanding the Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform, the sister projects are not only preserving SMARTCHAIN's legacy but also strengthening their ability to foster sustainable, innovative, and resilient agri-food value chains.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2.3.4 Communication and Dissemination Activities

To enhance visibility, outreach, and knowledge exchange, the sister projects established a Communication and Dissemination Working Group, which coordinated various joint activities to maximize the impact of their collective efforts. These initiatives aimed to create synergies across projects, amplify key messages, and ensure broader engagement with stakeholders. Among the activities designed and implemented within this working group was the sharing of information through the respective newsletters. In the newsletters of the various projects, a dedicated section was included to provide updates on implemented activities, progress made, and organized initiatives.

Figure 5: Section of the 6th LOWINFOOD newsletter (Nov 2023) dedicated to sister projects

News about LOWINFOOD's sister projects

#FoodWasteWarriors by FOODRUS

From 17–26 November, the #FoodWasteWarriors campaign under the FOODRUS project hosted multiple events in various European countries. The diverse activities included stands at canteens in Brussels, a food upcycling meeting at the University of Copenhagen, a replication workshop in Hungary, and awareness campaigns in Spain, Denmark and Bulgaria. The FOODRUS Day and all its events are part of the European Week of Waste Reduction 2023 (EWWR).

Read more

FAIRCHAIN FoodFactory-4-Us Competition 2024 call for student applications is open!

The 10th FF4US international student competition game is now open for applications! The topic to be addressed is '**Upscale or downscale a food supply chain to a regional or national level'.** Teams of 3 - 5 students anywhere in the world, can send their application by 11 February 2024.

Selected teams will attend from February – April 2024, five online, action-oriented, and innovative trainings in which they will develop their project and improve group cooperation and communication skills. The competition ends with a Virtual Conference where all teams present their projects. The winning team will receive, among other prizes, €300 from ISEKI-Food Association! Application and participation are completely free of charge.

Empowering Innovation: CO-FRESH Project Releases Glimpse into Co-Creation Journey

The CO-FRESH project team is delighted to announce the release of a series of informative videos, including pitch videos, a focus group discussion, and a summary video of the recent general assembly meeting, held in Pamplona. These videos are readily accessible on the official CO-FRESH YouTube channel

The pitch videos delve into the co-creation process of implementing various innovations at each of the project's pilot cases. They are designed to shed light on the functioning of the working groups, outline some of the challenges encountered, and emphasize the potential and benefits of collaboration with all value chain actors, including consumers.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2.3.4.1 Key Joint Communication and Dissemination Actions

1. **Strategic Conference Participation**
    a. A special session at the 2022 EFFOSET Conference, focusing on co-creation and joint paper writing among sister projects.
    A dissemination event hosted by FAIRCHAIN, where all sister projects contributed and shared insights.

2. **Collaborative Multimedia Content**
    a. A video was created highlighting the positive points of collaboration between sister projects.
    b. A short introductory video presenting the five projects collectively.
    Webinars on thematic topics, shared publicly via YouTube.

3. **Information Sharing and Coordination**
    a. A shared event tracker to facilitate coordination and increase participation in relevant events.
    b. A newsletter strategy including:
        i. A general newsletter featuring a dedicated section on sister project collaboration.
        ii. An internal newsletter for community members, where interested projects can share updates, links, and key announcements.
        iii. A collaborative drafting process for newsletters, ensuring each project has access to content from sister initiatives.
    The use of a common hashtag (#H2020FoodSis) across social media platforms to increase visibility and engagement.
4. **Cross-Promotion and Visibility**
    a. Mutual amplification of social media content, including retweeting posts from sister projects.
    Website cross-linking, ensuring that each project's website includes the logos and links of the other sister projects.

5. **Leveraging the Innovation Platform**
    a. Utilizing the Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform as a centralized hub to summarize innovations from all projects.
    b. Producing Practice Abstracts to highlight key innovations and methodologies.

By implementing these coordinated communication strategies, the sister projects have strengthened collaboration, visibility, and knowledge dissemination, ensuring that their work reaches a broader audience while fostering innovation and engagement across the agri-food sector. An infographic showing the common KPIs was published annually.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

Figure 6: Example of infographic on KPIs common to the 5 sister projects

2.3.5 Cooperation Plan and Workshop

As part of the ongoing cooperation efforts, multiple working groups were established to focus on key thematic areas, including:

- **Value chain assessment methodologies**
- **Food loss reduction strategies**
- **Co-creation processes**
- **Innovation platform development**
- **Dissemination and outreach initiatives**
- **Strategic cooperation planning**

Through structured discussions during cooperation meetings, project partners worked together to prioritize and define concrete cooperation activities to be carried out within the RUR-06-2020 and RUR-07-2020 project frameworks. These meetings played a critical role in shaping a coordinated action plan and ensuring alignment between sister projects.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

2.3.5.1 Key Outcomes and Initiatives

1. **Prioritization and Decision-Making on Cooperation Activities**
    a. The working groups collectively determined which joint activities would be implemented across sister projects for 2022 and 2023.
    Clear steps were outlined to enhance collaboration and streamline efforts in FLW reduction, sustainability, and innovation in agri-food systems.

2. **Establishment of a "Sister Projects Young Researchers' Seminar"**
    a. A dedicated working group was created to organize this seminar, providing an opportunity for early-career researchers to exchange knowledge, present findings, and engage in cross-project discussions.

3. **Cross-Project Engagement and Knowledge Exchange**

    a. A proposal was put forward to invite coordinators from sister projects to participate in general project meetings, fostering stronger collaboration at the leadership level.
    b. Plans were made to organize dedicated cooperation events, allowing projects to showcase their progress, share methodologies, and explore synergies.

By structuring these initiatives within a cooperation plan, the sister projects strengthened their collective impact, ensuring a systematic approach to knowledge exchange, methodological alignment, and collaborative decision-making across the consortium.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

3. Conclusions

Given the overlap in activities and expected outcomes, the five project consortia prioritized collaboration and synergy-building to enhance efficiency and impact. By fostering cooperation, they successfully avoided duplication of efforts while maximizing the effectiveness of shared initiatives.

A key outcome of this collaboration was the streamlined coordination of activities, achieved through information-sharing, joint communication strategies, and collective dissemination of results. This approach not only optimized resource use but also strengthened the collective reach of each project.

3.1 Objectives of Cross-Project Synergies

The cooperation between Horizon Europe initiatives and other EU research and innovation (R&I) programs aimed to:

- Align approaches and objectives across different funding programs, ensuring complementarity and efficient use of public funds.
- Map the scope of activities covered by each program to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Develop coherent strategies to maximize real-world impact.
- Encourage greater integration between programs, enhancing knowledge transfer.
- Expand the dissemination of R&I results, making them more accessible to EU institutions, Member States, and stakeholders.

3.1.1 Strengthening Cooperation Across the RUR-06-2020 and RUR-07-2020 Projects

Collaboration between the RUR-06-2020 and RUR-07-2020 projects has been highly active, leading to the formation of a networked ecosystem within the same thematic area. As part of this initiative, projects agreed to participate in multiple joint activities, including:

- Creating a community of experts that brings together stakeholders from across the agri-food value chain.
- Conducting innovation mapping to identify and track technological advancements.
- Standardizing methodologies for value chain assessment and food loss quantification.
- Utilizing NextCloud as a shared repository for document exchange.
- Leveraging the SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform to host and share key research outputs.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

These coordinated efforts significantly expanded the outreach of individual projects, facilitating wider dissemination and adoption of shared activities across the consortium.

3.2 Impact of the Cooperation Framework

Through regular meetings and structured working groups, partners successfully defined and implemented common activities in areas such as:

- Co-creation methodologies
- Value chain and food loss assessment
- Innovation management through the SMARTCHAIN platform
- Joint communication and dissemination strategies
- Development of a long-term cooperation plan and dedicated workshops

Each Working Group (WG) met consistently to exchange ideas, define strategies, and coordinate tasks, with WG leaders reporting key outcomes to the monthly meetings of the Cooperation Sisters Group.

