

agro BRIDGES

**“Building bridges between consumers and producers
by supporting short food supply chains through a
systemic, holistic, multi-actor approach-based Toolbox”**

(Grant Agreement 101000788)

COORDINATION AND SUPPORT ACTION

**“Let’s Build our SFSC”
Event Validation Report
Responsible Partner: UNIMOS**



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"Let's Build our SFSC!" Event Validation Report – Latvia

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1. Introduction

The present report summarises the activities of UNIMOS for the organisation and validation of the “Let’s build our SFSC” event in Latvia organised on March 30th, 2023. This event is an online brokerage and networking event, to bring stakeholders of the local agri-food sector to present their products, meet others and negotiate partnerships based on the concept of Short Food Supply Chains. The event was organised using the Brella matchmaking platform that was selected as the most appropriate for the needs of the agroBRIDGES consortium, based on market research and negotiations with the sales departments of various candidate providers, in the frame of task 3.4.

The present report outlines all steps taken for the design, planning and implementation of the regional event, as well as the outcomes and evaluation of the event by the participants and the organising agroBRIDGES partner, to produce suggestions for the improvement of the “Let’s build our SFSC!” tool and measure its impact to the agrifood sector at local level. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** – Introducing the event report
- **Chapter 2** – Describing the concept selection, design, organisation and implementation of the “Let’s build our SFSC” event in Latvia.
- **Chapter 3** – Outlining the validation results for the events by participants and the value found in the “Let’s meet!” guidelines by the organising partners when creating and launching their event.
- **Chapter 4** – Concluding remarks for the event and suggestions for improvement of the “Let’s meet!” tool.



2. “Let’s build our SFSC” event organisation details

2.1 Event programme / agenda

Table 1: Event programme

Title of activity	Topic / Short description	Date & Time (local)	Speakers	Location
Activity #1	Opening session and presentation of agroBRIDGES project	10:00 - 10:15	UNIMOS	Central stage
Activity #2	Presentation of development, financing opportunities and international exchanges for 2023-2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cascade funding opportunities (lump sums for innovations, trainings, matchmaking, etc.) within Euroclusters and other EU-projects (SUAVE)▪ Short-term international exchanges within ClusterXchange scheme (AURORA, AgriFoodX5.0)▪ Business and growth support activities within EU projects (BIOBoost), among others	10:15 - 10:30	UNIMOS	Central stage
Activity #3	Presentation of online agrifood exchange marketplace for consumers (Pora Na Pola) and business trading (DeFood)	10:30 - 10:40	DeFood and Pora na Pola - Maciej Wójtowicz	Central stage
Activity #4	Presentation of DRONE SPACE VALLEY	10:40 - 10:50	Cluster of Unmanned Systems – Aneta Łobodzińska	
Activity #5	Presentation of EIT Food Hub Latvia (represented by Riga Technical University) and open innovation calls	10:50 - 11:10	Alina Dolmate	Central stage



Title of activity	Topic / Short description	Date & Time (local)	Speakers	Location
Activity #6	Participant presentations and networking	11:10 - 11:50	Enno Ence, Founder of MILZU!, food producer Agnese Radzele, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training centre Kristine Irtiseva, Humico startup Emīls Paupe Balodis, Biorefic startup Raitis Rodins, farmer, founder of cooperative Ekologisks.lv Liene Turlaja, eeEdn (farm to table platform)	Central stage and breakout rooms
Activity #7	Closing session and digital evaluation	11:50 - 12:00	UNIMOS	

2.2 Personnel involved in the organisation of the event

Table 2: Estimated effort and expertise needed for the event

Specialisation	Number of employees	Expected role	In-house / External	Estimated effort (person days)
Graphic designers	1	Development of promo material	In-house	1 person day
Speaker	1	Person introducing guests to the concept, products, producers and collecting feedback	In-house	1 person day
Organisation	2	Setting all details.	In-house	2 person days

Specialisation	Number of employees	Expected role	In-house / External	Estimated effort (person days)
		Event promotion.		
Event moderator	2	Facilitation of the sessions and networking	In-house and external	N/A

2.3 Event material

Figure 1: LinkedIn Event – main page

Let's build our SFSC event
Networking and brokerage event for agri-food businesses, producers and HORECA

agr BRIDGES UNIMOS alliance

THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HORIZON 2020 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT N° 101000788.

