



Summary of the SSA project

**e-MENSA**  
**“e-platform Technologies for the European Agri-food Supply Chain”**  
2005-2006

***e-MENSA assumes that recent advances in food processing, auditing, information technologies and supply chain management offer the potential to improve food safety and quality along the whole agri-food supply chain***

The agri-food supply chain is the channel a product follows from source to end-consumer. In Europe, major weak points are co-operation and communication among players, who often have clashing policies, objectives and responses to changes in the industry. This confusion can allow safety and quality problems to travel downstream uncorrected. Thanks to e-platforms, supply chain players benefit by having the right amount of product at the right location and time with the desired quality level. They can thus cut transaction costs and improve other areas, such as information searches, contract negotiation and contract monitoring. Consumers get a stable supply of safe, quality food at a stable price, and continued access to regional specialty foods.

Project Participants:

- Tecnoalimenti
- AGER
- AINIA
- ENEA
- Federalimentare
- IAMB
- ILIM
- Imperial College
- Teagasc-AFRC
- Tech. Uni. Berlin

**Project objective: To develop a shared vision for R&D of agri-food supply chain infrastructures in Europe.**

**Project results**

**1. Benchmarking of existing technical supports to food supply chain infrastructures:**

- **CPFR** (Collaborative Planning, Forecasting and Replenishment model) developed by the University of Harvard – this model is potentially interesting but does not allow consideration of peculiar agrifood variables in forecasting.
- **SCOR** (Supply Chain Operation Reference model) proposed by the Supply Chain Council – a mandatory step, but born in a context of large enterprises and therefore not fitting to the prevailing share of SMEs present in the agri-food chain.

**2. New architecture for SMEs developed in this project:**

- **SMEC** (Small Medium Enterprise Chain model) proposed by ENEA, is simply based on the need for having a preliminary common strategy among food chain players.

**3. Emerging need of pre-requisites for the implementation of an e-platform:**

- **Co-operation between players:** common vision and a common set of objectives among and between all food chain players.
- **Shared benefits for all players:** even balance of benefits and cost deriving from the participation to an e-platform.

**4. Presence of facilitating or hindering conditions:**

- **Dominant position:** centralised e-platforms with dominant players may facilitate implementation, decentralised e-platforms with even power for each player may facilitate long-term co-operation
- **Effects on free competition:** co-operative agri-food chain platforms must not restrict free competition in order to meet Art. 81 of EC Treaty.

**5. Impact of an e-platform on the market:**

- **Food safety and quality:** e-platforms increase the confidence of markets and consumers concerning safety and quality of the agri-food supply.

**6. Establishment of a durable platform of experts and players:**

- **Leading network:** this project established a multidisciplinary network of experts and players in the field of agri-food e-platforms ready for future activities.

e-platforms ensure wide benefits to agri-food chain players and consumers. However, currently they are implemented in very limited cases and mainly in a context of large companies. Much effort is still needed for research initiatives in order to provide e-platform benefits for SMEs, which represent a 95% share of European food enterprises. This is particularly necessary for the **Mediterranean** cross-border agri-food chains.

