



# COMFOCUS

Community on Food Consumer Science



## D2.8 List of Dissemination and dialogue activities and meetings to attract new users



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### 1. Introduction

This document has been developed as part of the COMFOCUS – Communities on Food Consumer Science - project, which has been granted funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme, under the Grant Agreement no. 101005259. The contents pertaining to the list of dissemination activities and events to attract new users corresponds to Deliverable 2.8 which is part of Work Package 2 (WP2) – Networking, communication, stakeholder engagement.

As part of the COMFOCUS main promotional strategy and positioning within the food consumer science community and also outside the community, WP2 aims to “foster networking, communication and dissemination, ensuring that the COMFOCUS new way of working will be known internally within the consortium, but mainly also outside the consortium”. The work package envisions that “this will be achieved through three sets of specific dissemination activities targeted at potential new users. There will be activities through summer schools and presence at the relevant conferences for academia and industry, through the promotion of joint harmonisation activities to food industry and technology developers, and through dissemination and communication activities at conferences and online sharing of best practice within the Consumer Science community”. Deliverable 2.8 is titled “List of Dissemination and Dialogue Activities and Meetings to Attract New Users” and pertains directly to the activities and actions carried out in Task 2.10.

Task 2.10 “aims to support broader dissemination beyond the pan-European consumer scientist community, addressing adjacent science domains. The COMFOCUS partners organise, and widely advertise, annual user meetings focusing on interaction between social and life science. In M6 a list of relevant stakeholders groups from different domains and dissemination opportunities will be identified (Task 2.1) taking into account the alignment with user meetings of diverse research infrastructures such as FNH-RI, ESS, SHARE, EFFoST, EuroFIR, Metrofood and user meetings from identified relevant national research infrastructures (e.g. in the Netherlands BBMRI Cluster, or Food Waste Knowledge Hub). Those user meetings are very productive in the acquisition of new users and for the dissemination of project results. In all the events considered pertinent, COMFOCUS partners will use the dissemination materials developed in Task 2.4”.

This document details all the activities and initiatives – including meetings, conferences, seminars, gatherings, workshops, as well as all digital and printable dissemination content produced and distributed throughout the duration of the project – carried out to directly or indirectly disseminate the COMFOCUS brand, guidelines and new way of working, with the intention of appealing to and attracting potential new users to the new COMFOCUS community, both within the already established food consumer science community, as well as from other adjacent scientific and industry communities of relevance and interest for the dissemination, collaboration, enlargement and continuation of the COMFOCUS project.

## 2. Objectives of the Task

Task 2.10 aims to create the conditions for a concise spread of the COMFOCUS ethos and guidelines beyond the European food consumer science community, mainly other adjacent social and life science domains that are relevant to the food consumer science research and knowledge production and interpretation. To carry out this task, a list of relevant stakeholders was identified (Task 2.1), and relevant dissemination materials were developed (Task 2.4). Throughout the course of the COMFOCUS project, a series of meetings, workshops, conferences, academic trainings, and seminars were held, across the COMFOCUS member institutes and at some international conferences. These events were specifically created for users within the FCS domain, but also for attracting new users outside the FCS scope – mainly from adjacent academic fields and from relevant adjacent industries to the food consumer science field. More specifically, these events were organised to attract them to the new way of conducting experiments and research that COMFOCUS offers. Several digital and printable dissemination materials were also produced, released and spread with the same goals.

Three key areas of interest have been identified in the context of promoting dissemination actions and activities with the purpose and intent of attracting new users to the food consumer science field, and specifically to the new COMFOCUS guidelines of working:

- Organization of trainings within the Academic Training programme (Deliverable 2.6 “Report on Academic Trainings of COMFOCUS”).
- Presence and dissemination activities at internal and external conferences for academia and industry.
- Joint harmonization activities to food industry and technology developers.

Thus, deliverable 2.8 enumerates and details all such actions and activities carried out throughout the COMFOCUS project, describing each of the activities and identifying in what sense each of them contributed to the aforementioned goals of Task 2.10.

Moreover, the success of this task can be evaluated by the number of activities carried out, the variability of the types of activities, the variability of audiences reached and by their success in penetrating transversal new audiences and capturing interested new users.

### 3. Gatherings and Meeting Activities

In this chapter, we presented a detailed report regarding all gathering and meeting activities – namely meetings, workshops, conferences, academic trainings, seminars and other related activities – where a clear intention of attracting new potential users to the COMFOCUS environment was envisioned or touched upon. Each activity is identified by title, venue and date, alongside a brief report on relevant conducted activities.

Alongside the project gatherings, we also integrated our activities with existing networks and infrastructures in the FCS field, such as ESN, E3S, EIT Food, and EUROFIR/FNS Cloud. In particular, we were able to establish valuable connections for the Stakeholder Forum of COMFOCUS, which allowed us to further explore collaboration opportunities and strengthen the project's presence within the broader community.

#### 3.1 Project Meetings

##### 3.1.1 COMFOCUS Kick-Off Meeting

**March 15, 17, 19; 2021 – Online**

The project kick-off meeting took place online on March 15th, 17th and 19th. The three-day meeting was attended by the COMFOCUS consortium led by Wageningen Research (WR).

The event marked the launch of the project and was an enthusiasm-generator for the starting COMFOCUS initiative, providing valuable information for all the partners and allowing them to meet and share ideas.

