



THE SS4AF ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING STRATEGY: INITIAL GUIDELINES

2022

BACKGROUND

SS4AF was established to contribute to the development and roll-out of Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) in the involved regions in a way that the agri-food sector evolves into an interconnected, sustainable, resilient, and smart ecosystem built upon competitive food processing companies that embrace the principles of Industry 5.0 and environmental sustainability.

Having walked a significant path since its formation, we have reached a moment where we have created a trust zone between the members and gathered a relevant pool of knowledge and methodologies (namely through the implementation of collaborative EU projects) on how to lower the barriers for agri-food companies to access and implement the newest technologies linked to digitalisation.

To consolidate the fifth step - Leverage - in our overall conceptual model, the moment has come to think of a systematic approach to policy makers and managing authorities of regional and European funds so that the knowledge we have gained is transferred into the existing and upcoming policies, strategies, and instruments with the purpose of translating the SS4AF Strategy into actual practice for the benefit of the agri-food industry. Through the application of innovative digital solutions we minimize environmental impacts and support the development of food industry towards a climate neutral production sector.

In this document we outline the overall issues we would like to promote and to influence, the key actors, and the channels that we may use; the objective being to have an initial set of guidelines for a common, coordinated approach to secure long-term sustainability and maximise the impact of our Partnership.

Seemingly, for any specific issue we would like to advocate a detailed mapping of actors and contact persons and an action plan is to be thought, considering the actual resources available and the process stage of what we will try and promote.

WHAT WE OFFER

- ✓ Success cases contributing to the objectives and challenges of twin transition and Industry 5.0. in the food industry.
- ✓ A cross-regional stable interregional partnership of key actors (agri-food clusters, ICT clusters, RTOs) in the digital innovation ecosystem in the food industry, with a strong capacity to connect food processing companies and technical and digital solution providers.
- ✓ A deep understanding and knowledge of the concrete needs and challenges of the food industry regarding twin transition.
- ✓ A set of digital-based solutions that fits SMEs' needs and access to a network of technology providers, digital solutions suppliers, and living labs for food processing companies to develop, improve, test, validate, and apply solutions in practice.
- ✓ A tested methodological approach to guide the digital transition of the food industry.



WHAT WE WANT AND AT WHAT LEVEL

- ✓ **[EU + REGIONAL]** Direct channels to transfer our knowledge on the needs and challenges of the agri-food industry regarding twin transition, on the applicable digital-based solutions, and methodological approach for supporting food processing companies into EU and regional/national level policy makers and implementing agencies.
- ✓ **[EU]** Secure the regular launching of competitive calls that finance the offering of support services to SMEs to facilitate twin transition and Industry 5.0 and the implementation of investment projects via cascade funding, intermediated by Clusters (with a funding rate of 100% for non-profit organisations).
- ✓ **[EU]** Regular support to the SS4AF Partnership in the form of strategic & business advice from the Thematic Specialisation Platform / S3 Community of Practice to keep on growing and aligned with EU's Industry 5.0 and twin transition objectives.
- ✓ **[EU]** Access to medium- and long-term (2-4 years) cooperation instruments that can serve as an umbrella for regular or recurrent grants for the implementation of actions contributing to the objectives of the EU Twin Transition and Industry 5.0.
- ✓ **[EU]** Access to adapted funding schemes, such as operating grants to finance the operating expenditure and running costs of the SS4AF as a partnership pursuing objectives that form part of the EU Agri-food, Twin Transition, and Industry 5.0 policies.
- ✓ **[REGIONAL]** More engagement of the authorities responsible for the RIS3 in the SS4AF member regions through direct involvement in its activities and projects, and financial support: for example, by contributing to the SS4AF membership fee, contributing to personnel costs regional members have to work on advancing the Partnership, providing in-kind contributions to events and activities, contribute to the match-funding of projects generated by the partnership.

WHO DO WE TARGET

At the European level, our main interlocutors are the Directorate Generals involved in the TSSPs, namely those more relevant to the food industry:

- DG REGIO
- DG GROW
- DG AGRI
- DG CONNECT
- DG SANTE
- DG RTD

At the regional level (or national should it be the case in some regions or for some issues), our main interlocutors, via the SS4AF members, are:

- Regional governments and authorities
- Regional development agencies
- Regional innovation agencies
- Any other depending on the specific policy structure in the member regions



HOW DO WE APPROACH THEM

Depending on who we try to reach and the stage of the specific process which we are trying to influence and the actor we are trying to reach, we can think of a varied type of channels that we can use isolated or in combination, such as:

- Participation in formal consultation processes
- Request a meeting
- Invite to participate in our activities
- Co-organise activities
- Position and policy papers and recommendations
- Make presentations at relevant external events
- Approach informally during external events
- Collaborate with or join an existing lobbying platform/association

WHO CAN SUPPORT US

Our main supporters in maximising our influence capacity can be found in the Thematic Platforms community:

- Our peers: the existing 4 agri-food partnerships (Ingredients for Circular Economy, High Tech Farming, Traceability and Big Data, and Consumer Involvement) and the other S3 partnerships on Industrial Modernisation and Energy.
- The S3 Community of Practice, which manages and animates the TSSPs, provide technical assistance to the RIS3, and provide support to the S3 partnerships.

The Vanguard Initiative, which is well-positioned for policy influencing. Additionally, we can find advantages in cooperating with other EU initiatives to help leverage our outreach through extended dissemination and knowledge exchange, such as:

- KICs
- EIT
- ECCP
- EEN
- EIC accelerator
- EDIH
- Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

Furthermore, it is important to keep the connection with the regional level and look into how regional authorities, regional networks etc can support us. For instance are regional authorities willing to support the partnership financially by paying the annual fee for their region or even support person months to spend on work in the partnership. The benefit for them is that we can connect them to the European level.

NEXT STEPS

As said, this document contains an overarching framework for our advocacy and lobbying actions. For each specific issue of 'What we want', a specific action plan needs to be developed.

