EIT Food-funded WeValueFood fosters a new generation of Food Champions

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WeValueFood develops a network of Food Champions who inspire their peers through sharing knowledge about food on social media. In 2020, Food Champions are recruited in three hubs across Europe: UK, Spain, and Iceland.

- WeValueFood fosters a community of European Food Champions, a network of food-savvy young consumers who will inspire their peers through sharing knowledge about food on social media and school networks.
- Food Champions are helping to establish a society that is more knowledgeable and discerning about where food comes from and how it affects our health and the planet.
- In 2020, three European hubs, in Belfast, Madrid and Reykjavik, will support students to become Food Champions and engage next generation consumers.

Improving food engagement in the UK

At Queen’s University Belfast, a newly developed programme will improve food engagement within two student groups: those already highly engaged with food and those with a low level of engagement with food.

The prospective Food Champions will be a group of students who are already highly engaged with food. They will be trained to think critically about the communication landscape, for example, considering the reliability of food-related information on social media. The students will receive training and support from communication experts and local social media influencers, on how to amplify their voice online, share evidence-based information, and encourage engagement with followers.

The UK Food Champions will be tasked with communicating the value of food to their peers through social media and peer-to-peer activities, helping empower their friends in making good choices in food. The Queen’s University team will make sure the communication remains evidence-based. A parallel programme for students disengaged with food aims to encouraging them to develop general food skills, for example understanding how to select and store foods to reduce food waste, reading food labels, and practising good food safety.

Two-way online dialogue in Spain
With the rise of social media in the public debate, the Food Science department of Madrid University (UAM) and IMDEA Food, together with the Scientific Culture Unit UAM led a 30-hours university course to inspire food and health students with new approaches, such as the production of podcasts or social media trends.

The newly fostered Spanish Food Champions learned that two-way communication with their audience is essential to build a meaningful connection. Within the programme, the university students and graduates are encouraged to attend (online) events addressing topics related to nutrition, health, and food production.

Simultaneously, they also create and communicate via their own social media channels (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook). The new channels are going strong, for example, @nutreconciencia on Twitter gained 206 followers in 3 months, @beFEEDus on Facebook build a following of 267 during the same time and @madres_cientificas on Instagram launched in July 2020 already gathered 1867 followers.

As a follow-up step, Food Champions will present their social media channels before a communication expert panel and will be given advice on how to create even more impact in the future. The Spanish Food Champions are truly evidence-based influencers, combining a good flair for communication with a robust background in food and health science.
Sustainable food choices made fun in Iceland

In Iceland, teachers work with the infotainment material as early as in elementary school: Krakkar kokka or Kids Cooking designed by project partner Matís. The infotainment concept is straight forward, on the one hand, 11-12-year olds learn about sustainability, environmental impact, nutrition, and home economics. On the other hand, it entertains them with local food meal prep sessions and visits to and discussions with local food producers.

With the newly established Krakkar kokka Instagram, children and their parents, as well as food producers around Iceland learn about local natural food resources in Iceland and how they can be turned into delicious, nutritious, and sustainable meals.

The highlight activity is to engage students in creating short videos on the children’s obtainment of local food ingredients and then cooking from these ingredients, to spread the message among peers to become real Food Champions themselves. The videos will be available on Matís’ YouTube and school’s websites and social media such as Instagram and TikTok.

“By engaging the next generation of European consumers and fostering Food Champions, WeValueFood will help to establish a society that is more knowledgeable and discerning about where food comes from and how it affects our health and the planet.” – Paul Brereton, project coordinator

Next steps

Food Champions will continue to attend events and workshops to strengthen their skills set and enlarge their network, for instance, in collaboration with EIT Food projects FoodUnfolded and Food Ambassadors. Food Ambassadors meet in the #EatingTheGap event series, which brings together stakeholders and Influencers from all parts of the food chain in Europe. The Food Champions will take part in a joint event to get the opportunity to learn more on how to communicate evidence-based information about sustainable foods in an engaging way.

FoodUnfolded is a global, digital platform, funded by EIT Food, that creates and shares its content on the latest food and agricultural innovations.

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For more information, please contact:

Paul Brereton, Director of Strategic Alliances at Queen’s University Belfast and project coordinator
paul.brereton@qub.ac.uk
Davide Carrino, EUFIC Media Manager
davide.carrino@eufic.org

About EIT Food

WeValueFood is a project under the support of EIT Food. EIT Food is Europe’s leading food innovation initiative, working to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted.

The initiative is made up of an innovation community of key industry players across Europe, consisting of over 90 partner organisations and over 50 startups from 16 EU member states. It is one of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) established by the European Institute for Innovation & Technology (EIT), an independent EU body set up in 2008 to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe.

You can follow EIT Food via www.eitfood.eu or via social media: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube or Instagram.

About WeValueFood

WeValueFood is a 2-year Grand Challenge project funded by EIT Food involving 11 European partners from education, academia and industry, communication sectors. The project runs from 2019-2020 and is led by Queen’s University Belfast.

More information available at #WeValueFood and on the web page: eitfood.eu/innovation/projects/wevaluefood-2020.

Follow our Food Champions via:

- Instagram: @Madres_científicas, @fermentilandia, @nutreconciencia, @cocinacorrecome, @krakkarkokka
- Twitter: @beFEEDus, @cocinacorrecome, @nutreconciencia
- Facebook: @beFEEDus, @nutreconciencia
- YouTube: Matis Iceland
- Websites: WeValueFood, Nutreconciencia and Cocina, Corre y Come
- Podcast: Nutreconciencia