

# Identifying Needs of Food Composition Database Users – PortFIR experience



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## Introduction

Information sharing and management among all food chain intervenients is crucial to improve food safety and to promote and protect public health. It optimizes resources usage and provides evidence support to define and promote policies in food and nutrition and to increase the efficiency of food productive systems.

## Aims

To share information among Portuguese Food Composition Table (FCT) users, to identify their needs, in order to define priorities for the update of the National Food Composition Table.

## Materials and methods

INSA, IP established a partnership with GS1 Portugal, in 2009, to develop a programme - Portuguese Food Information Resource (PortFIR) - to implement national networks of knowledge sharing on nutrition and food safety (Fig.1). The programme has the collaboration of governmental and private organizations encompassing health, agriculture and economy sectors and includes the implementation of a Food Information Network Management System (sGRIA) with a web interface.

## Results and discussion

The analysis of the questionnaire responses (184 valid answers) revealed, as main results, that:

1 - Users choose as first option the on-line format (52%) of the Portuguese FCT (options: on-line, CD-rom, book, other).

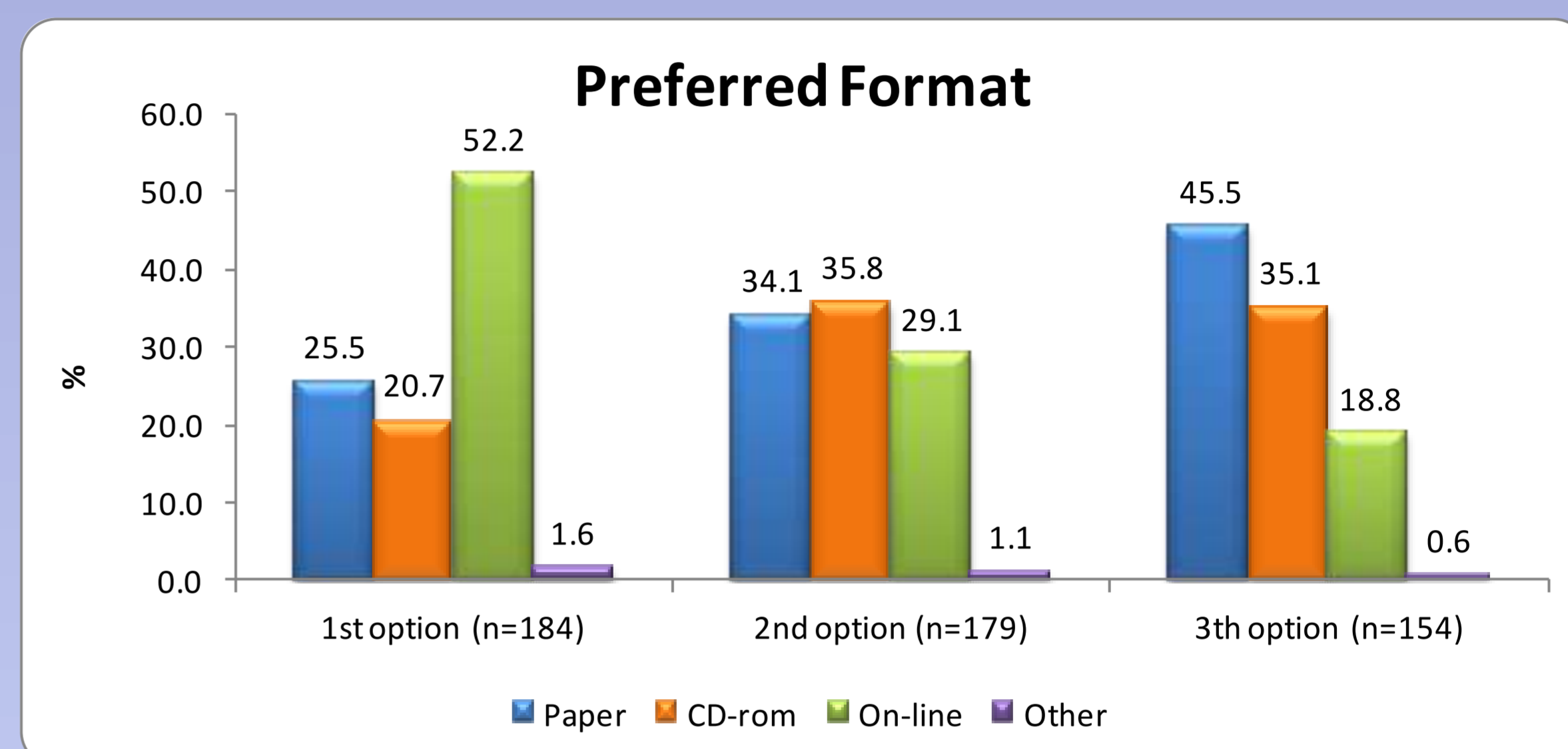


Fig. 3 – Food Composition Table preferred format

2 - Besides the current FCT nutritional information, users identified as their main needs: food portion (39%) (Fig.4), fatty acids n-3 and n-6 (25%) (Fig.5), allergens (50%) (Fig.6), and traditional dishes (23%) (Fig.7).