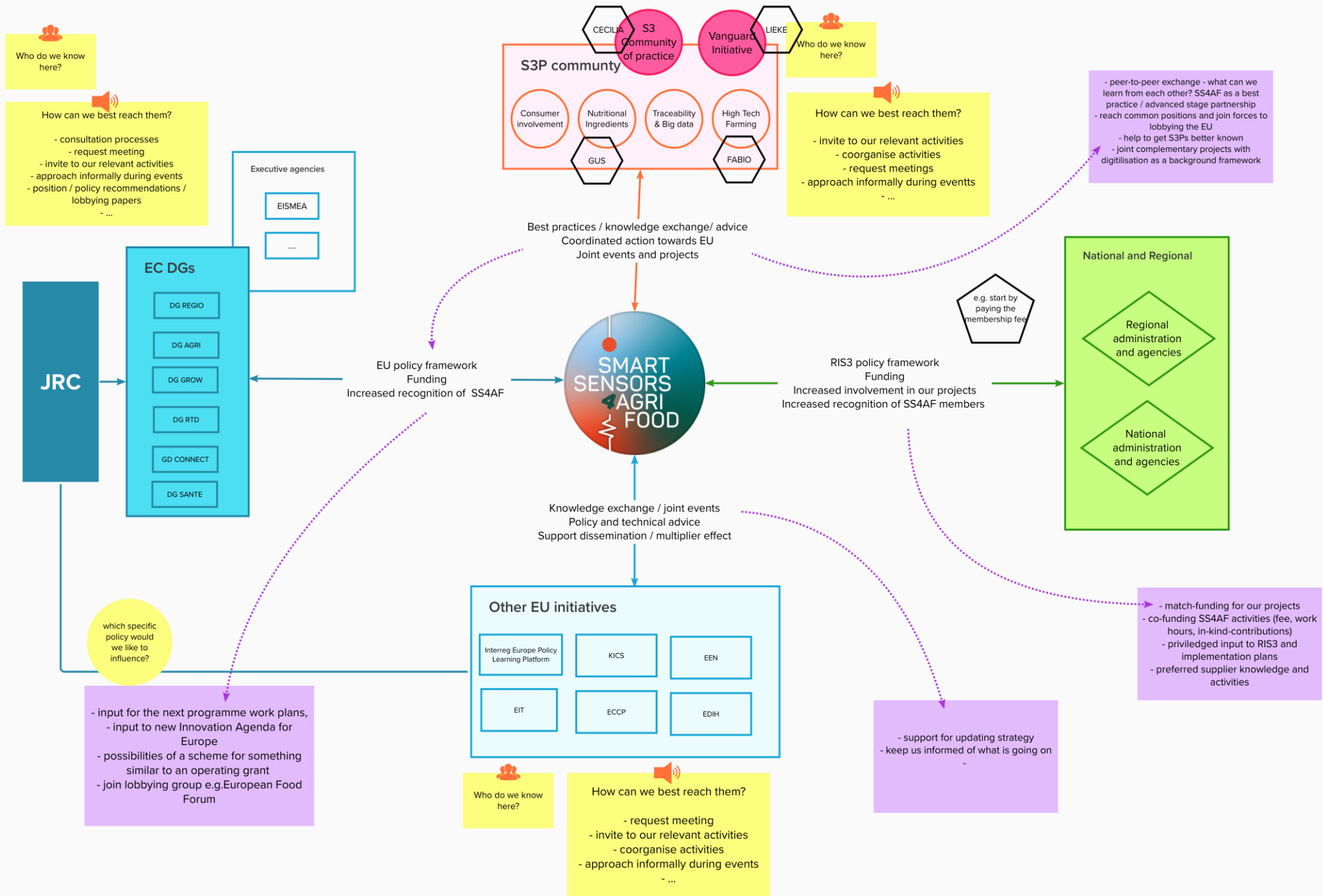


Preliminary steps to such task include a joint reflection and collecting information about:

- Who are the concrete individuals we can identify as entry points within each target? Who has direct contacts with them?
- What are we already doing? Overview of partners' actions → Identify synergies between different actions of SS4AF members
- How do we see us evolving here? Where do we want to put our focus for now? What policy processes are currently open, and which are foreseen? What are we going to do until let's say, end of 2023?
- What resources (time & money) can we commit to these activities?

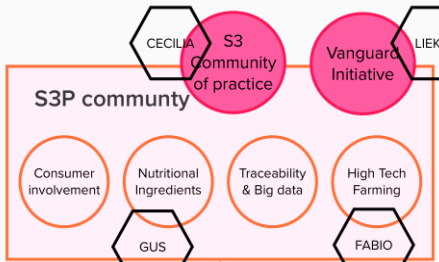
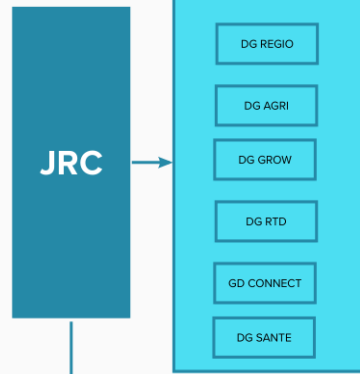
LINK TO EDITABLE MURAL: <https://app.mural.co/invitation/mural/clusaga4191/1653318610211>





Who do we know here?

- How can we best reach them?
- consultation processes
 - request meeting
 - invite to our relevant activities
 - approach informally during events
 - position / policy recommendations / lobbying papers
 - ...



Who do we know here?

- How can we best reach them?
- invite to our relevant activities
 - coorganise activities
 - request meetings
 - approach informally during events
 - ...

- peer-to-peer exchange - what can we learn from each other? SS4AF as a best practice / advanced stage partnership
- reach common positions and join forces to lobbying the EU
- help to get S3Ps better known
- joint complementary projects with digitalisation as a background framework

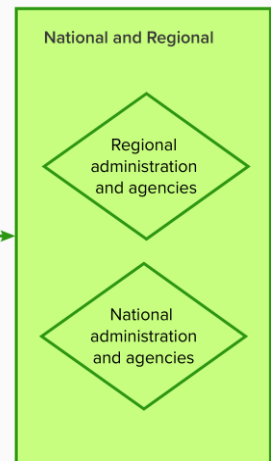
Best practices / knowledge exchange/ advice
Coordinated action towards EU
Joint events and projects



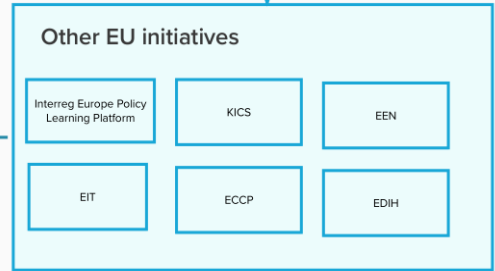
EU policy framework
Funding
Increased recognition of SS4AF

RIS3 policy framework
Funding
Increased involvement in our projects
Increased recognition of SS4AF members

e.g. start by paying the membership fee



Knowledge exchange / joint events
Policy and technical advice
Support dissemination / multiplier effect



- which specific policy would we like to influence?
- input for the next programme work plans,
 - input to new Innovation Agenda for Europe
 - possibilities of a scheme for something similar to an operating grant
 - join lobbying group e.g. European Food Forum

Who do we know here?

- How can we best reach them?
- request meeting
 - invite to our relevant activities
 - coorganise activities
 - approach informally during events
 - ...

- match-funding for our projects
- co-funding SS4AF activities (fee, work hours, in-kind-contributions)
- privileged input to RIS3 and implementation plans
- preferred supplier knowledge and activities

- support for updating strategy
- keep us informed of what is going on