

FEASTS Platform design for safe data sharing - concept

Deliverable 2.2

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Executive Summary

Data sharing is critical for scientific research and efficient innovation, yet it has been lacking in the field of cultured meat and cultured seafood (CM/CSF) due to concerns about revealing sensitive and largely proprietary information. This report describes a general design concept for a data-sharing platform to be developed within the FEASTS project. In addition to assisting with public dissemination of project results and the internal sharing and analysis of data, the platform aims to facilitate and incentivize the sharing of sensitive data by CM/CSF researchers, including those from private developers. It also provides examples of platforms, tools, and projects that may be of use to FEASTS in designing and operating the system.

Introduction

Until recently, progress in the cultured meat and seafood sector (CM/CSF) has been dominated by research funded by private investment. Such research is usually kept behind closed doors by developers, as investors are concerned with protecting future intellectual property (IP). The result is a sector fragmented into silos of knowledge and expertise, where standard scientific practices – especially data sharing – that accelerate development are intentionally avoided, due to fears of inadvertently aiding potential competitors. Data sharing may increase as public funding for academic research grows. However, due to the limited information available from private developers, most researchers will largely still have to start from scratch, leading to duplication of previous research efforts – regardless of whether they were successful. Further, academic institutions pursuing spin-off opportunities in the private sector may also become protective of future IP, leading to a continuation of the inefficiencies seen today. This suggests that the lack of data sharing is a major bottleneck to progress in this field, ironically driven by the very promise of innovation it aims to deliver.

The practice of open science to improve efficiency and accelerate progress in the CM/CSF sector has been advocated in the literature (Holmes et al. 2022). However, proponents for this generally acknowledge that private developers lack both the methods and incentives to engage in the practice, in addition to previously discussed concerns about IP. Common academic approaches to data sharing, such as publishing in journals, can be costly in terms of time, materials, and funding for developers, and may distract from their core activities. Moreover, building novel solutions, such as platforms for streamlined data sharing, could be even more costly and distracting, as they would require significant investment in infrastructure. This suggests that if open science is to become standard practice for CM/CSF, entities outside the private sector, and possibly even outside academia, will likely need to develop the infrastructure, methods, and incentive structures to lower "costs" and effectively encourage researcher participation.

FEASTS presents an opportunity to build a data sharing platform that supports the storage and analysis of data from both academic and private researchers.

Additionally, methods to incentivize data sharing by private developers could be explored, including mechanisms to protect IP sensitive information and reduce the associated costs. This document outlines both the general concept and specific design options for a data sharing platform to be developed and delivered by the end of the FEASTS project (Deliverable 2.2, Month 36).

General design concept

This section outlines a general concept for the data sharing platform, where the features described should be viewed as preferences rather than fixed capabilities or constraints, aside from the essential requirements of strict data protection and controlled user access for IP sensitive data. These aspects may change during the design and implementation phases depending on available resources and emerging opportunities. If existing or planned platforms are identified that align with the objectives of the FEASTS project, collaborations may be pursued to integrate them. This approach could create synergies between projects and regions, benefit the sector as a whole and reduce duplication of efforts.

Multi-purpose

While the platform's most novel feature, and a key component of the deliverable, is its ability to facilitate the sharing of IP sensitive data, it will not be limited to this function. As a product of FEASTS, it will support open science more broadly and serve as a general purpose data sharing platform for the CM/CSF sector.

Public and private facing

As a general concept, the platform could be described as having three layers. The first, or outer, layer would be public facing, while the second (middle) and third (inner) layers would be private facing.

The first, outermost layer would be for information exchange with the public at large. No sensitive information would be shared. The most basic function could be storage and dissemination of information generated by the FEASTS project (e.g. handled similar to library systems, categorized according to type of information such as publications, reports, and in some cases datasets), as well as allowing channels of communication and feedback from the public to FEASTS. If/when other related projects, initiatives, or entities collaborate with FEASTS, additional areas dedicated to public data sharing could be added to support those as well. In that way, the platform can grow beyond FEASTS to become a resource for the larger sector, and

potentially decrease costs and duplication of efforts across projects (see section on *Strategies for long-term sustainability*).

The second, middle layer would be for sharing data with and between members of or collaborators with the FEASTS consortium. It would have greater security related to data, user access, and user control than the public facing first layer, restricting it to those working for the project (member or collaborator). Sensitive data in this layer may be compartmentalized from less sensitive data to prevent accidental access. Likewise, if other projects, initiatives, or entities join with FEASTS to support the platform, data and user access can be compartmentalized to create a firewall within this layer between FEASTS and these others. Some data or files may be allowed to move between the first and second layer, for example if a dataset prepared by FEASTS members is readied for public dissemination. However, such exchange would be limited.

The third, innermost layer would be for sharing explicitly sensitive data between authorized parties in order to build cross sector data sets and perform relevant analytics. This is the most novel component of the platform and would feature the strictest controls over user access and data handling (including format), meant for IP sensitive data from those in the private sector or academic groups. This layer is not intended to interact with the others, for example, data or files should not move between layers. Bespoke subspaces may also be created within this layer for specific data storage and analytical purposes.

Different types of users

As outlined in the previous section on the platform's layered structure, the intent is to serve a diverse range of users. The public facing portion would serve users seeking straightforward information about the project and its outputs. The private facing portions would support those looking to collaborate and share data to develop new products or generate knowledge for the CM/CSF sector, whether through data integration or analysis. As described in the previous section, if additional entities FEASTS to collaborate on the platform, users may also come from other projects and countries. In general, moving from outer to inner layers reflects a shift from broad

based "passive" users of data from outside the sector, to specialized "active" users of data, within or researching about the CM/CSF sector.

Different types of data and analyses

As outlined in the FEASTS digital output management plan (DOMP), the platform will handle three general classes of data produced by the FEASTS project :

1) technical (*scientific data regarding the components, processes, and products of CM&S technologies that would be relevant to scientists and engineers*);

2) socio-economic (*data or findings relevant to those interested in social science, economic/business, political, or ethical aspects of implementing CM&S technologies for food production*); and

3) analytical modelling (*computational modelling/assessment of scientific and/or socio-economic aspects of cultured meat, using large data sets*).

These classes include both quantitative and qualitative data, with varying degrees of sensitivity, whether due to personal information or IP concerns. For a more detailed description of these data classes, see Appendix A, which includes the relevant section from the DOMP.

While the public-facing portion of the platform will enable basic data exchange without significant analytical functionality, the private facing layers may support more advanced data processing, either during or after data input. Any analytics will be purpose-driven and aligned with the relevant data classes.

Given the variety of data sources, including historical data, it may be necessary to reformat datasets to meet internal standards. It may also be decided that transforming data for use in a relational database would be advantageous for purposes of storage and retrieval across lines of research. Finally, compiling, inspecting, and labelling of data, including iterations of such steps, may support machine learning applications on large datasets.

Modular design

Rather than building a platform to serve all potential data types, users, and functions from the start, it is proposed that portions be created to serve specified functions in a modular fashion, as needed. For example, an initial module could be for storage of publications, acting as a standalone repository of articles produced by FEASTS, as well as (where possible) references used by them. Later modules could be more sophisticated, including relational databases for data that might be used by different researchers. This approach reduces costs and avoids unnecessary work.

Additionally, it allows changes to be made without disrupting functionality in other parts of the platform. This modularity could also include physical infrastructure, to create extra security by preventing access between different areas, or as additional storage for backup.

If additional collaborators join with FEASTS to support the platform, these modular structures, digital or physical, could be replicated in other locations to create a network maintained across projects and locations, providing additional stability and long term sustainability.

Security

Overall, GDPR guidelines will be followed for the entire platform. For the private-facing, middle and inner "layers", additional levels of security will be employed to protect the platform, data, and users. These security measures will be clearly defined as the platform's digital and physical infrastructure is developed. Data aggregation and anonymization are two methods commonly used for protecting sensitive information, whether personal or IP, and are likely strategies for some data handling.

