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# WASTE2FUNC

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## Deliverable 7.7

# Establishment of WASTE2FUNC Stakeholder Focus Group

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Deliverable 7.7: Establishment of WASTE2FUNC Stakeholder Focus Group

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## 1 Introduction

The WAST2FUNC project is seeking to create, as a demonstration, a new and sustainable biomass waste supply chain. This will integrate fluctuating supplies of agricultural food-crop biomass waste with an industrial food waste supply chain in order to demonstrate the potential for converting this combined stream into lactic acid and microbial biosurfactants as functional ingredients for home and personal care applications.

As part of the WASTE2FUNC project Work Package 7, regular Stakeholder Focus Groups are to be carried out throughout the project.

### 1.1 Aims of the Stakeholder Focus Group

As outlined in the Grant Agreement, one of the main purposes of the Stakeholder Focus Group is to represent stakeholders from across the value chains in the WASTE2FUNC project.

The Grant Agreement also outlines various aims for the Stakeholder Focus Group: to regularly review the project results, to provide advice on the feasibility of new supply chains (from wastes and residues), to improve the credibility of the proposed business models, to help identify on regulatory hurdles, and in general to provide inputs around challenges and opportunities in the project.

### 1.2 Value chain overview

As the main purpose of the Stakeholder Focus Groups is to represent the entire value chain, the supply chain outline from D2.1 has been copied into this report for convenience. As can be seen in Figure 1, the value chain is divided into feedstock generation, pre-treatment, feedstock transport, primary products manufacture (i.e. feedstock use and production of lactic acid or biosurfactants), primary products retail, secondary products manufacture (e.g. home and personal-care products), consumer products retail and consumption.

