

Brussels, 17 June 2004

Food quality and safety: EU awards €192m to new research projects and networks

Today at a conference in Dublin (Ireland) on “Thinking beyond tomorrow: a safe and nutritious food chain for the consumer”, the European Commission announced it would award €192 million for food quality and safety research in the second year of the EU’s Sixth Framework Programme for Research (FP6, 2002-2006). These funds will go to 31 research projects and networks of excellence and 13 smaller support actions, which will tackle a range of consumer-driven issues with an impact on the “fork-to-farm” approach. The short-listed projects will tackle issues such as traceability, contaminants in food, emerging pathogens, diseases affecting animals and crops, food allergy, obesity and various aspects of nutrition. The consortia behind these projects will now negotiate funding contracts for the next 3 to 5 years with the Commission. This will bring to €402 million the EU contribution to research in this sector over the first two years (2003 and 2004) of the Sixth Framework programme. Pursuing its effort in this field, the EC is about to publish the next call for proposals with research priorities and an indicative budget of €360 million for the next two years.

According to European Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin: “Now, more than ever, research in agriculture and food safety is critical to ensure the quality of life and safety of all citizens in an enlarged Europe, while sustaining the competitiveness of Europe’s largest industrial sector. Furthermore, many of these major research initiatives will contribute to the development of EU policies based on sound science.”

EU projects to be funded

185 proposals for European research projects were submitted during the latest call for proposals and evaluated by independent experts. Up to 44 proposals, representing an initial EU contribution of €192 million, are expected to receive funding (see table 1). This corresponds to a 23.7% success rate. Most topics were effectively covered by successful proposals, yet some very good proposals could not be funded due to budgetary constraints.

Integrated projects (IP) and networks of excellence (NoE)

Designed to provide EU activities with a greater impact, integrated projects (IPs) and networks of excellence (NoEs) help achieve the critical mass and better co-ordination of research at the European level, to tackle some of the major and growing concerns of scientists, public authorities and consumers in key research fields. For projects selected within the second FP6 call, the average EU contribution will be about €12 million.

For the second call the short list includes 10 IPs, which will study issues such as chemical contaminant screening in food, obesity, traceability in food (including genetically modified or “GM” food), nutrition in early life, food allergy and emerging pathogens. Two NoEs will focus on food information and cancer risk from nutrition and the environment. The number and scale of these projects reflects the will and ability of European scientists to fully participate in a true European Research Area, an internal market for science and knowledge.

Specific Targeted Research Projects (STREP) and Co-ordination Actions (CA)

For the second call the short list also includes 15 STREPs, with an average EU contribution of €2.2 million. These include projects on animal diseases, biotoxins in seafood, flavonoids, reducing and recycling of food production wastes, and nutrition during adolescence; and 4 CAs on topics such as plant diseases, aquaculture and the impact of diet on fertility.

Specific Support Actions (SSA)

In addition to the research projects, 13 SSAs are short-listed for funding for a total EU contribution of €6 million. Their aims include developing food safety networks in an enlarged Europe, fostering international co-operation, improving industry participation (especially SMEs), communication on science and society, etc. More SSAs can be submitted in September 2004.

SME participation

The overall number of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) participation is 187 out of 865 participants (21.6%) and the percentage of the EU financial contribution is 13.8%. This is an improvement from the first call and additional efforts are being made to continue to improve industrial (esp. SME) participation towards reaching the target of 15% of FP6 budget.

Mid-term overview for Food Quality and Food Safety research funding

Following the first two annual calls for proposals, the European Commission will have funded 80 research initiatives with a total EU contribution of €402 million (see table 2 for details). This includes pioneering networks of excellence such as NeuroPrion on BSE-related diseases and GA²LEN on allergies, and integrated projects such as SEAFOODplus, LIPGENE and NuGO.

Table 1: overview of shortlist of proposals

Funding instrument	Proposals evaluated	Projects short-listed	Budgetary request	Initial EU contribution
Integrated projects	66	10	€180m	€145m
Networks of Excellence	8	2		
Specific Targeted Research Projects	53	15	€48m	€41m
Concerted actions	9	4		
Specific support actions	49	13	€8m	€6m
Total:	185	44	€236m	€192m

NB: all figures are indicative only and may change slightly as a result of contract negotiations.

Table 2: overview of first two years for Food Quality and Food Safety (2003 and 2004)

Funding instrument	Year 1	Year 2	Total Year 1 + 2	Total EU contribution
Integrated projects	6	10	16	€311m
Networks of Excellence	6	2	8	
Specific Targeted Research Projects	11	15	26	€73m
Concerted actions	1	4	5	
Specific support actions	12	13	25	€13(+5)*m
Total:	36	44	80	€402m

*: the additional €5m corresponds to budget for September 2004 deadline for SSAs in second call.

NB: the Year 2 figures are indicative only and may change slightly as a result of contract negotiations.

Note for Editors

For the thematic priority on “**food quality and safety**” in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) see also:

<http://www.cordis.lu/food/home.html>.

The **third call for proposals**, announcing the research topics targeted for 2005 and the deadlines for submission, is to be published on **7 July 2004**. All relevant information and documents are available from the CORDIS web site:

<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/food.htm>

Sixth Research Framework Programme (FP6, 2002-2006) – Questions & answers

How the EU's Sixth Research Framework Programme supports research

- FP6 effectively started in 2003 and runs until 2006 with a budget of €20 billion, to be allocated on the basis of evaluations following calls for proposals over the 4 years. For Thematic Priority 5 “Food Quality and Safety” the initial budget was €685 million, but should approach a final figure of €750 million.
- Following annual calls for submissions, research proposals are evaluated by independent experts and the best proposals are ranked. Then, following approval of the short-list by the European Commission and a review by the programme committee, contract negotiations are initiated with project co-ordinators to provide a framework for research funding over 3 to 5 years.

Next call for proposals for “Food quality and safety”

- The third call for proposals, announcing the topics targeted for 2005 and the deadlines for submission, is to be published on 7 July 2004. All relevant information and documents are available on the CORDIS web site: <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/food.htm>

What are the "instruments" of the Sixth Framework programme?

- Integrated projects (IP) aim either to increase Europe's competitiveness or address major needs in society. Their main task is to deliver knowledge for new products, processes, services, etc. Projects must contain a research component. They may also focus on technological development, contain demonstration components and contain a training component. A single project may span over the whole research spectrum (i.e. from basic to applied research).
- Networks of excellence (NoE) are designed to strengthen scientific and technological excellence on a particular research topic. They aim to overcome the fragmentation of European research by networking together to find a critical mass of resources and the expertise needed to provide European leadership. NoE must also spread excellence beyond the boundaries of the partnership.
- Specific targeted research projects (STREP) are research project designed to gain knowledge or improve existing products, processes or services OR a demonstration project designed to prove the viability of new technologies.
- Co-ordinated action (CA): it aims to promote and support the networking and co-ordination of research and innovation activities. They cover activities such as: conferences, studies, exchange of personnel, exchange and dissemination of good practices, setting up common information systems and expert groups. A single project may span over the whole research spectrum.
- Specific support action (SSA): it aims to support the implementation of FP6 and in particular to stimulate, encourage and facilitate the participation of: SMEs, small research teams, newly developed and remote research centres and organisations from the Candidate Countries. For example: conferences, seminars, studies and analysis, working and expert groups, operational support and dissemination, information and communication or a combination of these.

For more on the instruments of FP6:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/instruments_en.html

<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/instruments.htm>

For information on the Sixth Framework programme:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6>