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I. Scope and agenda of the 1st Working Committee Meeting

The 1st Working Committee of the thematic S3P on Agri-Food took place on the 11th June 2018 in Seinajoki, Finland. The meeting was organised to take place one day before the opening of the FOOD SAFETY 2020 event organised by the ERIAFF network (Network of European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry) in order to benefit from synergies in content and participation between the two events.

The Working Committee meeting is organised on bi-annual basis and brings together the regions participating on Agri-Food S3 thematic partnerships with the European Commission services. Main goals of the 1st meeting were to offer lead and partner regions an opportunity to:

- assess and benchmark the progress of each partnership, discuss any ongoing/future challenges and develop new solutions;
- obtain information on possible synergies with other initiatives, e.g. Interreg, EIT Food or EIB;
- discuss and share strategic guidance for the next period on key issues such as building synergies with EU funding programmes, overcoming regulatory obstacles for investment, understanding financial instruments, and skills.

Status of the S3P on Agri-Food

By the time of the 1st Working Committee meeting the status of the thematic S3P on Agri-Food was:

- ✓ 5 qualified partnerships:
  - High Tech Farming
  - Traceability & Big Data
  - Smart Sensors for Agri-Food
  - Consumer Involvement in Agri-Food
  - Nutritional Ingredients
- ✓ 50 regional and national authorities participating
- ✓ 7 leading/co-leading regions
- ✓ Many participating regions come from: Italy (8), Spain (8), France (5), Hungary (4) and The Netherlands (4)
- ✓ 2 partnerships selected by DG REGIO for its Interregional Pilot Actions
- ✓ EC DGs involved: AGRI, REGIO, RTD, JRC

The meeting was well attended by around 60 participants (including the EC representatives and the three invited experts in interregional cooperation). All leading regions were represented except the region of Andalusia which couldn't be present in Seinajoki due to other earlier commitments but was represented adequately by a partner region. The meeting was opened with a welcome speech by the Deputy Regional Mayor of Southern Ostrobothnia region (Antti Saartenoja) that hosted both events and it was structured in four main (4) sessions:

A. Thematic Smart Specialisation on Agri-Food, Part 1
   - Overview presentation from JRC
- Presentations from 3 partnerships of S3P in AF (most recent ones)

B. Thematic Smart Specialisation on Agri-Food, Part 2
- Presentation of Pilot Action on Interregional Collaboration from DG REGIO
- Presentations from 2 partnerships of S3P in AF (most experienced ones)

C. Synergies with EU programmes & initiatives
- Presentations on synergies from EC representatives from partner DGs AGRI, RTD, the EIT, Interreg Europe and the EIB

D. Parallel discussions
- Participatory workshop in 3 topics in parallel discussions moderated by EC representatives

E. Closing with reporting back and conclusions

All the presentations delivered during the day can be found online in the following link:
http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/-/working-committee-semi-annual-meeting?inheritRedirect=true

An additional public session was organised by the S3 Platform on the 13th of June 2018 as part of the ERIAFF event. The session (titled "Smart Specialisation Platform for Agri-Food: Exploring Opportunities for Interregional Collaboration and Joint Investment in Strategic Growth Areas") ran on the 13th June and was open to all ERIAFF participants. The session gathered interest among the participants of the ERIAFF event and was well attended.

This report provides an overview of the presentations and discussions that took place during the different sessions of the event along with outcomes from the interactive workshop.

II. Content of the 1st Working Committee Meeting

A. PART 1 - Thematic Smart Specialisation on Agri-Food (moderator: JRC Annita Kalpaka)

Presentation: S3P for Agri-Food Platform: progress and results achieved (JRC Ruslan Rakhmatullin)

The very first session has been opened by a JRC presentation that provided an overview of the state-of-play of the thematic S3P in Agri-Food focusing on progress and results achieved. It has served as an introduction and background information on the needs for interregional collaboration in common smart specialisation priorities, the creation of the 3 thematic platforms (Agri-Food, Energy and Industrial Modernisation), the methodology put in place and the support provided by the S3P and the EC relevant DGs to empower the partnerships created under these 3 thematic areas.

Then the current status of the ecosystem of AF interregional S3P partnerships was briefly presented. It consists of an ecosystem that started in 2016 and today accounts for 5 qualified partnerships on different thematic areas most of them involving the modernisation of the Agri-Food sector via the use of disruptive digital technologies (precision farming, traceability & big data in Agri-food, industry 4.0 in Agri-food SMEs and more). 50 regions are currently involved and the EC supports this initiative with a multi-DG approach (DGs involved: REGIO, AGRI, RTD and JRC). A new tool put in place to monitor the progress and report on challenges and next plans has been presented to the Working Committee. This "Monitoring Progress report" has to be updated annually by the lead regions, and it has a "cumulative" dimension. By the time of the 1st Working Committee it has been filled and submitted by all 5 qualified partnerships. Finally responding to the needs of a number of partnerships a Joint Event was announced. For the first time, the Event will bring together three thematic platforms, and it will take place in Bilbao on 27-28 November 2018.

Presentations: Update on the activities and progress to date from AF partnerships

During this session, three recently qualified partnerships presented their state-of-play, challenges and future plans.
Smart Sensors 4 Agri-Food (Veerle Rijckaert, Flanders)

Smart Sensors 4 Agri-Food is a partnership that qualified in early 2017 led by Flanders Food—a leading agri-food related cluster supported by Flanders region—while 11 other regional clusters participate in the partnership. It differentiates from other partnerships in that it is mostly a network of cluster organisations and linked RTOs, universities, pilot facilities, etc. most of them supported by the regional authorities.

The partnerships main goal is to prepare all the agri-food companies to make the leap towards industry 4.0. They will support them to introduce new technologies and inspire and enable the companies to use these, connect competences and support the development of specific business cases. The main driver of the partnership is to contribute towards a more interconnected, resilient and smart agri-food system in Europe.

Their specific objectives are defined as follows: a) setting-up of a network of interlinked, open access living labs to facilitate the implementation of smart sensor systems in the agri-food industry b) establishing support services for business creation and technology intelligence and c) develop generic business models that can facilitate concrete, interregional investments and investment projects.

As regards their current status the lead region has drafted the Scoping Note and an initial mapping has taken place with the support of an external expert provided by DG REGIO (Alastair Reid). They presented it to all members for discussion and finalisation back in February 2018. They have also presented their partnership in a workshop organised within the framework of the EU Industry Day 2018 (“Upgrading EU agri-food industry to the digital age: Smart Sensors for the agri-food industry”). The partnership has been active in submitting proposals for projects under COSME (European strategic cluster partnerships for smart specialisation investments Call) and INNOSUP (Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains Call) in the area of smart sensors for the food industry to raise funds to support their operations and plans. They have also been active presenting the partnership in several other relevant events. They are still far from planning in terms of demo cases and potential business cases.

Their planning for next steps/action plan includes:

- Detailed, in depth mapping with focus on:
  - Business needs
  - Existing technology providers (academia, companies)
  - Business advisory services and funding mechanisms
- Starting discussion about governance structure
- Starting developing business model and financial plan to provide a robust framework for future joint activities
- Strategy building and roadmap development
- Defining and establishing network of living labs

At this point their main challenges are identified as following:
- Big upfront time and resources investment, especially for the lead region
- Difficulty to motivate other regions to actively participate: time consuming – slow process
- Should establish and agree on governance structure
- Funding is crucial for continuity of the partnership

Consumer involvement in agri-food innovation (Theo Neyenhuis, Food Valley region/Province of Gelderland)

Consumer involvement in agri-food innovation is a partnership qualified in 2017 led by Regio FoodValley (NL) and by Regio Östergötland (SE) and having two more participating regions. The aim of the partnership is to develop methods for enhancing and channelling consumer involvement in Agri-Food innovation. And it aspires to stimulate (investments in) pilot-projects to validate various methods, by exploring the paths among which this can be achieved.

All four participating regions have common S3 priorities in the agri-food area and they recognise the need of "internationalisation". In their endeavour they are inspired by the Vanguard Initiative and its methodology which they are going to follow. They plan to open their partnership to other interested regions when their scoping note is finalised. They have defined three working areas (pillars):

**Pillar 1. Joint Research & Innovation**
Involving consumers as partners in research and innovation activities instead of just being a subject of research.

**Pillar 2. Awareness and Public Debate**
Encouraging a direct dialogue with consumers and end users among actors throughout the entire food value chain. Establish arenas and platforms. Collect and share best practices.

**Pillar 3. Future business models**
Development of new business models anticipating and responding to the changing relationship between actors in the food eco-system and the agri-food value chain.

Their governance model consists of three layers: i) Steering committee of the four founding regions (partnership management) ii) Pillars: "where the magic happens" – open to other regions and iii) Project-level: "where the actual work is done" – various actors

In terms of status, the Partnership was launched officially at the ERRIAF event (June 12th 2018) and their draft Scoping note is going to be finalised by the end of the summer. During the next months they are going to expand the partnership to other interested regions. Ideas around potential investments and demo cases are already included in the scoping note and there are open for discussion.
The European Agri-Food Partnership on Nutritional Ingredients joined the S3P the Agri-Food recently, in 2018. The partnership is led by Wagralim (cluster in Walloon region) with FlandersFood (cluster in Flanders region) while other 8 regions participate. It is a partnership that consists of both cluster organisations of the agri-food sector and regional authorities.

