



# Food information base available across OECD Countries

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# Outline of the presentation

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Request for contribution



Insights from the  
questionnaires



Conclusions



# Request for contribution

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- Aim of the request:
  - To take stock of current **information base concerning the food environment** across OECD countries and potential links to health outcomes;
  - To allow a discussion on ways to foster greater international comparability, unlock access to additional data and **prioritise improvements** across OECD countries.
- Questionnaire – follow up from the 2017 FCAN meeting:
- Period from July to October 2018
- High response rate : 2/3 of the countries – 24 responses



## 6 categories of food information sources

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Cat 1: Food  
availability

Cat 2: Food  
intake

Cat 3: Food  
purchases and  
acquisition

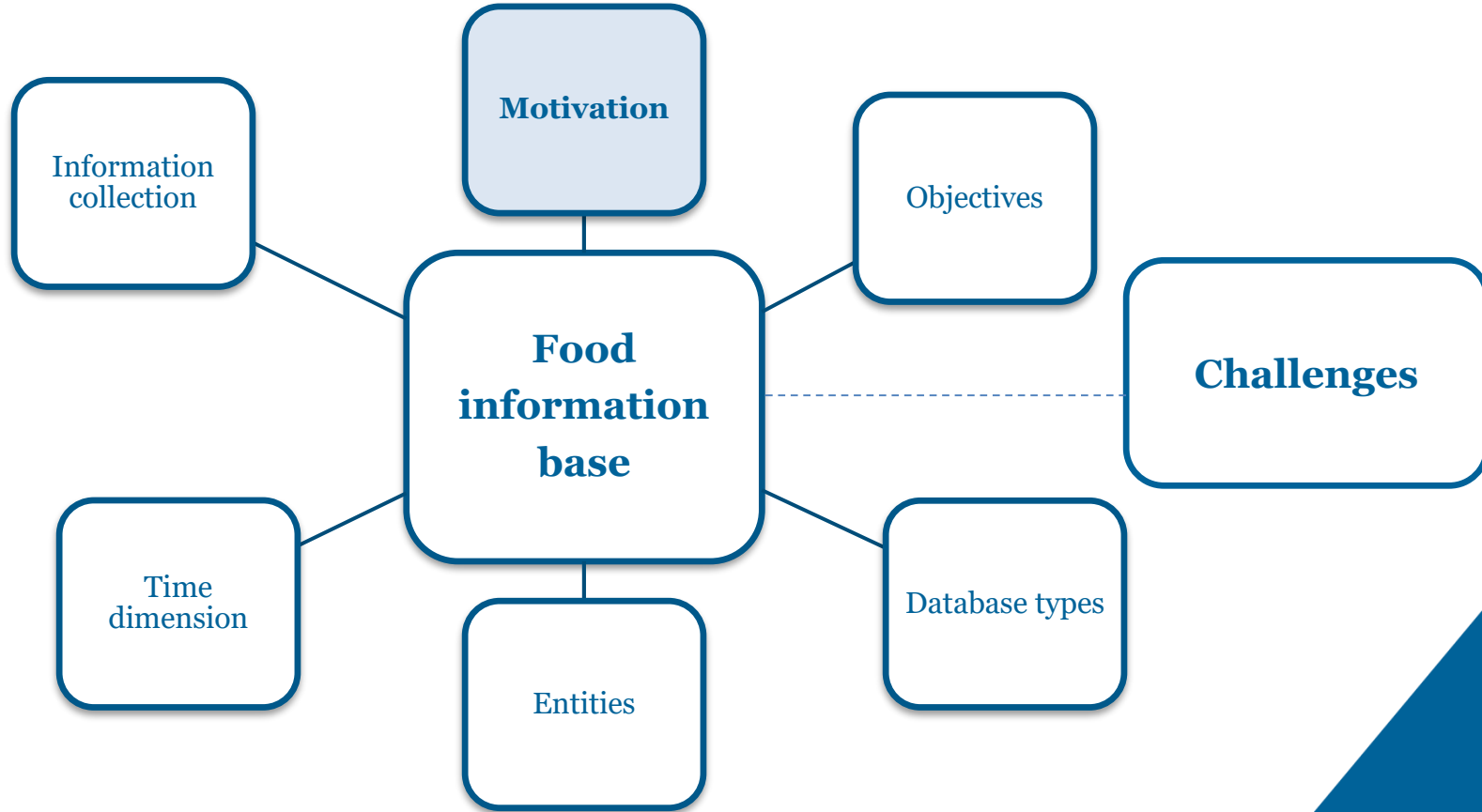
Cat 4: Food  
sales

Cat 5: Food  
composition

Cat 6: Other



# Key insights





# Food information base: motivation



## **Raising trends in:**

- obesity and overweight prevalence
- non communicable chronic diseases



## **Modification of the food environment:**

- consolidation of the processing and retailing sector
- changing habits: food away from home consumption, online shopping
- sustainability concerns : food waste problem, ....



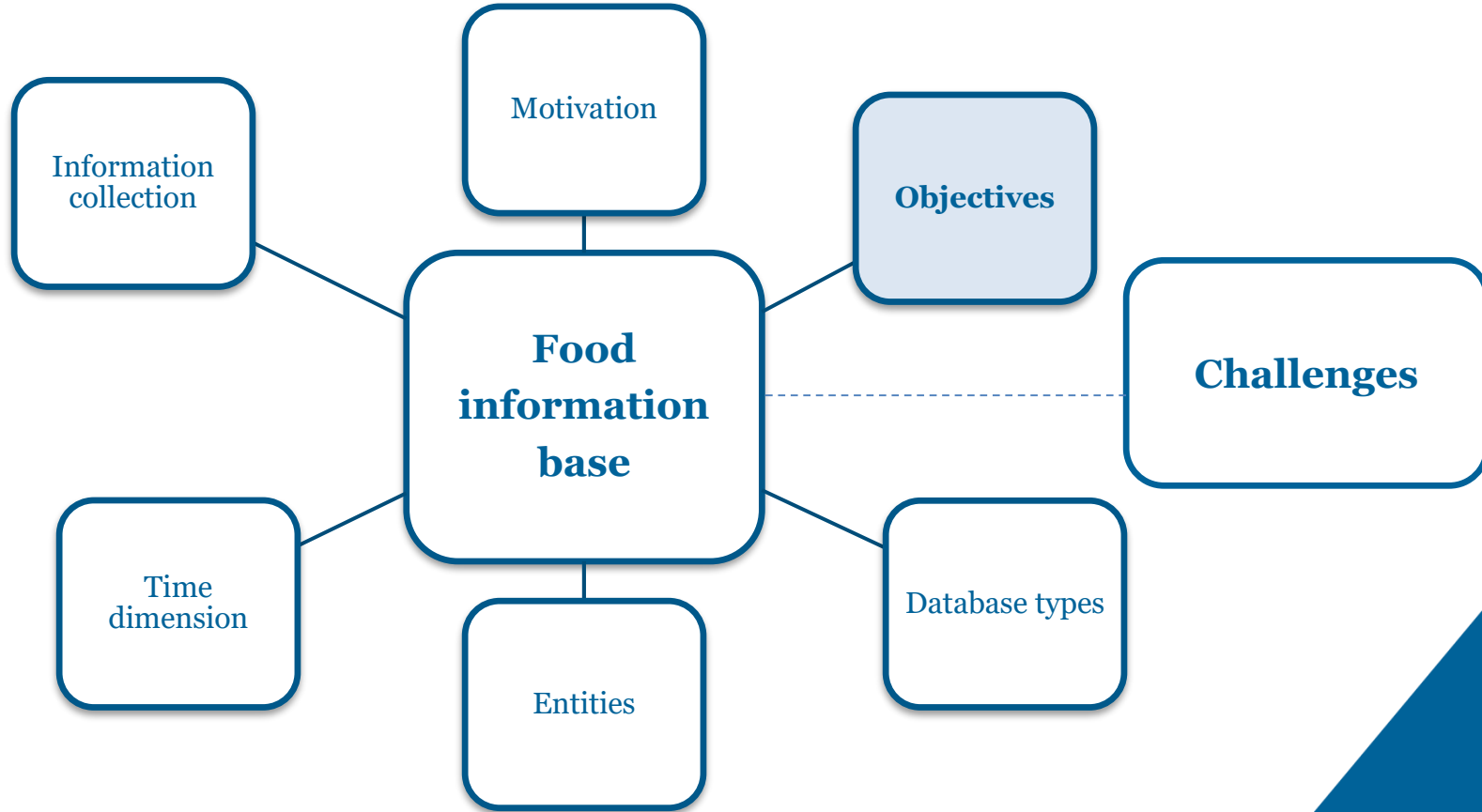
## **High demand for information on food products:**

- food safety and traceability are major concerns
- development of all types of claims on food products regarding different attributes (origin, production methods, health effects, ...)



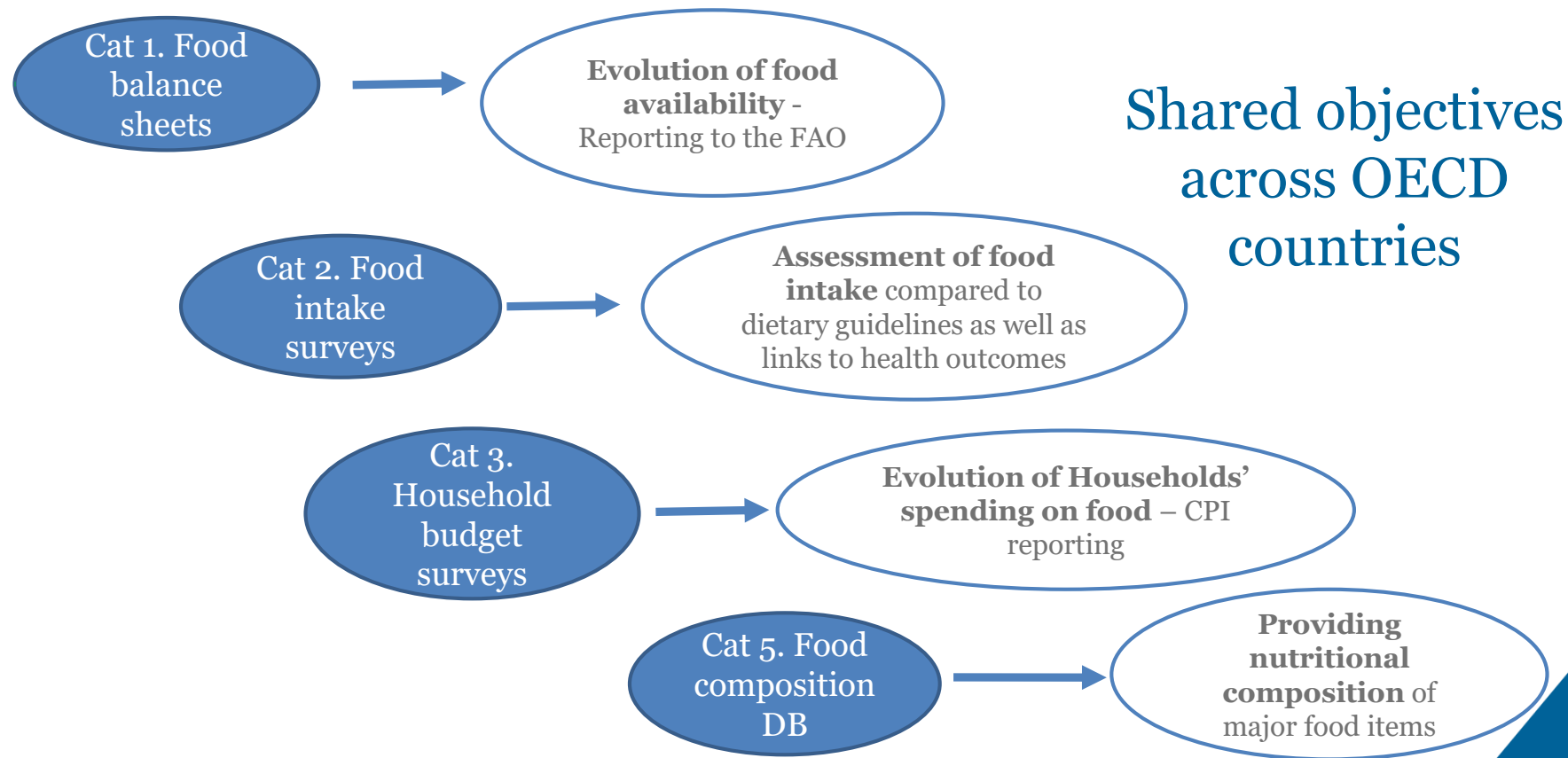
# Key insights

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# Food information base : objectives







# Additional objectives

## Understanding the food environment

- How does nutritional composition of food products evolve?
- Where do consumers shop ? What do they buy? When ? At what price?, ....

## Understanding eating habits

- How often do people eat out?, what do they eat? How much do they spend?
- Who do they share their meals with?, How long do they spend eating?...
- Relationship to income, education, ..

## Impacts of specific policies on stakeholders along the food chain and consumers

- For example: food stamps, health campaigns, food labels, food taxes, ....

Cat 4. Food sales data.

Cat 5. Product composition DB.

Cat 6. Food sector review

Cat 6. Market research databases

Cat 3. Consumer panel surveys.

