



Exploring big data for understanding consumer food habits and health (RICHFIELDS)

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[RICHFIELDS](#) aims to design a consumer data platform, to collect and connect, compare and share information about food behaviours, to revolutionise research on every-day choices made across Europe. Bringing together science, industry and technology, RICHFIELDS will utilise previously underexploited “big data” to assess the potential to link and share information generated by us daily (e.g. apps, sensors), as well as by business (e.g. retail and manufactures) and research (e.g. medical, sales, surveillance data).

“RICHFIELDS will assess what facilities, resources and services can support research, to learn more about what consumers choose to eat and how and why we make those choices,” said Karin Zimmermann, coordinator of RICHFIELDS at LEI Wageningen UR. Ultimately, this will support future strategies to improve public health. Stressing the need for world-class research infrastructures, EU Horizon 2020 provided financial support in 2015 for RICHFIELDS.

New ICT technologies bring opportunities for researchers to monitor behaviours, collect information around food choice, and provide personalised feedback. Increasingly, we use mobile apps and tech-wear, recording real-time data about health and behaviour. We might also obtain access to other valuable data, such as health and medical information. Every day, consumers and businesses generate “big data” - large volumes of information, that offer detailed descriptions of behaviours, including time and place (e.g. using GPS). If these data-rich sources could be linked and analysed, they have the potential to contribute greatly towards answering key questions to respond to societal challenges regarding food and health (e.g., obesity, cardiovascular disease, and also sustainability). RICHFIELDS will explore the integration of information (data) on food purchase (e.g. in store), preparation (e.g. in the kitchen) and consumption (e.g. in the dining room).

“Making the healthy choice the easy choice” requires knowledge about lifestyle choices. This knowledge comes from analysing different types of information on dietary choices such as what food and drinks are we buying, preparing and eating? Where? Why? How? With whom? In what social and physical context? Previous research concluded that these data are fragmented and key information is lacking. Existing datasets are not sufficient to understand our behaviours and help; companies develop products for personal nutrition or for governments to determine the success and failure of public health policies.

RICHFIELDS will identify best practice for extracting business food purchasing and procurement data from new and existing technologies. Furthermore, it will examine the feasibility of linking existing and new research infrastructures, laboratories and facilities, which could enrich the platform. In light of these findings, the project will design the technical requirements to collect, compare and share information about our food behaviour.



“RICHFIELDS invites stakeholders to discuss issues of data ownership, privacy, intellectual property rights, ethics, and governance structure, and establish rules for the consumer data platform,” said Zimmermann.

About RICHFIELDS

The RICHFIELDS project started 1 October 2015, and is funded for three years. The project is coordinated by LEI Wageningen UR. Sixteen project partners from twelve countries, bring together competences including nutrition, sociology, information management, ICT, business, consumer science, and food processing.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.richfields.eu/>

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