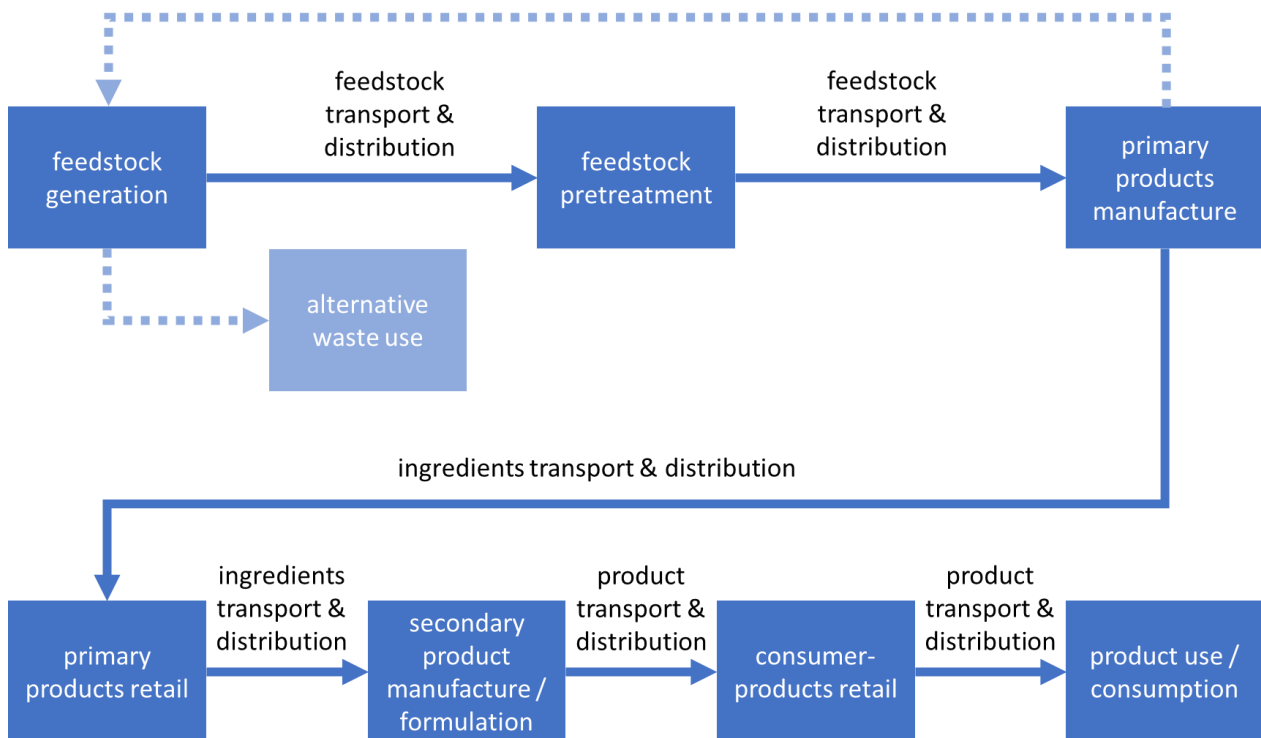


Figure 1: Basic value chain in the WASTE2FUNC project.

### 1.3 ‘Focus Group’ – what’s in a name?

The WASTE2FUNC proposal specifically plans a Stakeholder ‘Focus Group’. However, projects like WASTE2FUNC typically have an Advisory Board made up of external stakeholders to review project results. Advisory Board members attend presentations about project results, participate in discussions about results and provide feedback.

In contrast, a Focus Group is typically a very small group of people, chosen to be representative of a larger group, whose role is to react to specific questions posed by an evaluator. They are typically used in market research (prior to launching new products) and programme evaluation (to evaluate a plan or programme).

### 1.4 Hybrid approach

In WASTE2FUNC, we propose a hybrid approach to Stakeholder Focus Groups. We see value in a traditional Advisory Board, as this format is well understood and accepted by internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, some stakeholder meetings will be carried out in the form of an Advisory Board, where a select group of pre-agreed stakeholders are given deeper insight into the project on a regular basis. In addition, we see some stakeholders (particularly towards the consumer end of the supply chain) as difficult to include in an traditional Advisory Board, and we see very specific questions emerging from the WASTE2FUNC project that would be better targeted at a subset of stakeholders, rather than the whole value chain. For this reason, where appropriate, other stakeholder events will be carried out as Focus Groups with separate stakeholders.

Stakeholders should cover all the areas of the value chain. Many of these areas are already covered by the project consortium (section 2), additional areas will be covered by the external Advisory Board (section 3) and the more difficult to reach stakeholders will be engaged through focus groups (section 4).

## 2 Internal stakeholders across the value chain

The primary purpose of the Stakeholder Focus Group is to represent stakeholders from across the value chains in the WASTE2FUNC project. However, many are already covered in the project consortium. These have been outlined below.

### 2.1 Feedstock pre-treatment and distribution

Within the consortium, Biogas Solutions (AKA Group op de Beek) represents part of feedstock supply, pre-treatment and transport/distribution.

### 2.2 Primary product manufacture, retail and distribution

Primary products manufacturers of lactic acid and biosurfactants are also already covered within the consortium: lactic acid is represented by Triple W (3PLW) and biosurfactants manufacture is represented by Ghent University and Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (who have proposed the spin-out Amphistar for biosurfactants manufacture). In addition, biosurfactants manufacture is represented by Croda and Evonik, who currently sell ingredients for home and personal-care products (business to business), thereby also covering primary products retail.

It should be noted that primary products (ingredients) transport and distribution is routine and well-established, and none of the innovation in this project would have an effect on the transport and distribution of primary products. For this reason, stakeholders from primary product transport and distribution are not covered in any stakeholder groups.

### 2.3 Secondary products manufacture and formulation

Secondary products manufacture and formulation are represented by Ecover. Again, transport and distribution of products will not be affected in this project, so are not included as stakeholders.

## 3 External Advisory Board for wider value-chain coverage

Advisory Board meetings will be held once a year, with the next one planned in January 2022 to coincide with the Consortium Meeting. This will be held remotely owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent meetings are planned for January 2023 and January 2024 and, if appropriate, October 2024.

The eight members of the Advisory Board were largely agreed at the project proposal stage, and are listed below. Additional members of the Advisory Board will be considered if deemed appropriate as the project progresses, and if agreed by the project consortium members.