The goals of this interregional partnership between agri-food actors (industries, academics, cluster organisations and relevant research and technology organisations, RTO’s) are to:
- facilitate the cross-over of innovation in the field of nutritional ingredients
- stimulate cross-sectoral collaboration
- accelerate the development and commercialisation of novel and/or improved ingredients.

The current focus of the Partnership is on the following topics:

- Collect and interpret consumer demands and trends
- Identify the most promising innovative ingredients
- Elaborate the adequate innovation chain
- Build a strong transregional technology network + pilot centres and technological facilities
- Set-up of the database and its maintenance

Their main challenge at this point is the preparation of the scoping note, in which working areas will be defined and allocated to the most relevant partner regions, where an action plan and a mapping of competencies will be defined and where the major issues/gaps/needs in the value chain for concrete investments to co-develop consumer-driven innovative nutritional ingredients for the food industry in EU will be identified. They also plan to continue reinforcing the partnership with other interested regions while the organisation of a workshop later this year and the identification of relevant calls for proposals for projects is also in their plans.

Action plan: start working with a qualified consultant on the elaboration of a clear scoping note as well as on the setting up of the Governance structure of the Partnership.
B. PART 2 - Thematic Smart Specialisation on Agri-Food (moderator: JRC Annita Kalpaka)

Presentation: Pilot action on Interregional Innovation Projects - S3P on Agri-Food Platform, (DG REGIO Alessandra Lepore)

The second session started with a presentation from DG REGIO that provided an overview of DG REGIO's Pilot Action on Interregional Innovation Projects. The Pilot Action is a Joint-EC initiative (DG REGIO, GROW, AGRI, ENER, JRC) for the development of partnerships involving public authorities, businesses and researchers from at least 4 different EU countries. The aim is to commercialise and scale-up ‘bankable’ interregional projects that can create or reshape European value chains in priority areas such as big data, renewable energy, connected mobility, health or cybersecurity. The pilot action is following the methodology used by the S3P focusing more on partnerships during the advanced phases (Demonstrate Commercialise and Scale-up). They have selected eight (8) partnerships to participate in the Pilot Action two (2) of them (Traceability & Big Data and High Tech Farming) being part of the S3 thematic platform on Agri-Food.

Pilot action: the 8 selected partnerships (1/2)

This pilot action serves as a policy learning exercise and the results (expected early 2019) will feed (are already feeding) the EC's discussions for 2021-2027 multiannual budget period. Regarding future perspectives for the funding of interregional innovation projects a dedicated budget of 0.9 billion (of a total budget of 8.4 billion on European Territorial cooperation) for the next programming period has been proposed (Specific provisions for the ETC (COM(2018) 374 final) and the creation of new interregional innovation instruments. These instruments will encourage the development of European value chains and will be implemented under direct or indirect management. At the initiative of the EC the ERDF may support interregional innovation investments as well.
Presentations: Update from partnerships supported from DG REGIO Pilot Action

In this session, the two most advanced partnerships (also participating in the DG REGIO pilot action) of the AF platform have presented their state-of-play.

High-Tech Farming (Fabio Boscaleri, Tuscany)

S3P High Tech Farming partnership is one of the first partnerships that joined the S3P on Agri-Food and it has officially started its operation at the S3 AF Platform kick-off event in December 2016. It brings together regional/national authorities from 24 EU countries and focuses on 4 value chains (working areas): arables, horticulture, protected cultivations and livestock.

The main objective of the partnership is the development of joint activities for accelerating the adoption of high and new technologies that can improve the performance of farming practices and farm management. Specific objectives are: adoption of advanced agri-technologies in small and family farms; new solutions for early detection of pests and diseases; improvement of livestock health and wellbeing.

Several actors take part in the S3 High Tech Farming Partnership: over 80 Universities/Research Centres, 163 firms, 23 government bodies/public institutions and 160 End-users' representatives from different countries. Some of them are also involved in pilot projects/pilot actions.

The partnership has been very active and it's achievements to date include the following:

- Scoping Note
- Joint mapping (+extended mapping -> JRC expert)
- Submission of INTERREG project “Hint4AF” (was not successful on this occasion)
- Connection with a H2020 funded projects (NEFERTITI)
- Participation to / Organisation of events
- Identification of promising business cases - Submission of the Expression of Interest under DG REGIO call and selection as Pilot Partnership

The extended mapping exercise has led to some important for the sector observations:

- The high-tech is disconnected from the intensely integrated agro-farming;
- Lack of internationalisation and most subsidiaries are within the Regions;
- Very big discrepancy across regions in terms of diversification (as well as in terms of reporting);
- Emergence of dynamic capabilities around landscaping services;
- Only 37% of firms have data on employment while only 16% on revenue, where negative performance does not allow determining any patterns at cluster level.