3.3 Maximizing EU Investment and Stakeholder Benefits

The collaboration among sister projects significantly increased the effectiveness of EU investments by fostering resource-sharing, minimizing duplication of efforts, and creating added value through joint actions. These synergies produced tangible outcomes that would not have been possible through isolated project work.

Firstly, methodologies and tools were shared and aligned across projects as far as possible; this happened for instance for value chain assessment, food loss quantification, and co-creation strategies. This harmonization avoided redundant research and ensured that results were comparable, scalable, and more easily transferable across contexts and stakeholder groups.

Secondly, the joint use and maintenance of the Sustainable Food System Innovation Platform (originally developed in the SMARTCHAIN project) allowed for a single, enriched repository of innovations, case studies, practice abstracts, and publications, accessible to all stakeholders. This significantly improved knowledge dissemination and access to validated solutions across Europe, and at the same time ensured the proper exploitation of EU investments made on previous projects in the past years.

Thirdly, common communication and dissemination strategies, including coordinated social media campaigns, joint newsletters, shared events, and mutual visibility on websites, expanded the reach of each project. For example, the joint participation in major events (EFFoST conference 2022, Green Week 2021, Copa-Cogeca workshops, and policy

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

roundtables) created multiplier effects by bringing integrated messages and evidence-based solutions to a broader range of policymakers and practitioners.

It should also be mentioned that stakeholders directly benefited from coordinated capacity-building initiatives, such as the Sister Projects Young Researchers' Seminar and joint webinars, which enabled cross-learning and opened new opportunities for professional development and networking among early-career scientists, SMEs, and policymakers.

Finally, the policy recommendations developed through this network were more coherent and impactful, thanks to the collective input from multiple projects tackling food loss and waste from different angles. This allowed the sister projects to provide a stronger, unified message to European institutions, supporting policy integration and contributing to the design of future funding programs.

In conclusion, the structured cooperation among the sister projects maximized the return on public investment and produced broader and more sustainable benefits for a wide community of users – from food producers and processors to local authorities, NGOs, and EU policymakers.

3.4 Lessons Learned and Best Practices for Collaboration Among Sister Projects

Open collaboration fosters the exchange of best practices across projects, thereby maximizing their overall impact. Several key practices have proven to be particularly effective and could be replicated in future collaboration networks among research projects:

1. Leveraging Existing Sharing Platforms – Making use of platforms developed in previous projects ensures the continuity and enhanced impact of tools and resources already created, avoiding redundancy and maximizing efficiency.

2. Fostering Collaborative Research Efforts – Encouraging PhD mobility, joint research activities, and dedicated sessions at conferences strengthens cooperation and knowledge exchange. Additionally, organizing side meetings or thematic events fosters interaction among sister projects and provides a foundation for the development of new project proposals built upon past research outcomes.

3. Harmonizing Policy Recommendations – Facilitating cross-project knowledge exchange by sharing policy recommendations can enhance their relevance and coherence. This approach ensures that projects addressing similar challenges contribute to a stronger and more unified message to the European Commission and policymakers.

4. Bridging Past and Ongoing Projects – Establishing links between ongoing and completed projects enables the transfer of lessons learned from previous initiatives. Valuable insights

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

from past projects—such as best practices in organizing field experiments, surveys, and stakeholder engagement events—can significantly benefit new projects, improving their efficiency and effectiveness.

3.4.1 Key Considerations for Effective Collaboration

This collaborative experience highlights that defining clear objectives and focusing on specific activities are essential for building a successful and efficient research network. Additionally, strategic planning during the proposal preparation phase plays a crucial role in ensuring the feasibility of cooperation efforts.

One critical aspect is budget allocation: collaboration activities often require dedicated funding, and ensuring that all participating projects have adequate financial resources is vital for sustaining long-term cooperation. Budgeting for networking and joint activities from the outset prevents logistical and financial constraints that could hinder effective collaboration.

By adopting these strategies, research projects can strengthen their collective impact, optimize resource use, and contribute to more coordinated and effective research efforts at the European level.

LOWINFOOD has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000439.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.