



Strategy 2018-2023

Department of Food and Resource Economics



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Our fundament

The Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO) is a broad social science department in the Faculty of Science (SCIENCE) at University of Copenhagen (UCPH). IFRO originates from the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University and related research institutes. This history shapes the unique profile of IFRO today, with its focus on questions of importance for pertinence challenges within our thematic fields. These thematic fields include the use and protection of the environment and natural resources, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food, consumer behaviour, and development. The history shapes the successful study programmes at IFRO, some older than 150 years, and their close interaction with the surrounding society shapes the more than 100 year old tradition of providing research-based consultancy to governments and society within our fields.

Over the past six years, IFRO has consolidated its important role at UCPH, in Denmark and in the international research environment. Our research has grown in volume, quality and impact, as highlighted in IFRO's 2017 international research quality assessment. We are now one of the largest and strongest social science research environments in Europe, within our fields. We have strengthened our reputation as a department providing quality teaching to study programmes in high demand. We have expanded our public sector consultancy and grown our reputation for timely and credible research-based consultancy to society. We have disseminated our research and engaged in public debates using our insights and knowledge, strengthening our leading position in this important role at our university.

This document presents our strategy and our take on how to develop IFRO for the period 2018-2023. It outlines the most important challenges and opportunities we believe we face, the strategic objectives we formulate as a result of these and the main actions we will take to pursue these objectives. It also presents key elements of what IFRO will contribute over the next strategy period to support the implementation of the overall ambitions set out by UCPH and SCIENCE 2018-2023 strategy documents.

Within the framework of IFRO's strategy and UCPH's overall strategy, the researchers at IFRO will pursue their interests and apply their talents in research, teaching and other tasks. They will decide individually and in teams, which specific research questions to pursue and how. They will act to improve teaching and develop course content, and they will engage with society in numerous ways.

Introduction

The raison d'être and mission for our department is to undertake independent and excellent research within our disciplines, addressing our thematic fields. On this basis, we undertake excellent research-based teaching, research-based consultancy and disseminate research-based knowledge to society. As a broad social science department on the above thematic fields, we explicitly pursue options for excellence in interdisciplinary research to address research questions of pertinence and high complexity around the world.

The main challenges for 2018-2023

IFRO has grown substantially in research quantity and quality over the past strategy period and in public-sector consultancy, and grown less in student volume. Looking ahead, ambitions are high, and we pursue them in an environment of stagnating competitive research funds, public procurement competitions for our public-sector consultancy contracts and increased scrutiny of study programmes. The overall challenges are:

- To secure suitable funding for us to enhance the impact of our disciplinary research and the international reputation of our researchers, while maintaining our stronghold in interdisciplinary research.
- To attract more and better students to the courses and study programmes, for which we are responsible, and secure that all our graduates have high employability and strong research-based competences.
- To compete for and win our large public-sector consultancy programme and to protect and maintain our high credibility as providers of research-based consultancy services and knowledge.
- To remain an attractive academic environment for young researchers and to find new ways for our faculty to develop continuously and pursue novel ideas in research and teaching.

The strategic objectives for 2018-2023

We are ready to respond to the challenges and reach our overarching objectives of increasing quality of research and study programmes while improving work conditions. The main objectives are:

- We will harvest scale and synergy gains in teaching and consultancy to secure more core funding for our research. We will increasingly take leadership in larger research proposals to secure more focused funding for our disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary research, enabling higher quality. We will provide peer-learning and administrative support for this effort.
- We will take leadership in the research community, e.g. as a host of larger conferences, and we will modernize our research communication to sharpen the international profile of our research, researchers and research groups
- We will make a success of our two new MSc programmes, while safeguarding the success of our existing MSc and BSc programmes. We will develop the MSc in Environment and Development aiming for 40-50 graduates/year. We will develop and adapt the MSc in Integrated Food Studies to fit and supplement the study programmes at SCIENCE and enhance the profile and employability of students, aiming for 35-40 graduates/year.
- We will win and hope to expand our long-term public-sector consultancy contract to enhance our collaboration with others in the public and private sector. We will continue to develop and adapt contracting, quality management and communication procedures to ensure transparency and arm's length and safeguard independence and credibility of our consultancy and knowledge dissemination.
- We will increase transparency in recruitment processes and decisions. We will provide improved career guidance for younger researchers and mid-career researchers. We will remain an open and welcoming place to work, study and visit. We will support and pursue equal opportunities across gender and all aspects of diversity.

1. IFRO's ambitions for further excellence in research



The 2017 international research quality assessment concluded that research at IFRO has grown impressively in volume, quality and impact; publishing in top field and interdisciplinary journals and good general discipline journals. We will build on this basis of excellence, and we will pursue further excellence as described here.

Pursuing further excellence in research

IFRO is very strong in methods within its disciplines. We excel in bringing social science into interdisciplinary research. Our review panel encouraged us to enhance further our contributions to our core disciplines, to reach for leadership in larger research efforts, and find funding to pursue this:

- We will harvest scale and synergy gains in teaching, e.g. in our two new MSc programmes and in our public-sector consultancy contract, to secure more core funding for our disciplinary research.
- We will take leadership more often in larger research proposals, with the aim to improve research, design better projects and secure more focused funding for our disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary research, enabling higher quality. We will provide peer-learning and administrative support for this effort.
- We will encourage method cross overs between our disciplines to aim for high-level contributions and pursue options provided by e.g. new digital data and methods of analyses

Recruiting and retaining research talent

Open positions at IFRO are highly competitive. We have recruited and retained excellent staff, as evidenced by the achievement of our researchers. We focus on both young and mid-career researchers and will:

- Be innovative in finding ways to fund new PhD positions, e.g. in joint degree MC-ITN programmes, across related projects, as business PhDs, as full-degree PhDs from research institutes or emerging economies and as double-degree PhDs in collaborative agreements with other strong European universities.
- Provide improved career guidance for our younger researchers, e.g. using our growing alumni network in international research and organisation as well as the private and public sector. We will secure talent retention by supporting our mid-career staff in their continued development, e.g. through sabbaticals.
- We will improve transparency in recruitment processes and decisions. We will remain an open and welcoming place to work, inviting a diverse range of people to apply for our positions. We will act to support equal opportunities for both genders as well as other aspects of inclusiveness.

Research with impact

We undertake excellent applied research within our disciplines, often with fast and important impacts in society. We will build on this strength and:

- Increase the volume and improve the terms of our public-sector consultancy contract, in order to secure better conditions for our excellent applied research, to increase gearing and enhance impact.
- Publicly vocalize research questions of importance for society in our different fields and push for them to be funded, e.g. regarding the UN SDGs and the European and Danish policy goals in our thematic fields.

Strengthening international visibility and reputation of our researchers

Given the high quality and large size of our research groups, they should be more known and visible internationally. We will take a number of measures in the coming period to enhance this, including:

- We will take leadership in the research community, e.g. as a host of larger conferences, session leaders at conference, and by taking on editor roles in leading journals in our fields
- We will modernise our research communication to increase the international profile of our research and research groups, integrating the UCPH publication database, our digital data, linked websites and our social media better.

2. IFRO's ambitions for excellence in study programmes



We are responsible for five different MSc programmes, a BSc programme, a professional master programme and two international Erasmus Mundus programmes. The interdisciplinary element and sector relevance is a shared key feature and fundamental for their overall strong job market performance. We are also responsible for contributing to a number of other study programmes at UCPH, providing students with competences and insights in our disciplines. Among our many ambitions for our teaching, we highlight a few:

Making our new MSc programmes a success

In 2018, we assumed responsibility for two additional MSc programmes. Both are in areas where we have strong research groups and have been looking for opportunities to contribute more. We will:

- Make a success of the MSc in Environment and Development, jointly with our sister departments PLEN and IGN. We aim for 40-50 graduates/year and will enhance students' profile in the job market.
- Develop and adapt the MSc in Integrated Food Studies, together with the departments FOOD and NEXS, to the best possible fit among the sister study programmes at SCIENCE. We will enhance the students' profile in the job market and ensure research-based teaching. We aim for 35-40 graduates/year.

Quality in research-based teaching and practice insight

IFRO has a reputation for quality teaching. Students rate our courses highly and all our 'old' MSc study programmes have a strong job market history, reflecting the skills and quality of graduates. We will:

- Continue to teach to the highest academic standards and educate students to be critical, independent, reflective, and curious. We will ensure pedagogical training of all lecturers and apply teamwork in teaching to enable peer-feedback, and develop standardised guidelines for good supervision at IFRO.
- Maintain its well-functioning course evaluation procedure and develop mechanisms for cross-faculty learning in teaching. We will enhance student performance and lower dropout rates through individual study plans. Study directors will periodically review academic progression and levels across courses in the different educations.
- Involve more interested students in research projects, training them in research methods, improving their analytical competences, and enabling more research producing MSc theses.
- Actively contribute to enhanced inter-disciplinarity in educations across UCPH by offering and adapting our courses to other study programmes and offer supervision of BSc and MSc thesis writing.
- Continue to involve relevant public and private sector companies and organisations in teaching and increase their role as hosts for course and thesis work. Network and practice insights support thesis writing with companies and organisations in the sectors and promote employability of all students.
- Develop further our e-learning and related methods. We will adapt and develop course content, where relevant, to benefit from the increasing availability of digital data and new analytical tools to study them
- Continue our involvement in the Erasmus Mundus study programmes. We will ensure mobility windows where relevant to enable exchange of students with good universities abroad.

Study environment and accessible lecturers

Access to your lecturers and a good physical study environment is important for students to thrive. We will:

- Strongly encourage students to use IFRO's buildings and facilities, and, in particular, to engage with and consult relevant members of staff in connection with studies and student work at the Department.
- Make additional space available to the students for social and academic activities such as thesis writing at the Department, and we will engage with student organisations in their activities when invited

3. IFRO's ambitions for our societal impact



The profile of IFRO provides us a unique platform for making a difference to society. Our research and research-based knowledge is in great demand from both private and public actors. Providing research-based consultancy to the government is a fourth core task at IFRO. Our students are able to combine academic skills with practice and subject insight. Researchers at IFRO engage with candour in the public debates and offer their research-based insights. We will build on this strength and pursue the below ambitions.