After the selection as Pilot Partnership by DG REGIO, Partners have selected a reduced number of promising pilot business cases to be developed:

1. Technology adoption in small and family farms
2. Agriculture warnings for weeds and diseases
3. Integration of sensors to monitor and improve the conditions of livestock

They have identified the following challenges/bottlenecks for the development of business cases:

- Selection of business cases
  o Development of strong relationship among partners
  o Identification of a concept for interviewing actors
  o Meetings and exchange of info to allow convergences
- Integration of competences vs market competition
- Improving administrative capacities in public bodies and cluster management (Interregional dimension is not Business as Usual)
- Closing the gap between technology providers and primary producers (Post market services, trust, economic sustainability, market dimension)

 Traceability & Big Data (Agnes Trarieux, Pays de la Loire representing the leading region Andalusia)

*S3P Agri-Food Traceability and Big data (TBD) partnership's objective is to encourage the creation of an ecosystem to support innovation and digitisation of the agri-food sector in Europe.* The Partnership that joined the AF platform back in 2016 is led by the region of Andalusia and Emilia-Romagna. Altogether it consists of 19 participating regions and seven (7) associated RTOs / Universities / Clusters. It's worth mentioning that each region has a regional node made up of institutions from the quadruple-helix.

They have defined four (4) key working areas:

WA1: Lifecycles of the value chain.
WA2: Smart monitoring of the value chain to improve the overall competitiveness of the Agri-Food sector.
WA3: Incorporating consumer experience & different operators in food chain decision making processes.
WA4: Open data, interoperability, data governance and information security, cyber security.

**Governance framework:** In order to achieve their goals in the selected four distinct working areas, the regions have defined and are implementing a well-structured Governance and Management Framework (including a communication strategy) that regulates decision making and operation of the partnership, as well as the roles and responsibilities of partners. Each one of the selected topics of interest (working area) becomes a "sub-partnership" under the leadership of the defined co-leading regions that will work closely with the interested participant regions to produce a Working Plan for each working area.

Most important events and results up-to-date are:

• Approval of the partnership Work Plan (including the Communication Strategy).
• Approval and kick-off of the REGIONS 4FOOD Interreg Europe Project to improve policy instruments linked to the digitalisation of the agri-food sector.
• Participation in the EU-Commission "Smart Pilot action: interregional partnerships for innovative projects" with two demo cases for improving decision-making process in agri-food value chain.
• Involvement in three H2020 applications (RUR-02, RUR-04 and RUR-12).
• Participation in several workshops and dissemination events to raise awareness and contribute to the creation of an ecosystem to support innovation and digitisation of the agri-food sector in Europe.
• Connection of more than 700 actors following a quadruple-helix approach.

Main difficulties and bottlenecks faced by the partnership are:

• Improve connections between the partnership and other European policies and instruments.
• Specific financial support to implement partnership-related activities and projects.
• Guarantee support for S3P thematic partnerships for the 2021-2027 programming period.

Next steps are linked to the implementation of the Work Plan, and basically, the development of pilot projects with financial support of regional funds, H2020, Interreg, etc. It means, to conclude the demonstration phase and start commercialisation and scale-up phases.

C. Synergies with EU programmes and initiatives (moderator: JRC Annita Kalpaka)

This session was dedicated to provide information to the S3P AF partnerships representatives on the policy developments of relevant EC services in order to help them explore synergies with different EU programmes and initiatives. These presentations were delivered by colleagues representing the partner DGs RTD and AGRI, the EIT Food, the Interreg Europe Programme and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

- Synergies between R&I FPs & ERDF (DG RTD - Davide AMATO)

This presentation provided information on initiatives put in place by the EC in order to encourage the combination of innovation investments under smart specialisation priorities supported by ESIF with world-class R&I initiatives supported by FP. The timing of the event provided also the opportunity to the participants to receive early information on the planning of the next framework programme Horizon Europe 2021-2027 which was released only recently. A reference to the EU initiatives currently supporting synergies was made including: the Seal of Excellence (DG RTD), the Policy Support Facility – Mutual Learning Exercise (DG RTD) the Stairway to Excellence (JRC/S3P) and the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme. Challenges identified during this exercise include: differences in focus (excellence/non territorial approach vs socioeconomic development/place based approach), different type of management (direct vs indirect) and different application of state aid rules.
The new Horizon Europe 2021-2027 FP has a proposed budget of 100b€ and intends to strengthen the impact of R&I in supporting EU policies including 'Food and natural resources' which is defined as a new Cluster under the Pillar 2 'Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness'. One of the key novelties in Horizon Europe will be the new approach to partnerships in an effort to rationalise the funding landscape. Synergies with other Union programmes including CAP, ERDF, Innovation Fund and Digital Europe will have a prominent role in the new FP.

