

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW

‘STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK OF THE FOOD & BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM’

BY THE F&BKP STEERING COMMITTEE

During 2016 the Steering Committee of the Food & Business Knowledge Platform commissioned a stakeholder review of the Platform and defined the focus of the review as follows: *Emphasis should be on the future development of the Platform, the lessons learned, options for improvement and on making proposals for future positioning and sustainable continuation of the F&BKP.*¹

The Steering Committee assigned two consultants, Jolein Baidenmann (ISDuurzaam) and Alex Percy-Smith (APS Consulting Services) to carry out the review. The focus was formulated as:

1. A review of the performance and added value of the Platform in the eyes of its stakeholders.
2. A forward-looking advice on the approach and positioning of the Platform in the future.

The review was not intended as an evaluation for accountability and did not evaluate in detail the activities on the ground, the outputs and results achieved so far. Consultation meetings and interviews with stakeholders were the main source of information, and the perceptions of the respondents and the interpretation of the consultants form the basic content of the report.

The Steering Committee of the Food & Business Knowledge Platform has welcomed and approved the Report of the review as an important contribution to its reflection on how to further improve the Platform in order to ensure the sustainability of its important role in the Dutch and international knowledge landscape with regard to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) and agriculture. The Report will be shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with this management response. The Report and management response will also be published on the Food & Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) website.

The Steering Committee (SC) appreciates the Report of the review as capturing the views of many relevant insiders as well as relative outsiders. The SC also welcomes the analysis, the forward-looking recommendations and the many valuable suggestions formulated to strengthen the F&BKP, and the possible scenarios for future positioning and sustainable continuation. The report raises strategic issues that enable the SC to make the necessary decisions to empower the F&BKP to be even more successful in its next phase and to achieve its objectives. In its 2017 Annual Plan, the F&BKP Office team already incorporated many suggestions from the Report, taking into account the decisions of the SC with regard to reformulated priorities.

The main recommendations of the Report and the decisions on the way forward were discussed by the SC in four groups:

1. Strategic system level including decisions regarding strategic goals, target groups, and thematic focus;
2. Pillars of activities, i.e. knowledge Portal, brokering thematic networks and strategic partners, research uptake;
3. Knowledge agenda, transparency, consultation and communication, and
4. Governance of the Platform.

At the strategic level, the SC decided not to fundamentally change the ambitions and approach of the Platform, as it has been operating for only three years and this in a rather successful way. Furthermore, the goals, target groups and evolving thematic focus continue to correspond to the intentions of the

¹ Terms of Reference Mid-term Review Food & Business Knowledge Platform, June 2016

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which finances the Platform. Besides, the SC believes further improvement of focus can be achieved by giving this innovative Platform more time to flourish.

At the level of activities however, the F&BKP needs to work towards a new, more recognizable balance that optimizes its added value in the networks and partnerships it serves. The SC therefore agreed that the main focus of the Platform has to be on brokering thematic networks and strategic partnerships, and supporting the research consortia in their work to achieve research uptake. Consequently, the time investment in the Knowledge Portal will be reduced in favor of the brokering activities. Transparency of the Platform's activities will be improved by more clearly defining and communicating the goals, approach, complementarity, partnerships, funding criteria and decision-making processes regarding the Food & Business knowledge agenda. With regard to the governance of the Platform, it was decided to increase the number of private sector and NGO representatives on the SC. Given the practical implications involved, no final decision was made, but the F&BKP Office is asked to come up with proposals for the SC and current members are asked to reflect upon and identify and nominate suitable candidates. An advisory board representing a wider selection of stakeholders to advise the SC is regarded as too cumbersome for this Platform. Strategic discussions with creative and knowledgeable outsiders are a good alternative.

On behalf of the F&BKP Steering Committee,



Paul Engel (Chairman)

February 13, 2017

Responses and decisions of Steering Committee regarding main recommendations of Review

1.a Defining the system – Strategic goals

There is indeed a need for greater alignment between the strategic goals and what actually is being done within the main activities of the F&BKP. The current three strategic goals will be reformulated into a mission statement. The ambition will still be to combine the promotion of the knowledge the Dutch Agrofood sector can offer and the development perspective, i.e. the combination of Dutch supply and local demand, based on reciprocity. A result based M&E protocol including objectives at outcome level and proxy-indicators will be defined and linked to the Annual Plan 2017.

1.b Defining the system – Target groups

The SC agrees that more focus in the target groups of the F&BKP is needed. Three different layers of target groups can be distinguished. The primary target group consists of Dutch actors of the Dutch Diamond and their offices in LMICs, including embassies. Their partners in LMICs (not exclusively Dutch organizations) form the second layer and act as interfaces to the third layer consisting of local private sector, smallholders, consumers, and policymakers.

The F&BKP stimulates the Dutch partners to organize local networks/interfaces, and to work provable on impact, requiring collaboration of all stakeholders (the Growth Diamond). Consortia which apply for financial support by the Knowledge Management Facility (KMF) are required to show impact and as such how they act as an interface.

The F&BKP will organize regular interaction with the Ministries of FA and EA and will continue to link with dynamics in the Dutch Diamond which relate to the policy letter on food security. Collaboration will be continued with thematic networks in which NGOs and knowledge institutes (including green education such as Borderless Network) are active. It is the ambition of the F&BKP to collaborate more frequently with intermediaries and networks of companies (NABC, MVO, RVO, AgriProFocus, IDH, SNV, BoPInc, Seas of Change), instead of individual companies. A proposition for the private sector will be formulated based on recent examples.

