



Swiss Food Research is the partner and matchmaker following a holistic approach driving impactful innovations for a sustainable Agro- and Food landscape.

Annual Report Swiss Food Research – 2020

Foreword

The aim of an annual report is to show you the most important results and activities of the year 2020. From a business perspective, the year 2020 has been a very positive and successful year for Swiss Food Research. However, this impression is deceptive - what is relevant is what lies ahead. For this annual report, we have therefore decided not to focus on the past. Instead, we want to draw your and all our attention to the future - unusual for an annual report - but extraordinarily important and the right opportunity.

In the section "**2020 - Conclusions and consequences for the future**", you will learn which essential challenges await us. We can only find the solutions together. We look forward with excitement and anticipation to the exchange with you on our future.

Zürich, 26 April 2021

Sincerely

Fabian Wahl
President Swiss Food Research

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Annual Report 2020

2020 - A year full of challenges and changes

During this period of "uncertainty", 26 companies decided to invest in innovation and joined our network. By 2020, our network had grown to over 150 member companies and organisations.

Exchange and meetings are the elixir of any network

The first and last big physical event of the year took place on February 7. Together with SGLWT and SVIAL, we were able to hold the first Future Food Symposium. It was a complete success, the hall at Technopark was sold out. The cooperation of all three organisations has proven to be valuable and the Future Food Symposium has positioned itself successfully.

Development of innovative Ideas & Open Innovation

Swiss Food Research Calls

Innovative ideas are the basis for innovation. To enable ideas to be tested at an early stage, Swiss Food Research funds idea testing within the framework of Swiss Food Research Calls.

In the call 19 proposals were received. These were evaluated together with a team of experts from research organisations. A total of 9 proposals were funded with a sum of CHF 70,000. For the first time, the Avina Foundation also participated in the funding and took over the funding of 2 projects.

Since the introduction of the Research Calls as a separate funding for the promotion of innovative ideas in 2013, 123 projects have been submitted and evaluated. 66 projects were funded with CHF 570,000 and 70% of the funded projects have been continued. The Research Calls are thus a central element in the early promotion of innovative ideas and the initiation of new projects.

Open Innovation - NTN Innovation Booster

Together with the Cluster Food & Nutrition, the association "Suisse Agro Food Leadinghouse" was founded and the application for the Innovation Booster successfully covered. The [Innovation Booster](#) allows the early promotion of radical and risky ideas. The aim is to generate new solutions that advance the transformation of the agricultural and food system. Collaborative and multidisciplinary approaches are required to achieve this. With the NTN Innovation Booster, ideas can be further developed in design thinking workshops and funded with up to CHF 20,000.

Makeathon – A Hackathon for Food

As part of the EIT Food Makeathon "Makeit Meatless", new solutions for a low-meat diet were developed in a 3-day digital event using design thinking methods. A project that was carried out together with ETH Zurich and EIT Food with 7 teams. Solutions were developed to encourage consumers to switch to a low-meat diet and find solutions for new production processes for meat alternatives. The digital implementation allowed the inclusion of participants from different countries and fields of study. The experience gained will be used in workshops, innovation groups and other events.

National Thematic Network (NTN) & Innosuisse

2020 was also the last year of Innosuisse's eight-year support of Swiss Food Research as NTN. The last year ended successfully and all targets were fully achieved and largely exceeded. It is only thanks to the support of the Avina Foundation that the continuation for 2021 and 2022 could be secured. However, broader support from the agricultural and food sector is necessary, as they are the primary beneficiaries of the activities of the innovation network and the innovation ecosystem that has been created.

Recognition for Swiss Food Research

At last year's General Assembly, the importance and role of Swiss Food Research was made clear in the [speech by Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin](#). We are extremely proud that Swiss Food Research is even present at this level.

What drives us?

"Together, all members of Swiss Food Research are passionately committed to innovative projects in line with the concept of "one planetary health"! is the guiding principle of the Charta. "For the development of a holistic and sustainable future-oriented food system", the Charta was unanimously approved at the General Assembly on 6 October 2020. Supporting the transformation of the agricultural and food system towards a holistic sustainable system ("one planetary health") has thus become a central concern and innovative solutions are needed now.

