



Foreword

The year 2021 has been a very positive and successful year for Swiss Food Research. We acquired new projects, successfully started, and run the Innovation Booster, expanded the international activities, increased in memberships, and further grew the innovation groups. However, this impression is deceptive - what is relevant is what lies ahead and therefore 2022 will be another important year for Swiss Food Research. The further development and expansion of the "Swiss Innovation Eco-System" and new ways of financing is the core task for the future.

One important hub to build the future of Swiss Food Research are our members. You can support and strengthen this community throughout your connections (getting additional members, help identifying new fundings schemes, broaden the presence of the network). Only with a joined approach we will be able to reinforce the Swiss Innovation-Eco System and build our future together.

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Sincerely



Fabian Wahl
President Swiss Food Research



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Summary:

The biggest challenge for us in 2021 was building up and forming the new team. Aline Candrian finished her studies in June and is now active in Australia. In April and May, the team doubled with Corinne and Lucas. From autumn onwards, we received great support with 3 "working students" - Alessia, Alejandra and Fabian. The start of a solid team in our aim to drive impactful innovation with a holistic approach to a sustainable agro-food & nutrition ecosystem. All being: Neutral, confidential, and independent.

The year started with the 2nd Future Food Symposium in February. In April we had the Thai-Swiss Food Tech Forum and on 31st of August the Agro-Food Innovation Forum as a presence event. The Innovation Booster also started with the defining the practical cooperation with Cluster Food & Nutrition. Apart from topics such as evaluation and introduction of a software platform, active cooperation with the other Innoboosters, the active "management" of the Innobooster was a demanding task. Today we can look back on a successful operating Innobooster with still a lot of ground to cover.

Within the framework of EIT Food, we managed to obtain funding by being active in 5 different programmes. We organised and conducted 3 summer schools, worked intensively on the Start Up Accelerator Seedbed, participated in product development by students and secured the projects for 2022.

In addition, 11 meetings of the Innogroups took place, a new Innogroup "Fungi & Fungal Systems" has been created, and the Research Call was carried out together with the Avina Foundation. Furthermore, the cooperation with SATW in the area of biopolymers was established and a strategic collaboration has agreed for the Food 4.0 funding programme.

With all the activities, it is important not to forget the members' wishes. Based on the strategy that was developed in 2020, the focus in 2021 was on implementation. Within the framework of a large-scale member survey, we were able to find out what is important to our members and what we need to focus on further.

Our range of services needs to become more visible. The media partnership with "Lebensmittelindustrie" has proven to be very valuable for this. A new "corporate design" was created for our communication and all presentations were aligned with it. The website has been redesigned according to our new CI and our communication on social media intensified. The number of followers on LinkedIn tripled to 2204 in 2021 and we reach 3386 people in the newsletter. Our membership has increased to 173 and we have gained 32 new members in 2021.

Despite all that has been achieved, it is important to keep an eye on the upcoming challenges and to develop strategies for overcoming them. Therefore, the cooperation with the Avina Foundation has been intensified. In addition, further pillars are needed like e.g., an expansion of our involvement in EIT Food, EU projects and by obtaining funding at federal and cantonal levels.

Overall, we have managed to create a very solid basis in 2021 from which we can continue to drive our further activities to promote the innovation ecosystem in the agri-food sector. However, project-based funding schemes are not as attractive as it might be expected. Project based fundings do only cover actual costs and do not contribute to any structural and overhead costs. Therefore, it is important to keep a good balance between projects based fundings and general fundings. Currently only 30% of our budget is covered by membership fees, i.e., 70% of the budget is “third party funding” with always limited funding time (between 1 and 3 years).

Therefore 2022 will be an important year for Swiss Food Research. The further development and expansion of the "Swiss Innovation Eco-System" and new ways of financing is the core task for the future.

As a member you can support this throughout the connections you have (getting additional members, help identifying new fundings schemes, broaden the presence of the network) and thus making use of the chance that is offered to the agro-food segment. Only in a joined approach we can strengthen the Swiss Innovation-Eco System.

What happened in 2021 – More information in detail

Swiss Food Research is highly attractive - We welcome new members!

The importance of the network is recognised throughout the industry. We were able to welcome 32 new members and our membership has increased to 173 in 2021.

We gained established companies from the SME sector, numerous start-ups, and large companies (Lindt, Maestrani).

From the idea to the product:

Innovation groups generate new ideas and put them into practice

The innovation groups form the basis for generation of new research and development projects in the respective area. There are now 10 innovation groups active, and 11 meetings were held.

Active groups are: Grains & baked goods, insects, coffee, packaging, aquaculture, digitalization, Proteins4Future, Nonthermal preservation, Bioconversion and new Fungi and Fungal Systems.

NTN Innovation Booster

NTN Innovation Boosters powered by Innosuisse are initiatives that aim to spur innovation activities through concrete ideas development and testing. NTN Innovation Boosters foster a culture of collaborative innovation. Their activities are open to all Swiss actors who are interested. For the period 2021-2024 a total funding 21.3 million Swiss francs is budgeted to enhance 600 novel innovation ideas and 100 radical follow-up projects out of 18 NTN.

