



FOODforce Position Paper on the EU 10th Framework Programme: Accelerating Research and Innovation to Foster Resilience and Transformative Change in the EU Food System

Key Recommendations for Framework Programme 10

1. **Prioritise Food Security in the FP10 Research and Innovation Agenda**
2. **Invest in Collaborative Research & Innovation**
3. **Advance Food Research**
4. **Boost Innovation and Competitiveness in the Food Sector**

Mission of FOODforce

FOODforce is a network of 26 leading research centres and universities in Europe with a strong focus on research and innovation in food, nutrition, health and food system transformation. Our mission is to develop healthier, safer, affordable and more sustainable food for all, while strengthening the competitiveness of the European agrifood sector. Achieving this goal requires support for collaborative research and innovation programmes that bring together private sector, research, NGOs, consumers, public authorities and other stakeholders; therefore, these efforts should be at the centre of the 10th Framework Programme (FP10).

Rationale for Key Recommendations

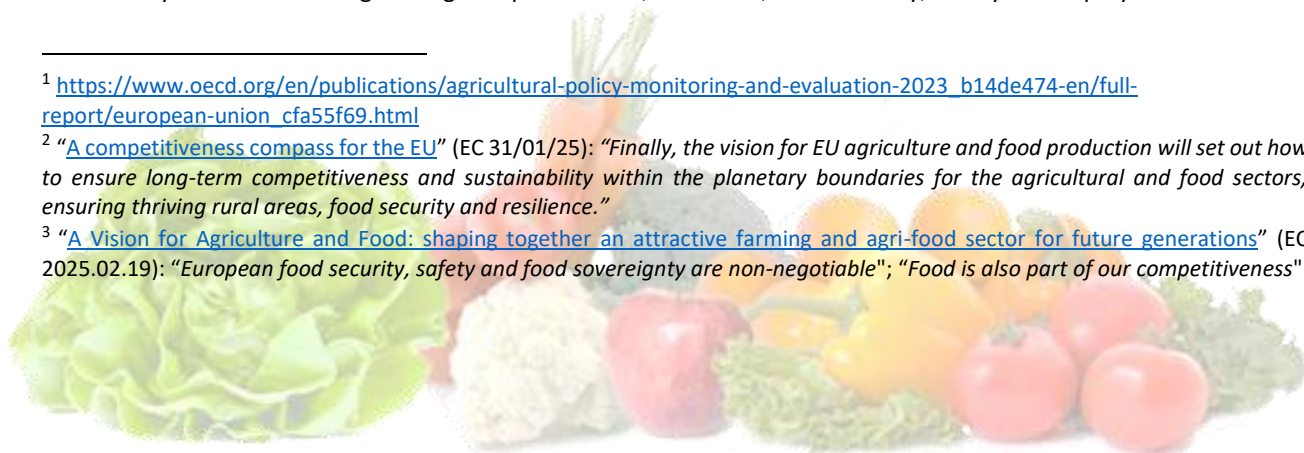
FOODforce proposes the following four key recommendations for FP10 to secure the future of the EU food system:

1. **Prioritise Food Security in the FP10 Research and Innovation Agenda.** In the light of global challenges such as climate change, population growth, geopolitical tensions, biodiversity loss, pollution and declining soil health, food security is more critical than ever. FOODforce advocates for continued EU investment in research and innovation to strengthen European sovereignty in food production and security. Yet, between 2019-2021, only 6% of EU agriculture spending went to knowledge and innovation, while competitors in Asia and the USA are making substantial investments (OECD¹). As FOODforce, we have observed a worrying trend in Horizon Europe with a relative decrease in funding for topics on food research compared to previous framework programmes. To maintain the high standards that define Europe's food system and address the challenges it faces urgent action is needed with better balance in funding between primary production and post-harvest research. The European Commission's report "A competitiveness compass for the EU"² underscores the importance of food security and the recently published Communication "A Vision for Agriculture and Food"³ acknowledges the strategic importance of the sector. However, this vision document remains very focused on the agricultural dimension while the food dimension is overlooked. **Linked to proposed actions A, B and C.**
2. **Invest in Collaborative Research and Innovation Programmes** to accelerate the transformative change in the EU food system while strengthening competitiveness, resilience, sustainability, safety and equity of the EU food

¹ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/agricultural-policy-monitoring-and-evaluation-2023_b14de474-en/full-report/european-union_cfa55f69.html

² "A competitiveness compass for the EU" (EC 31/01/25): "Finally, the vision for EU agriculture and food production will set out how to ensure long-term competitiveness and sustainability within the planetary boundaries for the agricultural and food sectors, ensuring thriving rural areas, food security and resilience."

