

Next FOOD

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION
OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

D7.1: Minutes from the Kick-off meeting 2-4 of May, Malmö, Sweden

WP7 – Project management



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Background

In 2050, the world population is expected to reach 9.7 billion, which will suppose a greater consumption of the earth resources. The growth of the global population goes hand in hand with a rise in demand for food, energy and other goods which originate from agricultural and forestry production. The challenge is multiplied by climate change that will pose threats to agrifood systems by extreme weather conditions and shifting climate zones.

By preparing farmers, students, advisors and others to become lifelong learners and acquire the soft and the technical skills needed to go from knowledge to action, NEXTFOOD will boost the transition to a more sustainable and resilient food and forest production.

NEXTFOOD will take on the challenge to design and implement a research-based, effective learning strategy that enhances all involved stakeholders' understanding of complex situations and hones their abilities to help co-create a more sustainable future in agrifood and forestry systems.

NEXTFOOD will challenge the linear view of knowledge transfer as a top-down process from researchers down to advisors and practitioners. Instead we will support the transition to a more cyclical learning where the learners go back and forth between practice and critical reflection.

Thus, the overall aim of NEXTFOOD is to generate an innovative European science and education roadmap for sustainable agriculture along the value chain from research via fabrication into application.

To reach the overall aim of NEXTFOOD, several objectives need to be met, including to:

- Create an inventory of the skills and competencies needed for a transition to more sustainable agriculture, forestry and associated bio-value chains,
- Facilitate case studies to identify gaps and needs
- Test new relevant curricula and training methods,
- Identify policy instruments that support the transition towards action-, and practice-oriented learning methods,
- Peer-review tools for evaluating the quality of the practice-oriented research
- Create a knowledge platform for knowledge for teaching practitioners

The Nextfood consortium

NEXTFOOD core partnership comprises 19 partners, from 12 countries and 4 world continents. The partnership has been designed to tackle the challenge posed by the necessity to gather all competences required to achieve the ambitious objectives of the project. The NEXTFOOD consortium encompasses partners who are renowned leaders in their fields, have access to networks of farmers or other organisations, and

have multidisciplinary interest and expertise to participate in the various work packages.

Several partners have extensive cooperation with organizations (universities, chambers, public authorities and organizations, private companies, cooperatives and associations) at national and European/international level, to jointly promote common objectives and exchange of information, ideas and experiences. Several partners and stakeholders design and elaborate training programs to increase the competitiveness of the business in the region and development of specialized and high added value in human resources.

Table 1. List of partners of the Nextfood consortium

Sweden	SVERIGES LANTBRUKSUNIVERSITET (SLU) (coordinator)
Sweden	LUNDS UNIVERSITET (LU)
Romania	UNIVERSITATEA DIN ORADEA (UNIOR)
Czech Rep.	JIHOCESKA UNIVERZITA V CESKYCH BUDEJOVICICH (USB)
Norway	NORGES MILJO-OG BIOVITENSKAPLIGE UNIVERSITET (NMBU)
Greece	AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL POST SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING ASSOCIATION (AFS)
Italy	ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITA DI BOLOGNA (UNIBO)
Czech rep.	BIOINSTITUT (Bioinstitut)
Sweden	FORESTRY RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF SWEDEN (SKOGFORSK)
Greece	AGRONUTRIOTIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA (ACRCM)
France	CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE HAUTES ETUDES AGRONOMIQUES MEDITERRANEENNES (CIHEAM)
Germany	DEUTSCHE WELTHUNGERHILFE E.V. (WHH)
Egypt	SEKEM DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (SDF)
Etiopia	MEKELLE UNIVERSITY (Mekelle)
Greece	ALEXANDREIO TECHNOLOGIKO EKPAIDEITIKO IDRYMA THESSALONIKIS (ATEITH)
Austria	ISEKI-Food Association (ISEKI)
Denmark	PROFESSIONSHOJSKOLEN METROPOL (MUC)
Italy	UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI SCIENZE GASTRONOMICHE (UNISG)
Chile	UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE (UChile)

