

**Healthy and Safe Food for the Future** ? a technology Foresight Project in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia

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## Introduction

The process of integrating the food industry of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries into the single European market presents important economic and political opportunities and challenges. Food quality and safety are crucial aspects of human life and are, therefore, prime policy objectives of the European Union. Food quality and safety have to be secured through regulations with regard to inputs, production processes, outputs, transportation, storage, packaging, labeling, documentation of origin and the like, for creating an adequate infrastructure for food markets and their smooth development. The food industries in the CEE are undergoing sweeping ownership, technological, organizational and financial changes. The new decision-making processes should put a strong emphasis on safety and quality standards. Substantial changes in financial services, wholesale markets, commodities exchange, price information, transportation facilities and infrastructure are also needed. A foresight process is highly instrumental to tackle these complex issues. By bringing together the relevant stakeholders ? business, researchers, policy-makers, consumers, NGOs ? with their wide range of expertise and accumulated skills it is possible to identify emerging technological and market opportunities and threats, consider S&T and socio-economic factors in their entirety, and thus devise appropriate policies and strategies, based on consensus among these stakeholders.

Within the 6th Framework programme, the EC decided to support a foresight exercise dedicated to the definition of policies and strategies to promote and guarantee healthy and safe food for the future. Six countries in the CEE region were selected as focus of the exercise and UNIDO act as project coordinator of the related project, which started on the 01.02.2007 and finalized on the 31.01.2009.

## Methodology

The project applied the UNIDO methodology for multi-country foresight, which inter alia involves the participation of high-level decision makers from Governments, enterprises and innovation sector, during the whole exercise. Their involvement is a guarantee that the findings and recommendations will integrate the policy guidelines for the target food industry. The key axes of the project's methodology are:

1. **Mobilization of a variety of actors** from different stakeholders groups with experience in relevant science and technology fields, business, societal issues and policy-makers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia to share their assessment and expectations of the future of the total food chain in these countries.
2. **A socio-economic scenario building** exercise to collect the views of consumers and other societal groups concerned with the food industry and the impact of different technologies. This exercise will also identify

the major drivers for the food chain.

3. **Interviews with specialists** from different disciplines and affiliation (industry, academic institutions, public authorities, etc.). The goal of these interviews is to gather information about the current situation of the sector, the industry needs, problems and future prospects.
4. A **survey on key technologies** to address challenges associated with the future of the industry. A special attention will be devoted to identify and analyse all aspects relevant to food quality and safety. Traceability and sustainability issues will be of specific concern throughout the project.
5. **Vision building** exercise to depict multiple possible future states, based on the views, experience and aspirations of stakeholders, consumers and other societal groups, business people, researchers and policy-makers.
6. **Technology road mapping** to consider in the detail S&T implications of possible future states and identify appropriate actions to exploit opportunities and alleviate threats.

A Foresight and Innovation Group (FIG) was set up within the project. This group defined the conceptual basis for interviews, the key technologies survey, future visions and road mapping.

## Results and policy impact/implications

The project is expected to influence and shape the national policy of the countries involved, as well as the CEE region as a whole. The policy-oriented goals of the project are: ? Integration of new concepts in relation with the total food chain, producing healthy and safe food and thus identification of areas of competitive advantages; Strengthening long-term thinking on strategic issues; Improved exploitation of science, technology and innovation (STI) results by policy-makers and businesses; Establishment of a Food Quality and Safety Platform as a new way of networking and cooperation between the six CEE countries.

## Conclusions

The outcomes of the project were consolidated in policy recommendations to develop specific policies promoting the food industry and to elaborate common actions to implement specific technologies. The project website offers the results and opportunity for public online debate and to collect the views and feedbacks of experts. The exercise reviews the findings for different target groups in policy and industry and creates knowledge community on technology trends and visions in the sector. A short manual to assist companies was also developed.

The ultimate objective of the project is to promote a new decision-making culture among managers and policy-makers in order to place quality and safety issues into the centre of the total food chain management and to identify future key technologies and new business models to promote the quality and safety requirements in food production, by supporting a Food Quality and Safety Platform in CEE countries.

## For more information on the projet, please visit the project website

- [UNIDO Technology Foresight](#)
- [European Technology Platform ?Food for Life? home page](#)
- [Cordis Sixth Framework Programme home page](#)

## External links

- [Future Food 6](#) home page