

## 4.7. Food Futuring Tours

<b>Project</b>	Food Futuring Tours (FFT) – A participatory visionary lab to think and tinker with the future of food at Expo 2015 in Milan
<b>Organisation</b>	Institute for Electromagnetic Sensing of the Environment/ National Research Council (IREA-CNR) and The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Directorate I – Competences
<b>Research location</b>	Milan, Italy
<b>Team</b>	One research fellow and three senior researchers
<b>Funding sources</b>	The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
<b>Websites</b>	<a href="http://www.irea.cnr.it/">http://www.irea.cnr.it/</a> <a href="http://foodfutures.tours.irea.cnr.it/en/">http://foodfutures.tours.irea.cnr.it/en/</a> <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research-topic/science-and-technology-studies">https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/research-topic/science-and-technology-studies</a>

### ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND ●●●

Food Futuring Tours is a collaborative project between two researchers from the Italian National Research Council (IREA-CNR) in Milan, Italy and two researchers from DG Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. The four researchers involved in FFT were all women. The project is a public participatory experience aiming to re-imagine food in the 21st century. It consists of five semi-guided walking tours through the pavilions of EXPO2015 with the focus on “*Feeding the planet, Energy for Life*” (May-October 2015, Milan).

### FUNDING ●●●

The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Directorate I funded this initiative.

### PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED ●●●

The aim of Food Futuring Tours was to gather insights, imaginative ideas and expectations about food futures through a debate with citizens who are usually described and treated simply as consumers. The project explored new ways to engage citizens’ views about an urgent and complex human issue: *feeding the planet with quality*. Conducted at an event like EXPO, this initiative opened up a space that stimulated and challenged citizens to imagine food futures – including food production, distribution and consumption. This approach allowed a small number of citizens to view the EXPO as a place where prevalent narratives of food futures could be contested and questioned. This project explored ways of creating safe spaces where dialogues like these can be carried out and illustrated with opinions and examples. In particular, institutions that have insufficient interaction with civil society, are not left entirely to those considered as “experts”, but can work quickly with citizens to promote such dialogues about the future.



## RESEARCH DESIGN AND SOLUTION ●●●

Food Futuring Tours was a participatory experience that aimed to re-imagine food, gathering ideas, perspectives and imaginative insights about the future of food and the food of the future, and the possible social, ethical and cultural aspects and environmental impacts of that food, based on the great Universal Exposition 2015 in Milan, which was entirely dedicated to this theme. For six months, from May to October 2015, hundreds of countries around the world came to the Expo to showcase technologies, innovation, culture and traditions around the theme of food.

Food Futuring Tours consisted of five semi-guided walking tours led by experts from the Italian National Research Council (CNR) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, through the halls of EXPO2015. Participants visited a variety of pavilions such as NGO pavilions, industry/private pavilions, the supermarket of the future, the Slow Food Pavilion and pavilions representative of the global North and South, East and West. During these tours participants focused their attention on the issue of food as shown in its past, present and future dimensions, taking photographs (using smart phones or digital cameras), drawing or using any other visual means of recording.

The participants defined the focus of the “futuring” deliberation at the end of each afternoon workshop that followed the Expo walk: ten scenarios on the future of food were produced during the workshop sessions that were held in groups after each morning tour.

The whole proposal was based on the work of Cynthia Selin, Sarah Davies, Gretchen Gano and Ângela Guimarães Pereira in Lisbon through a project called [Finding Futures](#) (Selin et al. 2013), which explored methodologies based on “experiential” engagement, noticing and anticipating the future. This project explored innovative ways of deliberating on the future of cities through an emphasis on visual engagement. In the Expo context this methodology was explored using the topic of food. The ten final scenarios that participants imagined reflected their take on the societal, economic and environmental challenges of the future at local and international levels. By working out the ten scenarios for 2040, the participants critically reflected on present ways of living and consuming and then articulated their insights, values, perceptions, expectations, needs and fears into the futures that they imagined.