Outline of the kick-off meeting

NEXTFOOD will provide tools for efficient communication and collaboration within and beyond the project consortium. Special emphasis will be placed on developing a collaborative and dialogue-based work climate within the consortium, to serve as a role-model for others. We will perform cyclical learning within the consortium as a part of the internal quality assurance, e.g. by organizing reflection workshops at partner conferences. In order to internalize the Nextfood learning approach in the consortium, the kick-off meeting consisted of a number of highly participatory and action-oriented workshops. We consider the development of the consortium as a case in itself, and the output from the workshops will be well documented to enable continual learning. The outline of the workshops at the kick-off meeting is depicted in Figure 1.

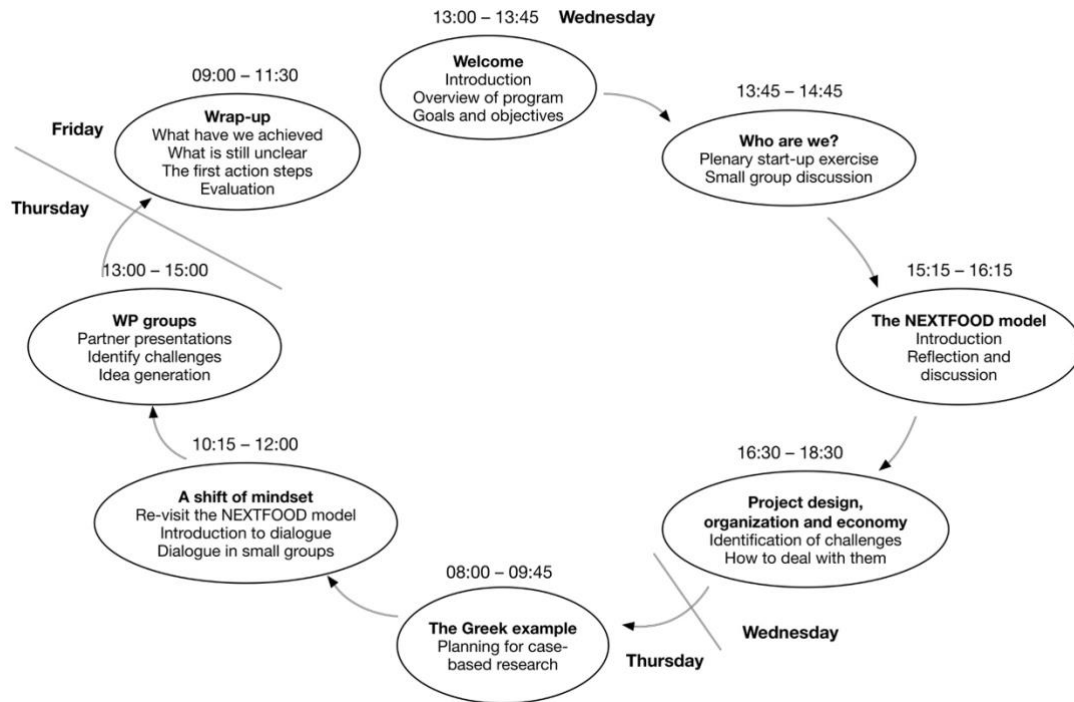


Figure 1. Outline of the workshops at the kick-off meeting

Summary of workshop outputs (highlights from the group discussions)

Workshop 1; Introduction to the Nextfood model

Question 1: If you next week were asked to present this model to an interested friend, what would you find most challenging? (The model and not the process from linear to cyclical. The process will be dealt with in the following workshop).

- Different target groups have different aims (such as students, farmers, foresters, farmers and foresters).
- There is a challenge in changing the attitudes of the students who are used to front lessons and reading books, as well as training teachers in such a new context.
- There may also be a cultural hinder, a language mismatch between practitioners and academics may result in a wall between the two different groups.
- Importantly, one need to explain the added value of this new model compared to the old one.
- Need for mentors in the model, for example experienced professors with field knowledge.
- The relation between the model for education as presented in the NextFood model and the research which will be conducted in the project. Where does it come in, and with which purpose/s?
- The transition from a functional model for a specific education program to a model for an entire education system for food and farming professionals in Europe. How will that be pursued?