³ "A Vision for Agriculture and Food: shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations" (EC 2025.02.19): "European food security, safety and food sovereignty are non-negotiable"; "Food is also part of our competitiveness"



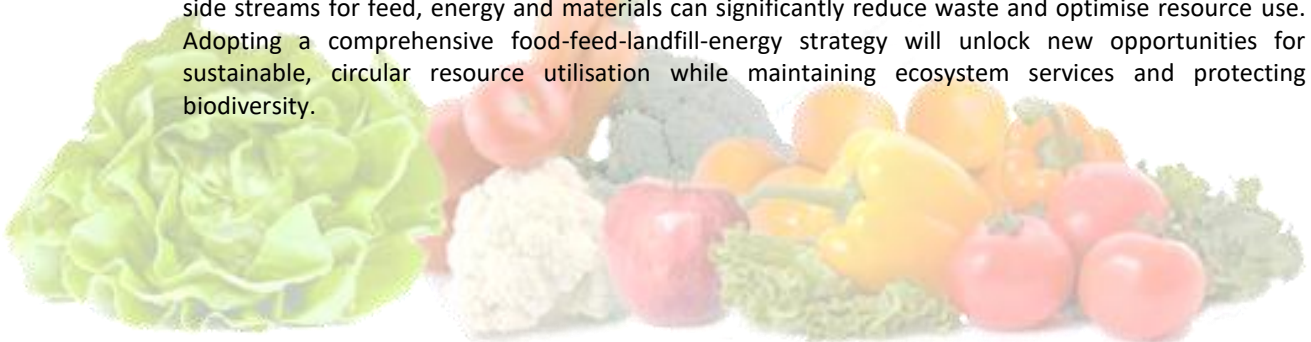


sector. A mission-based approach is needed, uniting diverse sectors, disciplines and stakeholders - including universities, research institutes, industry (including SMEs), farmers, policymakers, NGOs and citizens - building on the success of larger-scale, multi-actor projects under Horizon Europe's Pillar II (Clusters), whilst leveraging the synergies between European countries. Additionally, mandatory monitoring of project outcomes should be considered to ensure more effective exploitation and dissemination of results. [Linked to proposed actions C and D.](#)

3. **Advance Food Research** to accelerate food system transition and implement the 11 Pathways for Action outlined in the Food2030 Strategy. This includes research on alternative proteins, non-conventional food sources, healthier food products and resilient food production systems. FP10 should also emphasise the link between food and health to combat obesity, ageing-related challenges and non-communicable chronic diseases, and dietary driven health inequalities. Increased funding is needed for preventive health strategies, including dietary shifts, personalised nutrition, microbiome science and lifestyle interventions. These efforts should be guided by a common, evidence-based European policy framework. [Linked to proposed actions E, F, G and H.](#)
4. **Boost SME Innovation & Competitiveness in the Food Sector** by supporting food SMEs to adopt knowledge-based innovations, accelerate innovation capacity and market impact. The vast majority of food SMEs lack the resources to further develop and upscale towards market implementation. Better uptake, valorisation or implementation of promising results from EU Framework projects is needed to make SMEs in the food sector more competitive. [Linked to proposed action I.](#)

Proposed Actions Contributing to the Key Recommendations

- A. **Align the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with Food Security and Competitiveness strategies.** FP10 should prioritise research and innovation to enhance food security and competitiveness, whilst embedding sustainability across the entire food system. Strategic integration of CAP with research advancements is essential for creating synergies that foster sustainable growth and resilience in the EU food system. Regenerative agriculture, agroecology and climate smart agriculture must be supported with evidence-based science to inform CAP policies.
- B. **Ensure Sustainable Primary Production for Food Security.** Sourcing sustainable primary products is vital to ensure Europe's food security and innovation. However, the EU's primary sector remains vulnerable to climate impacts affecting supply chains. Additionally, a significant portion of waste and pollution originates from primary production due to resource use inefficiencies, agricultural emissions and food loss during harvest and processing. Therefore, FP10 should focus on precision farming, soil management, crop diversification, waste reduction technologies and food technologies to enhance resilience, improve efficiency of production systems, optimise resources and reduce environmental footprint.
- C. **Accelerate Protein Diversification** To support the shift towards alternative protein sources, FP10 should fund research addressing food production challenges, functionality, health, safety, environmental, economic and business impacts, and promoting consumer acceptance and affordability. Large collaborative projects promoting systemic approaches are essential for engaging stakeholders and testing solutions across Europe's diverse socio-cultural, economic, and territorial contexts, while alignment with national initiatives of Member States can further accelerate deployment.
- D. **Integrate Food Systems and Circular Bioeconomy.** Merging food production with the circular bioeconomy is key to enhancing resource efficiency and reducing waste. The Circular Bioeconomy Europe Joint Undertaking currently lacks a strong focus on food systems, making such integration difficult. Scientific advancements in bioenergy, such as converting agricultural waste into renewable energy, demonstrate key benefits of the circular bioeconomy. Research shows that repurposing food side streams for feed, energy and materials can significantly reduce waste and optimise resource use. Adopting a comprehensive food-feed-landfill-energy strategy will unlock new opportunities for sustainable, circular resource utilisation while maintaining ecosystem services and protecting biodiversity.