- **Synergies between EU funds for agricultural innovation (DG AGRI - Alexia ROUBY)**

In the same context with the previous one this presentation provided information on synergies’ initiatives already put in place and an insight of what is planned beyond 2020. At present CAP and Horizon2020 are working in synergy in some areas of agricultural/agri-food innovation via relevant initiatives (EIP-AGRI operational and focus groups, H2020 thematic networks) while synergies have been gradually developed in the area of Agricultural and rural innovation between different policies such as CAP, Cohesion Policy, Digital Single Market, Environment & Climate, Health and more. Challenges to be taken into consideration for the future of synergies include management modes (EU vs shared), objectives / rules / timing, support to interregional cooperation in shared management policies, access to information and more. The importance of long-term strategic planning on achieving synergies in the future has been stressed.
As regards the future of CAP in relation to innovation in agricultural/agri-food sectors some important messages were passed:

Strong attention to agricultural and rural R&I will remain and more focus will be in even greater connection with other policies. A strategic approach to EU agricultural R&I will act as a backbone of the action and missions will be jointly defined. RIS3 will have its place as a useful strategy document. EIP and the synergistic and integrated model of working between Horizon EU and the CAP will remain. Focus will be on interactive innovation and the multi-actor approach.

Evolutions include: a greater budget allocated to agricultural & rural innovation under the new Horizon EU, core place in the CAP modernisation effort and policy simplification & modernisation.

- Synergies with EIT FOOD (EIT - Begoña PEREZ VILLARREAL)

In this presentation (delivered via Skype) participants had the opportunity to learn about the EIT Food and its role and objectives in the EU Food innovation eco-system with a view to identify possible areas of synergies and/or collaboration with the S3P partnerships in Agri-Food.

EIT Food is a European Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), part of the EIT, with an aim to transform the European food ecosystem. By connecting consumers with businesses, start-ups, researchers and students from around Europe, EIT Food supports innovative and economically sustainable initiatives which improve health, access to quality food, and the environment. Its strategy is focusing on 4 functional areas: education, communication, innovation and business creation and they have developed innovation programmes in order to connect businesses, research centres, universities and consumers. These include EIT Food Assistant, Your Fork2Farm, The Web of Food, The Zero Waste Agenda.

There is a specific focus to the start-ups and SMEs eco-system where they aim to boost the skills and entrepreneurial spirit in the sector and unlock the potential of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which in turn will accelerate innovation, create jobs, benefit businesses and increase Europe’s competitiveness.
- **INTERREG EUROPE Programme (IR-E - Erwin SIWERIS)**

How could the Agri-Food S3P interregional partnerships benefit from the Interreg Europe Programme that focuses on better regional policy? Interreg Europe is a pan-European programme that valorises interregional collaboration aiming to improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC through exchange of experience and policy learning. Interreg Europe and S3P reached recently a cooperation agreement (November 2017) in areas such as communication, projects, policy learning services etc. while IR-E's policy learning platform can support S3P policy learning events.

Possible synergies and benefits to the S3P Agri-Food can be summarised as follows points:

- Similar objective and target groups:
  - IR-E projects: preparation for strategic investment (first stage of ‘investment pipeline’)
  - Focus on regional development policy makers and stakeholders
- S3P Agri-food can enrich projects scope and activities
- Possible pilot actions in projects: evidence of success for co-investment
- Policy Learning Platform can support S3P Agri-Food policy learning events

One of the S3P Agri-Food partnerships has already seen their project proposal approved under the 3rd Call of IR-E: REGIONS 4FOOD (consortium is part of the TBD partnership led by the Region of Andalusia). A new 4th Call was already open by the time of the 1st Working Committee in Seinajoki and the partnerships were welcome to submit proposals for funding while more funds will be available until the end of the current programming period.

- **EIB & Smart Specialisation Platform on Agro-Food (EIB - Jukka LUUKANEN)**

The last presentation of this session offered to participants an overview of the EIB’s role with a view to explore future possible funding opportunities by the time the partnerships reach their investment phase.