A plenary event titled “Setting the Objective”, led by Karin Zimmermann, set out, among other topics, the groundworks for the COMFOCUS dissemination and researcher-attracting methodology. The plenary “presented the main objective of COMFOCUS and this kick-off meeting. In a nutshell, these objectives are to celebrate the start of this project, to get acquainted with each other, to inform all participants about the project and to define our framework and determine our way of working together.”

##### 3.1.2 COMFOCUS Annual Meeting #1

**February 1–3, 2022 – Online**

The overall aim of the first COMFOCUS annual project meeting was twofold. First, the development of a shared, coherent vision on the results and outcomes of COMFOCUS, including the way the final collected data can become future-proof. Secondly, to get clarity on interlinkages and dependencies between Networking Activities (NA), Joint Research Activities (JRA) and Virtual and Transnational access (VA/TNA) of the project. Emphasis was also given to the organization of future events that could further disseminate the COMFOCUS guidelines across the broader scientific community.



### 3.1.3 COMFOCUS Face-to-Face Meeting

#### **June 13–14, 2022 – The Hague, Netherlands**

The first real-life, face-to-face COMFOCUS meeting took place in The Hague, Netherlands, and brought together the COMFOCUS community to meet each other in person and to strengthen the collaboration and interlinkages between work packages. The meeting was also useful to monitor applicants and further actions of the ongoing Open Call 1 and to get clarity on the upcoming Open Call 2. During the meeting the consortium could also count on the valuable presence of members of the International Advisory Board (IAB). During the face-to-face meeting, a Stakeholder Forum was installed. This was a great opportunity to connect with other players in the field (Corporate Sector, Governmental Organisations, Non-governmental organisations and Academic/Professional Bodies) where fruitful discussions arose. This interactive meeting was the starting point to create a lasting network of external stakeholders that would create a strong multi-sectoral forum for food consumer science.

### 3.1.4 COMFOCUS Annual Meeting #2

#### **February 9–10, 2023 – Porto, Portugal**

The overall goals of the second COMFOCUS annual meeting were “to make it happen” – to bring COMFOCUS beyond the tipping point and show “proof of principle” of a Food Consumer Science integrated data and research infrastructure, and to stimulate interlinking and cooperation between Networking Activities (NA), Joint Research Activities (JRA) and Virtual and Transnational access (VA/TNA). Besides the plenary meetings, the agenda of the event included several parallel work sessions, the Stakeholder Forum and the International Advisory Board (IAB) meeting. In the plenary session on Open Calls, the start of the application process has been announced, along with a guideline on the further applicants’ steps and information about the opportunities the COMFOCUS toolbox gives. During the interactive part of the session on communication and dissemination, participants had the opportunity to present their vision on how the future dissemination strategy steps should look like.

### 3.1.5 COMFOCUS Face-to-Face Meeting

Another face-to-face meeting with project management and work package leaders was held in Schiphol on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The meeting included discussions on the knowledge platform, library and discussion platform. Fruitful and informative discussions followed by a short speech by each work package leader.

At the meeting, every project member received a clear understanding of what is going to be done in the nearest future, namely:

- To have a clear and joined vision of the end point of COMFOCUS.

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- Create an overview of the promised goals and identify gaps, risks and activities to reach them.
- Create and stimulate interlinkages and cooperations between Networking Activities and Joint Research Activities resulting in concrete action points.

After the meeting, everyone understands the importance of having a clear vision on what is the project end point in 2025.

### 3.1.6 COMFOCUS Annual Meeting #3

#### February 27–28, 2024 – Ljubljana, Slovenia

Consortium members, IAB members and stakeholders gathered in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in the third COMFOCUS annual meeting, to share and provide updates about the status of the project after three years, and settle goals for the last year of the project. The main goals of the two-day meeting were to further “shape” the COMFOCUS community with a focus on sustainability and “self-propagation”, and to make plans for the future “after COMFOCUS”, including possible dissemination pathways to reach new users after the end of the project.

Stakeholder Forum and IAB (International Advisory Board) meetings also took place within the event. Within the project meeting, project members were updated on the status of open calls, where some TNA leaders shared their first experiments. Among many other topics, several discussions were also held on communication, dissemination and sustainability. “Life after COMFOCUS” was set to become the main theme for the upcoming year, so the participants were also adamant to highlight their ambitions regarding what is necessary to make sure that what was built continues, survives and thrives, captivating new potential researchers along the way.

### 3.1.7 COMFOCUS Final Conference Meeting

#### February 13, 2025 – Wageningen, Netherlands

The Final COMFOCUS Conference took place in Wageningen, the Netherlands, on February 13th, 2025. The event marked participation of eighty-two people, including consortium members, stakeholders and IAB members, project fellows and other interested researchers in the food consumer science field. Participants represented different European countries, including Poland, Chechia, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Netherlands, Germany, Kosovo, Norway.

The event was held under the slogan 'Advancing Open Science in the Food Consumer Science Field' and aimed to share the final results of the project with the audience. A series of engaging and insightful sessions, alongside demonstrations of emerging technologies were held during the event.

The conference aimed at presenting the project's achievements to the audience and reviewing its journey over the four years since its inception. We also highlighted our goal to advance the FCS field beyond its

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current fragmentation and our aim to make the “new way of working” developed within COMFOCUS a model for the field, incorporating three levels of integration: institutional, social and data integration.