Workshop 2; Project design and organisation

Question 1: What are the main challenges for you in this project? (The group should aim to identify the three biggest challenges – challenges which they themselves can address). Formulate the challenge as a question: In what ways can we ..., or How can we ...?)

- The overall question “How can we best get such a big consortium going?” “ sums it up well; concerns about each partner finding their roles in the consortium was lifted, as well as how to ensure a good linkage between the overall goal and the different tasks in the work packages and the cases.
- Time management and communication in a complex project as Nextfood is important.
- How to Adopt a Holistic approach to the food system chain
- The long-term impact: “How can we assure the sustainability of the developed and improved methods and really cause the shift of paradigm?”
- How do we scientifically assess the result of the project in long term?”

Question 2: How can we overcome the challenges? (Answering the questions that were developed as a response to Question 1)

- All work packages should go into the case studies and try to understand the work that is going on there. This to ensure that we got a two way process between case studies and work packages. Also, give space /flexibility for interested consortium partners to be involved in specific case studies of interest to them where they could contribute with their experience/expertise.
- It’s crucial that we in the consortium build a learning environment, and one good start would be to find a common terminology, different terms have different meaning to the partners.
- For the long-term impact, we need scientific methods and indicators to measure the success and sustainability.
- To “get the consortium going” we should secure synergy and a shared responsibility among partners, and make sure that we have clearly defined tasks across and within WPs.
- A good communication platform with web based tools is also important. However, physical meetings are indispensable to get to know one another and build personal contact and trust. We should communicate graphics, illustrations, short messages instead of lengthy texts.

Workshop 3; The Greek example

Questions raised during the presentation

1. What role will be assigned to partners of the consortium?
2. Do we expose students to the process of providing strategic guidance?
3. The students will have an opportunity to engage with a variety of farming situations. How much do we want that? Do we expect them to observe, assimilate and compare?

4. The role of the students as both observers and participants needs to be elaborated
5. The relationship between field advisors and ATEITH faculty needs to be clarified and codified
6. The role of farmers as student mentors and evaluators needs to be clarified (do successive student cohorts visit the same farmers)
7. To how many farmers is each student exposed?

Workshop 4; A shift of mindset

Question 1: What would it take to shift the mindset from a linear to a cyclical one?

- It's important to know the cyclical model, understand it, internalize and adopt it. That everyone involved understand the method and believe / agree that it is a good idea – why would this be a better way of learning than the linear one? It's perhaps best done by practicing the model and exchange experiences.
- Several mentioned a change in attitudes: to listen and respect the other opinions; to have the courage to dare to question our own assumption (as student, participant, stakeholder...); willingness to achieve something above just creating a position of power. The goal is to make students really learn and create lifelong learning – not stop after the exam
- Motivation for teachers, professionals and students could be to learn something new, to have fun at work, that the new method makes it easier to “teach” and/or learn and/or that the using the method gives better results.
- The importance of reflection on the learning itself was highlighted: It must be realized that reflection is needed not only on how things are, work etc. (first-order reflection on ontology) but also on our knowing and the processes by which we learn (second-order reflection on epistemology).

Question 2: How can we enable fruitful collaboration between the cases (WP2) and the other

- A common platform for communication between different wp's and cases is important for the collaboration. This could include:
 - A plan of regular meetings; physical meetings and via Skype etc.
 - A specific format for short videos for sharing case experiences
 - In the second half of Nextfood, arrange conferences to share experiences from the cases and WP:s, as well as workshops of specific topics
 - A Facebook or LinkedIn group for sharing photos etc
- The partners must get to know the other case studies and the deliverables of the work packages in order to make the link.
- Another suggestion was to define 6 month objectives for each wp and update each other monthly by teleconference with few people.
- Use of knowledge management systems.
- Reporting structure – template for structure and how to report input from the cases (describing how, when, what and who?)

