

A network for the agri-food ecosystem



The Cluster Food & Nutrition is a platform that connects the key players in the agri-food industry. It draws on a large network of partners to offer workshops, training and conferences. Supporting innovation is also a central pillar of its activities.

The Cluster Food & Nutrition is located in the blueFACTORY technology park in Fribourg and uses networking to support innovation in the agri-food sector. The association's mission is to strengthen collaboration between the various players in the regional and national digital ecosystem and to support them in their innovation efforts. It is ready to explore all the possible synergies, even the most unlikely. «It is important for professionals in the sector to meet and inspire each other,» says Nadine Lacroix, who has managed the association since 2015. «And related sectors also need to exchange ideas, because the cheese sector could very well have something interesting to offer the chocolate sector.»

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY NETWORK

The Cluster draws its strength from the richness and diversity of its network. The small, three-person-strong operational team moderates the exchanges of a hundred or so members and partners from the food, agricultural, packaging and distribution sectors, as well as from research and training institutions and professional associations. In just one example of its achievements, The Cluster Food & Nutrition was involved in the development of Champidor, a variety of mushrooms rich in vitamin D that is sold in Coop supermarkets. For this project, it brought together the Swiss union of mushroom producers, the Swiss Vitamin Institute and the School of Agricultural, Forest

and Food Sciences HAFL in Zollikofen. «We have an interdisciplinary approach. While agri-food remains the main sector, the health, nutrition, sustainability, digitisation and agritech sectors are also integrated, and we aim to promote them holistically,» says Lacroix.

SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Cluster Food & Nutrition, in partnership with Swiss Food Research, has obtained funding from Innosuisse, the Swiss innovation agency, for the next four years (2021 to end 2024). The two associations will jointly run a new thematic network and support innovative projects in the fields of intelligent nutrition, biomass conversion, resource efficiency, the circular economy and sustainable packaging. This funding will enable them to provide financial support to companies and assist in the development of numerous projects.

The Cluster is a project of the Région Capitale Suisse association, which is composed of five cantons (Bern, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Solothurn and Valais) and several cities, municipalities and regional organisations. It is financially supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the New Regional Policy (NRP) developed by the Confederation and the cantons.