To conclude the event, a panel discussion was organised to gather reflections on the new way of working from various perspectives. This was an excellent opportunity for participants to share their insights on COMFOCUS's achievements and the value it brings to the field of FCS.

### 3.1.8 COMFOCUS Final Project Meeting

#### **February 14, 2025 – Wageningen, Netherlands**

The Final Project Meeting of COMFOCUS was held in Wageningen, Netherlands on February 14th, 2025, and aimed to conclude smoothly with reflection on the Final COMFOCUS Conference, previously held on February 13th and to summarize the results of the interviews, conducted with the project partners on finding the best way to exploit the main Key Exploitable Results (KERs). This was followed by a practical session with all consortium members to define concrete actions for the sustainability of the three main KERs. In this session, project partners could work in groups and find some practical solutions to sustain the main results defined within the project.

In the meeting, consortium members received valuable updates and defined concrete actions to continue disseminating the project's developments and achievements. These actions will also support the future use of these outcomes.

## 3.2 Workshops

### 3.2.1 “Harmonizing Self-Report FCS Approaches”

#### **January 11, 2022 – Online**

This first online workshop was primarily concerned about gathering feedback from the COMFOCUS community on the priorities for the remaining work in harmonising self-report measures at the European level, namely in surveys and questionnaires studying factors related to food-choices and personal healthy food habits. The purpose of those joint efforts is to create comparable data across different studies – from different regions, cultures and languages across Europe – and build a foundational base of protocols that will be applied in different survey methods, with a special emphasis on questionnaire-based studies.

### 3.2.2 “Measurement Tools for Food Consumer Science”

#### **May 19, 2022 – Online**

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This online workshop was organized within the Measuring Behavior Conference – the stage for the latest inventions, prototypes and techniques in behavioral research. The workshop set out to target technology developers directly involved and adjacent to the food consumer science and industry. Its aim was to properly define and identify technologies that are not yet utilized (or are underutilized) in the institutional infrastructures of consumer science, and to develop joint understanding of these new and emerging technologies. As such, insights for technology developers about instruments and emerging technology required by the FCS community were provided. The effect of such technologies on harmonisation of measurements and protocols and guidelines on FAIR and RRI design and data management was also discussed.

### 3.2.3 Workshops “Sharing Best Practices Among Food Consumer Science Experts”

29 Mar 2022 - Nordic countries (Denmark) (was held online)

18 Oct 2022 – Barcelona, Spain

April 19, 2023 – Nitra, Slovakia

April 25, 2023 – Taastrup, Denmark

June 21, 2023 – Girona, Spain

16 May 2024 - High Tatras, Slovakia

These six roundtable workshops took place in three countries: Slovakia, Denmark and Spain and gathered 153 participants in total. The aim of the six events was to gain insight regarding the future approach to the COMFOCUS project, and to get input to alternative ways to manage the project going forward, especially taking into consideration the dissemination targets and actions regarding the future of the project, and the acquisition of new researchers. Also, the aim was to learn whether the harmonised protocols and measures currently set up would be helpful in participants’ current and future research. The project approach was shortly introduced by the project members during the meetings. Discussions were essentially devoted to harmonisation of measures and protocols and also challenges in the COMFOCUS approach. Participants discussed data protection rules across countries. They also talked about the two main components of the harmonisation vision. The COMFOCUS community was seen as relevant and the need to communicate and disseminate the mission and goals of COMFOCUS for the food science community was emphasized and further discussed. It was addressed how mentoring could be an option to spread the COMFOCUS ethos and focus on data sharing, promoting the collaborative research mindset. The idea was raised that this could be included as a part of PhD training – “COMFOCUS Academy”, in order to get new fellows and further spread the COMFOCUS strategy, even beyond Europe, to further integrate FCS data and methodologies.

### 3.2.4 “Enabling Future-Proof Food Consumer Science: The Role of BIG(ger) Data from Interlinking Our Efforts”

#### **June 13, 2023 – Prague, Czech Republic**

The workshop was held as part of the pre-conference program of the International Food Marketing Research symposium (Prague). Its main goal was to further discuss the harmonization of measures and protocols in the food consumer science community (and specifically within the COMFOCUS fellow core) and its impact on research quality and creativity. The agenda of the workshop included three brief presentations and group discussions. A specific emphasis was on ensuring cross-cultural comparability and interlinking of data. Another topic for discussion was cultural and other biases in the use of harmonized measures and protocols in FCS. The project members also emphasized the importance of considering these biases and their impact on research outcomes when implementing harmonization efforts. The meeting concluded with a recognition of the relevance and importance of harmonization in the field of food consumer science, and in particular its role on the overall dissemination of the field. However, the participants emphasized the need for flexibility and consideration of evolving concepts, cultural differences, and sub-cultural variations in order to ensure that measures remain relevant and reflective of current trends and perspectives.

### 3.2.5 COMFOCUS at the Integrated Food Ontology Workshop

#### **July 15, 2024 – Enschede, Netherlands**

COMFOCUS was present at the Integrated Food Ontology Workshop (IFOW) 2024, held in Enschede, Netherlands. Joep Tummers presented and disseminated insights from the COMFOCUS Project, as part of the "Farm to Fork Food System Representation". The main focus of the presentation was the ontology created in the COMFOCUS project for food consumer science, and the way data harmonisation impacts the future of the field. The workshop, part of the Formal Ontologies in Information Systems (FOIS) conference, brought together leading experts on ontologies to explore innovative approaches on this topic, including the role of AI and Large Language Models in enhancing food data systems. The COMFOCUS ontology was met with great enthusiasm, and valuable feedback was received from the audience to elevate the project to a higher level. This positive reception underscores the project's potential impact on advancing food consumer science ontology.