Digital is the "normal"

The use of new digital tools, the experience of a new form of collaboration has accompanied everyone. Meeting has been made easier, the informal exchange more difficult. New formats had to be found for the innovation groups. We experimented with different approaches. Rapid prototyping & agile development had to be used "in the field". At the end of the year, we found a way to make joint meetings valuable for all. A big advantage of digital events is that place and time are decoupled, and you can combine regional with national with international. This opens completely new potentials for the development of ideas and the advancement of innovation.

The Swiss innovation ecosystem is thus experiencing unimagined growth. With Swiss Food Research, the players in the Swiss agricultural and food sector have the innovation platform to jointly use the system to their advantage.

2020 - A year of transformation and successful further development!

2020 - Conclusions and consequences for the future

The year 2020 marks a turning point for our common project of advancing innovation. The basis of funding will change fundamentally. The Presidium and the Executive Board are very concerned and aim to point out the following thoughts on the principle of continuity and future orientation.

Innosuisse - the conclusion of funding as an NTN

In 2020, the funding programme was successfully concluded by Innosuisse. The two 4-year funding programme came to an end in October 2020. We were able to achieve all targets and were awarded the maximum possible funding amount of CHF 360,000. A result to which everyone contributed, and we can be proud of. However, it is not enough! Rather, it means that as of 1 January 2021, there will be a funding gap of 360,000 CHF that must be filled or "restructurings" will need to be initiated.

How do we want to achieve this?

Or to put it another way: how important is an innovation platform and innovation network for Switzerland? This question has been with us from the beginning and is still unanswered. Without the essential support of the Avina Foundation, the answer would have been: it is not important enough for all the actors in the agri-food sector! That would be the simple answer - but is it sufficient?

After 8 years of intensive work in this environment, we see things in a more differentiated way. Yes, we are all doing well. Humans tend to prefer to preserve what is good rather than reach for what is better if this is associated with change (risk and expected gain). This behavior is well described in relevant literature (Good to Great, Jim Collins).

The difficult thing about innovation is that it only takes effect in the future, but requires investment today in the form of work, time, and money. Success is not guaranteed, and the accuracy of the decision is only clear in retrospect.

Especially in times of success, this easily blinds us to planning the future. In lean times, on the other hand, people do not want to invest resources in the future. The future, however, does not care about these views as tomorrow was made yesterday and today! You probably ask yourself, why does such a trivial thing appear in an annual report? The answer is: because despite its simplicity, it seems that it is not sufficiently considered.

Switzerland has all the key success factors: an excellent education and training system, excellent research and infrastructure, economic stability, a healthy diversity of businesses, young companies, a culture of constructive discourse, cultural diversity and crucially - short distances that allow easy physical use of all resources.

For it to become a unique melting pot for innovation, all these elements need to be connected. Each of us values such bridges - but building and operating bridges requires financial resources.

Swiss Food Research is the innovation platform and bridge builder that connects the elements. The investment is future-oriented, the sponsorship collaborative and the benefits and value individual. For this to be run sustainably and successfully for all of you in the future, it needs the broad and strong support of the users of these "bridges".

The larger the number of bridges, the broader the bridges, the more effect and impact generated. The effectiveness of a network comes from its size and activities. This requires more "users».

As experienced members, you can play a decisive role here. Share your experiences. Become ambassadors and advocates of innovation and its network. Nothing encourages change more than reports from those who have already taken the path.

The newly launched NTN Innovation Boosters (<https://innobooster.org>) act as idea generators and innovation drivers. Each Innovation Booster represents a network on its own. Swiss Food Research has successfully initiated cooperation between these Innovation Boosters. This creates a network of networks from a wide range of disciplines. Switzerland can thus create a unique innovation ecosystem. The way we innovate is also subject to change - we have everything available to continue to be the innovation world champion - we do not have any other raw material. Instead, it is one that is not naturally depleted.

Let us push this forward together - but to do so, the financing of the network must be broadly supported and secured by its actors. The current share of 25%-member funding (corresponds to 185'000 CHF/a) must be significantly increased. Otherwise, there is a risk of fragmentation into project-related funding and the constant search for projects (EU programmes, national or regional funding programmes). We are forced into this situation today and it only secures our existence for the next 18 months. The only time we have to build up sustainable financing!

With these thoughts we would like to start the discussion on funding. We can only work on this together. It needs every single member of the network with all their contacts and connections to achieve the necessary funding.

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