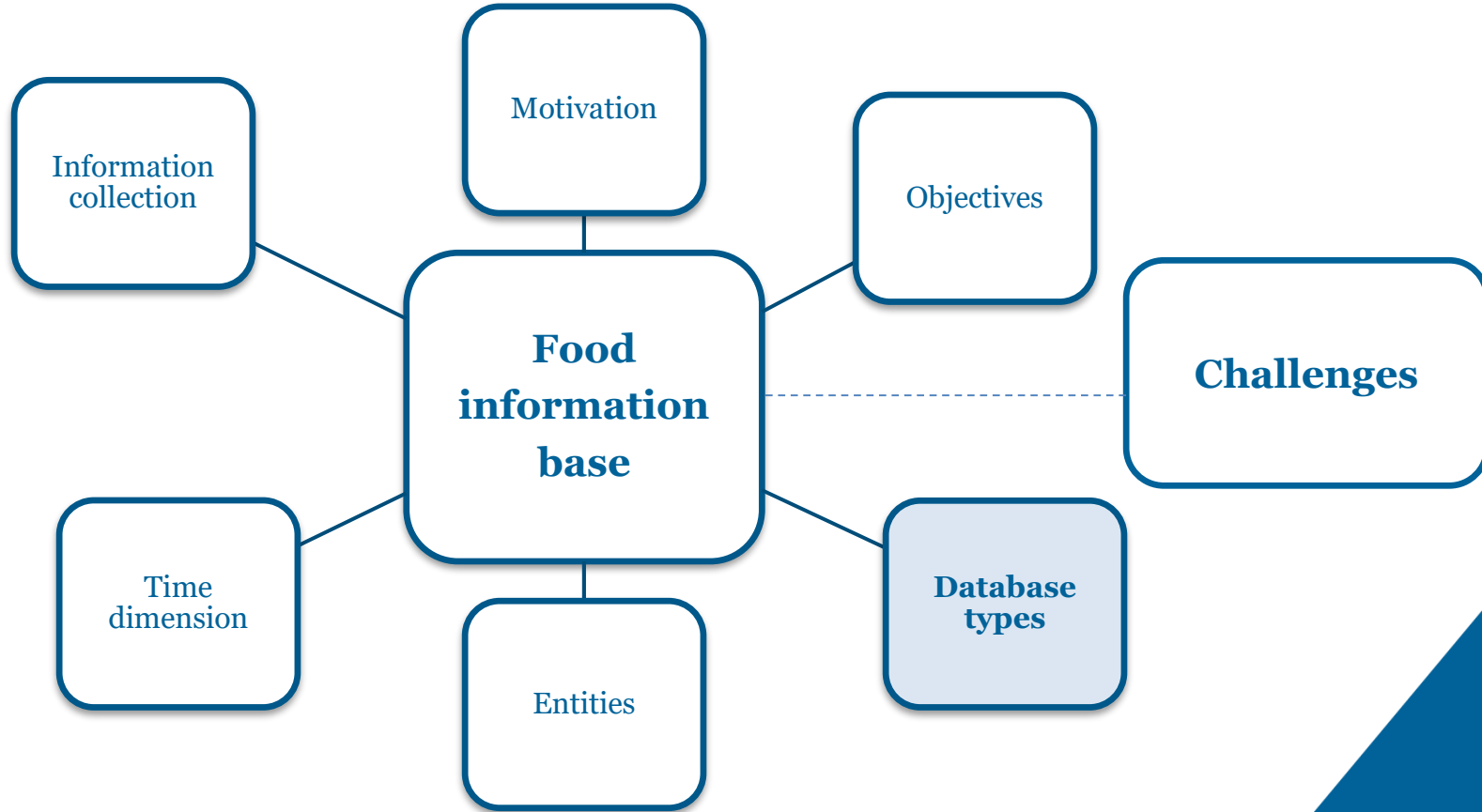
Cat 6. Time use surveys

Cat 6. Census data, tax auth. data



# Key insights