### 3.2.6 Food Convergence Innovation – Design and Capacity Building Workshop

#### **July 24, 2024 – Amsterdam, Netherlands**

The main topic of this workshop was on advancing and further envisioning the COMFOCUS on the food consumer science ontology and individual food choice and behavioral changes, within Food Convergence

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Innovation (FCI) capabilities. Joep Tummers (Wageningen Economic Research) presented insights of the COMFOCUS ontology, which was further discussed with several other experts in the field.

The workshop was split into three blocks: ontology technology, ontology governance, and use of ontology for Food Consumer Science research, experimentation and practice. The “Life after COMFOCUS” concept was also discussed and further conceptualized, particularly regarding the future dissemination mechanisms of the ontology, namely ontology exploitation aspects after the end of the project.

### 3.3 Appearances at external conferences

#### 3.3.1 METROFOOD-PP Final Conference

**May 19, 2022 – Bucharest, Romania**

The COMFOCUS initiative was present at the METROFOOD-PP Final Conference – Boosting Research and Joint Cooperation: An Agrifood System Snapshot, held at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest. The COMFOCUS team, led by the COMFOCUS project coordinator Machiel Renders, had their insights presented during a roundtable discussion to the audience of the final event, at a panel discussion titled “Agrifood system challenges and stakeholder needs”. The Conference gathered representatives of the scientific community and the relevant stakeholders of the agricultural and food systems to discuss the main related challenges (with regards to topics such as food quality and safety, food system traceability and transparency, the route to digitalization for better system integration, circular bioeconomy, sustainability and resilience). The conference was a valuable opportunity to introduce the COMFOCUS way of working to a broader, receptive community, namely, to discuss the relevance of boosting research, cooperation, innovation, and stakeholder engagement in support to the food consumer science sector.

#### 3.3.2 IV National Congress of the Spanish Association of Sensory Analysis

##### Professionals

**June 6–8, 2022 – Logroño (La Rioja), Spain**

The IV National Congress of the Spanish Association of Sensory Analysis Professionals (AEPAS) took place at the RiojaForum (Logroño), organized by the Spanish Institute of Grapevine and Wine Sciences (CSIC-UR-GR) and the CTIC-CITA Technology Centre. The AEPAS Congress is a biennial event, with this edition addressing the latest advances, challenges, and the future of research in the field of sensory and consumer sciences, with a specific focus on understanding product perception in the context of the most relevant industry challenges: market globalization, development of healthier foods, industry sustainability, and the creation of an industrial system, particularly in the agrifood sector, that is connected to the consumer. To achieve this, a program has been designed featuring four sections: advances in the development of sensory techniques; understanding

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the consumer experience regarding perception and expectations; chemical-sensory perception understanding regarding sensory signals in complex systems; and promoting healthy eating by developing new products and refining the understanding of consumer response. Each section included plenary lectures and oral presentations selected by the Scientific Committee. Three workshops were held regarding agile management of tasting sessions, dysphagia in the supermarket, and quality control in the food product sector.

The contribution of COMFOCUS in this conference was assured by the presence of COMFOCUS members from the Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology (IRTA), Spain, with the goal of promoting the COMFOCUS strategy on the European markets and to support sensory analysis-related events, in the hope to meet new potential users in the Spanish community of Sensory Science experts, and promoting interactions with technology developers specifically involved in the food consumer science field.

### 3.3.3 “Farm to Fork: Sustainable Production & Consumption in Public Canteens”

#### September 12, 2022 – Online

The "Farm to Fork: Sustainable Production & Consumption in Public Canteens" Summer School, organized by EIT Food with the RIS Inspire Programme, was a three-week online program designed to provide participants with insights into sustainable food production and consumption, particularly within public canteens. The activity was organized by Matteo Vittuari and Giovanni Dinelli (University of Bologna) in partnership with the University of Turin and the Aarhus University. The course was open to Bachelor, M.Sc., and Ph.D. students, as well as graduates and professionals interested in nutrition and food. Participants chose to focus on one of three key topics: local and organic products, zero waste, or alternative proteins. Through a combination of live lectures, offline materials, and team projects, attendees co-developed innovative ideas for sustainable public canteens, culminating in a pitch contest. Overall, the programme included a total of 60 hours of study (online, offline and teamwork variants), and was focused on Southern and Eastern European countries to address sustainable production and consumption, in the context of the major nutritional challenges addressed within the European Farm-to-Fork strategy. The school emphasized entrepreneurial thinking and practical strategies to promote healthier, more sustainable lifestyles, aligning with the COMFOCUS dissemination and promotion strategies.

### 3.3.4 EuroSense 2022

#### September 13–16, 2022 – Turku, Finland

The European Sensory Science Society (E3S) organises EuroSense (European Conference on Sensory and Consumer Research) biennially, in collaboration with Elsevier. The 10<sup>th</sup> edition was organized by the ATJ Sensory Science Division of the Finnish Society of Food Science and Technology. EuroSense is a successful event, gathering sensory and consumer researchers, both academics and from industry, from all over the

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world. The meeting is a unique opportunity for discovering the latest innovations in the field and for networking, as well as meeting up with colleagues and friends in a relaxed atmosphere.