## GRAND CHALLENGE BEING ADDRESSED ●●●

The grand challenge addressed in this project is food security. The Food Futuring Tours discussed the social, ethical and economic aspects embedded in current narratives about food futures in view of a stated need to feed future generations with sufficient food that is fairly produced and traded and of high quality. Food *futuring* is often left to specific stakeholders – scientists, designers, corporations, chefs – but FFT expanded the dialogue on food futures to people who are often not invited, promoting a ‘place’ for critique, reflection and re-imagination. The objective was to tap into alternative perspectives on the future of food, beyond the predominantly technologically driven perspective. The main challenge of the project was to create meaningful places where *citizens* could be included in debates on future food issues. In connection to food, the scenarios developed by the citizens involved, reported and described citizens’ imaginations of the future of their lives and their cities at social, ecological, government and economic level. Together with these, a list of social inequalities, environmental disasters, educational distortions and economic disparities emerged which might, in their view, become more or less pronounced in the coming years.

## RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ●●●

The Food Futuring Tours involved nearly hundred citizens who participated on a voluntary basis in five semi-guided tours. The participants were recruited via the website [foodfutures.tours.irea.cnr.it](http://foodfutures.tours.irea.cnr.it). This website recorded all issues relating to recruitment and the research process, describing its objectives and methods as well as the results of the journeys. The call was free but open to a limited number of participants who had to register and participate as *citizens*. The majority of participants were women, with diverse nationalities (although they all lived in Northern Italy), professional/cultural backgrounds (educators, students, researchers, artists and public and private employees) and ages (17-71). They interacted with proposals made by stakeholders and non-governmental organisations at EXPO2015 about foods of the future and the future of foods. Perspectives presented by these stakeholders were questioned and analysed by the participants.

The Food Futuring Tours [website](#) was the main channel for continuous reporting on the initiative and for interaction with participants. The platform described the five tours, day by day, using pictures taken by researchers and those attending the tours. Citizens registered freely using the specific page for the day when they wanted to take part in the initiative, and entered their personal contacts, motivations and any questions or doubts on that page. Instructions for the day were also given to the participants through personal e-mails sent before the tour, together with the list of the equipment needed (digital camera or smart phone, audio-recorder, pen and paper etc). During the walks, the participants took pictures and notes of (food-related) *things* that they liked, disliked, or that somehow struck or inspired them. These materials were used as inputs for the afternoon session, which was a participative workshop. Whereas the morning session involved an individual exercise where the participants walked, observed, took pictures etc., the afternoon session was a collective/group exercise, where participants developed future food visions and discussed drivers and uncertainties, fears and expectations, personal values, opinions on food production etc.

The results of the workshops were described in a sort of Charter of Ideas reporting suggestions, tips, interests and ten scenarios, either desired or feared, around the theme of the future of food. These scenarios were projected to 2040 and also looked into uncertainties that could hinder or foster the imagined futures. Some scenarios were given names like: awareness,

self-sustainability, wellness, resilience, quality, responsibility (etc.). Private expectations on future food were shared among the participants and analysed in terms of possible desired/non-desired impacts. The ten scenarios that emerged at the end of the whole initiative were publicly presented during the final conference and reported in a free booklet. These ten scenarios can support policy makers and/or experts who deal with food strategy planning at local (e.g. Milan Food Policy), national and/or European levels. Furthermore, this update on food expectations taken from the sample of citizens involved allows politicians to imagine the societal and environmental expectations of their citizens themselves.

## EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION ●●●

The research was carried out by three senior researchers and a research fellow. It is a relatively small project with a strong focus that was implemented over a short period of time. The project has been taken up well beyond its immediate scope and multiple press releases and media attention comprising diverse audiences. Three references were included, one from the city council and two international researchers. Based on the application form, the authors mention five papers, which have been published at conferences, the EGU General Assembly and in the *Journal of Science Communication*. The initiative can be replicated as a 'Decision Support' tool in projects when public consultation or experiential engagement is required. The model can be replicated for researchers or public bodies who need to collect users' requirements or suggestions (e.g. in urban planning design).

