

Next FOOD

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION
OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

D8.1, 8.2, 8.3: Ethics

WP8 – Ethics



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1.1 Executive summary

This document is a collection of the NextFood “Ethics Policy” deliverables 8.1 (use of humans in research), 8.2 (protection of personal data) and 8.3 (third partner countries). The overall aim of NEXTFood is to generate an innovative European science and education road map for sustainable agriculture along the value chain from research via fabrication into application. Within NEXTFood we will employ systems approaches, in which the farmers and other supply chain actors involved are seen as important actors and co-creators of knowledge. This will challenge the linear view of knowledge transfer as a top-down process from researchers down to advisors and practitioners. The project will involve several phases of research, each of which will be planned in accordance with high standards of research ethics. This document reports how potential ethical issues in the NextFood project will be identified and taken into consideration by the partners involved in the research activities and the data collection and storage.

1.2 Introduction

NEXTFood will employ case-based action research to develop relevant and effective education and training programs for a transition to more sustainable agrifood and forestry systems. Research will be performed on qualitative and quantitative data generated during the case development process. In addition, we will analyze data collected in a broader context by using data from questionnaires. Key ethical issues concerning the planned research activities are recruitment of participants, information to participants and informed consent during the planned research activities. Moreover, fair benefit sharing with non-EU low and middle income partners and protection of personal data is taken into consideration. This document reflects the commitment of the NextFood research group to conduct responsible and socially acceptable research. It describes how we deal with ethical issues that will or may arise while completing the different tasks of the project and demonstrates how our research is in line with international, EU and national laws. The Management Team will be responsible for overseeing ethical issues throughout the project, and will consult institutional ethics committees whenever necessary.

Compliance with research ethics is an integral part of the research in the NEXTFood project. Project partners are bound by the requirements to adhere to best practice regarding ethical standards and contemporary processes as they may evolve over the period of the project (c. 2018 to 2023). The processes and approach to ethical clearance in NEXTFood comply with the guidance in Regulation (EU) 1291/2013, 11 December 2013, establishing the Horizon 2020, Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), as set out by in the Official Journal of the European Union, Article 19 on ethical principles (European Parliament, 2013). Of particular relevance to NEXTFood are the principles of:

- proportionality,
- the right to privacy,
- the right to the protection of personal data,
- the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person,
- the right to non-discrimination,
- the need to ensure high levels of human health protection.

Research activities will be required to meet the following:

1. Research will be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.
2. Research participants and staff will be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.
3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents will always be respected.
4. The independence of the research will be clearly set out, and any conflicts of interest or partiality will be made explicit.

The NEXTFOOD Consortium Agreement includes a requirement for all Partners to strictly adhere to the ethical standards and guidelines of Horizon2020, regardless of the country in which the research is carried out. It includes reference to processes for the collection of personal data.

The Project Plans for each Task in the Project Management Plan will identify whether there is a likelihood of requiring ethical clearance for the activities proposed. The assessments will be reviewed as the project evolves, and monitored by the Executive Board, through the WPLs. For those activities for which ethical clearance will be required the responsibility for the conduct of the research rests with the lead investigator of the activity. The relevant Task and WP Leaders will ensure that the activity has the appropriate ethical clearance. Such clearance will normally be through a partner's institutional ethical procedures. If there are no such procedures, those of the most relevant Task or WP Leader will be followed. In the absence of a relevant procedure, the process of the Coordinating organisation, SLU, will be used. Guidelines on best practice will be followed, as published by the most relevant professional body or public agency. As a general guide, NEXTFOOD partners will follow the UK Economic and Social Research Council Research Ethics Guidebook (www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/Consent-72). The project Data Management Plan will set out the principles, processes and requirements for ensuring data protection, whilst pursuant of a general project policy of research being Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR).

1.3 Application area

The procedures and criteria specified in this document shall be applied by all partners in NextFood and for all procedures of data acquisition involving subjects external to the Project Consortium in a non-anonymous form. Each partner supervises and checks the work performed by its own staff in accordance with this document.