The topic of the 2022 conference was ‘A Sense of Earth’, with a specific attention to innovative approaches to study sensory perception in relation to preference, choice, and other types of behaviour from a global perspective, with the goal to build a scientific program considering emerging challenges, the latest knowledge, and out-of-the-box ideas in both fundamental and applied sensory and consumer science. The conference included food and other applications where the study of the senses plays a key role.

COMFOCUS consortium was represented by its members Mari Sandell (University of Helsinki and University of Turku, Finland), who chaired the event and scientific coordinator of the project Hans van Trijp (Wageningen University & Research), who gave a presentation titled “How could the field of Food Consumer Science reinvent itself to truly be the scientific data rich discipline to support public food policy and private food strategy in understanding and bringing about the necessary transitions in the areas of healthy and sustainable food consumption”?

This conference provided a great opportunity for COMFOCUS to raise its profile, explore collaborative opportunities, and connect with potential new users who could benefit from the project's impact on the FCS field.

### 3.3.5 Pangborn Conference 2023

#### **August 20–24, 2023 – Nantes, France**

The Pangborn Sensory Science Symposium is a leading international biennial conference dedicated to sensory and consumer science. It brings together researchers, industry professionals, and academics to explore the latest advancements and trends in understanding sensory perception, consumer behaviour, and product development. The 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the symposium featured keynote lectures, workshops, and scientific presentations on topics like sensory analysis, food and beverage innovation, and consumer preferences.

COMFOCUS was present at the conference through several members of Consortium Partners. The conference hosted over 1000 participants from academia and food industry across Europe and the U.S., and COMFOCUS-related food consumer science topics such as the harmonisation of self-report measures, the advent of new technologies in aid of psychophysiological experiments and measures, but also discussions on food technology, food design, the eating process and behavioural nutrition. COMFOCUS consortium member Dr. Hans van Trijp was invited to be panel member in one of the sessions to discuss the issue of the risks of fragmentation within the FCS field with the audience. The workshop session called “What is Sensory and Consumer Science? – An evolving field (still) in need of a definition” was organised and moderated by Herb



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Meiselman, Sara Jaeger and Davide Giacalone, with Paula Varela (NOFIMA), Richard Popper (P&K Research) and Hans van Trijp (Wageningen University & Research) as panel members.

### 3.3.6 European Nutrition Conference 2023

#### **November 14–17, 2023 – Belgrade, Serbia**

The European Nutrition Conference is a four-yearly event organized by the Federation of European Nutrition Societies (FENS) and one of its national members. The 14<sup>th</sup> edition was held at the Sava Center (Belgrade, Serbia). The conference theme was "Food, Nutrition and Health: Translating science into practice," focusing on bridging the gap between scientific research and practical applications in nutrition. The program featured keynote lectures, symposia, workshops, and interactive sessions covering topics such as nutrition across the life course, metabolism and chronic diseases, personalized nutrition, and the role of nutrition in sustainability. The event provided a platform for researchers, practitioners, and industry professionals to discuss the latest advancements and challenges in the field of nutrition.

In the workshop "Why We Eat What We Eat: Better Understanding of Healthy Eating Patterns in Practice", consortium members Ellen van Kleef, Lada Timotijevic and Harold Bult and participants outside the project, were engaged in discussions related to harmonisation of self-report measures and its impact on research quality. They also discussed the principles of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) and Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI). These principles are the basis for building our community, and key to capturing new users into further adopting and spreading the COMFOCUS guidelines. The workshop concluded with a brief plenary discussion, allowing participants to share insights and expertise.

### 3.3.7 EuroSense 2024

#### **September 8–11, 2024 – Dublin, Ireland**

The 11th European Conference on Sensory and Consumer Research (EuroSense) 2024, themed "A Sense of Global Culture," took place in September 2024, at the Royal Dublin Society in Dublin, Ireland, organized by the European Sensory Society (E3S) in collaboration with Sensory Food Network Ireland. This biennial event gathered sensory and consumer researchers from academia and industry to discuss innovative approaches in sensory perception and consumer behaviour. The conference featured keynote lectures, workshops and interactive sessions, providing a platform for networking and sharing the latest advancements in the FCS field. In the workshop titled "Advancing the field and practice of food consumer science", presented by COMFOCUS consortium members Ireen Raaijmakers, Liisa Lahteenmaki, Elena Horska, Jakub Bercik and member of the Stakeholder Forum Sara Spinelli, some of the COMFOCUS guidelines and way of working were presented and systematized, with the goal of spreading the ethos of harmonisation practices and ensuring potential new users were made aware of and informed about the project.

### 3.4 Academic Trainings

The COMFOCUS Academic Trainings played a crucial role in attracting new users and fostering collaborative opportunities by covering a wide range of FCS-related topics, encouraging users to explore these insights in greater depth. This programme advanced understanding of emerging needs in FCS and promoted awareness of sustainability, health, and ethical considerations in the field. Below, we present some results from the trainings held in the third and fourth years of the project (for more detailed information, please refer to Deliverable 2.6 “Report on Academic Trainings of COMFOCUS”).