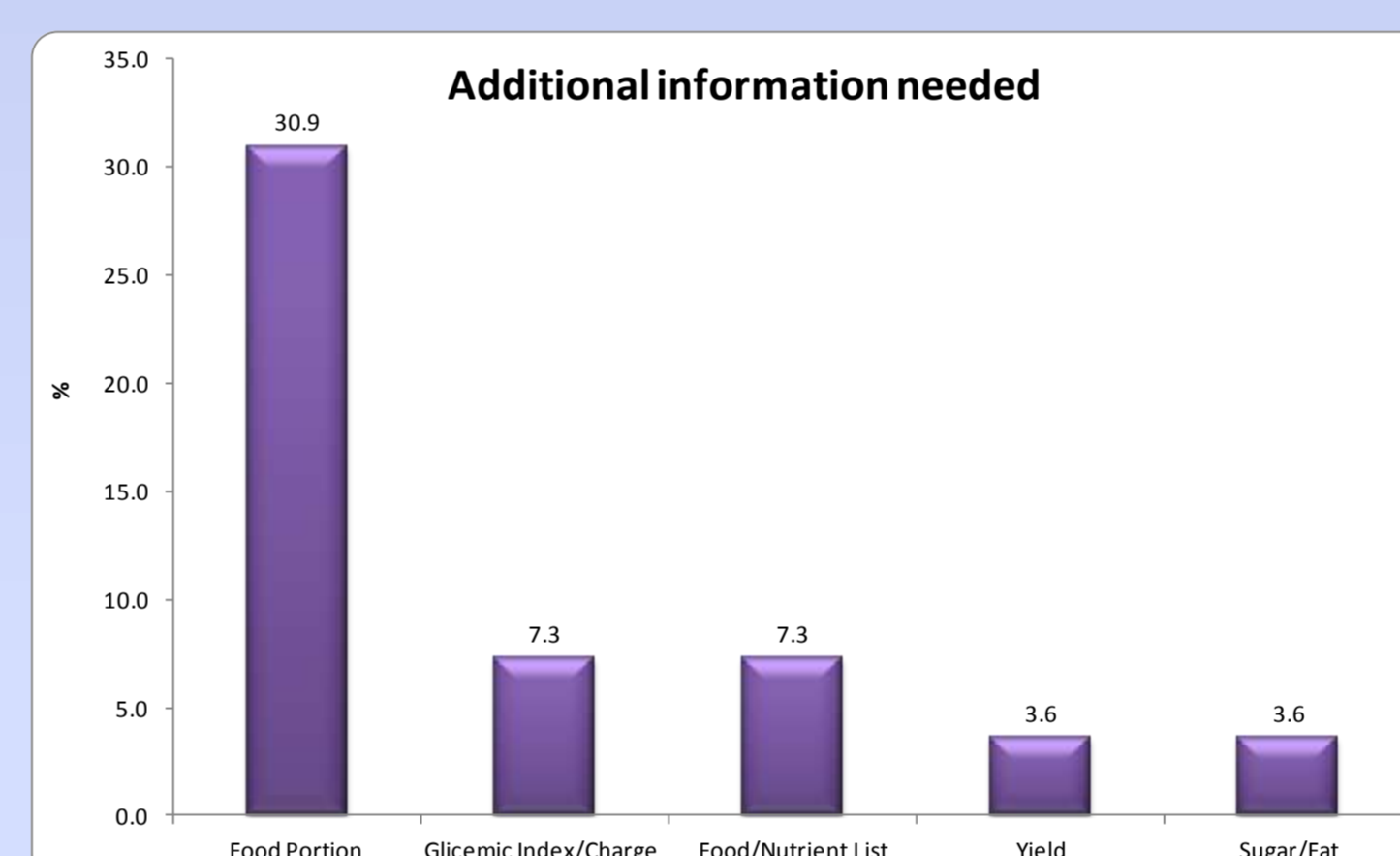


Fig. 4 – Additional information needed by FCT users

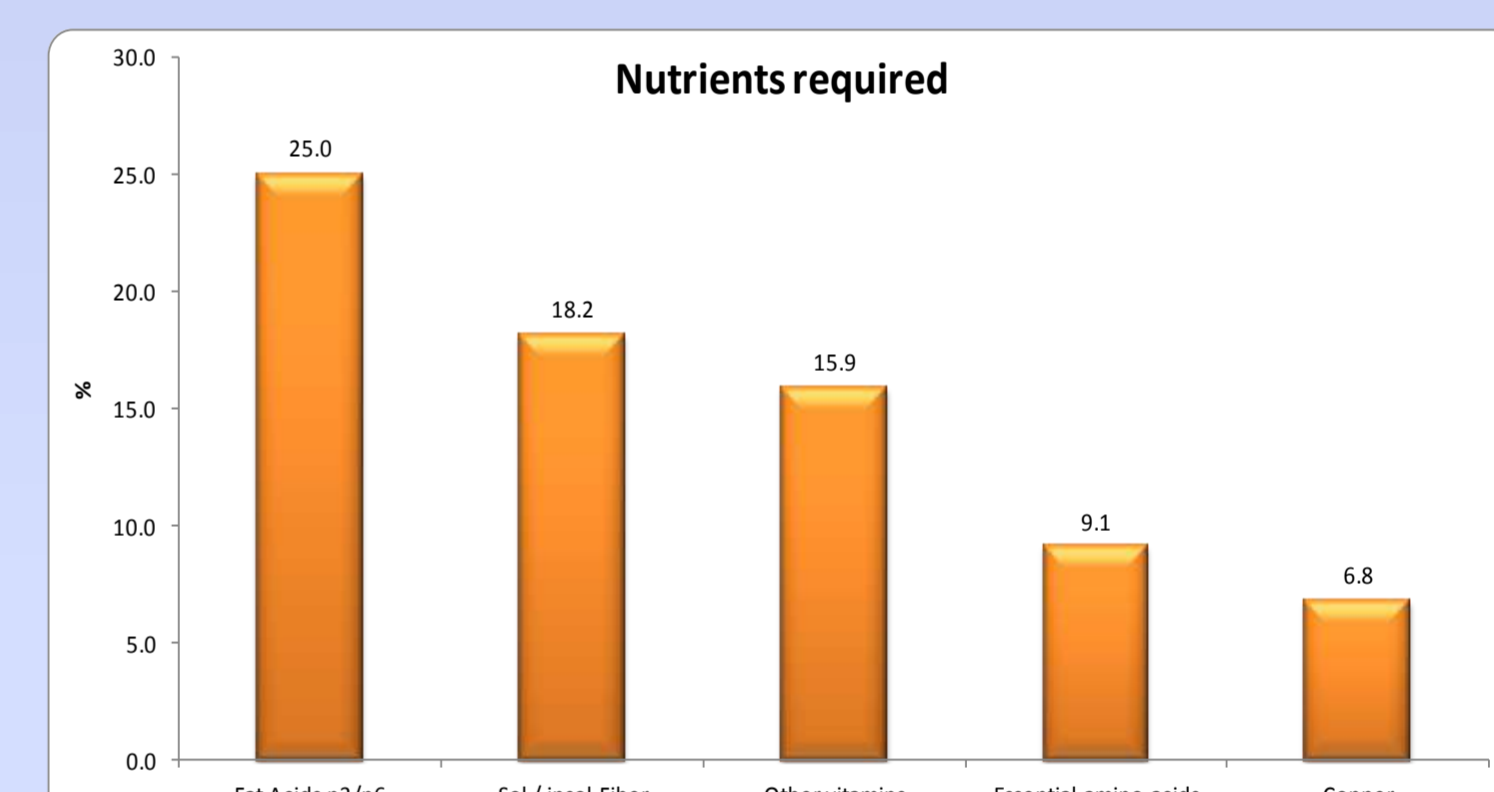


