



INDEX

Objective of this document	2
Background	2
Supply chain collaboration.....	3
Benefits of e-platforms.....	3
Recommendations	4





Objective of this document

This document is the result of the work done through the SSA project eMensa, supported by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Union. Its aim is the dissemination of the results of the project through different recommendations to the agents involved in policy development concerning agrofood supply chain to improve the cooperation across food chain players.

Background

This project through its different stages has reached the following objectives:

- It has established a multidisciplinary network among stakeholders, practitioners, technological academic experts and socio-economic academic experts active in the agro-food chain, to set up a structured pan-European discussion platform of experts and players for a knowledge-exchange.
- It has developed a shared vision for food supply chain infrastructures and technological strategies across Europe, through a consensus-based technological strategy paper suitable for a European vision of food chain infrastructure and a consensus-based research agenda to be promoted in order to create technical feasibility
- It has started with the dissemination results to the scientific community, to the business community, to consumers and to policy-makers community.

The project has brought together all interested stakeholders to develop a long-term vision to create a coherent and dynamic strategy in order to implement a novel electronic and technological management platform of agro-food supply chain.

One of the most important subjects that has emerged within the studies in this project, has been the need of cooperation across food chain players. Through this document the purpose is to support regional, national and community policies aimed at regulating co-operation across food supply chain players.





Supply chain collaboration

Agrofood chains represent a complex network of inputs and outputs that link farm production inputs to food consumers. They involve a wide range of stakeholders.

Supply chain collaboration aims at supporting the cooperation between enterprises in their roles of client and supplier within a Supply Chain.

e-supply chain collaboration includes the following processes:

- Management, in cooperation among all the enterprise members of the supply chain, of the activities of Planning, Forecasting and Replenishment
- Survey and Control of the Supply Chain, through the sharing of information such as current production levels of SC members, their current inventory levels, notification of critical events for the SC
- Cooperative management of the process of communication towards and back from the SC target market, in order to best meet customers wants and needs and to deploy the most appropriate quality of the SC output
- The collaborative development of new products and services to satisfy new or yet unmet market needs

In order to make the agrofood chain work efficiently it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the final consumer needs. In fact, only a complete comprehension of the customer demands and its transfer to the stakeholders allows having a major efficiency in the chain.

Benefits of e-platforms

Among the benefits sought through the adoption of e-platforms, fast easy and error free processing of transactions between members of a supply chain is the benefit that frees human resources from repetitive activities, allowing the enterprise to move to more strategic activities, such as customer care. However, if the adoption of an e-platform comes with the appropriate managerial approach, total benefits are broader, such as:

1. Granting total consistency of quality;
2. Lowering time-to-market;
3. Minimizing costs;
4. Providing flexibility to meet market fluctuations;
5. Supporting coordination activities among supply chain members.

However, to get a collaborative system supposes big efforts and that's why it is necessary the support of the representative agents involved in policy development.





Recommendations

After the revision done, some recommendations are indicated as follows. They try to help to resolve some of the problems concerning non-collaborative models in the food supply chain and aim to get a complete integration in it. An incorrect communication between stakeholders in the agrofood chain can seriously hinder its development and make it unable to operate efficiently.

The work done in the eMensa project suggests the following Recommendations:

Research and development:

It is necessary to continue research in some issues. The consultation work done with experts extracted the following ones:

- Previsional systems for a new agrifood chain management for improving product quality and safety and reducing wastes.
- New technological systems for control of liquid foods and commodities during continuous processes
- New systems for the supply chain governance tailored for agrifood SMEs
- Novel systems and devices for deriving shelf-life prediction to be implemented in fresh product and produce industry.
- Food chain economic studies for paving the way to improving benefits of collaborative e-platform approaches in the food chain
- Standardisation issues and organisational studies of collaborative agrifood e-platforms

To develop these issues it is necessary funding for research, focusing on concrete aspects of those mentioned above. It is also important to promote the creation of networks and consortiums to share the knowledge that already exists in these areas.

Special attention to the first link in the chain: primary producers

Primary producers, mainly the farmers, are the first "link" in the chain and the agents with which the food process starts.

Through the work done in the eMensa project, the main deficiencies they suffer have been analyzed (inability to program their production, lack of an effective knowledge of the market and of an entrepreneurial mentality, low concentration of the offer, etc). Consequently, it is very difficult for them to satisfy the requirements of big stakeholders to make the supply chain work efficiently.

Some of the actions to carry on with them should be: to stimulate horizontal alliances among them; improvement of their managerial ability in the relation with the different sectors of the chain; to introduce innovative forms of organization in order to construct





stable contacts with the other stakeholders; to promote the adaptation of the primary sector to the requirements of the food industry, especially in regards to the standardization of raw materials; to equip farms or their associations with the essential information instruments to make them able to use new software; to facilitate their access to appropriate structures for the exchange of information regarding their individual products, detailed quality standards, etc. nearing them information of the market and giving them organised support and cost effective services; to promote the development of e-commerce for the trade of some raw materials to carry out commercial transactions, etc.

Promotion of agreements on food chain quality standards and protocols

It is referred to incentives to supply chain members to engage in contractual agreements or external signals relating to product quality at a European level. If these standards were set or recognised at a European level, they would ensure quality, facilitating the access to the market and the internationalization of the products, recognising quality characteristics to the consumers.

Some work is already done regarding this but it is necessary to continue and to promote the demonstration of the quality characteristics to the market.

Improving the knowledge in e-platforms

Many times, as these systems are not well-known by the agents involved in the chain, it is an obstacle for their participation.

It is mainly referred to the training, which is essential for all the agents of the chain that should be interested in participating in collaborative systems like e-platforms. Training would regard to ICT technologies, advantages on the participation on e-platforms, the need of accomplishing some conditions, or the new technological developments that can have influence on this kind of systems.

The organisation of workshops for small groups to have dynamic and practical sessions about the benefits of these systems and problem-solving sessions should also be beneficial. As well, meetings with the agents involved and their associations should be also welcome to inform to the sector about it.

Support the implementation of e-platforms

To stimulate the participation of the different stakeholders in collaborative systems such as e-platforms at the beginning of their implementation, one recommendation could be to incentive it through fiscal advantages. Some examples could be to assume a part of the initial costs by public initiatives or a post-refund of them.

Considering that the collaboration is among different stakeholders, the incentives could depend on their position (primary producers, food processors, retailing or distribution).





Management of e-platforms

It is referred to the centralization of an e-platform by national or regional agents that would define the conditions to participate, would defend the interests of the stakeholders and would control the necessary exchange of information.
It could work as a public e-platform to promote collaboration.