Swiss Food Research successfully joined forces with Cluster Food & Nutrition, funded the “Suisse Agro Food Leading House” which is now the managing organisation of the NTN Innovation Booster Swiss Food Ecosystems with the thematic focus on technology-based next-generation innovation in the field of Smart Nutrition, Biomass Valorization, Resource Efficiency, Circular Economy, Sustainable Packaging, and innovative business models.

Together we were managing the Innovation Booster, designing, and organizing its contents, and running 6 campaigns in which 68 proposals were submitted. 25 proposals were funded by means of the Innovation Booster. Several proposals were continued and supported by other sources.

The Innovation Booster is the funding scheme that supports creation and testing of ideas in an early stage and provides funding to all parties working on an idea.

Swiss Food Research Calls

Innovative ideas are the basis for innovations. To enable ideas to be tested at an early stage, Swiss Food Research promotes project ideas within the framework of Swiss Food Research Calls. In 2021 we started the open Call "Fungi Systems" supported by the Avina Stiftung. In the tender 2021, 11 calls were received. These were evaluated by a jury. A total of 6 proposals are supported.

Since 2013, Swiss Food Research has evaluated 125 projects with experts and funded 57 projects with a total of more than CHF 550,000 and 70% of the projects funded by Swiss Food Research were continued.

Events – Working & Networking

11 meetings were held with the different innovation groups. Some groups met twice, others only once. The groups bring companies and research together and an average of 30 participants per meeting can be expected.

The Thai Swiss Food Tech Forum took place during 2 days in April with up to 140 participants. The pitching of 13 Thai Start-ups presenting their innovative products was combined with keynotes, explaining important steps to consider when importing to Switzerland and food trends in Europe.

The third Agro-Food Innovation Forum took place in Kemptthal on 31 August 2021. An event organized jointly with the Kompetenznetzwerk Ernährungswirtschaft and Cluster Food Nutrition. The forum was a great success with 100 participants and 16 Start-ups pitching their innovative ideas.

Together with SVIAL and SGLWT the 2nd Future Food Symposium was held about resilient food system.

In addition to the events, Swiss Food Research published several articles on various topics in the relevant media.

Networking & Partnerships

Cooperation with EIT Food

EIT Food, established by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), is Europe's leading food innovation initiative, working to make the agro-food system more sustainable, healthy, and trusted. EIT Food is building an inclusive and innovative community of diverse food sector partners, to drive innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe. **Swiss Food Research** is partner of EIT Food providing mentoring, coaching, and education within multiple programs.

Cooperation with SATW

Swiss Food Research started a cooperation with SATW in the area of biopolymers to support the development of biobased plastics. Furthermore, a strategic collaboration has been agreed for the Food 4.0 funding programme. The Food 4.0 programme aims at supporting early-stage projects and idea testing and can also be combined with the Innovation Booster. Thus, the agro-food & nutrition segment is now well staffed with fundings for idea testing and development.

Cooperation with SVIAL

SVIAL is the Swiss professional association of food scientists and agronomists. It comprises 1700 members. The strategic cooperation between SFR and SVIAL has been established at the operational level and several joint events have been held such as the Agro Food Job dating and the Future Food Symposium.

Cooperation with other clusters

In the agro-food sector, there are three regional networks supported by SECO and the cantons:

- Kompetenznetzwerk Ernährungswirtschaft - Eastern Switzerland to Zurich Region
- Cluster Food & Nutrition - Region Fribourg, Bern, Wallis - driven by Fribourg
- Swiss Food Nutrition Valley

These networks have different focuses, some of which complement and some overlap with those of Swiss Food Research. This results in duplications and competitive situations that are not conducive to the economic interests of non-profit organisations.

Organization & Internal

Developing strategy further and putting it into action is core for growth and the transition to subsequent independence. The focus of Swiss Food Research is clearly on growth. In terms of personnel, Swiss Food Research was expanded by the appointment of Lucas Grob as Innovation Manager (1 FTE) and Corinne Stämpfli (0.6 FTE) as Communication Manager. Furthermore on October 3 students started to work for Swiss Food Research (0.3 FTE each)

Communication

In 2021 a new "corporate design" was created for our communication and all presentations were aligned with it, including Infographics showing the Services of Swiss Food Research. The website has been redesigned according to our new CI and our communication on social media was intensified.

Outlook & Future

The further development and expansion of the Innovation Eco System is the core task for the future and safeguards the raison d'être of Swiss Food Research by creating clear added value for all participants in the agro-food value chain.

The Innovation Eco System covers all stages of the innovation life cycle, starting from promotion of ideas to successful implementation in the market. The innovation lifecycle includes many dimensions and interrelationships that need to be considered.

A sustainably working innovation eco-system will drive the agro-food value chain forward. Building on what already exists and linking all elements together provides the basis for a strong eco-system.



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