

1. PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY

Summary of the context and overall objectives of the project (For the final period, include the conclusions of the action)

Internationalization, the cornerstone for competitiveness

The NF4 project was powered by a 5-Food Cluster alliance formed by Clusaga (ES), FoodvalleyNL (NL), Valorial (FR), Vitagora (FR) and Wagralim (BE).

The support to interregional cooperation and internationalization of SMEs are priorities for the clusters participating in the NF4 project. The aim is to transform local/regional economies into wealth driven by smart specialization and to search complementarities in value chains that deliver solutions to common challenges. The New Frontiers in Food – Fast Forward project (NF4), was a specialized Internationalization fast track Acceleration program for our food SMEs. The overall objective of the project was to provide a full package of acceleration services, aiming at boosting international collaboration and business development of a cohort of European Food SMEs within 4 overseas target markets in which the consortium was already strongly connected.

To do so, The NF4 partners developed a NF4 process divided into seven Work Packages. Three Work Packages provide transversal activities:

WP1 Management & Monitoring.

Objectives: Manage and coordinate activities at consortium level including financial & legal activities and the establishment of a relevant scorecard to monitor activities.

WP2 Partnerships & Agreements

Objectives: Develop and maintain cooperation agreements with relevant intermediation partners (Clusters and other organisations) in target countries; stimulating and supporting business agreements between NF4 end-users (SMEs) and relevant business/RTDI partners in target countries through help-desk support.

WP7 Exit & Sustainability.

Objectives: To pursue the support done by the partners within NF4 beyond the scope of the project, in order to keep supporting SMEs to internationalize their activities

The four central Work Packages delivered the core vertical functions of the Fast-Track NF4 Accelerator :

WP3 Communication & Promotion.

Objectives: development of a series of communication actions and branding tools in order to raise awareness and diffuse the offering of the NF4 internationalization accelerator and the underlying opportunities for SMEs. The specific objective was to generate expressions of interest amongst clusters' SMEs portfolio and secure a substantial flow of applicants.

WP4 SMEs selection and projects identification.

Objectives: the WP aimed at selecting champion-SMEs that would be engaged in a comprehensive, hands-on, tailor-made and ambitious internationalization accelerator program and to identify projects, SMEs and their specific needs & expectations.

WP5 Business Intelligence / Skills development, mentoring & coaching.

Objectives: the main purpose of this WP was to invest in the capacity building of SMEs' executive and business development teams, in order to better prepare them to envisage and to enter into foreign

markets, and especially the four target markets defined in the NF4 project. We have implemented business intelligence – production of content information and we have offered to our SMEs mentoring and coaching activities. The Clusters staff were also trained to the Business model canvas.

WP6 matchmaking and market support actions.

Objectives: WP6 was one of the most business development-oriented activity, and was focused on offering practical support to projects participants and SMEs in finding partners. This was done by organizing structured specific B2B matchmaking events and Tech-Road-Shows for NF4-SMEs, both in Europe In Europe during special events and in the targeted countries during partnership missions.

Work performed from the beginning of the project to the end of the period covered by the report and main results achieved so far (For the final period please include an overview of the results and their exploitation and dissemination)

The logical framework of the NF4 project accelerator was based on the following methodology:

At the beginning of the project we had to select the first round of champion-SMEs that would be engaged in our tailor-made internationalization accelerator program. We have developed a diagnostic tool and an evaluation grids and made interviews. At the same time, we have developed and implemented a system of travel voucher to support the SMEs in their internationalization.

We also redefined and implemented the communication plan & tools (based on the previous project) and ensure the visibility of the project. New design for our website <http://www.newfrontiersinfood.eu/> with the creation of an online application form (Deliverable 3.1). During the two years of the project we developed 4 newsflashes and were also active on social networks.

We were thus ready to take our companies to international markets.