#### 3.4.1 Academic Training online

The first online Academic Training was held on November 20, 2023, with the goal of introducing the COMFOCUS approach and providing participants with valuable insights from the food consumer science (FCS) field. Thirty-five participants attended it, including the COMFOCUS Open Call 2 fellows, stakeholders, and members of the International Advisory Board (IAB). Lecturers from five COMFOCUS institutions—Aarhus University, University of Trento, University of Bologna, University of Turku, and Wageningen University & Research delivered presentations on various aspects of food consumer science, including an introduction to the COMFOCUS way of thinking. The training also covered the following topics: harmonized psycho-social and psychophysiological measures, explicit and implicit measures, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies in food consumer science, and individual differences in consumer sensory perception.

Through the presentations, we touched upon interesting topics, highlighting also the importance of advancing the FCS field beyond its level of fragmentation.

After the training, participants were provided with a questionnaire to offer feedback on their experiences and suggest ideas for future training.

#### 3.4.2 Academic Training Ljubljana

##### **February 29, 2024 – Ljubljana, Slovenia**

On February 29th, COMFOCUS held an Academic Training in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and welcomed its fellows, who came to the event specifically to learn from the project members and share experiences with other fellows. The Academic Training program aimed at demonstrating and disseminating harmonised measurements, protocols, data sets and to study best practices in the field of food consumer science. A special session was led by two International Advisory Board (IAB) members Damion Dooley and Laurette Dube, who passionately lectured about community building within and across scientific fields and the role of ontologies. Javier de la Cueva discussed ethics in consumer research and data use: “Data is never neutral, it is a way of making politics. Therefore, we have to be very aware of the ethical, social and political effects involved in data

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collection, data management and data dissemination”. Hans van Trijp raised important aspects on processing data for optimal FAIR data use. Luis Guerrero and Alejandra Bermudez from Consumer Behavior Lab (Girona, Spain) gave a lecture on methodological advances in immersive technology in food consumer science. Together with Clara Mehlhose (University of Göttingen) and Mari Sandell (University of Turku), they led an interactive session with the opportunity to test emerging technologies that are used in the COMFOCUS research infrastructures, particularly, they could see how the virtual reality approaches work in real life. Participants could also work in groups in a community building session, where they first presented their scientific posters to each other and then reflected on what they learn from cooperation with the project and how they personally could contribute to COMFOCUS.

### 3.4.3 Academic Training Bologna

#### **October 10, 2024 – Bologna, Italy**

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, COMFOCUS had its second face-to-face Academic Training in Bologna, Italy. It was hosted by the Department of Agrifood Sciences and Technologies of the University of Bologna. The training started with the welcoming word from Dr. Matteo Vittuari (University of Bologna), who was happy to greet the COMFOCUS fellows, Ph.D. and M.Sc. students, COMFOCUS consortium members and a member of International Advisory Board (IAB) members in the premises of the University of Bologna.

Hans van Trijp (Wageningen University & Research) started the training with his presentation on the future of COMFOCUS – project ambition and vision. In his presentation, he discussed how the food consumer science field can face challenges in the modern world, identifying a strong worldwide need to change diets to prevent diseases, climate change and environmental harm. A major transition is required in such turbulent times for all actors in the entire food system, including understanding consumers and changing their behaviour.

IAB member Sylvain Delplanque (Swiss Center for Affective Sciences) presented his investigation on the properties of fragrances in humans and how smells influence consumer choices. Philip Dean from the University of Surrey presented the EEG approaches, in particular, he gave an interesting lecture on the opportunities of EEG, including the COMFOCUS context. Fellows had the opportunity to present scientific posters based on their FCS research to other and participants in a poster session, which was very interactive and highlighted the need for knowledge sharing.

All participants had an incredible possibility to verify their uncertainties in the insightful Q&A session on the specifics of food consumer science. In the end, participants of the event had a session on sustainability of COMFOCUS and were proposed to look at the main Key Exploitable Results (KERs) and the main actions to be taken to maintain the project developments and activities after its end. It was a productive and dynamic event

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with lots of insights and interesting dialogs that will surely help us to foster the COMFOCUS approach and to advance the food consumer science field.

### 3.4.4 Academic Training Wageningen

The Academic Training programme concluded with its final gathering at the Final COMFOCUS Conference, which took place in Wageningen, the Netherlands, on February 13th, 2025. The event marked participation of eighty-two people, including consortium members, stakeholders and IAB members, project fellows and other researchers in the food consumer science field. The project fellows represented different European countries, including Poland, Chechia, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Netherlands, Germany, Kosovo, Norway.

The event was held under the slogan 'Advancing Open Science in the Food Consumer Science Field' and aimed to share the final results of the project with the audience. It concluded smoothly with a series of engaging and insightful sessions, alongside demonstrations of emerging technologies.

In the training, we presented the project's achievements to the audience and reviewed its journey over the four years since its inception. We highlighted our goal to advance the FCS field beyond its current fragmentation and our aim to make the “new way of working” developed within COMFOCUS a model for the field, incorporating three levels of integration: institutional collaboration – for promoting access to facilities and facilitating staff exchanges to optimize resource utilization and advance the field; social integration – for building a network of FCS researchers that is more inclusive, offering equal opportunities to early-career researchers, regardless of their location; data infrastructure – for adopting FAIR data and RRI principles to ensure that data are harmonized for interoperability and reusability.

In conclusion, we organized a panel discussion to gather reflections on the new way of working from various perspectives. This was an excellent opportunity for participants to share their insights on COMFOCUS's achievements and the value it brings to the field of FCS.