International organizations (e.g. EU, CGIAR, World Bank Group) belong to the second layer and F&BKP will link with these if the Ministries of FA and EA, and/or the Dutch food security policies require so.

1.c Defining the system – Thematic focus within Food Systems

FNS is a multi-dimensional challenge. To be effective, the F&BKP should focus on a limited number of themes, especially regarding the Knowledge Portal.

The agenda of the F&BKP is determined by partners which “vote with their feet”; questions of ministries, and networks which have something to offer related to the Dutch FNS-policy and the Aid and Trade-agenda. New themes which may be of interest for the future policy agenda can be initiated by stakeholders or the F&BKP SC/Office. Consequently, the agenda is flexible and will change over the years.

The F&BKP Office will define its thematic agenda for 2017 and discuss this with the SC. In addition, the F&BKP will look for ways of consulting the outer world in cooperation with the Ministries of FA and EA. It is not the intention to define a common Dutch Knowledge Agenda on FNS, but an F&BKP agenda which contributes to and is attuned with the agendas of ministries, TopSectors, etcetera, and covers possible gaps which are relevant for the future.

2. Defining the activities - General

The constitution of the Platform will not change radically. The main focus of the Platform will be to broker the thematic networks and strategic partnerships, and support the research consortia with their research uptake. The time investment for the Knowledge Portal will be reduced in favor of the brokering activities. Considering the limited resources, the Office will need to support less intensively the networks and partnerships and to organize efficiently the interaction with the research consortia. The Office will work towards a new balance between the different activities (pillars).

The SC expects the Office to organize more open forums/conferences in order to share FNS and Food & Business content and enhance policy dialogue.

2.a Defining the activities – Knowledge Portal

The SC agrees on the proposed adaptations: fewer (sub)topics; a more direct linkage with the topics of the thematic networks and the emerging themes addressed by the Office; faster change

of topics; quit updating and instead archiving of subjects that are not or not much visited; more efficient monitoring of sources. The engagement strategy to increase the Portal traffic and outreach by e-mail alerts, dissemination in the F&BKP network and use of social media, will be continued. After implementation of the improvements, a user survey will be conducted in September, which will be input for a well-informed go/no-go decision in October.

2.b Defining the activities – Thematic networks en partnerships

Knowledge brokering – making sure existing knowledge on FNS is shared and discussed, new insights are generated and co-creation of knowledge is facilitated - will remain the main activity of the Platform. This niche role of the Platform is well appreciated and even required by stakeholders. An important added value of the Platform is to connect and link different knowledge stakeholders with a network-to-network approach. The Office will need to less intensively support the networks and partnerships and must be more effective with less resources. This needs a stricter definition of partners with an assessment on impact, and focus on primary themes where leverage is expected to be substantial. This may imply reducing the structural collaboration with some networks and focusing on just sharing knowledge and contact, advice and dissemination of results.

2.c Defining the activities – Food & Nutrition Research

The Platform should continue its role in identifying themes and gathering relevant systematic questions on FNS for future research and for brokering of networks. Related to the Food & Business Research (FBR) programme, the focus will be on promoting and supporting research uptake by the ARF and GCP research consortia in collaboration with NWO-WOTRO. In addition, the F&BKP will contribute to this research uptake by communicating results at project level, and analyzing and communicating results at Call/theme-level.

Before the end of 2017, the SC will formulate a proposal on the follow-up of the current FBR-programme. A timely vision on the objectives, content and design of a new programme is needed to guarantee future funding.

3.a Recognizability and Transparency – Criteria and decision making

The SC agrees that the transparency of the Platform should be improved at different levels, including: who decides on the topics for Calls; who defines the knowledge agenda; what is the partner strategy; what are the steering principles for the Office; what are criteria for KMF-funding.

The website should contain more information about the activities of the Platform, the relevance of the Platform to different stakeholders, the different ways to get involved within the Platform and the knowledge agenda.

3.b Recognizability and Transparency – Communication

The Platform will increase its efforts to be clearer in describing its objectives and be more visible and transparent. The visibility and understanding of the Platform should be improved through communication about its purpose, structure, strategic partners; what can be offered to each of the stakeholders; the functioning and activities of the F&BKP; and the criteria for eligibility for the KMF.

4.a Governance and Office – Steering Committee, role and composition

The SC will increase the representation of different stakeholders (such as business intermediaries and NGOs). Members of the SC will function as active ambassadors if the opportunity is there. Installment of an advisory board of not-involved persons to advise the SC is regarded as too cumbersome for this Platform. Strategic discussions with creative and knowledgeable outsiders are a good alternative.

The “Petit Comité” will keep its responsibility to discuss basic management topics and prepare the meetings of the SC.

4.b Governance and Office – Role of Brokers

Brokering is the main function of the Office. The brokers should strike the balance between implementing activities themselves and facilitating and empowering others to act. General knowledge of the field of FNS and its stakeholders, is needed. The Office will keep looking for a person with strong affinity with the private sector and its intermediary organizations.

Many researchers, practitioners and policymakers working in the field are operating as excellent brokers. The F&BKP should support these “role models” and present them as inspiration for others, e.g. by nominating a “broker of the year”.