In the FEASTS document treating the data sharing platform as a key exploitable result (KER) of the project (see Appendix B for full excerpt), concepts of data security are described as follows:

The platform will incorporate robust encryption protocols to safeguard sensitive data. Compliance with GDPR could be ensured through:

- *User consent protocols for data sharing.*
- *Regular audits by external data privacy experts.*
- *Training sessions for stakeholders to adhere to data governance rules.*

Opportunities & resources

This section explores examples of tools, projects, and platforms for data sharing, which FEASTS could use, adapt into its design, or in the case of existing projects and platforms, join or collaborate with.

Examples from the public sector, especially those supported by the European Commission, may offer relevant guidelines or opportunities for direct project collaboration, while those from the private sector may allow more flexibility in design choices and adaptability to novel data handling needs.

Some of these examples have greater relevance for handling sensitive data, and are thus more applicable to the private facing, middle, and inner layers of the proposed FEASTS platform, while others are used for general, open data sharing as found in public repositories, making them more relevant for the public facing, outer layer.

Sensitive data handling

[PISTIS project](#)

From the website for the European project Promoting and Incentivising Federated, Trusted, Fair Sharing and Trading of Interoperable Data Assets (PISTIS) ([link above](#)) (note: emphasis in **bold**, by author of this report):

The European project PISTIS aims at delivering a secure and controlled platform for the exchange and usage of data assets and data-driven intelligence.

PISTIS, a new project funded by European Union, stands for Promoting and Incentivising Federated, Trusted, Fair Sharing and Trading of Interoperable Data Assets.

Started in January 2023 under the coordination of Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems (FOKUS), **the project aims to create**

incentives for companies and public institutions to share their data with each other in a controlled, secure, and fair way.

... approximately 80% of industrial data is never effectively used ... In fact, data management and sharing remain elusive due to several issues, concerning technical, cultural/organisational, economic, and legal factors.

“PISTIS aims to address these challenges, developing a federated data sharing/trading and monetisation platform for secure, trusted and controlled exchange of proprietary data assets. Targeting the expansion of the data trading ecosystem, the project will consider and influence the specifications produced in the global Data Spaces initiatives (GAIA-X, IDSA) to increase the degree data sharing interoperability to further promote the EU Data Economy”, explains Yury Glikman, the project coordinator of PISTIS.

iSHARE Trust Framework

From the iShare website (link above) (note: emphasis in **bold** added by author of this report):

Managing and analysing large datasets in R&D requires effective data management strategies, which are often time-consuming and complex. Research institutions also need unrestricted access to manage sensitive or proprietary data to overcome privacy regulations and specialised skill requirements. The ethical compliance and navigating regulatory frameworks further amplify data complexity, demanding meticulous attention and time from researchers.

The European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) supports interdisciplinary and multinational research by promoting the use of FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data to plan, execute, disseminate, and evaluate their research workflows and outcomes. Initiatives like FAIR-IMPACT identify practices, policies, tools and technical specifications for FAIR data

management across real-time use cases in Agri-food, life science, photon & neutron science and social sciences and humanities. Another Initiative, the Research Data Alliance (RDA) facilitates the open sharing and reuse of data among researchers to address societal challenges.

With the iSHARE Trust Framework, the research sector can improve the open sharing and reuse of data across various fields including Agricultural Sciences, Engineering, Medical Sciences, and more. **By implementing iSHARE's standardized protocols, research institutions can streamline data management, ensure compliance with privacy regulations, and maintain control over sensitive and proprietary data.**

TRUSTS project

From the TRUSTS website (link above):

The Horizon 2020 project TRUSTS – Trusted Secure Data Sharing Space aims to develop a data sharing platform for secure, trustworthy, and GDPR-compliant data exchanges.

Based on the experience of two large national data market projects, TRUSTS will allow the integration and adoption of future platforms in different jurisdictions.

Common European Data Spaces

From the page for Common European Data Spaces (link above) (note: emphasis in **bold** added by the author of this report):

To harness the value of data for the benefit of the European economy and society, the European strategy for data of February 2020 set out the path to the creation of Common European Data Spaces in a number of strategic fields: health, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, mobility, finance, public administration, skills, the European Open Science Cloud and the green deal.