## 3.5 Seminars

### 3.5.1 Online Seminar Series

#### **March 7, 2024 to November 28, 2024 – Online**

COMFOCUS organized a series of online seminar sessions to enhance consumer research exchange featuring work from fellows across Europe, aimed at enhancing our fellows' studies within a supportive environment. In these sessions, fellows had the opportunity to present their studies and receive feedback from other fellows, but also consortium, IAB members and stakeholders on their approach. With this programme, COMFOCUS also aimed to let fellows get in touch with each other and share their research findings.

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During the year 2024, we organised twelve Seminar Series sessions with fellows and covered different topics, such as “Behind consumers’ words: The case of pork belly varieties in supermarkets”, “Duality in attitudes: The Influence of Consumer Materialism and Pro-Environmentalism on Green Food Choices”, “Threat to Dietary Autonomy and Consumer Satisfaction with Sustainable Food Choices” etc.

This knowledge exchange helped us to maintain a dialogue between research fellows, consortium members, stakeholders and IAB members and to widen impact of the studies conducted at the COMFOCUS research institutions.

### 3.6 Open Call Activities

The Open Calls #1 and #2 were the main vehicle for the COMFOCUS project to acquire new users as part of the starting community in food consumer science. For this, a series of dissemination activities were put in motion in order to properly organize the recruiting actions, and to promote them in such a way that they could reach the widest possible audience of potential new members from within the FCS and adjacent research fields.

Succinctly, the following strategies, approaches and actions were carried out for both Open Call events:

- **Direct Marketing** – Potential new users – mainly MSc and PhD students – were directly contacted and invited to participate in the Open Calls. These contacts were carefully chosen based on existing relevant academic networks provided by, but not limited to, the COMFOCUS consortium members
- **Website Announcements** – A dedicated section of the official COMFOCUS website was developed to be easily seen and searchable for the wider community.
- **Social Media** – A series of social media posts were developed and spread about the Open Call launches and to announce related events, encouraging potential new users to apply. The posts were shared across LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with an overall average of 231 impressions per post.
- **E-mail Announcements and Newsletters** – E-mail announcements and adjacent newsletters were produced and spread across carefully curated COMFOCUS mailing lists regarding the Open Call launches, and consortium members were asked to further spread the information via their own personal and social networks of researchers.
- **Workshops and Information Sessions** – Several events were organised to promote the Open Calls, including online workshops and clarification sessions. In total, 12 different events were organised, some of which included as part of adjacent conferences and congresses, in order to take advantage of an already established audience and further reach new potential members.

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- **Research Gate Platform** – This platform was chosen for its close ties to the scientific community, with a presence of around 25 million researchers. A promotional campaign was launched ahead of both Open Call launches, garnering an average of more than 38,000 views each.

The detailed list of activities carried out to envision, organize, promote and follow through with the Open Call events can be consulted in the document pertaining to Deliverable 3.2.

## 4. Digital and Printable Dissemination

### 4.1 COMFOCUS Website

The official COMFOCUS website, hosted at [www.comfocus.eu](http://www.comfocus.eu), served as the central hub for the dissemination of all pertinent information regarding the project, including general information about the goals and mission, dissemination of news and events, as well as general contact information. Moreover, the website was estimated to be the go-to platform for most COMFOCUS members and fellows – who were already involved or familiar with the project – to share with users outside the project, making it one of the most versatile dissemination tools that were developed.

### 4.2 Promotional Videos

At the early stages of the project, the COMFOCUS team created a short and informative video to convey the general idea of the project, the issues it identified within the FCS research community and the way it proposed to tackle them. The video was carefully made so that it could appeal equally to research fellows and the general public alike, in order for it to become an easy-to-digest information spreading tool.

We developed a series of videos for the project Transnational Access Infrastructures (TNAs) – the project partners' institutions across Europe opening their doors for research fellows for conducting research using different emerging technologies. With these videos, we wanted to introduce research institutions to fellows, but also to encourage them to participate in Open Call 2.

A similar, equally “light” but informative final promotional video was produced at the end stage of the project. The video summarized all COMFOCUS activities, addressing the issues that were tackled, and proposing new ideas to keep the COMFOCUS guidelines and ideas going beyond the duration of the project itself.

All videos were hosted at the COMFOCUS website and spread through all the adjacent communication channels whenever possible and pertinent.

COMFOCUS has also launched the development of three short videos about the main project Key Exploitable Results (KERs) in order to share our main achievements and things that we would like to sustain after the project end. These videos will be developed within the project timeline and will be disseminated through social media.

### 4.3 Social Media

The COMFOCUS team was very active in social media platforms to promote the project. Social media is, indeed, one of the most powerful ways to reach wider, diversified audiences. Social media accounts in Facebook, LinkedIn, X (former Twitter) and YouTube were established and actively managed throughout the duration of

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the project, spreading new events as they were planned and developing, fostering contacts to a wider number of potential new users.

Throughout the project, we developed 90 posts promoting the COMFOCUS results and sharing information about upcoming and held events. We gained more than 2900 followers in all social media.

### 4.4 Newsletter

COMFOCUS kept audiences up to speed by developing and disseminating periodical newsletters throughout the course of the project. From September 2021 to December 2024, 10 newsletters were produced, alongside 1 press release. The newsletters and press release covered a variety of topics regarding COMFOCUS activities, including updates on workshops, conferences, seminars, Open Call launches and other events that were planned or had recently concluded. The newsletters were uploaded to the COMFOCUS website and spread on official social media accounts and through selected mailing lists.

