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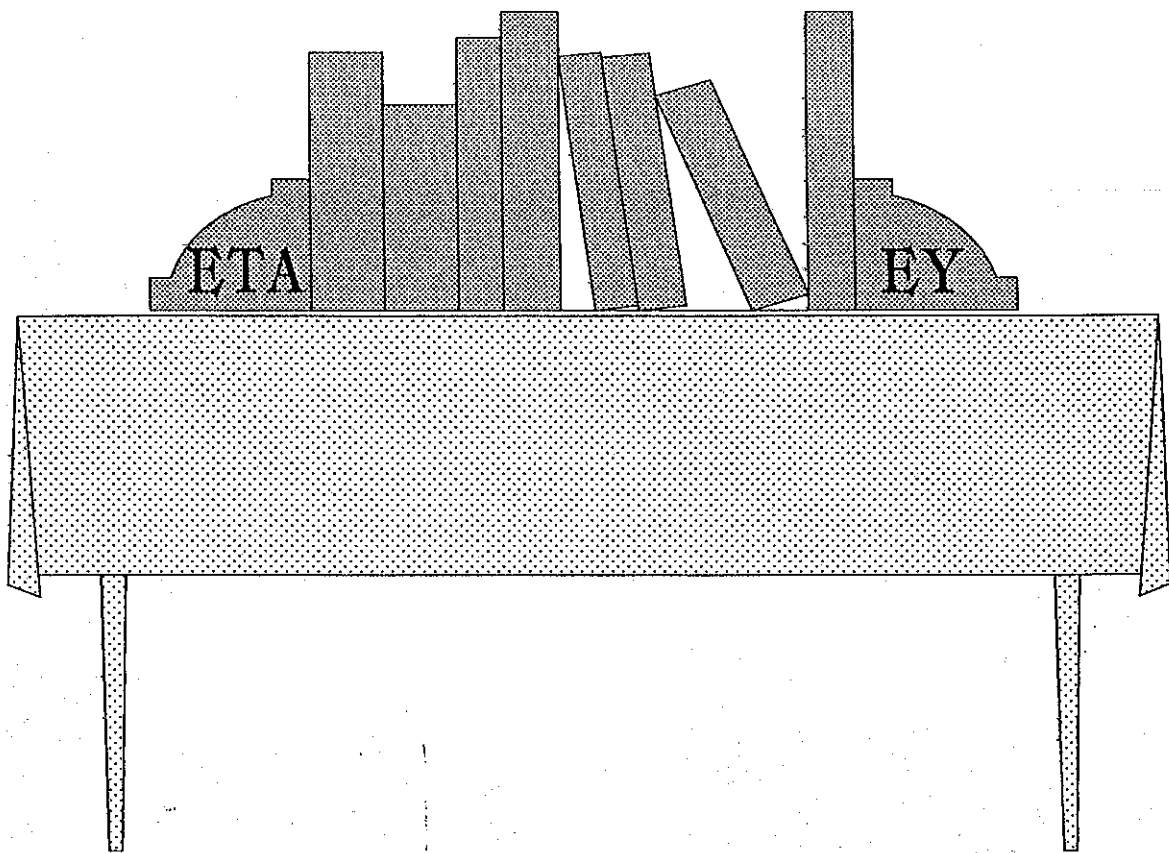
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EC FOOD RESEARCH PROGRAMMES: AN IRISH EXPERIENCE OF EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

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The overall research programme of the European Community (EC) is vast by any standards (see 1990 programme list, annex 1). The current mainstream food research programmes are FLAIR and AAIR (Agriculture and Agro Industry, including Fisheries) but there are many other programmes that can be considered as "support" programmes in a food research sense (e.g. SPRINT, VALUE, STRIDE, COMETT, BioTECHNOLOGY, etc.) in that food researches may be able to draw down funds or support from them. The first imperative, therefore, is to have a national information focus which alerts researches to the scope and opportunities available under EC food R and D programmes. The newly established EC Information Relay Centres in Member States will help to fulfil this requirement.

