

SEAFOODplus and the changing face of EU RTD

Ciaran Mangan
European Commission DG RTD



This gathering has an important purpose, and that is to showcase the developments which have taken place in this flagship Integrated Project over the past four and a half years since its debut in January 2004.

It is considered a flagship project of the sixth framework programme because SEAFOODplus is the largest research project ever sponsored by the EU in the seafood sector – not only with regard to the total budget, but also with regard to the content and complexity of the research programme. It has frequently been used as a successful example of what the sixth framework programme originally set out to achieve in bringing together the "critical mass" necessary to address a specific EU objective. The objective in this case was to find ways to reduce health problems and increase well being in European consumers through increased fish consumption. This was achieved by bringing together 150 scientists from nearly 70 organisations across 16 countries to participate in 20 individual research projects, organised across 6 strategic pillars ranging from human nutrition to consumer behaviour, food safety, aquaculture and traceability along the food chain. In parallel to the research pillars the project ran a further six pillars dedicated to information flow to businesses and consumers, training, dissemination and demonstration activities. The actual impact of this 25 M€ project will be felt over the coming years as the results are tested and tried through peer review and market acceptability. With over 200 individual result based deliverables in the form of tools, trials, surveys, protocols, databases, and intellectual property along the whole food chain a very high impact is expected. Over the next two days we shall hear and learn about these developments and at the end be able to access their true significance.

The sixth framework programme is now over and we are already in the early calls of the seventh framework programme.

This new programme builds strongly on the challenges and structures of previous programmes while introducing interesting proposals and models for the future shape of EU research. Looking towards future EU programmes the cost sharing collaborative research from which SEAFOODplus was born will still be available but perhaps in a limited more targeted manner. A much greater emphasis however will be placed on the creation of a true European Research Area where Member States collaborate more thoroughly to prevent redundancy and achieve greater effectiveness and competitiveness. This can be achieved through a greater expansion of the ERANET networks, and an increased role for technology platforms, joint programming activities, and joint technology initiatives. Coupled to this, specific initiatives such as promotion of EU research infrastructures, enhancing the training and mobility structure, the creation of a European Institute of Technology, new Risk-Sharing Finance Facilities, and the increased use of structural funds for research purposes could be envisaged.

Through such cooperation we can achieve an integrated approach based on the right mix of technology, innovation, investment and regulation. Accordingly we can fulfil Europe's ambitions for growth and prosperity in an ever more competitive global economy through not only more and better research but also on how we convert the resulting knowledge into products, processes and services that others want to use and buy.

This type of cooperation is at the heart of what the SEAFOODplus project was about and reflects the importance of its success.