1.4 Use of Humans in research

1.4.1 Protocol for recruiting research participants

Recruitment of research participants involves presenting potential participants with information about the study in order to make them interested and willing to serve as

research subjects. Human participants are involved especially in the case studies in WP2 and WP3 where farmers, students and other professionals participate, but also to a certain degree in WP1, WP4 and WP5 where we will be using surveys and focus group interviews. No children or adults not able to give an informed consent will take part in NextFood. Participation in the studies does not involve any physical interventions, invasive techniques, nor will any samples be taken from humans. It's important that the information is presented in an accurate and understandable way and that ethical issues in the recruitment process is taken into consideration. Participation in research must be voluntary. To assure that participation of students, farmers and other professionals are voluntarily, the investigation will be introduced in a way that allows participants adequate time to ask questions and to freely consider whether or not they wish to take part. The recruitment of participants will involve the following steps:

- In the case studies, researchers will meet potential participants in groups in order to recruit and inform them of the research, e.g. at the introduction of a course.
- The participants will be provided with adequate information in their native language about the study. Researchers contact details will be provided, for participants to contact the researchers for information and decide whether they wish to join in.
- When making surveys, participants will be given the necessary information in a foreword to the questionnaire.
- Participants in the case studies will be asked to sign the informed consent form. In surveys, participants will give their consent by ticking a box.
- The partner who is responsible for the investigation is also responsible for storing the signed forms for future reference.
- Participants are able to withdraw from the study at any point; it will be made clear that participation is voluntary.

1.4.2 Information sheet

The information sheet will explain that the study involves research and it also includes information on the purpose of the study. We will explain clearly, what the role of the person / farm will be in the study and how much time participating in it requires. All research participants will receive an information sheet for their involvement in the study. The information sheet is supposed to help the participant to make an informed decision about joining the research project or not. The information sheet should be kept concise in order to make the potential participants read it in full. The Participant Information Sheet includes the following information (Swedish Research Council, www.codex.vr.se):

- the researchers, their affiliations and contact details
- the purpose and the overall plan of the research
- risks and benefits of taking part
- what the role of the person will be in the study
- and how much time participating in it requires
- how the participant's information will be used and stored
- how confidentiality and anonymity will be preserved
- information on how to withdraw from the study

1.4.3 Informed consent

In research involving humans, participants have to get information about the research and the participation has to be consented. Informed Consent is the decision, which must be written, dated and signed, to take part in research, taken freely after being duly informed of its nature, significance, implications and risks ([European Commission. Ethical Review in FP7. Guidance for Applicants: Informed Consent. 2013.](#)) The consent also includes how data is stored and used for future research. NextFood is an Open Research Data Pilot, which aims to make the research data generated by Horizon 2020 projects accessible with as few restrictions as possible, while at the same time protecting sensitive data from inappropriate access. That means that data underpinning published research and have a longer-term value must be deposited in a research data repository where they will be findable and accessible for others.

The purpose of the informed consent is to verify that participants:

- understand that taking part is voluntary and they are free to withdraw
- fully have understood the information provided in the information sheet
- have been given the possibility to ask questions about the study to researchers
- recognize that the data they provide with will be de-identified
- agree that the research team have the right to access the data
- recognize that the data will be stored for use in other future research

1.4.4 Sample Information sheet

Project name	Educating the next generation of professionals in the agrifood system
Project acronym	NextFood
Lead insitution	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Funder	EU- Horizon2020
Duration	48 months; May 2018 – April 2022

Website	TDB
Name of the researcher for this task	Name
Contact details to responsible researcher	Affiliation, cell phone, e-mail

1. Introduction

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Before making a decision on whether you want to participate or not, please read this document carefully. Please ask all the questions you may have so you can be completely sure to understand all the proceedings of the study.

2. Purpose of the study

The aim of NextFood is to prepare professionals in agriculture, forestry and food value chains to be able to contribute to a more sustainable food and forestry production. NextFood will do that by developing new education and training systems for students, farmers, foresters, advisers and other professionals in the agrifood system.