Funding and/or support may be "direct" or "indirect". The former refers to contractual agreements between the CEC and the researchers (or their organisations) on a project by project basis. The latter refers to EC funds to national governments which are then distributed at national level. For example, in Ireland a number of food R and D projects are ongoing under the Operational Programme for Rural Development which commits some of the so-called Structural Funds. These funds are given by the EC to develop infrastructure in peripheral regions, e.g. the STRIDE programme for the development of scientific infrastructure.

Increasingly EC food R and D projects are precompetitive (and/or prenormative) and transnational, with participation by industrial partners highly desirable if not

essential. Projects are usually Share-Cost or Concerted. Contracted research with cost sharing is the most common form of funding by the Commission in which it reimburses up to 50 % of the projects costs. This applies to companies and research institutes. For Universities or other non-commercial bodies the Commission usually reimburses 100 % of the marginal or additional costs only. Concerted Research is the name given to the activity by which the Commission draws together existing researchers in a common field without payment for research. The Commission will however pay the costs of coordination meetings, travel and secretariat. This mode of operation is most common in COST projects but is also used extensively in FLAIR and AAIR. It is argued that Concerted Research is the most beneficial of the two as it often spans scientific and technological disciplines and gives optimum synchronization of state-of-the-art in the field of study. There is increasing interest in EC programmes and the level of competition between proposals is very high. For example, over 1100 proposals were received in the second call for proposals to AAIR while about 200 of these were funded. Proposals must, therefore, be strong and scientifically innovative.

Benefits

The benefits of involvement in EC food R and D programmes are listed briefly under the headings national, institution, and researcher.

At national level: EC food R and D programmes are of immense benefit both to the research community and to industry. This is especially so in small peripheral

countries such as Ireland (population 3.5 million) where the number of food researchers is relatively small. Currently 21 of the 100 (approx) food researchers in Ireland from universities/institutes are involved in the ongoing FLAIR programme. A similar number of researchers have won food research contracts in excess of IR£6 million under the new AAIR programme. This level of participation gives a huge boost to the national food R and D effort not only in financial terms (thus enabling more research to be carried out) but also via the transnational collaboration and contacts (includes scientist exchange) arising from the projects. The examples above refer to the two main programmes where food research funds are being sourced.

The transfer of results and technology from the FLAIR and AAIR programmes to the food industry is greatly enhanced by the participation of industry as partners in the projects and also via the dissemination efforts of the researchers and of the FLAIR-FLOW EUROPE dissemination project. The support of the EC VALUE programme is available to help with the exploitation and commercialisation of the research results.

At institution level: The National Food Centre in Dublin is an example of participation by an institution in EC food R and D programmes. The Centre has 20 permanent and 8 contract researchers, and a support staff of 45 and carries out R, D, training and technical support for the Irish food industry both on a contract and on a public good basis. Benefits to The National Food Centre from participation in EC food R and D programmes are fourfold (a) increased research output; (b) access to R and D findings from transnational partners and colleagues; (c) upgrading of staff and research facilities via EC mobility programmes (e.g. research bursaries, scientist visits and exchanges) and infrastructural measures respective-

ly; (d) increased opportunity/support for technology transfer to the food industry and also for the training of food industry personnel. Current involvement by The National Food Centre staff (as contractors or sub contractors) in "direct" and "indirect" funded EC food R and D programmes both "mainstream" and "support" include: FLAIR (2 projects), VALUE (1 project), AAIR (5 projects), BCR (1 project), Operational Programme for Rural Development (5 projects); there is active participation in COMETT (visiting researchers), SPRINT (technology transfer), STRIDE (assistance with equipment purchase) and LEADER (pilot projects and feasibility studies for food companies in rural areas). There is also involvement with the so-called "Measure 6" of the Operational Programme for Rural Development which is a new R and D grant scheme for industry, including the food industry.