The presentation focused on efforts put in place to provide synergies between ESIF and EFSI under several schemes of implementation and according to the CPR rules (fund of
funds/financial intermediary level, funded layered funds, combination of support at final recipient level). Examples of such funding mechanisms were presented, including funding of projects in national (Sweden) or regional level (Haut de France, Occitanie). Moreover a new regulation (Omnibus regulation) was proposed by the EC in order to provide new opportunities for ESIF/EFSI combination and gave ground for more finance opportunities in MS. Advisory services at the level of EIB are in place in order to provide advisory support to stakeholders on funding mechanisms and financial instruments that could be used for the development of investment projects.

Very relevant to the S3P Agri-Food ecosystem was the announcement that a study dedicated to 'Access to finance for innovation along the agri-food value chain' in co-operation with DGs RTD and AGRI is under progress with an extended market consultation taking place and expected final results due in Q3 2018. The scope of the study focuses in 3 subsectors along the value chain (production-processing-packaging): 1) Digital technologies for smart production 2) Innovative processing technologies and 3) Packaging innovations. Topics that are addressed: a) Investment landscape, b) Funding challenges and c) Policy. The results of this study are expected to be of great value for the S3P Agri-Food partnerships.

**D. Workshop - Parallel discussions**

- *Participatory workshop in 3 topics in parallel discussions moderated by EC representatives*

The afternoon session consisted of a workshop carried out in a participatory interactive way in order to bring together representatives from different partnerships and discuss issues of common interest that represent a challenge for the operation of the partnerships. The aim of this interactive session was to provide hints and help to draw conclusions on how the European Commission could support the Partnerships better in their effort to reinforce interregional innovation uptake in their selected areas. Participants could choose among three parallel topics:

1. Regional commitment and governance issues
2. Mapping and matching competences to align innovation roadmaps
3. Investment projects – Types of instruments
Each parallel session was moderated by an EC colleague (R. Rakhmatullin, A. Kalpaka and A. Ruby) while each of the invited experts joined one parallel session to gather input and report feedback.

During the 3 parallel sessions, a total of 5 round tables have been formed that worked collectively around one question in order to share ideas and experiences with a view to propose at the end of the session 3 collective suggestions /recommendations. Participants were asked to rephrase the chosen question to one with which they identify more and the questions discussed in each of the tables were finally the following:

1. Regional commitment and governance:
   - How to design a governance system that allows "Different worlds" (regional public authorities and businesses) to be aligned around the same vision?

2. Mapping and matching competences to align innovation roadmaps
   - How to find complementarities in order to: leverage, scale up, upgrade value chains from the pilot phase?
   - How can we make these partnerships attractive to the industry? What can a partnership offer to industry?

3. Investment projects – Types of instruments
   - What can the EC do to help with investment projects?
   - Which new mechanisms are needed to support investments from S3 partnerships? Who must be the main beneficiary? Project focus vs partnership focus?

In all 5 tables the participants engaged in very active discussions around the selected themes, formulated the questions and lively debates took place that led to a lot of peer exchange and very interesting ideas. The last part (III) of this report includes a selection of the most important outcomes of this interactive section along with some of the most notable suggestions/recommendations proposed by participants.

E. Closing with reporting back and conclusions

In this last part of the meeting each working table reported back on their selected question and briefly presented the main points that came out of the discussions. Most of them highlighted how much they appreciated this interactivity and that these exchanges made them
realise that the challenges they face are common across the partnerships. Being in different stages of the process they can benefit from the experience gained and the methods used by other partnerships in areas such as governance for example.

In their closing statement they all referred to the organisation of the 1st Working Committee meeting as a very successful and eye-opening event that helped reinforcing the eco-system and networking actors with common interests. They warmly thanked the JRC and the other EC services for the organisation and stated that they are looking forward to continuing working with their partnerships towards their set goals. Some of the partnerships mentioned the need to exchange with partnerships under different thematic areas such as Industrial Modernisation and Energy.

In that context the European Commission announced a "save-the-date" for a currently planned Joint Thematic S3P event on 27-28 November in Bilbao that will bring together all the three S3 thematic platforms and where the 2nd Working Committee on Agri-Food will take place. Partnerships are also invited to organise their technical meetings in the margins of this event.
III. Lessons learnt / suggestions / conclusions from the 1st Working Committee in S3P on Agri-Food

Since the creation of the thematic S3P in Agri-Food late 2016 the 1st Working Committee meeting was the first event bringing together all currently qualified partnerships and giving them the opportunity to present their work so far, express their concerns and challenges that they face and share experiences between them. They also had the opportunity to learn from all relevant EC services (JRC, REGIO, AGRI, RTD, EIT) about the current policy developments in the area of their interest, and to receive information on the EC proposals for the next multi-annual financial period (2021-2027) and the prominent role that interregional collaboration on innovative investment projects has gained and the funding opportunities arising. Moreover they acquired comprehensive information on potential funding opportunities for their operations (INTERREG Europe, Horizon2020 Calls) and possibly for investment projects (EIB). Of great interest was the presentation of plans around the funding opportunities available via new budgets and instrument in the future. During the interactive/participatory session they had the opportunity to deepen the debate on critical for their operations issues and exchange with peers in order to end up with some suggestions and action plans for the near future.