### 4.5 Printable Dissemination Materials

Throughout the project, several COMFOCUS-branded printable promotional materials and merchandising were created to accompany and be distributed throughout relevant physical events, such as conferences, congresses and related meeting events. The merchandising materials included brochures, flyers, posters, banners, bags, pens, notebooks, backpacks and power banks.

These dissemination materials had a great impact throughout the project and helped us to share the main COMFOCUS principles and vision, and also to disseminate information about Open Calls engaging researchers to apply and get access to virtual and physical infrastructures. A set of flyers were also developed to share information about the main KERs of the project, particularly, they were developed to disseminate our main results – Institutional Community of New Way of Working, the Toolbox, and Harmonised Measures and Protocols. These particular flyers were shared with the participants of the Final COMFOCUS Conference and received a significant impact.

### 4.6 Research Publications

Research publications are likely the most powerful way to reach new users in the academic field and promote the new COMFOCUS harmonised way of working within their own communities. Below are some of the academic papers produced and published within the COMFOCUS consortium and/or under COMFOCUS funding:

Ispirova, G.; Cenikj, G.; Ogrinc, M.; Valenčič, E.; Stojanov, R.; Korošec, P.; Cavalli, E.; Koroušič Seljak, B.; Eftimov, T. CafeteriaFCD Corpus: Food Consumption Data Annotated with Regard to Different Food Semantic Resources. *Foods* **2022**, *11*, 2684. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11172684>



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Van Trijp, H.C.M. Higher level data integration: A new reality for sensory and consumer research? *Sci. Talks* **2023**, 5, 100156. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sctalk.2023.100156>

Valenčič, E.; Koroušić Seljak, B.; Bucher, T.; Collins, C.E.; Beckett, E. How to Nudge a Modern Consumer towards Healthier Food Choices. *Proceedings* **2023**, 91, 248. <https://doi.org/10.3390/proceedings2023091248>

Bermúdez, A.; Claret, A.; Guerrero, L. Harmonisation of Context Based Emerging Research Approaches in Food Consumer Science. *15th Pangborn Sensory Science Symposium - Meeting New Challenges in a Changing World* **2023**

Valenčič, E.; Beckett, E.; Collins, C.E.; Koroušić Seljak, B.; Bucher, T. SnackTrack—An App-Based Tool to Assess the Influence of Digital and Physical Environments on Snack Choice. *Nutrients* **2023**, 15, 349. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15020349>

van Kleef, E.; Reinders, M.; Horská, E.; Seljak, B.K.; Lähteenmäki, L.; Timotijevic, L.; van Trijp, H. Advancing Food Consumer Science to Facilitate Health and Sustainability Transitions: Bridging Complexity, Collaboration, and Ensuring FAIR Data. *Proceedings* **2023**, 91, 20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/proceedings2023091020>

Berčík, J., Gálová, J., Rusková, A., Predanócyová, K., Horská, E., & Tkáč, F. The influence of front-of-pack labelling on consumer decision-making: a comprehensive study using electroencephalography and FaceReader. *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition* **2024**, 75, 911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637486.2024.2420269>

Mohebati, L.; Iori, E.; Haugaard, M.; Stancu, V.; de la Cueva, J.; Rovný, P.; Jansto, E.; Mehlhose, C.; Schäfer, A.; Weiß, I.; et al. European Perspectives on Public Benefit in Relation to Food: Insights from a Serious Game Approach. *Sustainability* **2024**, 16, 9559. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16219559>

Berčík, J.; Vietoris, V.; Korčok, M.; Rusková, A.; Durec, J.; Neomániová, K.; Organoleptic Properties and Neuroimaging Response of the Perception of Edible Gels. *Heliyon* **2025**, 11, 41649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e41649>

## 5. Conclusions

To appeal and capture the attention of potential new users to the new, harmonised COMFOCUS way of working in food consumer science, several dissemination actions were carried out across different communication means, both digital and physical, with a concrete objective in mind – to maximize the exposure of COMFOCUS to the widest possible audience from academia, industry and the public.

To achieve this, COMFOCUS organised workshops, conferences, summer schools, seminars and related events, and assured appearances in strategic, high turnout conferences and congresses specialised in the food consumer science and related fields, as well as users involved in the food industry and the technology and software developing sectors. These activities were further disseminated through the established COMFOCUS communication channels, including social media, the official website, newsletters and mailing lists.

Overall, these efforts proved to be very fruitful, as they managed to capture new audiences and inform them of the project and its mission and goals. In particular, we successfully engaged with the project research fellows—researchers in the FCS field seeking new collaborations and experiences. Through our cooperation with these fellows, we were able to establish a community that promotes a 'new way of working,' fostering a higher level of collaboration. We successfully attracted industry stakeholders to provide feedback on the project's developments and tools, which aim to bring innovation to the field and bridge existing gaps. Through these connections, we received valuable insights on the COMFOCUS approach. We established important connections with advisory boards possessing diverse expertise and encouraged their participation in various project activities. Their insightful perspectives not only greatly contributed to our work but also provided valuable lessons that helped us successfully nurture the project findings.



**COMFOCUS**

Community on Food Consumer Science