Developing The Nordic Food Partnership

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A Nordic agenda

The food system is confronting major interconnected societal challenges related to food and is going through rapid changes. The food industry stakeholders in the Nordic countries share joint challenges and opportunities. A key challenge is to remain competitive on a global food market. A key opportunity is to take the lead in the growing market segment for safe, healthy, sustainable and pure food products. This calls for new strategic partnerships to ensure the competitiveness and innovation capabilities of the actors in the Nordic food system.

The governments of the Nordic countries are all investing in R&D to tackle the main challenges (sustainability, health and educated workforce) in order to grow the national agrifood sectors. Today, there is no network or organisation that channels the pan-Nordic efforts to reach significant impact.

By synthesizing national strategies and “find the Nordic way”, we aim to move away from a fragmented landscape where different regional, national and global strategies target different aspects of the Food System in a not always coherent way. A cross-border common understanding of food innovation activities across the Nordics is an advantage when gearing regional, national and international investments in food related innovation, entrepreneurship and education.

The Nordic countries each have world-class excellence in different areas of the food system. By cross-fertilization and combination of strengths, the best-practices of individual regions or countries can be turned into assets for the whole Nordic area. If the Nordic countries should manage to keep building excellence, also in these transformative times (bio-economy, big data etc.), it is necessary to mobilize the critical mass in terms of research, capacities and investments across all countries, as well as across disciplines and in interaction with society.

By strengthening the Nordic networks, the interfaces between research on the nutrition-sensitivity of food and agriculture systems and on environmental sustainability, can be addressed to connect scientific knowledge to the food value chain.

Bringing stakeholders together across the Nordic countries is the only way to ensure critical mass behind joint activities, also in relation to European and global positioning and impact.

Turning challenges into opportunities – building on FoodNexus Nordic

In the past years, FoodNexus Nordic has created a strong partnership with excellent connections to key actors in the European food system. The Nordic Food Partnership aims to build on the work of FoodNexus (see fact boxes), re-shape the purpose and extend the collaboration to all Nordic countries.

As part of the development of FoodNexus, the industry partners in Europe and Nordics have defined key challenges for innovation (including the research behind them):

1. New technologies
2. Preservation and distribution
3. Waste streams (sustainability, circular economy)
4. Ingredients
5. Safety and health
6. Big data
7. Nutrition and Consumption
Several of these challenges are also highlighted in the recent EASAC report (Dec. 2017), where the national science academies of the EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland collaborate in giving advice to European policy makers. It is here stressed that to improve consumer health and the environment, "Europe should not stall on opportunities offered by genome editing, precision agriculture and the use of large data sets".

Looking at this picture of challenges through a joint Nordic perspective, some unique Nordic key opportunities and preferences can be carefully selected - and can form the initial focus of the Nordic Food Partnership.

Identifying this focus will be one of the first tasks of the partnership, when launched in 2018. However, good examples of significant business opportunity areas are already there: the supply of high-quality raw materials in a circular economy; new products for the global consumer; Food safety 2.0 and Big data. To unlock these opportunities, a system approach is necessary. By working together we can for example build the digital infrastructures that no actor can alone and ensure real Nordic progress. The same applies for attracting new talent to the sector. We want to make the food system attractive for for the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs.

A recent survey to the industry partners engaged in FoodNexus Nordic revealed that many found it highly valuable to have easy access to a platform that can address the generic challenges and take initiatives of behalf of all, including influence the agenda and future funding of innovation in the sector.

To integrate the industry perspective with existing Nordic and European initiatives at the policy level will be key for targeting these challenges, thereby leading the way towards a more sustainable and competitive Nordic Food sector.

What is The Nordic Food Partnership?

The Nordic Food Partnership is an agenda-setting partnership between the key stakeholders of the Nordic Food System that can have an influencing as well as initiating role. It will take initiatives within food system innovation and education at Nordic and EU level and act as an information hub for Nordic and European collaboration.

Doing this, collaboration and synergy with existing programs and consortia will be fundamental. For example with EIT Food, supporting the broad community’s engagement with and benefit from activities.

Equally fundamental will be the cross-fertilization and synergy between “large and small”. e.g. between SME’s and entrepreneurs on one hand and large corporates and research actors on the other.

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1 Examples are inspired and aligned with the recent Swedish and Danish strategies for growth and innovation in the food sector ("A National Food Strategy for Sweden"; "World Class Food Innovation Towards 2030") as well as the newly launched Flagship initiative ("Nordic Food Policy Lab") of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
Our Vision

The vision of the Nordic Food Partnership is to build on Nordic strengths in order to drive the transformation of the Food System towards a system that enables the production, packaging and distribution of safe, affordable and nutritious food with as little harm as possible. We will target the challenges of the food system, such as security, sustainability, health, knowledge provision and attraction of talent:

- in the Nordics
- in Europe
- and in global interaction

Goals, activities and expected impact

With the vision in mind, six goals have been set. To achieve these, the partnership will undertake four main activities. Goals, activities and the overall expected impact are presented in Figure 1, below. The activities are further described in a separate appendix (“Nordic Food Partnership_Draft Activities”)

Organisation

- The Nordic Food Partnership is an independent entity, with a non-profit purpose
- The Nordic Food Partnership is co-funded by the NKJ, Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research
- The partnership consists of key players from all sectors of the food system in all Nordic countries. Industry, academia and research institutes, and policy makers will be the core of the partnership.
**GOALS**

1. Translate current Nordic strengths into a **challenge driven agenda**, shared by the key actors of the Nordic Food System. Such agenda will identify a set of Nordic common **large-scale research, innovation and education missions** and the anticipated impacts, thereby, delivering a **framework for policy makers at all levels** to build on.

