Ws06.1 Vasco da Gama and the Exploration of New Research Territories - The ISAFRUIT Context
L. Bertschinger, Forschungsanstalt Agroscope Changins-Wädenswil, Switzerland

The goal of ISAFRUIT to increase fruit consumption has strong foundations in new knowledge created by a multidisciplinary team of natural and social scientists addressing critical aspects and solving problems of the multi-faceted fruit chain for delivering fruit to consumers that responds to and stimulates demand. Bridging the gap between disciplines proved to be a substantial challenge for ISAFRUIT, as the disciplines have quite different languages, methods, and networks. In March 2008, ISAFRUIT launched an initiative to address this gap. By occasion, reservations were made for the meeting to take place in a room at world trade center at Schipol airport in the Netherlands, which was labeled with the name of “Vasco da Gama”. The initiative launched was subsequently named the “Vasco da Gama process”. This Portuguese explorer embarked, early in the 16th century, in the first ships to sail directly from Europe to India and to bridge the gap between continents and cultures. It seemed quite stimulating for the person participating in this initiative to ally with the successful bridging efforts of don Vasco da Gama.

Ws06.2 Listen to Consumers and their Needs
A.C. Bech, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

One question with no definite answer is “How do we develop and identify food products that are likely to be more successful than others in the market place”? One approach that almost seems too obvious is to listen to the ‘voice of the customer’ – however it is a very valuable process when done in a systematic way and by the use of scientific research methods. The focus is on QFD – Quality Function Deployment that offers both a systematic method for handling the voice of the customer (WHAT) and for translation of that voice into a more technical specification (HOW) by a multidisciplinary team and by the use of the House of Quality. We will go through the House of Quality and go more into detail with the WHAT – the specification of customer demands and needs with focus on the end user – the consumer. Since consumers are different and may or may not have different needs and demands – listen to the voice of the consumer are combined with food related lifestyle segmentation allowing for listening to multiple voices. QFD and the use of the voice of the consumer is a user driven and market oriented approach to product innovation.

Ws06.3 ISAFRUIT’s House of Quality
I. Van der Lans, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

ISAFRUIT’s process for bridging between research disciplines was to discover if the technical research conducted indeed addresses consumer-demand related requirements and is as such likely to contribute to increased fruit consumption in Europe. For this purpose, the Quality Function Deployment (QFD) method was applied. This includes the construction of a House of Quality (HoQ), which is a conceptual and graphical tool that presents the positive and negative relationships between technical quality attributes, as studied and influenced by pre- and post- harvest experiments, and consumer-demand related attributes. In this presentation, the methodology will be explained in greater detail. The first experience with this process showed that, even if scientists from different disciplines were keen to be involved, there was a need for a sustained effort to drive such a process. The process is still underway, and specific results will be published later.
Ws06.4 Future Perspectives, Conclusions  
K. Zimmerman, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Communication barriers between technical researchers and consumer researchers can lead to less acceptance by the public of very investment intensive and useful (new) food technologies and product innovations. This can be based on misunderstanding, fear or trust. All these aspects influences the success of launching new products or the reductions of failure. The approach of HoQ is very useful for product development (products, services, industrial processes) in general. The goal is to enlarge awareness and develop quality strategies for product developments before to manufacture or even to designs a new product, service or process. Many new product and services fail because of the lack of customer focus. The fact that more than 50% of new food products disappear from the shelves within a year, thereby wasting enormous efforts and expenses, proves that testing the consumer satisfaction and the consumed perception of added value in an earlier stage is needed. To anticipate on this situation intervention during the production process or even after introduction on the market is highly inefficient en ineffective. The HoQ approach can inspire policy and industry to use this tool for various reasons and from various perspectives but in the end to predict the success of a new technology or product on the market.