Workshop 5; Actions steps in first six months

Work package	Action steps within 6 months
1.Inventory of skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of templates to fulfil with mapping tasks (inventory of skills, analysing gaps) 2. Create a platform for information exchange 3. Document first cases and best practices from partners curriculum 4. Identify long term examples of action learning, coordinated with WP2+3 5. Identification and systematization of relevant literature 6. Design and develop roadmap for assessing match between competences offered and needed
2&3; Case facilitation, education and training systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of templates to fulfill with case information 2. Create a platform for information exchange 3. Define competence for each stakeholder typology 4. Learn from long term examples of action learning and literature 5. How to judge different educational tools with action learning approach for teachers, students and farmers/food producers. 6. Finish the deliverables that are due in WP2 and WP3 7. Prepare for starting of case work (e.g., reading of key literature, getting info from other WPs,) 8. Start case-work according to the manual to be worked out in WP2 and supported by suggested educational contents, approaches and processes as worked out and provided in WP3
4.Policies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To have the questionnaire for the survey scheduled in Task 4.1 drafted by UNIBO and reviewed by the WP4 Partners. 2. To have a list of at least 3 contacts for the survey from every project Partner. 3. To have the list of contacts validated and started sending out the questionnaires.
5. Quality assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting of the Communication strategy within the work package 2. Time plane for internal WP5 workshops (first during next ca. three months), where the time line with concrete steps for WP5 will be prepared.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Literature study – a) discussion which resources and which concrete parts we will evaluate and b) search “What are the existing tools for evaluation of research/education”.
6. Dissemination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of the dissemination, exploitation and outreach plan (mid-june) 2. Project webpage: The architecture, appearance and functions of the webpage will be described and send to the partners together with the Dissemination Plan. 3. On-line Platform: This operational and communicational tool will be analysed and presented to the partners. Again the suggested features will be sent to all partners for comments. 4. Printed material and Publications in English. The digital material (presentation, short clip) will be produced when we have compiled some work on the project, especially in the study cases. The same stands for the material for journalists (Press Kit). 5. AFS will try to have some early identification of opportunities to organise round table talks and promote stakeholder involvement. 6. Planning of workshops and training activities 7. A plan for practice abstracts
7. Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put up a temporary platform for internal communication and knowledge sharing 2. Four-months financial report 3. Ethics deliverables within three months 4. Condensed summary of the proposal

Workshop 6; achievements and unclearness

Achievements

- Meeting and getting know each other
- Getting the common feeling for project spirit, first steps for getting shared understanding, methodology...
- Some idea of Nextfood model (from linear to cycle) and some experience of it
- Some idea of the cases, better understanding of the administration process and of workplan of the project
- We get a better overview about NEXTFOOD and what are the challenges.
- Very good discussion on activities of WPs mainly in order to plan next activities
- Opportunity to meet and know partners from countries with which we do not have a regular cooperation

Unclearness and urgent needs (comments in blue added by coordinator after the meeting)

- Urgent need for communication platform (a sharepoint and a facebook page has been set up for the urgent communication needs)
- Lack of clear timeline and basis for daily working routine (a six month plan produced and communicated on sharepoint after this meeting)
- Introduction of action learning understanding in each case study (will be addressed in a workshop in September 2018)
- Collaborations among case studies: which is the right way? (will be addressed in a workshop in September 2018)
- No clear publication strategy (mainly for academics) (will be addressed in the DEO-plan due in June 30).
- How the case study to feed other WP activities: find a mechanism (will be addressed in a workshop in September 2018).
- We could realise there are some problems (i.e. the above mentioned points) in the project, but it is good, because there are time to improve. “Confusion is an achievement because it lead to dialogue.”
- A quick presentation of each participant, name, occupations, competences and partners in the WP, it should be published in the project web page or send by email (a contact list has been set up and published on sharepoint)

Parallel session; Financial and Administrative Information (16 persons) (all according to the PowerPoint used for information/discussions)

History of the application: review to update beneficiary of the application process and to get into the project, to have a common view of the project

Kickoff in Malmö- why are we here: to learn to know each other, to be able to work in a good way and start the project, information

Templates and information: time sheets, cost examples, supporting documents, audit, partner meetings, CA, and focus on rules and how to find those in the GA.