Fig. 5 – Nutrients required by FCT users

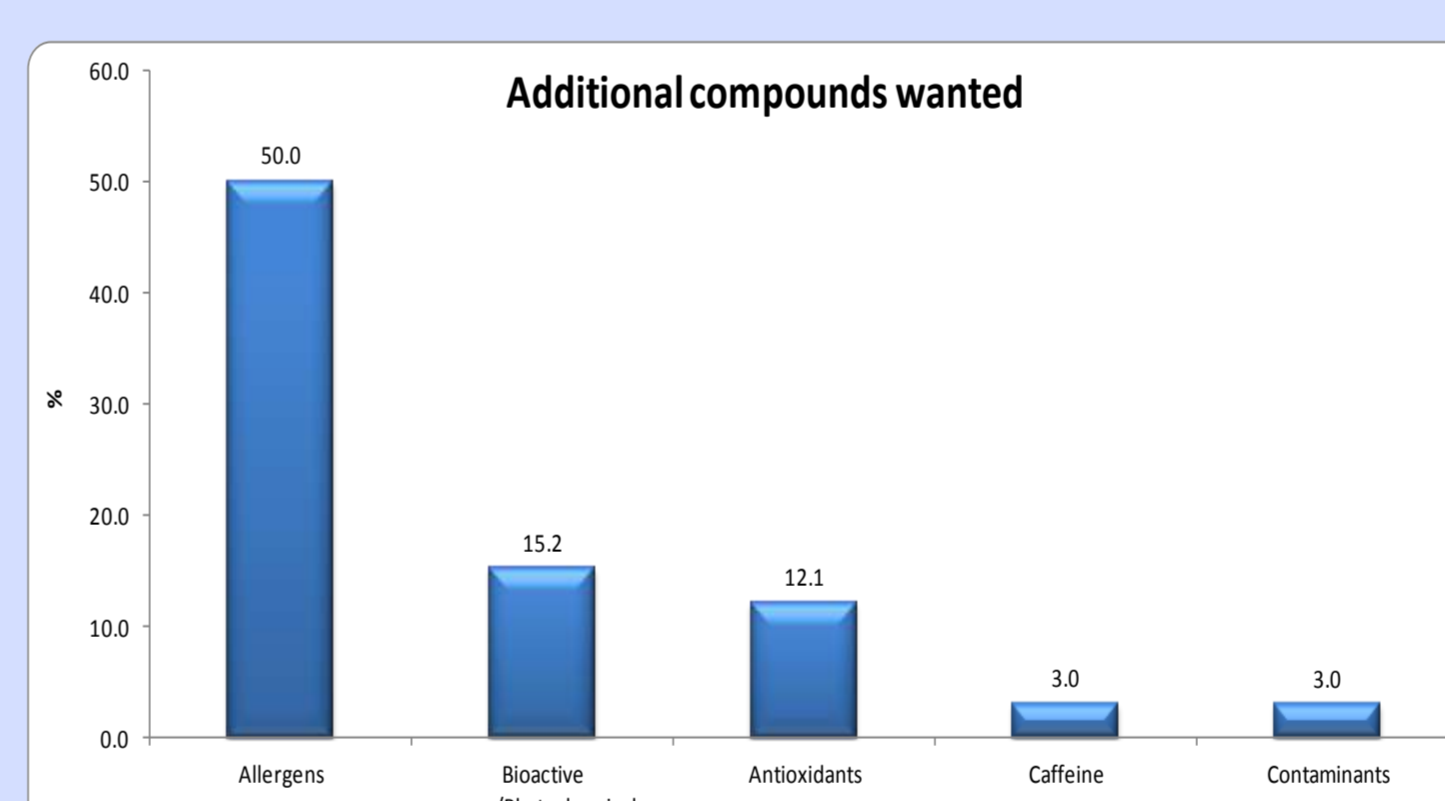


Fig. 6 – Additional compounds wanted by FCT users



Fig. 7 – Additional dishes/foods wanted by FCT users

3 - Respondents consider number of foods, micronutrients and composite dishes as the main limitations of the present FCT.