... Stakeholders drive the evolution of data spaces. Users within each distinct sector contribute to shaping these spaces, resulting in the emergence of unique forms and characteristics. Yet, what underpins all European data spaces is common data infrastructures and governance frameworks, which facilitates data pooling, access and sharing. In addition, the Common European Data Spaces have these key features. They:

- are open for the participation of all organisations and individuals.
- **have a secure and privacy-preserving infrastructure to pool, access, share, process, and use data.**
- **are a clear and practical structure for accessing and using data: common European data space have fair, transparent, proportionate and non-discriminatory access rules, due to well-defined and trustworthy data governance mechanisms.**
- **respect EU rules and values, especially personal data and consumer protection, and competition law.**
- **enable data holders to grant access to or to share certain personal or non-personal data.**
- empower data holders to make their data available for reuse for free or against compensation.

The Common European Data Spaces will help unleash the enormous potential of data-driven innovation. **They will allow data from across the EU to be made available and exchanged in a trustworthy and secure manner.** EU Businesses, public administrations, and individuals will control the data they generate. At the same time, these data holders will benefit from a safe and reliable framework to share their data for innovation purposes.

[SIMPL platform](#) & [SIMPL Program](#)

As described on the website (links above):

Simpl is an open source, secure middleware that supports data access and interoperability in European data initiatives. It provides multiple compatible

components, free to use, that adhere to a common standard of data quality and data sharing. A future where reliable, updated data are available across industries is possible with Simpl.

and...

At its core, Simpl is an open source project, which means that it is built upon the efforts of a large network of contributors. Simpl allows anyone to see, modify and distribute its software, which increases transparency and customisation. But the participation options go beyond code development: there are many ways in which you can engage in the project.

Open science / repository data handling

[European Open Science Cloud \(EOSC\)](#)

From the EOSC website (link above):

The ambition of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) is to provide European researchers, innovators, companies and citizens with a federated and open multi-disciplinary environment where they can publish, find and reuse data, tools and services for research, innovation and educational purposes.

This environment will operate under well-defined conditions to ensure trust and safeguard the public interest.

The EOSC enables a step change across scientific communities and research infrastructures towards

- seamless access
- FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability and Reusability) management

- reliable reuse of research data and all other digital objects produced along the research life cycle (e.g. methods, software and publications)

The European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) ultimately aims to develop a 'Web of FAIR Data and services' for science in Europe upon which a wide range of value-added services can be built. These range from visualisation and analytics to long-term information preservation or the monitoring of the uptake of open science practices.

Dataverse

From the Dataverse Project website (link above):

The Dataverse Project is an open source web application to share, preserve, cite, explore, and analyze research data. It facilitates making data available to others, and allows you to replicate others' work more easily. Researchers, journals, data authors, publishers, data distributors, and affiliated institutions all receive academic credit and web visibility.

Federated Research Data Repository (FRDR-DFDR)

An example repository platform, from the FRDR website (link above):

The Federated Research Data Repository (FRDR) is a bilingual publishing platform for sharing and preserving Canadian research data. It is a curated, general-purpose repository, custom built for large datasets.

CKAN

From the CKAN website (link above):

CKAN is an open-source DMS (data management system) for powering data hubs and data portals. CKAN makes it easy to publish, share and use data. It powers hundreds of data portals worldwide.

CoreTrustSeal (certification)

From the CoreTrustSeal website (link above):

CoreTrustSeal offers to any interested data repository a core level certification based on the Core Trustworthy Data Repositories Requirements. This universal catalogue of requirements reflects the core characteristics of trustworthy data repositories.

Strategies for long term sustainability

The goal is to have the platform exist beyond the end of the FEASTS project in order to continue serving the sector and to preserve information valuable for innovation as well as public understanding of these technologies. A report that describes the KERs expected from FEASTS outlines strategies to ensure the platform's longevity and can be considered part of the design concept. The following is a brief excerpt from that report (see Appendix B for the full excerpt):

There are opportunities to expand the platform for use with other projects and international efforts seeking to share data regarding CM/CSF. The ultimate goal is to extend the platform's use and impact beyond the duration of the FEASTS project by:

- *Establishing partnerships with global initiatives such as OpenCellAg.com.*
- *Hosting webinars to onboard additional stakeholders.*
- *Creating modular features to adapt the platform for other cellular agriculture applications.*

...