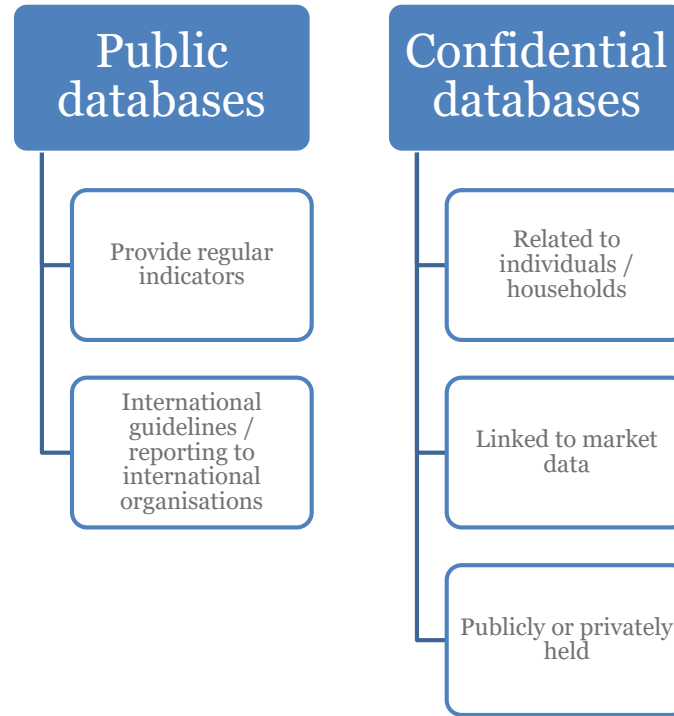
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# Food information base: database types

