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# PEER REVIEW Emilia-Romagna

## Preliminary Report and Recommendations

Peer review, 12th – 15th February 2019





Thank you Emilia-Romagna Region  
for your kind hospitality!

Peer Review Team: Maramures (Romania), Greater  
Manchester (UK), Plovdiv/Sofia (BG), Flevoland (NL)

# Peer Review Focus

1. Finding the most suitable and effective way to make research institutions, packaging companies and food companies to work together;
2. Promoting innovation in order to develop new effective, efficient and sustainable packages for this high quality food.

# General impressions of the Peer Review week: Emilia Romagna region - Developed food culture and strong regional identity

- ◆ high rate of entrepreneurship
- ◆ large number of PDO and PGI products
- ◆ people proud of their food culture
- ◆ strong cultural awareness of food
- ◆ people are highly educated around food
- ◆ rich history in traditional products
- ◆ excellent products with strong local identity
- ◆ funding available for agri-food sector through rural development and regional operational programs

# Focus 1: COOPERATION AMONG THE RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, PACKAGING & FOOD COMPANIES

## Strengths

- good example of cooperation among food producers, retailers, packaging industry (CPR system)
- large companies have good cooperation with universities in research projects
- the students are encouraged and supported by companies to develop their licenses and master theses
- support to the consortiums from the regional government by providing funds for the agri-food sector (*see the question*)
- existence of triple-helix clusters: education and research, companies, regional authority (Agrifood Clust ER, ASTER, packaging cluster)
- well developed cooperative system at regional level

# Focus 1: COOPERATION AMONG THE RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, PACKAGING & FOOD COMPANIES

## Challenges

- access to support for SMEs from the regional authorities
- identification of the companies which are not involved in the research and encouraging them to be engaged
- ensuring information flow transparently to all the stakeholders
- identifying consumer expectations, demands from the local and external markets
- complying with the dynamic changes of legislation related to packaging materials

# Focus 1: COOPERATION AMONG THE RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS, PACKAGING & FOOD COMPANIES

## Preliminary recommendations:

- consultancy, training and financial support for SMEs to facilitate their access to research
- increased cooperation between private industry, academic research and government to identify key areas of maximum impact in sustainable packaging and associated technology
- more transparent communication in the food chain
- conducting educational campaigns for the consumers regarding the importance of the packaging sustainability (mass-media, meetings, awareness events, competitions, school programs, etc.)

# Focus 2: INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING OF HIGH QUALITY FOOD

## Strengths:

- clear interest of agri-food businesses in circular economy and environment sustainability
- innovative approaches for active and sustainable packaging
- intensive research activity in universities with significant results
- large companies have good cooperation with universities in research projects
- extensive knowledge in the region on packaging equipments and materials
- both companies and research institutions have interest for sustainable innovation in the food packaging
- well developed infrastructures for innovation: research laboratories, innovation centres, high technology networks



# Focus 2: INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING OF HIGH QUALITY FOOD

## Challenges:

- universities perform very good scientific research but they are often long term activities, whereas SME's are probably looking for short term practical solution; there is a gap between fundamental and applied research;
- limited consumer knowledge in relation to innovation in food packaging
- more efficient correlation between: packaging technologies, food manufacturing and waste management
- limited market demand for sustainable packaging

# Focus 2: INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING OF HIGH QUALITY FOOD

## **Preliminary recommendations:**

- The regional government should consider to support SMEs to comply with the EU regulations in the field of food packaging sustainability by providing them some incentives: beneficial points in the evaluation criteria for project to be funded by operational programs or additional points for public procurements
- Better correlation between the Rural Development Program and Regional Operational Program for the next programming period
- Provide funding and investments for food packaging waste reduction schemes

# Focus 2: INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING OF HIGH QUALITY FOOD

## Preliminary recommendations:

- Encourage the companies to adopt circular economy and new solutions for sustainable packaging
- Provide innovation vouchers which support SMEs and higher education research for knowledge transfer in sustainable packaging
- Increase the ratio of recycled materials inside the new packages
- Addressing the dual challenge of food waste and plastic waste through the reduction of single-use plastic packaging and scaling up reusable packaging
- Region should focus on innovation front runner (cans with bio-lacquer from tomato residues)

# Best Practices

- **National Academy of Packaging, Bulgaria:**  
<http://mahvp.uft-plovdiv.bg>
- **Innovation Technology Centre, The Netherlands:**  
<http://www.wetsus.nl>
- **Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Chemistry and Biology:** International Projects on active food packaging - SMARTPACK, GraFOOD, STRUCT-PHO-PACK

# Questions to be answered by the host region

- How are the public funds distributed, marketed and how available are they?
- Are SMEs aware about how to use the funds?
- What support is available for start-up and SMEs related to innovation and collaboration?
- What are the challenges of start-ups and SMEs regarding food packaging innovation?

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# Questions?