



InAFQual project partners gathered in Seinäjoki to advance data-driven food quality solutions

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International partners met at SEAMK to review project progress and future opportunities

Partners of the Interreg Aurora-funded InAFQual project gathered in Seinäjoki, Finland, on 29th of September 2026 for the project's second annual meeting, this time hosted at SEAMK. The event brought together project partners and industry representatives from Finland and Sweden to discuss progress, exchange ideas and plan the next stages of collaborative research and innovation.

The meeting was organised in conjunction with the Food Days event week and included research presentations, company discussions, laboratory visits and a steering committee meeting. Project partners also had the opportunity to explore SEAMK Food Labs and discuss future pilot activities with industrial stakeholders.

Developing smarter tools for food quality and

authenticity

The InAFQual project aims to improve food quality assurance, safety and authenticity verification through advanced sensing technologies, hyperspectral imaging, artificial intelligence and data analytics. By combining expertise from research organisations and companies, the project seeks to develop practical tools that can be deployed in real food production environments.

Research cases showed encouraging progress

During the meeting, project partners presented the latest developments from their respective work packages and discussed technical challenges, future milestones and opportunities for collaboration.

Detecting biofilms on food-contact surfaces

SEAMK presented ongoing work on the detection and characterisation of biofilms on stainless steel surfaces commonly used in the food industry. The discussion focused on data collection, imaging approaches and the development of reliable AI models capable of supporting hygiene monitoring and food safety management. Experimental work continues.

Caraway and agricultural product authenticity

Research activities related to caraway and other agricultural products explored how spectroscopic methods could be used to identify quality parameters, product characteristics and geographical origin. Participants highlighted the importance of high-quality reference data and robust validation methods for developing reliable authentication solutions.

Hyperspectral imaging for Arctic reindeer meat

Another key research case focused on Arctic reindeer meat. Partners reviewed opportunities to utilise hyperspectral imaging and AI-based analysis for evaluating product quality and supporting food authenticity verification. The discussions also addressed the importance of acquiring sufficient training data for future model development. As a follow up from the meeting next visit to Arvidsjaur was planned.

Food Labs visit connected research with industry needs

A guided tour of SEAMK Food Labs provided participants with an overview of the university's pilot-scale research environments and analytical capabilities. The facilities demonstrated how research results can be tested, validated and transferred into practical industrial solutions. The visit also generated discussions on new pilot opportunities, technology demonstrations and future collaboration with food sector companies across the Aurora region.

Looking ahead

The meeting confirmed strong progress across several research areas and identified key priorities for the coming months. These include expanding data collection activities, advancing AI model development and preparing new pilot demonstrations with industry partners.

Participants described the meeting as highly productive and valuable, providing an opportunity to strengthen project collaboration and align future activities across the consortium. SEAMK was thanked for hosting the event and providing an opportunity to showcase its research infrastructure and food innovation ecosystem.



A group selfie at SEAMK Food Labs, l-r: Markus Ojala, Gun Wirtanen, Julien Walser, Joel Lundberg, Ahmed Elragal, Dina Shona Laila, Sanna Gunell, Viveka Öling-Wärnå, Katrin Asplund (photo by Markus Ojala).

About the project

InAFQual (Intelligent Approaches for Food Quality) is an Interreg Aurora project that brings together universities, research organisations and companies from Finland and Sweden. The project develops innovative methods for improving food quality assurance, authenticity verification and data-driven decision-making through advanced sensing technologies and artificial intelligence.

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Markus Ojala works as a project manager at Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences (SEAMK), focusing on food-system innovation, food-process digitalisation and collaborative research and development.

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Note on the use of AI

Generative AI was used to summarize meeting transcript, language revision and structure for the article. The author reviewed, edited and takes responsibility for the content.