The questionnaire analysis revealed the need of further improvement regarding open questions.

## Conclusions

❖ Cooperation between data producers and users is contributing to optimize the usage of National resources and to disseminate the knowledge about nutrition and food safety.

❖ The information obtained through PortFIR – Users Working Group, will support compilers to establish informed priorities/decisions..

❖ Future applications of this questionnaire should transform open questions into questions with defined options (based in this previous study) to improve coherence of the answers and the analysis of results, and sample should be more representative and better documented.

❖ Food portion, fatty acids n-3 and n-6, allergens, and traditional dishes, were the main Portuguese FCT update needs, identified through the questionnaire.

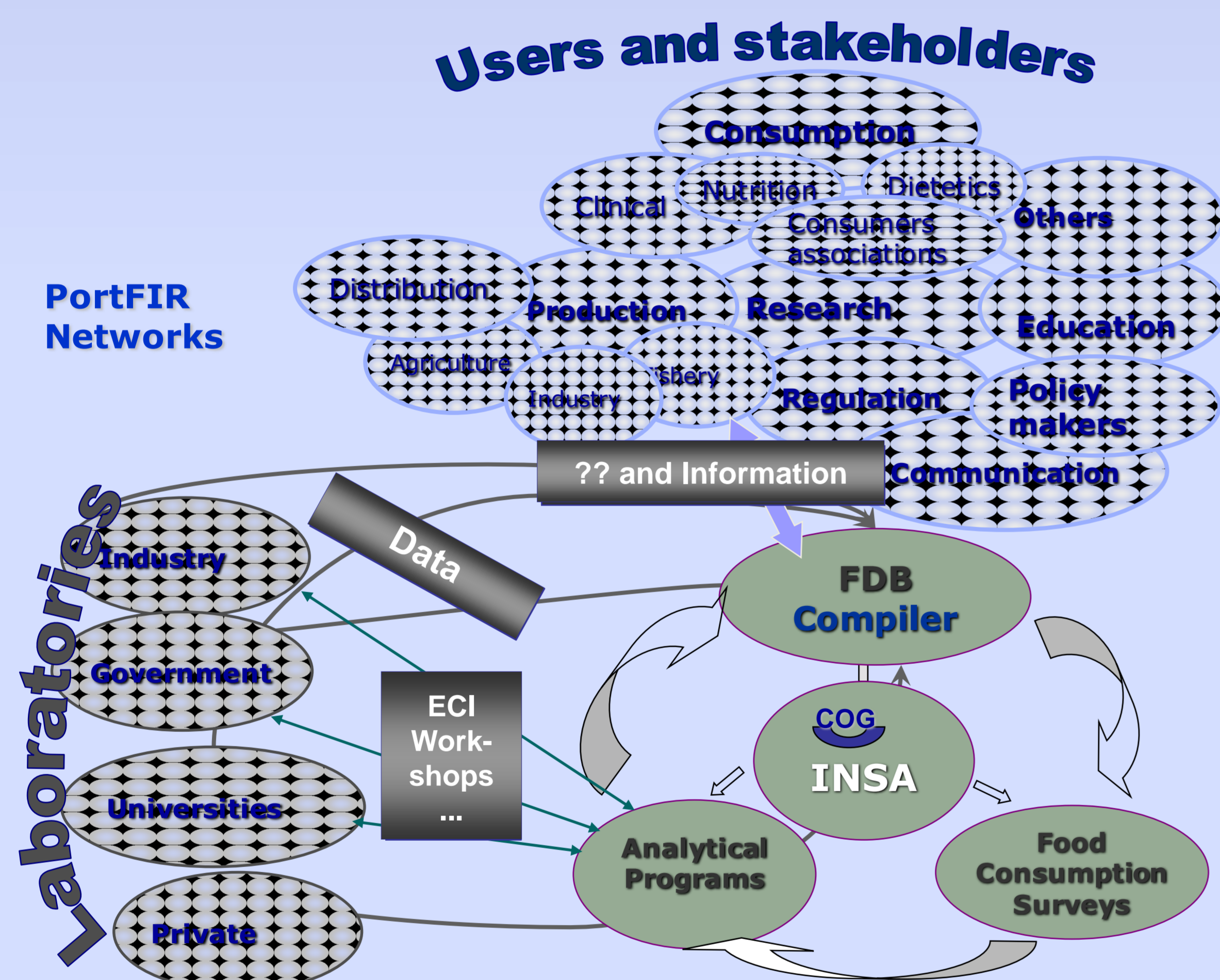


Fig. 1 – PortFIR networks

Two networks were created to date, Food Composition and Food Microbiological Information, acting through working groups (WG), some of which are transversal to both networks (Fig. 2).