Until the platform has been created, it is not possible to specify mechanisms ensuring sustainable hosting after the end of FEASTS. However, long term sustainability will be kept in mind during its design and implementation.

As mentioned above, one possibility is to integrate the proposed platform with existing platforms (e.g., OpenCellAg.com). It could also be integrated with similar platforms being developed by other organizations or projects. This can reduce costs as well as increase synergies by connecting data-sharing needs and required infrastructure beyond a single project.

It is preferable that any host organization maintaining the platform be a non-profit with mission goals aligned to New Harvest, particularly a commitment to open and responsible innovation, with examples such as GFI or EIT-Food.

The platform may also be maintained jointly, again to help reduce costs. Within this model, particularly if private CM/CSF developers are involved, be additional funding mechanisms may be introduced, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Finally, subscription models for platform use or for accessing certain features could be developed to create a revenue stream for upkeep. This is not preferable, as it begins to erode open science and innovation; however, it can be considered as long as the revenue is not profit-oriented.

Next steps

Initial work towards a data sharing platform for the field of cellular agriculture, including the CM/CSF sector, was launched by New Harvest prior to the start of the FEASTS project, working closely with Lejly Gafour (then CEO of Cult Food Science). The intention was to construct this platform using the website OpenCellAg.com as its basis, with a compilation of publications and standard operating procedures (SOPs) as likely first candidates for data sharing. With the launch of FEASTS, options for location, design, types of data, and uses have expanded.

New Harvest Netherlands and New Harvest Canada, in particular, along with people with relevant knowledge and expertise connected to our network (e.g. data science, digital library repositories), have continued scoping potential designs and means of collaboration for such a platform. New Harvest Canada has recently started a Canadian funded project called CAPE, which also seeks to create a database, offering points of collaboration between these projects. In addition, other projects related to the CM/CSF sector, inside and outside the EU (e.g., [APROVALS](#), [CARMA](#)), have also been identified as potential collaborators toward a data sharing platform that serves the sector. This scoping will continue, along with increasing activity toward finalizing a design and building an initial platform over the remainder of the year. If opportunities arise to use or build upon existing platforms, these may also be taken.

In parallel with developing the platform, discussions with representatives from private developers, as well as those familiar with IP concerns, will be consulted through surveys and/or workshops to understand the nature of resistance to data sharing. From this work, strategies to incentivize data sharing by the private sector will be developed, with the goal of attracting their use of the platform to build knowledge for the sector.

References

Holmes, D., Humbird, D., Dutkiewicz, J., Tejeda-Saldana, Y., Duffy, B., & Datar, I. (2022). Cultured meat needs a race to mission not a race to market. *Nature Food*, 3, 785–787. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-022-00586-9>

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Appendix

A. Expected types of datasets and digital outputs

The following is an excerpt from the FEASTS Digital Outputs Management Plan (DOMP) describing the "... types of datasets or digital outputs ... the project [is] expected to produce, re-use, and hold long-term value for other researchers...":

FEASTS will produce information across a range of topics, defined by the specific focus of work packages 2-7, but may be generally divided into three broad categories: **technical** (scientific data regarding the components, processes, and products of CM&S technologies that would be relevant to scientists and engineers); **socio-economic** (data or findings relevant to those interested in social science, economic/business, political, or ethical aspects of implementing CM&S technologies for food production); and **analytical modelling** (computational modelling/assessment of scientific and/or socio-economic aspects of cultured meat, using large data sets). Given the diverse nature of these topics, this will include qualitative and quantitative data, in digital, written, or visual/multimedia formats.

Technical data will cover the entire production process from cell sourcing to final product, necessary to understand the development and viability of CM&S technology, as well as nutrition and safety analytics relevant to understanding how processes or products could affect consumer health. This will come from both literature and experimental research conducted by consortium partners and where possible shared by external stakeholders.