Impact through independent research-based consultancy

Undertaking research-based consultancy for the private and the public sector provides synergy options with our research and teaching. It is both rewarding to see our research used and sometimes challenging, as public interest in our consultancy is often high and sometimes debated intensely. We will:

- Win the forthcoming public procurement of the long-term public-sector consultancy contract to expand the quantity and quality of our work to the benefit of society.
- Continue to develop contracting, quality management, peer learning, and communication procedures to protect the credibility and integrity of our researchers and provide them a firm basis for dissemination
- Continue to ensure transparency and suitable documentation of research-based consultancy.
- Continue to safeguard integrity, independence and credibility of our consultancy and related dissemination and provide researchers with support and courses on media handling

Communicating our research

IFRO has a strong profile in the national media and it is increasingly important for society that we actively continue to offer a research-based point of view in public debates on topics within our fields. Thus, we will:

- Increase the visibility of IFRO research through an integrated use of websites, newsletters, social media and various electronic media in cooperation with the SCIENCE Communications
- Encourage more researchers to communicate agenda setting research, to think communication and dissemination into their research plans and assist them in developing communication skills,
- Engage proactively in public debates within our research fields, including if our research is misrepresented or misused in public debates and ensure that our work is represented correctly.

National outreach and collaboration

We often engage with stakeholders, as partners in strategic research or as objects of research, and thus:

- To strengthen our continuous dialogue with stakeholders in both the public and the private sector, IFRO has established an Advisory Council, which we will make an integrated part of our outreach and a source of inspiration for research, education and dissemination
- IFRO will maintain and look to increase its use of business PhDs and postdocs as one suitable bridge for research collaboration with business and industry.

Opening up our science and educations to the world

In this strategy period, we will contribute to the agendas of Open Science and life-long learning, thus:

- Using available structures at UCPH, we will develop an electronic infrastructure where we can safely store our digital data and works, fulfilling FAIR-principles, and make it available and accessible to the world following an Open Science agenda, and inform and train all academic staff in data management.
- IFRO will look for options to expand, at market conditions, its professional education and life-long learning activities, e.g. in courses in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) for the university colleges and in advanced courses for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4. IFRO's ambitions for our department as a work place



While being in research may be a calling of sorts, working at IFRO should also be rewarding in a career and personal perspective. This in turn will better enable us to make our ambitions come true.

Work environment:

IFRO has a typical egalitarian Danish workplace culture, yet competitive as research tend to be. We value the contributions of all staff and depend on mutual respect for the different roles we each have. To support this:

- We will continue to be an embracing work place, where diversity, work-life balance and social inclusiveness is constantly in focus, and where we openly acknowledge and celebrate a work well done
- We promote and encourage scientific and professional seminars and events, but also encourage social events. At IFRO, as a member of the staff, you participate in and contribute to social and scientific events.
- We observe and pursue equal opportunities, e.g. across gender and ethnicity, in all aspects
- We stress that transparency is a core value for IFRO, e.g. about career options for all staff categories, incl. administrative staff, salary negotiations, management decisions and economic performance
- We will continue to stress teamwork as a core value and source of progress and work-life balance; whether in research, teaching or consultancy. We will, however, become better at acknowledging and highlighting also the individual achievements of any staff member in our internal communication.

Career enhancing professional development

For many of our researchers and staff members, a position at IFRO is part of a career, while for some it is a substantial part of their life and ambitions. Therefore, different kinds of guidance and options are relevant:

- Many young researchers, PhD students, postdocs etc., join IFRO to start their career. We support them in making the best of this opportunity and in making the next step in their career, whether here or elsewhere. We will enhance the visibility and awareness of the many different careers of our alumni
- We aim to have more senior research staff making use of various forms of sabbaticals or short term repeated visits abroad, for inspiration, to renew their research plans and ideas and to grow their network
- IFRO has excellent administrative staff, and we will ensure continued professional development to maintain this

Organisation, support and collaboration

IFRO has organised itself in four topical sections, with each their distinct core focus, but also with overlapping research areas. We have a small and effective administrative unit, and draw upon the SCIENCE and UCPH infrastructure and administrative support. We will:

- Maintain a highly competent administrative unit with a continuous focus on developing the competences to support the objectives of IFRO. We will continue to run, at regular intervals, information campaigns about the types of support available from the unit to inform new staff and remind existing staff.
- Increase the visibility of and support for collaboration across all sections, to reduce social and physical distance effects and to inspire new collaborations.
- Maintain our current common-pool resource-allocation model that shares risk across all of us. We will continue to stress that the well-functioning of this model relies entirely on our joint effort
- We will pursue options for a better long-term funding basis for IFRO, e.g. in study programmes, through larger project budgets in external research and improved long-term government research contracts.
- To reduce budget risk at SCIENCE, we will work to have better guidelines for budgeting external research funds implemented at SCIENCE, reducing co-financing and increasing contributions to true costs.