Event ended

Let's build our SFSC in Latvia
Event by UNIMOS Alliance

Thu, Mar 30, 2023, 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (your local time)

Online

Event link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe-o-8tvi2h3b3t9af6qzoxiDCLPLFSMPmi5VO7QHPw8o-aqmw/viewform>

Anna Bialik and 4 other attendees

Share Manage ...

Details Comments Networking Analytics



Figure 2: LinkedIn promotional post



Figure 3: Facebook promotional post





2.4 Invitation of attendees and promotional activities implementation

In order to organise an event in Latvia and invite attendees, along with some promotional activities that can be used to increase attendance, the following general steps were taken:

- The purpose of the event was defined and the target agrifood ecosystem players and stakeholders in Latvia were identified, including organisations, NGOs, businesses working towards The European Green Deal and sustainable food systems.
- The working group that organises open space discussions on green procurement in Latvia with the participation of the various actors involved in the chain from production to consumption, services, research and policy areas (including farmer & founder of “Ekologisks.lv”, organically grown vegetable cooperative in Latvia, representatives of Latvian Rural Advisory Centre, Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics, municipality, EIT Food Hub in Latvia and more) was identified.
- EIT Food Hub in Latvia helped to identify active actors in the local agrifood ecosystem, including startups and food producers, e.g. MILZU! grey pea based product producer, awarded Latvian exporter, “Agenskalns market” that not only represent a physical location, but a team of passionate professionals supporting the local SFSC and ecosystem by serving as a multifunctional food hub for sustainably produced and locally sourced food in the area of the local market. Moreover, the coordinator of the Cities2030 project in Latvia was identified, as the project vision is to connect short food supply chains, gathering cities and regions, consumers, complement industry partners and more.
- Some short discussions with identified stakeholders were held (2 weeks before the event) to understand what their priorities are and pressing challenges at the moment.
- A date and time that works for key identified attendees was set.
- Direct invitations to guests were sent out via email, social media, or WhatsApp groups (where relevant).
- Respondents were provided with additional information they needed.

Additional promotional activities that were used:

- A social media event on LinkedIn to attract the attention of the target group and increase recognition.
- Email to agrifood community members through EIT Food Hub in Latvia network (more than 200 newsletter subscribers).
- Additional calendar invite was created and sent out to attendees who confirmed their participation (approximately 1 week before the event).



3. Event implementation and outcomes

3.1 Event implementation

The event took place online via the Brella platform. To set a tone and start a conversation, the presentation of the agroBRIDGES project by UNIMOS was prepared explaining the aim of the project - empowering farmers through new business and marketing models based on Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC), as well as developing an agroBRIDGES Toolbox supporting the aim.

Following the identified needs of the attendees, an additional presentation was prepared by UNIMOS on the ongoing international support activities - development, financing opportunities and international exchanges for 2023-2024 that highlighted the potential and several directions for extended collaboration among the group of attendees. Presentation of short-term international exchanges within ClusterXchange scheme (AURORA, AgriFoodX5.0) also highlighted the opportunity for attendees to facilitate transnational cooperation, peer learning, networking, and an example of support mechanisms aimed at innovation uptake between different actors.

Figure 4: agroBRIDGES presentation



The representative of The European Innovation and Technology Institute (EIT) Food Hub in Latvia proceeded with a short introduction of the main mission of the EIT Food and the available support for the local ecosystem aiming to achieve positive changes in the current food system.



Figure 5: EIT Food Latvia presentation

The image shows two screenshots from a Brella video conference. The top screenshot displays a presentation slide titled "What is EIT?". The slide includes a definition of EIT, its mission, and a list of its various initiatives: EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Digital, EIT Food, EIT Health, EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Manufacturing, EIT RawMaterials, and EIT InnoEnergy. It also features a central graphic of a city skyline and a bottom section with statistics: 6100+ jobs created, 900+ new products and services, 1.58€ investment raised by EIT ventures, 2300+ graduates completing EIT programmes, 2000+ ventures supported, and 50+ innovation hubs across Europe. The bottom screenshot shows a slide titled "EIT FOOD SUPPORTS 6 FOCUS AREAS". These areas are: ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS, TARGETED NUTRITION, SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE, DIGITAL TRACEABILITY, and CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEMS. Each area is represented by a circular image and a grid of icons. The slide also mentions that these focus areas are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the European Union's Farm to Fork Strategy. Logos for EIT Food and the European Union are visible at the bottom of the slide.



