



Issue 8: September, 2020: This e-bulletin is aimed at health professionals, consumers, growers, farmers, packers, processors, distributors, retailers, and others in the plant foods area.

Innovation Europe

In these dark days of Covid-19 and recession Rebeca Fernández, Director of Food Policy, Science and R&D at FoodDrinkEurope has written an upbeat article on making Europe the food innovation capital of the world. The article is outlined below:

Europe already leads the world on food safety and when the European Commission launched its Farm to Fork Strategy earlier this year, it said it wanted the EU to become the global gold standard for sustainable food. This ambition will require:(i) significant investment in research and innovation (R&I), (ii) providing the legislative environment that lets European innovators in the public and private sectors develop solutions that enable Europe to go carbon neutral by 2050, improve health, protect nature, and deliver on the EU Green Deal. Five ways EU decision makers can ensure Europe becomes the food innovation capital of the world are:

1. [Provide adequate funds to sustainable food systems:](#) Horizon Europe is the European Commission's flagship programme to support R&I, and R&I investment, and is fundamental to fulfilling the objectives of the Green Deal. Concern is expressed that the proposed budget for Horizon Europe is not proportional to the challenges that lie ahead, particularly in areas relevant to the food and drink sector. Policy makers are urged to increase the focus, and investment, on sustainable food and drink innovation. More information is available via the link below in the Horizon Europe position paper launched by FoodDrinkEurope in August 2020. Building on the success of Horizon 2020, the new European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (R&I), Horizon Europe, will run from 2021 to 2027.

https://www.fooddrinkurope.eu/uploads/publications_documents/Horizon_Europe_position_paper.pdf

2. [Develop a predictable, science-based policy environment:](#) In a 2019 BusinessEurope survey, companies ranked innovation-friendly EU regulation as the second most important issue (after R&I funding) that the EU should improve in order to help companies to scale up their R&I investments. The European food and drink industry is on the cutting edge of innovation – whether developing alternatives to plastic packaging, finding ways to preserve food to avoid food waste, or fortifying foods to beat malnutrition - but needs more

predictable, science-based regulation to give it confidence to invest in the future.

3. Promote more collaboration: While the food industry is actively engaged in R&I towards more sustainable food systems, increased collaboration is essential. For Horizon Europe to succeed, it must consult all R&I players, including food and drink businesses, in setting an inclusive strategy. Within the current H2020 programme there are very positive examples in place including (i) the SMARTCHAIN project, which aims at enhancing sustainability of short food supply chains, and (ii) the FIT4FOOD2030 project which seeks to mobilise a wide variety of stakeholders to future-proof the EU food system, in which the European Technology Platform 'Food for Life' is a partner.

4. Build skills: New skills and competences in the food sector's workforce are required to successfully address and react to the new challenges and opportunities for the food sector. FoodDrinkEurope is a partner in the ERASMUS+ Knowledge Alliance project ASKFOOD, which aims to create a link between businesses and higher-education institutions in the food-related sectors to identify and address existing and emerging skills needs. FoodDrink Europe is also involved in FIELDS, an ERASMUS+ Sector Skills Alliance focusing on skill needs for sustainability, digitalization, and the bio-economy in agriculture. Decision makers are encouraged to provide more support in this important area.

5. Incorporate R&I into the Farm to Fork Strategy: The results from R&I projects are not only helpful for further research, or to develop new and better products and services, but they can also help shape policy making. The EU is now fully alert to the urgency for a step change in the way food/drink is grown, processed and consumed through the publication of its Green Deal ambition and the Farm to Fork Strategy; the latest available reliable scientific evidence should be the driving force behind these. If the EU wants to be the global standard for sustainability, it must increase its commitment to R&I in order to develop and test solutions, overcome barriers and uncover new market opportunities for more sustainable food systems.

FoodDrinkEurope: The mission is to facilitate the development of an environment in which all European food and drink companies, whatever their size, can meet the needs of consumers and society, while competing effectively for sustainable growth. FoodDrinkEurope's contribution is based on sound scientific research, robust data management and effective communication, working within the regulatory framework to ensure that all food and drink issues are dealt with in a holistic manner. More detail in:

<https://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu/about-us/role-and-mission/>

See previous 7 issues of PlantFoods-ucd at: <https://www.ucd.ie/foodandhealth/newsandevents/plantfoodsucd/>

Compiled by Professor Ronan Gormley, UCD Institute of Food & Health, School of Agriculture & Food Science, Belfield, Dublin 4. **More information from ronan.gormley@ucd.ie

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