### 3.1 Feedstock supply

One of the main novelties of the WASTE2FUNC project is the use of wastes and residues as feedstocks, so for the Stakeholder Group there was a strong desire to include more feedstock generators and distributors. For agricultural residues, Primary Producer Focus Groups are being held by consortium partner ISP and are reported elsewhere (deliverable 7.1).

To represent feedstocks derived from agricultural processing, *Flanders Food* and *Cargill* are included as external stakeholders in the Advisory Board. Additional external stakeholders from the area of food-processing residues and food waste are represented in the Advisory Board by *LIPA Family* (for oily feedstock), *Suez* (for oily feedstocks) and *Vamix* (AKA Vandemoortele) (for carbohydrate- and oil-rich feedstocks).

### 3.2 Secondary products manufacture and formulation

There are challenges associated with adding stakeholders from companies making primary and secondary products (B2B or B2C) to internal project discussions. This is because confidentiality is key to ensure the project results can be successfully exploited commercially after project end. One external stakeholder, *Sisterna*, has been included as a B2B representative for biosurfactants in the Advisory Board.

### 3.3 Other key stakeholders

Outside of the value chain itself, *OVAM* have been included in the Advisory Board as the use of waste raises regulatory concerns.

### 3.4 Establishing the advisory board

To establish the Advisory Board, the above-mentioned external stakeholders have been contacted to remind them of their commitments and to welcome questions. The first Advisory Board meeting is planned in January 2022 to coincide with the Consortium Meeting.

## 4 Focus groups for hard-to-reach stakeholders

There are significant challenges with including too many remote stakeholders in regular Advisory Board meetings. For example, most topics covered by the Advisory Board meetings would be technical or logistical in nature, and difficult for representatives of consumer groups or retail companies to understand.

For this reason, Focus Groups in the traditional sense are planned to engage with these harder to reach stakeholders. This will involve groups of no more than 8 people. Sessions will be guided by an evaluator using specific questions and focussing on participant reactions. Focus groups should last no more than a few hours.

### 4.1 Conception of the focus groups

Discussions were held with individual consortium members, primarily between NNFCC, Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant and Ecover, as the most interested in Focus Groups.

Areas relevant for Focus Groups were agreed as:

- feedstock availability hurdles (non-agricultural feedstocks)
- consumer acceptance of waste-derived products
- business plan hurdles

Additional stakeholder focus groups will be considered if needed as the project progresses, for example around the topic of regulatory hurdles.

## 4.2 Feedstock focus group

A feedstock-availability focus group is planned for spring 2022, to address specific questions around hurdles to real availability of wastes and residues. This will likely involve a combination of some feedstock stakeholders from the Advisory Board and some additional external stakeholders from the feedstocks sector. Stakeholder interviews in recent months (as part of Work Package 2) have already identified several interested participants from industries generating waste.

## 4.3 Consumer acceptance focus group

Late in 2022, a focus group is planned around customer acceptance of waste-derived ingredients for home and personal care products. In particular, this relates to the challenge that customers in the 'green products' market typically want vegan products, but post-consumer waste (such as food waste from local authorities) cannot be guaranteed to be vegan. Exact questions and participant lists are yet to be fully developed, but desired participants are likely to include NGOs such as WWF, Cruelty Free International and The Vegan Society. It is likely that this stakeholder focus group will be repeated in 2023 to further develop some concepts.

## 4.4 Identifying participants

Participants for Focus Groups will be identified through participation in communication events, through the Contact button on the project website (<https://www.waste2func.eu/nl/>) and by contacting relevant companies or individuals directly.

# 5 Reporting on Stakeholder Focus Groups

Regular reporting is planned in the Grant Agreement as Deliverables 7.8 (workshop 1, M6), 7.9 (workshop 2, M12), 7.10 (workshop 3, M24), 7.11 (workshop 4, M36) and 7.12 (workshop 5, M46).

Deliverable 7.8 will cover a stakeholder engagement workshop carried out in the first 6 months of the project, deliverable 7.9 will cover the first Advisory Board meeting, deliverable 7.10 will cover the first focus groups, deliverable 7.11 will cover the second Advisory Board meeting, and deliverable 7.12 will cover the third Advisory Board meeting and any later Focus Groups.