This meeting had also another positive effect in the sense that it reinforced to the members of the partnerships the sense of belonging in an EU wide eco-system and that the challenges they face and the questions they may have are common between them and new partnerships could benefit a lot of the experience of other more advanced on how to deal with them. The Agri-Food S3 thematic platform eco-system consists of partnerships being in different stages of development according to the methodological approach used. Two of the partnerships have completed the Learn and Connect phases and are now entering the Demonstration phase while two others are currently in the Learn and Connect phases and one is entering currently the Learn phase. The other notable dimension is that in some of the partnerships the driving forces are Regional authorities while in some others Clusters organisation. This differentiation also brings variety to the policy exercise and interested outcomes as regards the different challenges faced and the complementarities in handling them.

From the JRC point of view one of the goals of the meeting was to collect important feedback that could help us in the organisation of our activities to better support the partnerships in the future. The most important feedback received from the stakeholders involved (Partnerships, EC services, invited experts) is summarised below.

- **Main lessons learnt by the Partnerships**
  (Expressed by the lead Regions [Tuscany, Pays de la Loire (representing Andalusia), Flanders, Wallonia, FoodValley])

  **Interaction and connection between partnerships** is considered very important and helpful in order to learn from each other's experience, take advantage of the differences in "maturity" and explore synergies and overlaps in similar areas between partnerships. The sense of belonging to an eco-system is also reinforced. Need to exchange experience with Partnerships formed under other thematic areas in the S3P (Industrial Modernisation, Energy) has also been expressed.
Different levels of involvement and commitment of stakeholders have been identified. Partnerships led by Regions report low interest and involvement from the business sector while those led by Clusters consider that they miss the impact that could be provided by the public authorities. Different speeds of the two sectors (business and public) have been mentioned and the need to work in a better match between them. Both expressed the need to reinforce connections and collaboration with their counterparts finding ways to bring closer and in regular basis the relevant stakeholders.

Governance of the partnerships is a critical and recurring issue. New partnerships have expressed the need for help in defining a governance model where more partners share and assume responsibility in the different activities of the partnerships. Good practices shared from more experienced partnerships could be used (e.g. governance model of TBD – Andalusia) as reference. Governance has also a regional dimension on how to better organise the regional innovation eco-system in order to participate actively in the partnership. Another issue expressed was the regional authorities’ real involvement when the driving force for the partnership is the European representation office.

Networking and communication have been mentioned as very important means in strengthening the links between the different partnerships but also for the internal operation of partnerships that consists of a large number of regions and other stakeholders. Examples of these include: creation of on-line communities, use of social media (twitter, LinkedIn), emailing lists of the partnerships’ participants etc.

Support from the EC services is seen as very important and the need to benefit more from the relevant EC services involved and contact points has been expressed.

- **Suggestions and recommendations from partner DGs (REGIO, RTD, AGRI)**
  
  (Expressed from the representatives of the partner DGs)

Colleagues from the different partner DGs AGRI, REGIO and RTD have actively participated not only in presenting their policies but in the interactive /participatory sessions. They came up with the following main comments/suggestions on the present and future of the S3P on Agri-Food partnerships:

**DG REGIO**

- Agri-Food partnerships should examine areas of possible overlapping and consider possible synergies in order to avoid "duplication" on topics and efforts.

- The EC services should better identify in the future the support provided at each stage and formalise it in order to avoid confusion, misunderstanding and false expectations.

- Proposal for a follow-up meeting with lead regions (of similar stage) to reinforce discussions on the methodology and next steps/possible approaches. Cross-fertilisation among partnerships / exchange of good practices / lessons learn from each other’s experience very important for the future.

**DG RTD**
• Similar issues are faced by all partnerships. A strong vision on how they could positively impact on food systems in the EU is missing.

• While regions will play an increasingly pivotal role in the future of food systems, Agri-food partnerships are still in embryonic phase lacking inter-connection and funding. In the current programming period Managing Authorities couldn't mobilise any funding for interregional collaboration in Agri-Food.

• In view of the next programming period the EC services (DGs: AGRI, RTD and REGIO) should create the right strategic framework to overcome current challenges in funding and the lack of systemic approach.

