PERSONAL TRAITS, MOTIVATIONS, EDUCATION AND CAREER PATH OF EUROPEAN FOOD PROFESSIONALS

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The European food industry is losing attractiveness to younger generations, a problem felt by the food industry associations and already a focus of European food research agenda. To understand the current needs and to provide support to policies related to the food professions, a pan-European, internet based survey has been carried out within the FP7 Track_Fast project (www.trackfast.eu) on the motivational base, personal behaviour, education, career path of professionals working in food industry, research ad governmental organisations.

More than 2000 responses have been collected in EU countries and Turkey, even though the sample can not be considered representative as the countries with higher number of employees in the food industry are underrepresented and professionals with age less than 40 year old contributed to almost 50% of the answers.

Based on the self-evaluation, food professionals are characterised by a high level of sense of responsibility, flexibility and challenge driven behaviour. The secondary school has a relatively important role in orienting to Higher Education (HE) studies in the food area. On the contrary the HE qualification of food professionals at the 1st workplace is rather heterogeneous, food technology and engineering degree being the most frequent, and a continuous training occurs during the career path to achieve higher level positions. The mobility between the different spheres (production, public administration, R&D) is limited.

The results highlight the need of the improvement of the social role and image of the food professional to increase the attractiveness to the young generation; the continuous professional development has to be also implemented.