

THE EUROPEAN FOOD INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (FITI) KICKS OFF

Today, some 45 representatives of both the public and private sector involved in the food chain gathered in Brussels to discuss the action plan and roadmap for year 1 of the Food Information Transparency Initiative (FITI), a project aimed at providing consumers with factual, honest and clear information about the food they consider buying.

The project idea was conceived in 2009 by the non-profit organization Orange House Partnership¹ (OHP) together with the Brussels based public affairs group Bureau Brussels², the Dutch ICT group Caesar Experts³ and the communications consultancy Schuttelaar & Partners⁴. Its development took until Summer 2011 and the initiative was formally presented on 18 November 2011 in Brussels⁵ in the presence of the European Commission's Director General of the Information Society and Media Directorate General, Mr Robert Madelin and several other leading individuals involved in the food chain.

Today's project kick-off meeting addressed details of the action plan and roadmap for the first year. The participants, gathered as Stakeholder Forum, discussed priorities and the best approach for a successful introduction in one year's time of the first project outcomes into the EU consumer market.

A major and most challenging component of the project is ensuring that the abundance of information provided is indeed factual and truthful, allowing the consumer to make a truly informed decision. To achieve this, the project involves scientists and technical experts in a balanced manner from the public sector (national authorities and institutes, international organisations, academia and non-governmental organisations) as well as the private sector (food producers and retailers). Agreements on criteria, definitions and descriptions of particular food aspects (such as origin of ingredients, quality, traceability and sustainability) will be made on the basis of consensus by all involved.

The second pillar of the project is the development of a personalized freely accessible software application, allowing the consumer access through his smart phone or scanning device in the shop to factual, comprehensible and truthful information, tailored to his preference for particular information (e.g. the presence of gluten or the origin of a particular ingredient such as palm oil). The prototype of this application (or app) was already successfully tested by the participants of the meeting in November last year.

The project is welcomed by the European Commission, European Parliament groups, by national authorities and consumer organisations. Food producers and food retailers have also expressed interest in project participation. The Chairman of the Project Management Team, Herman Koëter said: *"today we started a cooperation in the food sector that was never seen before: consumers, authorities and independent scientific and technical experts are sitting around the same table together with producers and retailers all aiming at providing consumers with really useful and straightforward information about the food they consider to buy"*.

¹ www.orangeOhouse.eu

² www.bureaubrussels.eu

³ www.caesar.nl

⁴ www.schuttelaar-partners.com

⁵ Full report at: [http://www.orange--house.eu/assets/fiti%20r%20rt\(2010\)6%201%20clean%20final.pdf](http://www.orange--house.eu/assets/fiti%20r%20rt(2010)6%201%20clean%20final.pdf)