
How to involve the stakeholders in the sustainability assessment process of a technology or food value chain

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The transition towards a more sustainable food system requires that small and mid-sized enterprises increase their economic competitiveness and resilience and strengthen their innovation capacity. However, their specific needs are often neglected, especially in innovation processes that often focus on large and expensive improvements.

The H2020 project FAIRCHAIN (<https://www.fairchain-h2020.eu/>) proposes development and adaptation of innovations that strengthen the position of small and mid-sized farmers and processors in the food chains and allow the scale-up and expansion of the production of nutritious food at a regional level. FAIRCHAIN has developed a methodology to encourage putting technological innovations for food producers and food SMEs into practise through resilient and sustainable food value chains. This methodology is based on a co-creation process and an assessment framework in which stakeholders participate in the definition of the assessment indicators.

This talk will present the methodology developed and will illustrate it with some technical and technological innovations devoted to SMEs and producers which may increase food sustainability: as examples the development of an innovative healthy fermented whey-based drink to upgrade the value of whey, a co-product of cheese manufacture ; the development of an innovative packaging machine for liquid or viscous food products in the dairy and fruit & vegetables and dairy sectors, using green or sustainable packaging materials and designed to fulfil hygienic requirements ; or the development of the blockchain technology for a feta production chain, to improve the traceability , transparence and information sharing, that is of major importance when increasing the number of intermediaries in the food chain.

The benefits of the proposed co-creation process and assessment framework will be presented. Key challenges to innovation adoption (identified thanks to the co-creation process and assessment framework) will be discussed, as well as factors supporting and hindering innovation uptake and possible solutions for successful implementation.

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