DG AGRI

• The inter-regional partnerships formed under the thematic smart specialisation platform contribute to structuring the innovation ecosystem locally. They are also a useful channel to put businesses in the different regions into contact, facilitating the development of cross-border solutions/innovations/value chains. The regional level is also a critical level of governance for the interplay between the various European policies and funding sources.

• Inter-regional partnerships find it difficult to move from connecting and exchanging information and practices to investing together in practical applications, demonstrators or projects. The REGIO pilots launched in October 2017, two of which are from the Agri-Food Platform (high-tech farming and traceability and big data, both mostly on agriculture), are there to show how to unlock these investments. But main challenges to these investments seem however to be: i) insufficient awareness by policy makers and managing authorities of the potential benefits of inter-regional cooperation and inter-regional investments and ii) reluctance to invest outside of the programme territory for political reasons.

• For the European Commission:
  - Clarify the scope of inter-regional investments: are these investments in the innovation ecosystem i.e. the regional system for supporting innovation, or investments directly in the projects themselves?
  - Make it mandatory for regions to invest part of their envelope on inter-regional projects or provide clear incentives to do so (through top-ups or higher co-financing rates) or even allow for these partnerships to be financed outside the regional operational programmes (ERDF mostly).
  - Provide experts to help benchmarking between partnerships and facilitate mapping.

• Organise capacity building, training, coaching and information activities to make the case for inter-regional joint investments and empower staff at regional level to handle the complexity of such projects (finance, IT, engagement, business model development, IPR etc.).
- **Feedback provided by invited experts (names)**
  (Expressed from the experts Age MARIUSSEN, Emanuela TODEVA, Cecilia GAÑÁN DE MOLINA)

1. **Regional commitment and governance**

   - Among the best practices are the establishment of governance structures – to improve communication and decision making.

   - Mission statement is a good practice that could be implemented by all partnerships.

   - The interregional dimension probably needs more awareness actions (communication) and capacity building in interregional level among stakeholders especially public authorities.

   - Responsibility must be pushed around; lead partners are exhausted while other partners are free-riders. Clear engagement from all partners is needed and power-sharing.

   - Partnerships should focus on some consolidation activities – to draw learning and identify best practice within their scope.

   - Each partnership should identify direct and indirect management tools – to ensure incentives for participation and to establish a more transparent governance framework, and to enable partnerships to innovate.

   - Training is needed at multiple levels – regional representatives in Brussels, partnership coordinators, other facilitators. Training is needed about the strategic development process, strategic positioning and strategic upgrading.

   - Learning activities such as "School of smart specialisation" with lectures and training sessions could reinforce alignment with S3 strategies. Understanding of what is "good" is concentrated to a few individuals.

2. **Mapping and matching competences to align innovation roadmaps**

   - Partnerships should develop a stronger relevance for business.

   - Partners should consider that business growth requires scaling up of activities and upgrading capabilities.

   - Match-making initiatives should involve a stronger presence of strategic vision and not only – who is interested. Invited participants for match-making should be sought in terms of driving value chain integration and scaling-up.
- A form of ‘Export support’ is needed – both in terms of diffusion of technology across EU regions, but also intelligence on export markets and export facilitation – to drive growth.

- Interregional partnerships in the EU multicultural and multi-lingual settings have the meaning of internationalisation from a firm point of view. Hence more knowledge on the internationalisation process is needed even though the focus is on the Single market value chain integration.

- There are significant knowledge gaps in terms of product and technology markets. The business scope of many partnerships exhibits early stage of innovation and brainstorming in terms of business propositions.

- Some partnerships have achieved clarity around the sectors to drive the strategic change. They are however, still using single case examples, rather a vision of input and output markets – which is necessary for the scaling up

- Continuous upgrading of the S3 strategies will make them more relevant and will bring new stakeholders. The partnerships are currently developing a mind-set of exclusivity, which is not conducive to value co-creation.

- There is a need for multi-stakeholder events which requires a new format of ‘Strategic Development Workshops’ – as a next step of the Smart Regions Conference, but going deeper into mobilising support from business, policy makers and universities (or broadly relevant knowledge providers).

3. Investment projects – Types of instruments

- The financial support issue still remains open. Taking into account the "ecosystem building" approach might be helpful to identify the right beneficiaries.

- Shifting from "Tools & Instruments" perspective to a more open and wider mechanism approach seems appropriate.

- Improved inter-regional Communications seems to be the main value added of these partnerships to date. This needs to progress towards collaborative decision making and resource allocation – if these partnerships are to achieve more ambitious strategic aims.
Thank you for joining and save-the-date for Bilbao 27-28 November 2018!

Two events:

- Joint inter-thematic platform event
- Next S3P in AF Working Committee