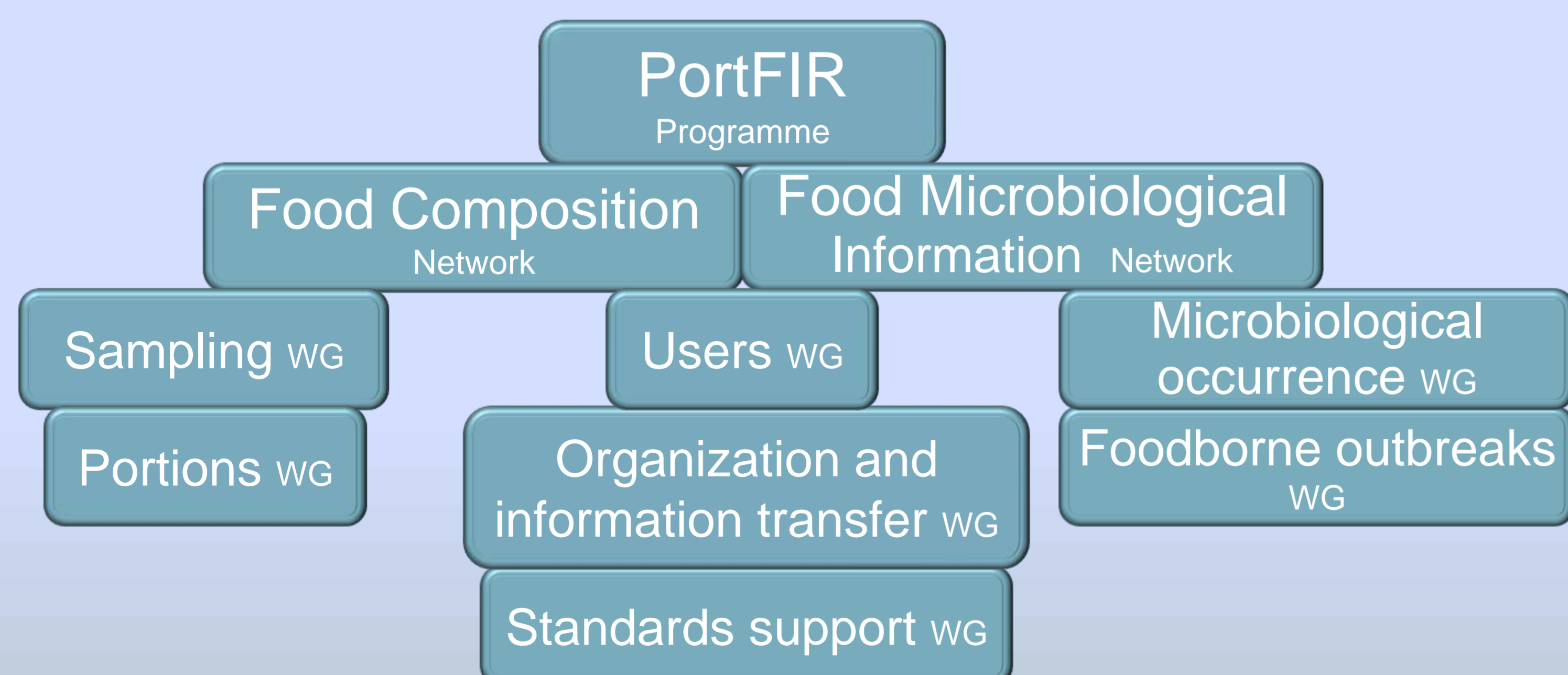


Fig. 2 – Working Groups (WG) within PortFIR Programme

Users WG (56 members from industry, distribution, universities, public institutes) developed a questionnaire that was implemented on-line from July to October 2011, using the software LimeSurvey® with an invitation for the Portuguese FCT users and buyers to participate.