Budget: partner, audit, yearly meetings, workshops, pre-financing, justification of costs and so on.

PowerPoint presentation in NF home page (but without the links to the different time sheets, partners budgets and so on, those sent out to all beneficiaries.)

Very active discussions and questions from all beneficiary attending. This shows a great interest to participate and to put the financial and administrative work in place already from the beginning.

Executive board, May 4, 2018, Malmö

Present:

Christina Lunner Kolstrup, SLU (chair)

Niels Heine Kristensen, UCC

Davide Viaggio, UNIBO

Lotta Woxblom, Skogforsk

Gerhard Schleining, ISEKI

Geir Lieblein, NMBU

Philip Papadopoulos, AFS

Jan Moudrý jr., USB

Christer Borglin, SLU

Martin Melin, SLU

Presentation

Short round of presentation of all participant at the meeting

Meeting plan and decisions

- Meetings for the executive board was decided to be on-demand, ie should be planned in relation to key deliveries in the project. The situation will decide if the meeting is physical or if the meeting is on skype. The coordinator is responsible for calling to the meetings. Responsible MM and CB
- A decision was taken that the coordinator will report on the project status once every sixth months. This activity report should contain a brief description of what's going on in each wp, what has been achieved, any deviations from plan and what are the next steps. Responsible MM
- A decision was taken to make a financial report at four months into the project in order to make sure the routines concerning project economy is working. Responsible CB
- The need for an impact strategy was mentioned, how can Nextfood connect to other education/research bodies in and outside EU in order to guarantee an impact beyond the project. Philip will look into this and the executive board will discuss this further on. Responsible PP
- Next meeting will be on Skype, in September, after the first financial report. Responsible MM

General Assembly (with wrap-up), May 4, 2018, Malmö, Sweden

- Nomination of two representatives to the executive board. The general assembly decided that Lotta Woxblom, Skogforsk and Gerhard Schleining, IFA to be members of the NEXTFOOD executive board.
- The coordinator presented a plan for all conference meetings and workshops/WP leader meetings. The preliminary plan for partner meetings where all partners are represented is the table below, however this is still open for discussions within the consortium. The first workshops/wp leader meeting is planned in September 2018, a suggestion is a case workshop at UNISG in connection to the Terra Madre conference. The remaining workshops will be planned according to the demands of the consortium.

Organisation	Where	Type of meeting	When
SLU	Malmö	Kick-off	May 2018
UNISG	Pollenzo (CN)	Workshop	September 2018
USB	Prag	PM	Spring 2019
AFS	Thessaloniki	PM	Spring 2020
CIHEAM	Bari	PM	Spring 2021
SLU	Bryssel	PM	Spring 2022

Evaluation of the Kick-off (some major points from the General Assembly)

What was good about the kick-off meeting?

- The circular approach not only for the education but also for the meeting. A deeper knowledge of cyclical action learning model.
- Workshop layout, giving opportunity to think, reflect by yourself, and discuss with others
- All the participants have been involved, which fostered creative thinking + engagement in the group
- Very well organized, the days gave a better knowledge of partners, project and contents. Good summary and clarification on last day
- Budget discussions and financial meeting

What can be done better to next time?

- Presentation of partners, their role in project at first day.
- Have the WP leaders more involved, for example reports from WP leaders to all the participants (not only workshops for WPs)
- Not only group work, more common sessions of finally discussions and more time to discussions and negotiations
- Start with creating an understanding of the project as whole rather than going details at the beginning. Prepare homework for the participants and ask them to do it in order to have better informed conversations about concepts, goals and methodology.
- A more detailed plan for the six months ahead. Provide timelines of activities and schedule for the immediate months ahead