We have organized trade missions with specific B2B matchmaking events for NF4-SMEs in each of the 4 countries. We have started with Canada, then US, China and Brazil. A total of 57 companies have placed their trust in us and have accompanied us in these different markets. To do so and to prepare them for international markets we have defined the mentoring and coaching approach. The mentors included members of the network of the NF4 clusters and covered different areas, such as regulation, market access, market positioning, business modelling, working across cultures and were aligned with the needs identified in the internationalisation diagnoses

Regarding the tech roadshows in Europe, we took over the opportunity of the FoodValley Summit, CFIA, Vitafoods Europe and Wagrallim Event to gain visibility for NF4. We met some of our cluster partners such as St Hyacinthe Technopole of Canada during the wagrallim Event and The Natural product Canada during the Vitafoods fair and discussed further collaboration, we developed trade books including all the NF4 participants. The European companies were enthusiastic to be introduced to our Canadian partner.

As part of the sustainability of the project we listed and benchmark the existing funding/projects between our countries and at EU level, specific to the value chain or general, that will support champions SME's to continue their internationalization after NF4 project life-time and we developed a mapping of fundings. In order to continue our collaboration and to help our SMEs we have created and registered our European meta-cluster New Frontiers in Food, which is approved by the French Court on 2019.

Progress beyond the state of the art, expected results until the end of the project and potential impacts (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

Important steps have been made by the New Frontiers in Food consortium over the past years. During the Phase 1 of the project we defined an internationalization “roadmap” - an action plan for SME internationalization focused on key target countries outside of Europe: Brazil, Canada, China and USA. Relevant clusters or potential partnership organizations have been contacted and memoranda of understanding signed for many of them.

During the NF4 project - Phase 2 of the project we further involved our clusters members by, amongst others, taking part in missions and development actions with the identified partners. (13 members joined the Canadian trade mission; 14 to US, 19 to China and 11 to Brazil which means a total of 57 companies).

By identifying and creating relationship with local actors (clusters and/or other organisations), We are enabled to help our SMEs to enter into targeted markets with different tools. For instance, webinars and tech roadshows. i A financial support to the participating SMEs in the Innovation Tours is being developed with vouchers. Several business agreements were signed or are in the process of being signed.

Conclusion:

The Partnership proposed within the COSME call for European Strategic Cluster Partnerships “Clusters Go International” has been set up to support clusters, their SMEs and other regional ecosystem actors. The NF4 project focused on the internationalisation of Agri-food SMEs that support the whole agri-food value chain and

reinforce their competitiveness, sustainability and growth: The project brought opportunities, tools and market analysis to SMEs, The partnership goals were in line with the COSME programme that “aims to promote growth and to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises in the European Union.”

Our approach had also strengthened the inter-cluster and inter-regional cluster collaboration for developing joint international collaboration. This project brought us to strengthen our international strategy, tools and partnership as well as our European network that will benefit to our SMEs. Partners have also exploited ECCP services to further pursue these objectives and we have also provided SMES with qualified networks, tools and support to deliver their products and services at an international level.

Last but not least, we have created and registered our European meta-cluster New Frontiers in Food (a so-called EEIG) and composed of our 5 clusters! It’s an important step for our collaboration and for our agro-and food SMEs in the way of internationalization! Further steps are in consideration to keep active our EEIG. A meeting is organized on March 06 in Madrid. There is a real interaction and common interest to keep it going on.

Address (URL) of the project's public website

<https://newfrontiersinfood.eu/>

In October 2019, Vitagora hosted a delegation from Missouri, United States on the occasion of Appet



This picture was taken during the Vitafoods expo roadshow, during the NF4 cocktail joining 5 cluster



Preparation is essential for successful participation during the NF4 Innovation Tour.
Amongst oth



China info session at Namur



Early Morning meeting in Spain



A key element of the NF4 Innovation Tour is the interaction and matchmaking with Chinese companies



The NF4 cohort at BENEFIQ, the healthy food event in Québec city in October 2018. A delegation of 13



This picture was taken during the pitch session of our champions SMEs at FabWisconsin. Preparing com



Brazil Innovation Tour



NF4 team in Belgium

