

FOODMISSION: Citizens Leading the Change for Sustainable Food Systems

The highly anticipated EU-funded FOODMISSION project has officially begun, marked by a successful kick-off meeting held on January 14–16, 2025, in Bergen, Norway.

"Today marks a significant milestone as we launch FOODMISSION project, which engages citizens as agents of change for food system transformation," announced Professor Natalia Mæhle, the project coordinator from the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. "Despite numerous initiatives and information campaigns, current food consumption patterns remain unsustainable from both health and environmental points of view. Citizens need to be empowered to make informed, healthy, and sustainable food choices and reduce food waste. Our goal is to give citizens an opportunity to see the tangible effects of their actions on the food system."

Funded by Horizon Europe, the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, the FOODMISSION project takes a novel citizen science approach by directly involving citizens in the research process through participation in data collection and other activities. By engaging individuals and households, the project aims to better understand how citizens perceive sustainable food and what drives their food-related behavior. The collected citizen data will be used for informing effective policymaking and driving meaningful change.

To secure continuous citizen engagement, FOODMISSION uses gamification, which represents one of its key innovations. The project will develop a gamified educational virtual platform that combines educational content with interactive activities designed to maintain user interest, incentivize specific actions, and disseminate valuable information. The platform will also support the collection and sharing of data contributed by citizens, in full compliance with privacy regulations and ethical principles. Through data visualization and feedback mechanisms, individuals and communities will receive evidence of the impact of their decisions, which will promote social learning, collective responsibility, and system-level change.

To incorporate multiple perspectives, the FOODMISSION project will in addition involve various stakeholders through seven 'Transformation Labs' across Europe. These labs will serve as hubs where stakeholders, such as universities, SMEs,

consumer associations, and NGOs, will collaborate to co-create the platform and other key project outputs. This approach ensures that the project adheres to Responsible Research and Innovation principles, involving stakeholders at every stage of project development.

"By harnessing citizen engagement and innovative technology, we aim to foster a fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food system, aligned with the European Green Deal's objectives," concludes Prof. Mæhle.

Coordinated by the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, the project involves four universities, two SMEs, a national consumer association, a representative from the retail sector, a social learning and policy implementation NGO, and an interest group of agricultural and food companies. The partners cover 8 European countries and a whole range of expertise: sustainability transition, digital innovation, consumer behaviour, food systems, nutrition, gamification, citizen science, citizen engagement and motivation, policy advocacy, digital education and training. FOODMISSION was launched on the 1st of January 2025 and will run for 3 years and 6 months.

For more information about the project, please contact FOODMISSION's coordinator, Natalia Mæhle, at foodmission@hvl.no.

FOODMISSION Consortium:

