

[Test] FindingPheno Newsletter Oct 2021

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22 October 2021 at 12:02

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Newsletter 2 | September 2021



The blog has been a little quiet lately with almost written posts hanging out in my drafts folder while I focus on our first big outreach event, a Stakeholder Synergy Meeting coming up next week. I am so happy about our speaker list with so many cool people and projects coming, so I wrote an enthusiastic blog post about that instead. Værsgo!



Stakeholder Synergy Meeting

Our first external event!

Preparations are in full swing here at FindingPheno for **our first external meeting** to be held next week. This is our first real opportunity as a consortium to start connecting with other EU projects, academics or companies working in the intersection of big data and microbiome research. We see this as an important chance to help facilitate knowledge sharing across the research community, bringing new ideas to FindingPheno in the process, and also as an opportunity for all attendees, not just FindingPheno, to build relationships and maybe even new collaborations.

Planning this event has been a huge amount of fun for me because I was able to take the time to learn about all the really cool research going on, then actually reach out to all kinds of interesting people and ask them to come meet with us. Our aim was to get a bunch of relevant people in the same room for a day of presentations, discussions and brainstorming to see how our ideas and technologies can work together to make a difference in the world.

And I think it worked! We have a really great list of attendees, with 53 people representing 16 publicly funded projects and 11 companies coming from 11 countries across Europe. In particular, we have eight speakers coming to talk about challenges and opportunities in their projects and subject areas. I am genuinely really excited about them all so the aim of this post is to share with you why I am looking forward to each one.

Integration and application of multi-omics data

HoloFood: Often called our “sister project”, HoloFood is also coordinated out of the UCPH Center for Evolutionary Hologenomics and has been running since 2019. They focus on measuring molecular interactions across the full holobiont (host animal and its associated microbiota) [after dietary interventions in chickens or salmon](#) in order to develop better animal feed products. They are starting to really generate results by now so it will be great to get an update of where they are and what they are finding, giving a strong case study of how hologenomics can be used to make food production more efficient and sustainable,

ELIXIR: The leading EU-wide infrastructure for big data analysis, ELIXIR provides services, computational platforms, research projects and subject-specific communities aimed at making the most of the bioinformatics data being generated in the EU. [ELIXIR Food and Nutrition](#) has been grappling with problems of how to manage, store, integrate and analyse all different types of data, both from omics studies and also physiological and even behavioural data, in order to improve food availability and nutrition. I am looking forward to hearing how they are approaching this problem as FindingPheno has a scaled down version of the same thing.

PROMICON: This H2020 RIA has [just started](#) and is super interesting to us as they are using some of the same technologies as FindingPheno such as machine learning, systems biology, and bacterial ecology to study microbial communities, but focussed on the totally different problem of how to optimise biotechnology applications such as large-scale fermentation. I am really interested to hear their take on how these technologies can be applied in their field, both because it's really cool and also to maybe spark ideas of new ways of looking at the problems we are interested in too.

Better and more sustainable agriculture

ECOSTACK: What drew me to this H2020 RIA is the way they focus on more than multiple levels, from developing and optimising new technologies or methods for use on the farm, to considering biodiversity and the ecosystem around the farm, through to even figuring out the best way to support farmers in actually applying their findings. ECOSTACK [includes a work package](#) looking at microbiome-based products to enhance plant protection and I look forward to hearing about their views on how the microbiome can be used in agriculture given their deep understanding of the entire food production value chain.

EXCALIBUR: This H2020 RIA focusses specifically on the interactions between the soil microbiome and plants for improved crop production. They are currently running field trials with strawberries, apples and tomatoes to test microbiome-based biofertilisers, and have been [posting so many fun photos on twitter](#) from their field studies and sample preparation. I think that soil has so much potential for not just improving crop production but also for trapping excess carbon and protecting the environment, so am keen to hear more about how EXCALIBUR is going and what they see as the main areas of impact for this type of technology.

ROOTPHENOBIOME: This Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship project aims to understand how the [maize root microbiome](#) can affect, and be affected by, the plant genome and environmental conditions. The microbial community associated with roots differs from just the overall plant or soil in general and can have a strong influence on overall plant health or crop yield. This link between microbiome/host metabolism and overall phenotype is the main purpose of FindingPheno as well, although we are taking different methodological approaches, so we see strong synergies between our projects and are looking forward to hearing more about ROOTPHENOBIOME.

Industrial application of microbiome research

Cargill Animal Nutrition: Cargill is a large multi-national company working in the areas of food production and nutrition and their Animal Nutrition department develops and sells innovative animal feeds or feed additives. [Their research includes](#) understanding interactions between microbiota and gut health of food

production species, and I am really interested to hear how this knowledge can be used in a real world setting – getting us out of the academic bubble.

Novozymes Human Health: Novozymes are the world leaders in biotech-produced enzymes, holding around 50% of the market, and with a strong history of innovation and new product development in this area. Their talk will focus on the use of microbes and the microbiome in [human health applications](#), looking at unmet needs in this industry and where we could go in the future. While FindingPheno does not include any human health applications it is the obvious next step for our technology, so I am looking forward to hearing a commercial perspective of this area from such a successful company.

So there you have it, the exciting speaker list we have managed to assemble for our first event and, incidentally, the reason why the blog has been so quiet recently while we work on this. I am sure that many new posts will be stimulated by these discussions so there will be more to come!

[Read and comment on the full post here.](#)



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 952914.

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