Socio-economic data will cover aspects relevant to the implementation of this technology, such as: supply chains necessary to scale-up production, consumer perspectives, potential business models, safety and regulatory policies (including labelling), and views of/potential impact on stakeholders in the current food value chain. This will come from both literature research and workshops with relevant stakeholder groups, conducted by consortium partners and where possible shared by external stakeholders.

Analytical modelling data will generally involve computational analysis of large data sets, such as techno-economic assessments (TEAs) and life-cycle analyses (LCAs) relevant to understanding necessary parameters for development and implementation of CM&S technology at different scales/production-distribution models, using data provided by consortium partners, or where possible shared by external stakeholders.

Databases for each class of data may be created by partners working directly on specific topics, though it is expected that they may be combined/grouped where possible under work packages or an umbrella consortium-wide database.

B. Platform as a Key Exploitable Result (KER2)

The following is an excerpt from a FEASTS document describing the project's KERs , specifically addressing KER 2: the Platform Design for Safe Data Sharing.:

Definition/Assessment/Intellectual Property Status

The second key exploitable result (KER 2) of the FEASTS project is the development of a data-sharing platform intended for non-commercial use. The platform aims to ensure broad access to and sharing of CM/CSF relevant data by FEASTS partners and various stakeholders groups, including industry and non-industry actors. The goal is to foster knowledge development, innovation, service provision, and further scientific research.

This platform will include mechanisms to encourage the sharing of sensitive data by industry or other stakeholders. These mechanisms may include contractual agreements for data handling or methods for processing data while protecting IP-sensitive information. For industry, sharing data in a way that safeguards IP-sensitive information, while enabling discoveries that are only possible with large datasets across different developers ... is crucial. This approach aims to break down the current siloed method and accelerate the development of these technologies.

The platform will incorporate robust encryption protocols to safeguard sensitive data. Compliance with GDPR could be ensured through:

- User consent protocols for data sharing.
- Regular audits by external data privacy experts.
- Training sessions for stakeholders to adhere to data governance rules.

There are opportunities to expand the platform for use with other projects and international efforts seeking to share data regarding CM/CSF. The ultimate goal is to extend the platform's use and impact beyond the duration of the FEASTS project by:

- Establishing partnerships with global initiatives such as OpenCellAg.com.
- Hosting webinars to onboard additional stakeholders.
- Creating modular features to adapt the platform for other cellular agriculture applications.

Exploitation Strategies and Activities

The data sharing platform is intended for non-commercial purpose, to ensure broad access to and sharing of CM/CSF relevant data by different stakeholder groups (industry and non-industry) to develop knowledge and innovation as a service provision and further scientific research.

Profile of Exploitation Entity

New Harvest is a nonprofit research institute focused on open, public research on cultured meat. Their mission is to make information on cultured meat accessible to everyone, fostering innovation and collaboration. They build partnerships across academia, government, philanthropy, and industry, and their open intellectual property strategy allows free use and sharing of resources, maximizing impact. In this sense, the activities planned to accomplish this KER envisage a possible collaboration and co-development with OpenCellAg.com, together with other experts in the field.

Until the platform has been created, it is not possible to specify mechanisms ensuring sustainable hosting after the end of FEASTS. However, longer term sustainability will be kept in mind during its design and implementation.

As mentioned above, one possibility is to integrate the proposed platform with existing platforms (e.g. Opencellag.com). It could also be integrated with similar platforms being developed by other organizations or projects. This can reduce costs as well as increase synergies by connecting data-sharing needs, and required infrastructure, beyond a single project.

It is preferable that any host organization which maintains the platform be a non-profit with similar aligned mission goals to New Harvest, particularly a commitment to open and responsible innovation, with current examples such as GFI or EIT-Food.

It may also be maintained jointly, again to help reduce costs. Within this model, particularly if private CM/CSF developers are involved, there may be added mechanisms for funding, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Finally, subscription models for use of the platform, or accessing certain features, could be developed to create a revenue stream for its upkeep. This is not preferable, as it begins to erode open science and innovation, however it can be considered as long as revenue is not profit-oriented.



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