Similar examples of extensive participation can be cited for food researchers in University Colleges Cork and Dublin and in The National Dairy Products Research Centre in Fermoy, Co. Cork.

At researcher level: Irish food scientist have a long history of active participation in EC programmes both as contractors but also

as project coordinators and subprogramme chairmen. The consensus is that participation is generally very rewarding and the saying that one gets out of something what one puts in is an understatement in this context. Food scientists at The National Food Centre have been involved in a succession of food or food related EC research programmes including Agro-Food (1979-1988; intensive production vs quality), COST 90 (1976-1986; Physical Properties of Foods), COST 91 (1981-1989; Processing and Quality of Foods), FAST (1985-1986; Food and Health), FAR (1989-1991; fish technology) and currently FLAIR (1990-1993; food quality,

safety, wholesomeness) and AAIR (1991-1994; food processing, food quality and consumer aspects). This pattern of participation is repeated also in other Irish food R and D institutions. Collectively these programmes maintain the participating researchers and technologists at the forefront of international advances in food science and technology with consequent benefits for the Irish food industry.

Drawbacks

The benefits of participation in EC food R and D programmes far outweigh the drawbacks; however, there are some drawbacks. These include the time taken to prepare project proposals and to identify transnational partners, the failure rate for proposals submitted (80 % in AAIR), and the dilemma of how to balance EC funded research with other nationally or client funded research, development, training, and service activities.

Annexe 1

Source: EC Research Funding - a Guide for Applicants.

CEC, Directorate-General XII, 1990

Agriculture	85	Large-scale scientific facilities	107
AIM (Informatics in Medicine)	69	LINGUA (Foreign language teaching)	125
B.C.R. (Applied metrology)	77	MAST (Marine science)	99
BRIDGE (Biotechnology)	79	Medical and health research	53
BRITE/EURAM (Industrial technologies/advanced materials)	73	Medical research ECSC	132
CADDIA (Data exchange for the agricultural market)	141	MONITOR (Forecasting, analysis and evaluation)	109
COMETT II (Education and training)	124	NETT (Network environmental technology transfer)	136
Decommissioning of nuclear installations	89	RACE (Telecommunications)	63
DELTA (Informatics in education)	67	Radiation protection	57
Demonstration projects in the field of environment	126	Radioactive waste	87
Demonstration projects in the steel industry	128	Raw materials	75
DOSES (Statistics)	111	REWARD (Waste recycling): see Raw materials	75
DRIVE (Informatics in road safety)	65	SAST (Strategic analysis): see MONITOR	109
ECLAIR (Agro-Industrial technologies)	81	Scholarships	118
EPOCH (Climatology and natural hazards)	59	SCIENCE (Scientific cooperation)	103
ERASMUS II (Mobility of students)	123	Social research (ECSC)	133
ESPRIT II (Information technologies)	61	SPEAR (Research evaluation): see MONITOR	109
EURET (Transport)	71	SPES (Economic science)	105
EUOTRA (Machine translation)	113	SPRINT (Innovation and technology transfer)	135
FAR (Fisheries and aquaculture)	101	STAR (Telecommunications in regional development)	137
FAST (Forecasting and assessment): see MONITOR	109	STD (S & T for developing countries)	97
FLAIR (Food technologies)	83	STEP (Environmental protection)	59
FOREST (Forestry): see Raw materials	75	STRIDE (S & T for regional development)	138
Fusion	93	Technical coal research (ECSC)	130
Human genome analysis	55	Technical steel research (ECSC)	131
IMPACT (Information market policy)	140	TEDIS (Data interchange for commercial purposes)	142
INSIS (Interinstitutional Information system)	143	TELEMAN (Remote handling systems)	91
International scientific cooperation	120	THERMIE (New energy technologies)	127
JOULE (Non-nuclear energies)	5	VALOREN (Energy potential)	139
		VALUE (Dissemination of results)	115