All the presentations were important to call attention to the systematic approach for reaching common goals and to the support ecosystem that is available for the key change makers.

Following the presentations, event attendees were invited to introduce themselves, share their profiles, priorities and key areas of impact. International guests were invited to present their case studies and best practices. agroBRIDGES Polish good practice Pora Na Pola (online marketplace) together with DeFood (agriculture exchange platform) and Drone Space Valley delivered their presentations about boosting agri-food innovations by using high-tech and deep-tech technologies, as well as building new sales and negotiations channels with national and global approach.

Figure 6: Participants' presentations (HUMICO)



Figure 7: Participants' presentations (DeFood / Pora Na Pola)





Figure 8: Participants' presentations (Drone Space Valley)



The event proved to be valuable for building a stronger connection among attendees, establishing trust and potential for future collaboration - participants from Latvia initiated to create a WhatsApp group, where it will be easier in the future to exchange information. Following the event, attendees from Latvia also expressed an interest to learn more about the agroBRIDGES Toolbox and how they can contribute to the successful deployment of the tools in the local ecosystem. A farmer and a cooperative “Ekologisks.lv” manager shared that he was already considering developing a digital platform similar to the “Net” tool in Latvia and would appreciate to know more about the possibilities of adjusting the “Net” tool for the Latvian market and developing a sustainable business model based on it.

Moreover, the producer and founder of Milzu! expressed an interest in “Smart Delivery” tool and possibility of adjusting it for a new business model piloted in the local market.



3.2 Event participation

Table 3: Event participation

Audience type	No. of participants
Producer & distributor	2
Local green procurement working group members from different organisations	5
Farmer, cooperative founder	1
Startups	2
Total	10

No one-to-one meetings were set up using the online platform. However, the organiser also received a request for contact information of particular attendees, and immediate follow up meetings were set by Agnese Radzele, a representative of the Latvian Rural Advisory Centre, and startups presenting at the event - Humico, and Biorefic.



4. Event Validation

4.1.1 Validation of event by participants

Question	Yes		No		Not sure	
Question #1: Were you familiar with the concept of Short Food Supply Chains before this event	7		1		0	
Question	Absolutely agree	Agree	Do not agree or disagree	Disagree	Fully Disagree	No answer
Question #2: Did you find this event helpful to meet professionals and businesses you can collaborate with?	2	6	0	0	0	0
Question #3: Do you think that this event helped you see Short Food Supply Chains as a promising business alternative?	2	2	4	0	0	0
Question #4: Did you find the matching and booking of one-to-one meetings with other people useful to identify and negotiate collaborations?	1	4	1	0	0	1
Question #5: Was the event useful in supporting you to find interesting opportunities to collaborate with other businesses for the development of Short Food Supply Chains?	2	5	1	0	0	0
Question	Monthly or more often	3-4 times a year	Twice a year	Once a year	Never	I prefer not to answer
Question #6: Would you like another similar event to be organised in your region? How often?	2	5	1	0	0	0



4.1.2 Validation of the “Let’s build our SFSC” event by the organising partner

Question #1: Did you find the event relevant to your local agri-food ecosystem and organisation?

In general, concepts are relevant, while different elements might be combined/ adjusted to the local ecosystem for the maximum value. More support and guidelines would be helpful for setting up and communicating the benefits of registering to the matchmaking platform with the attendees (similar principles as introducing the marketplace, if it is intended to be used as a matchmaking tool not just as an alternative to communication platforms as Zoom, Teams etc.)

Question #2: Would you organise the same event again in your region? If yes, would you make any adjustments? If not, please explain your thinking.

Yes, the concept of the event would be valuable in the local ecosystem, yet the dissemination model and format of the event should be adjusted (please see my recommendations below).