3. Duration of the research activities

Project activities will last 48 months from 01/05/2018 to 30/04/2022.

4. Risks or inconveniences

No risk is foreseen. You are only requested to be available to participate.

5. Benefits

There are no personal benefits besides the possible learning from solving problems related to food and forestry production together with other professionals. With your participation you will make a substantial contribution to the transition towards a more sustainable food production.

6. Privacy and confidentiality

Responses you give in the questionnaires, interviews, workshops and focus groups will be recorded. Your recorded data will be de-identified; hence it will not be possible to identify you afterwards. Information will be processed during the phase of data analysis and will be shown in project reports. It will not be possible to identify the source of the information. The results of this investigation may be published in scientific journals or conferences and may be used in further studies. Nothing of the provided personal data will be handed out to third parties.

7. Withdrawal options

You can withdraw from the study and request your information be deleted at any time, without giving a reason up to the end of the study. If you should decide to deny your consent, please contact the leading investigator and let her/him know of your intention of leaving the study.

8. Contact persons

In case of any issue involving you in your role of participant of this research study, you are invited to inform the Project Coordinator, PhD Martin Melin, via email, martin.melin@slu.se.

9. Confirmation

Your participation in this study is only possible if you freely and independently sign this consent to authorize us to use the data you provide.

Sample Consent form

<p>Consent</p> <p><i>Below you give your consent to voluntarily participate in the NextFood research project. Read the information in this form carefully and consent with your signature below.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have read and understood the information sheet or it has been read to me. I have been given the opportunity and enough time to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that taking part in the study may involve (Briefly state the type of intervention that will be undertaken e.g. audio-recorded interviews, focus group discussions, and how long time the intervention will take)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that personal information collected about me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.

NextFood is an open data pilot, which means that data generated within the project is that the research data is free to access, reuse, repurpose, and redistribute. The Open Research Data Pilot aims to make the research data generated by Horizon 2020 projects accessible with as few restrictions as possible, while at the same time protecting sensitive data from inappropriate access. This will be described in a data management plan.

1.6 Third party countries

1.6.1 Fair benefit-sharing arrangements

Benefits-sharing especially for non-EU low and middle income countries means ensuring fair sharing of new values produced from the research activities in these countries. Stakeholders in these countries, including researchers, businesses, farmers, advisers and students should see that benefits rising from NextFood is shared in a fair way between all parties. NextFood promotes openness and co-ownership of the research and its outcomes, e.g. teaching and training methods, curricula, and toolboxes for teaching practitioners. Co-creation is a key element of the project, as each work package requires inputs from partners both in and outside EU, especially for developing the new education and training system and for the inventory of skills.

All EU partners, as well as partners from non-EU low and middle income countries, have a budget for travel and accommodation to be able to participate in partner meetings. The budget allows for at least one person and sometimes two persons to visit the meetings.

They will be invited to participate in consortium conferences. Non-EU low and middle income countries will also have full access to the research results produced in other country case studies, which can be a valuable source of lesson learning for all partner institutions. Research results such as the master manual, and policy briefs will be promoted in non-EU countries through the respective partner organisation. NextFood will also provide support to carry out stakeholder workshops in the non-EU countries.

Researchers from non-EU low and middle income countries will also be participating in knowledge creation through participation in developing and/or implementing the research methods and co-authoring publications.

1.6.2 Transfer of data between EU and non-EU countries

Chile, Egypt, Ethiopia and Norway are partner countries in Nextfood. In addition, we will manage cases studies in India via the German partner WHH. These partners will collect data for work packages 1, 2 and 3, and it may include personal data such as names and addresses of farm locations. Data will be imported from Chile, Egypt, Ethiopia and Norway and there will be a transfer of data to, in particular, the non-EU country Norway. However, all personal data will be de-identified before transfer of any data between countries. This means that no personal data will be transferred to or from non-EU countries.

1.6.3 Risk mitigation

No risks for participants or researchers have been identified.