- E. **Strengthen the link between Food & Nutrition and Health Research.** The importance of food and nutrition to address health issues must be prioritised by FP10. FOODforce advocates for increased research and innovation on prevention through diet and nutrition, avoidance of malnutrition (or deficiencies) in the transition to sustainable diets and promoting healthier food environments. Discontinuation of JPI-HDHL and the limitations of ERA4Health and FutureFoodS Partnerships have fragmented the nutrition-health continuum across Cluster 1 and Cluster 6 topics. To address this, FP10 should secure greater integration between health and agri-food Clusters through joint interdisciplinary topics.
- F. **Generate robust scientific evidence for the health impact of so-called “Ultra-processed Foods (UPF)” through science-based evidence.** A critical and contentious area which demands urgent unbiased scientific examination is the validity of assertions about the health effects of highly refined, ultra-processed foods. The impact of confounding factors, such as unhealthy dietary patterns, nutrient quality of these foods and processing effects on health parameters, and lifestyle behaviours needs to be investigated. From an industry perspective, there is also some evidence to suggest that certain sub-categories of ultra-processed foods may have opposing health effects. The issues related to “UPF” will impact the competitiveness of the EU food industry. Therefore, robust scientific evidence which demonstrates or refutes cause and effect relationships are essential to inform regulation and safeguard consumers.
- G. **Enhance Consumer Awareness and Education.** FP10 should promote consumer-centric actions through targeted campaigns tailored to specific vulnerable groups and underserved communities, while considering regional and cultural dietary differences. Effective strategies are needed to improve consumer food literacy, build trust, make healthy diets more affordable and encourage healthier food choices. Transnational R&I projects are essential to bridge the gap between consumer demand and food industry supply.
- H. **Support Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing.** To align with the EU Biotech and Biomanufacturing Initiative⁴, the EU must support development of biotechnological advancements, particularly in sustainable food production, starting from animal and plant breeding as outlined in the European Animal Breeders Vision⁵ 2030 and the Joint Statement of the ETP Plants for the Future. Recent data⁶ from ETP Plants for the Future shows a steady decline in investments in animal and plant breeding and biotech research over the last three framework programmes. FOODforce emphasises the need for strong R&I in breeding and biotechnology, integrating AI to drive innovation. To fully leverage this potential, FOODforce advocates for creation of a comprehensive “Biotech Act” that includes food biotechnology, to accelerate the deployment of emerging, competitive technologies for sustainable food applications and ensuring clear understanding of these technologies by the general public/consumers
- I. **Promote Food Innovation Ecosystems** to provide SMEs with access to shared technical facilities, technological infrastructures, regulatory support and training, helping them to foster sustainable product development.
- I. **Build a pan-European network** of food innovation hubs to exchange best practice, share facilities and create and foster collaborative models.
 - II. Introduce a **“Proof of Concept Innovation Instrument”** for the food sector to bridge the innovation gap for SMEs that represent over 95% of food companies. We propose that EIC and EIT funding instruments should be more systematically accessible to food SMEs in FP10, ensuring better links between FP10 collaborative research and innovation projects, and FP10 innovation instruments to bring promising innovations to market.
 - III. **Enhance synergies with structural funds** by stimulating regional funding models that co-finance innovation ecosystem and offer ‘accessible funding structures’ (i.e. vouchers), enabling SMEs and farmers to access transition support.

⁴ [Communication Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU](#)

⁵ [European Animal Breeders vision 2030](#)

⁶ [Trends in European Public Investment in Plant Breeding R&I](#)





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