4.1.3 Additional feedback from the organising partner

Strengths:

- building connection and trust by getting to know each other.
- attendees feeling support locally and internationally, recognition and encouragement for their actions leading to positive change in SFSC
- attendees developing connections with new actors in the field
- open funding and exchange opportunities to follow up on after the event (bringing additional value to their represented organisations)
- communication of best practices is very welcome by attendees as this might be information that is hard to find themselves (not all international best practices, business models and case studies are well promoted and can be found online), as well as honest feedback sharing from the founders and representatives - provides valuable insights and learning
- attendees from the local green procurement groups/ working groups and/ or local active ecosystem players and innovators might be able to achieve more for the long-term (and sustainable) success of SFSC than individual consumers

Weaknesses:

- Active ecosystem players and change makers in the small country as Latvia might already know each other under different circumstances and collaborating, thus one-on-one breakout room sessions limited in time might not serve the purpose of the event (initial concept)
- To ensure effective discussion, co-creative processes among participants and the results in a form of next steps to follow, it would require more time (more than 2 hours), co-creation process methodology and moderation
- Distributors and retailers have their own processes and procedures for discovering new producers (majority also have available application process), while consumers are used to getting to know local



producers and farmers during the local market days, through e-commerce stores (platforms) as, for example, Svaigi.lv in Latvia, local produce distribution groups or food expo

- Small farmers still require individual approach and invitation, while innovative startups and producers in the small country usually know major small retailers focused on local produce and contact them directly, meet in person
- Inviting small producers to join a matchmaking platform it requires additional motivation and a feeling that consumers, distributors are there in the first place (similar to peer-to-peer marketplace model), which means a reasonable budget and effort should be put into narrowing down the focus, running a promotional campaign, scaling and administrating of the platform, while consumers now tend to prefer apps with easy delivery (easy to get it) functions integrated into them

Recommendations:

- It might be valuable to consider organising a “Let’s build our SFSC” event in collaboration with local produce e-commerce stores, e-market, delivery app or the holders of the local farmer and producer catalogue, for example, novadagarsa.lv in Latvia, who are putting an effort daily in identifying new producers of local origin products.
- Additional possibility might be a local food expo that would reach bigger and more diverse audience to facilitate a collaboration between producers, farmers and institutional kitchens, restaurants, the event might require an on-site setting and food tasting. Another possibility to consider is integrating the event into an annual (or semi-annual) restaurant week - in Latvia, it is a very well received initiative during which restaurants “open their doors” and invite for tasting of special (mostly local and seasonal) menu at an affordable price.

4.1.4 Limitations and barriers of the organising partner

- The online matchmaking platform Brella was unfamiliar to attendees and provided challenges in user experience (two registered attendees reported of not being able to connect to the platform and join the meeting)
- If this event is supposed to serve a matchmaking purpose, the guide should include suggestion of inviting attendees that do not know each other before the event, which would require additional time for identification of new producers, farmers, startups and additional motivation for them to register (fill in the registration form fully) at the matchmaking platform. It should be taken into account that in a small country the majority of new producers know the way to approach local marketplaces, small retail stores and distributors, thus some added value should be considered for participants.
- Time limit might be reconsidered (providing more time for individual discussions)



5. Conclusions

The majority of participants' feedback about the event was positive, the most exciting parts highlighted in the questionnaires and as direct feedback included:

- building connection and trust by getting to know each other.
- feeling support both locally and internationally, recognition and encouragement for their actions leading to positive change in SFSC
- developing connections with new actors in the field and information about funding, development opportunities
- best practices and case studies provide a lot of valuable insights.

All attendees found this event useful (or even very useful) for finding new collaboration partners (companies or professionals). Most participants also found the event useful for identifying interesting cooperation opportunities with other companies for the development of short food supply chains and would like similar events to be organised 3-4 times a year (or even more often).

Room for improvement:

- Following the feedback of attendees, more emphasis during the event should be put on new/ alternative business models in the short food supply chain, their benefits. Opinions slip - one part of participants found the event useful in this sense, while other part did not have a clear opinion.
- More attention and time should be put on selecting participants for one-on-one meetings and moderating the event helping attendees to matchmake.

Some optional recommendations:

- The concept might need to be adjusted to local ecosystem (especially in small country) and more attention should be paid to proper introducing participants to matchmaking platform, e.g. Brella.
- It might be valuable to consider organising a "Let's build our SFSC" event in collaboration with local produce e-commerce stores, e-market, delivery app or the holders of the local farmer and producer catalogue, for example, novadagarsa.lv in Latvia, who are putting an effort daily in identifying new producers of local origin products. Additional possibility might be a local food expo that would reach bigger and more diverse audience.
- To facilitate a collaboration between producers, farmers and institutional kitchens, restaurants, the event might require an on-site setting and food tasting. Another possibility to consider is integrating the event into an annual (or semi-annual) restaurant week - in Latvia, it is a very well received initiative during which restaurants "open their doors" and invite for tasting of special (mostly local and seasonal) menu at an affordable price.