2. Influence the **food innovation agenda** at national, Nordic and EU level.

3. Promote **Open Innovation** and **Open Science** activities and networks within the food sector, engaging Nordic companies, academia and other actors in a forum for “IP free” science and innovation activities.

4. Build synergies with related industries and knowledge disciplines, such as Life sciences, ICT, Energy and Material Sciences, thereby facilitating the implementation of technology shifts (digitalization etc.) in the food industry.

5. Best possible **access to the Nordic and European food research and innovation infrastructure and community** for food entrepreneurs of all sizes - start-ups, SME:s and large scale industries.

6. Identify joint opportunities and nourish Nordic collaborations.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. “**Agenda setting**”. Each year, the Board is responsible for defining a Nordic Agenda with 3-5 priorities, a consolidated common view of the important areas to collaborate in. At the annual “Agenda Day”, the board should exchange and analyze Nordic agendas, and decide on priorities. From this, s.c. missions for the NFP are created. The missions more thoroughly describe how to bring about change. The Board also acts as a “sounding board”, for input, ideas, opinions or questions from public bodies, industry/interest organisations and research funding bodies for an inclusive agenda-setting dialogue. The Board can act as ambassadors for key issues.

2. **Influence and impact**. Developing (European) alliances for large-scale initiatives like a potential JTI or other flagship initiative in Food, coordinate Nordic input to key initiatives (Food2030, FP9 etc.) as well as facilitate Nordic participation in targeted innovation and R&D projects.

3. **Initiate seed projects**. Departing from the missions, the board can decide to kick-start activity by initiating seed projects variating in type and lengths, all pan-Nordic. I.e. arranging seminars, order reports/foresights, proposals on “next practice”, or for example investigate how to establish **Open Science/Open innovation platform** within a specific topic. A “knowledge synthesis” in a key area, such as digitalization, new generation of proteins, personalized nutrition etc. could boost development and incubate new collaborative projects.

4. **Connecting actors across the Food System**, acting as broker or facilitator in between other initiatives.

**EXPECTED IMPACT**

- **Higher attractiveness of the food system for young entrepreneurs and researchers**
- **Visibility/ Positioning** of Nordic Food interests
- **Influence**
- **Synergy**
- **Implementation of “Next practices”**
- **Transformation** towards a “Food System vol. 2”
- **Funding for investments in the food system of tomorrow**

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1 As example, please see the SPOMAN Open Science platform within materials science engaging a number of universities and companies: [http://spoman-os.org/](http://spoman-os.org/).
FACT BOX: FoodNexus Europe 2011 -

- Business-led community of multinationals, SMEs, and cooperatives in strong food regions of Europe together with the world’s best knowledge institutes in the area of food
- 75 partners
- Formally founded in 2011
- Collaboration within food innovation, education and entrepreneurship – through joint projects, matchmaking, influencing activities and more.
- The industry partners directly employ over 500,000 people, reaching a turnover of 180 B €/year, and directly involve more than 500,000 farmers in their supply chains
- Top-ranked European universities – among the global top 8 in agriculture and top 4 in plant and animal sciences (NTU 2015 ranking)
- Connected to >50 SME-networks, clusters and incubators across Europe
- Already working together on approx. 100 Horizon 2020 projects within the area.
- Regional centres: Nordics-Germany-Poland; Iberia; Italy-Hungary; Benelux; Iberia, France and Ireland.
- www.foodnexus.eu

FACT BOX: FoodNexus Nordic 2010-2017

- Nordic consortium of companies, research institutes, universities, public bodies, cluster organisations, industry federations and incubators within the food and adjacent sectors.
- Founded in 2010, building on previous Danish-Swedish cluster initiatives.
- Main purpose was to work for and secure that the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) would launch a call for a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) within the area of Food, and to submit a bid for a Food KIC with the best possible positioning of Nordic interests.
- Approx. 40 founding partners + engagement of a broad range of additional actors in the open activities
- Strong portfolio of activities to strengthen the innovation eco-system across DK-SE borders and to generate growth, including alignment of agendas at regional, national and Nordic level.
- Models for “next practice” in terms of education, innovation and research have been presented.

FACT BOX: The Nordic Food Partnership 2018 –

- Brings together the key stakeholders of the Nordic Food System to develop an agenda-setting mission for research and innovation.
- Founded in 2018
- Identifies common challenges and establishes Nordic collaborations and synergy.
- Drives the implementation of “Next practices” and targeted R&D projects.
- A unified voice and effort, to help drive the transformation of the Food System in the Nordics, in Europe and in global interaction.
- A partner for Nordic policy makers at all levels, to consult and engage with in strategic as well as operational matters (“put strategies into action”).