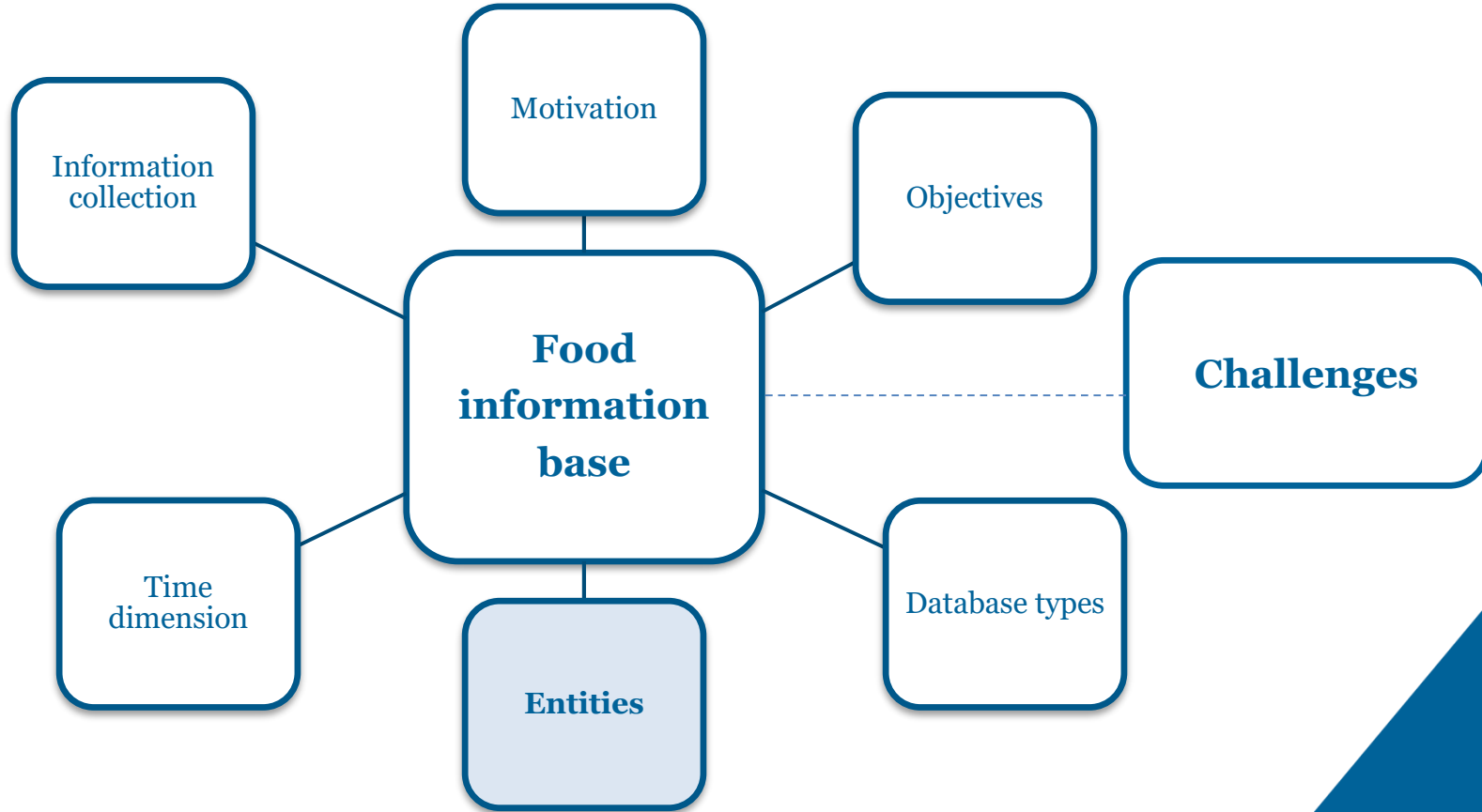
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# Key insights

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# Food information base: entities

## Public entities

Statistical office

Ministries

Agriculture  
Health

Social affairs  
Economic affairs

Food safety authority

Research institutes

## Private entities

Food chain

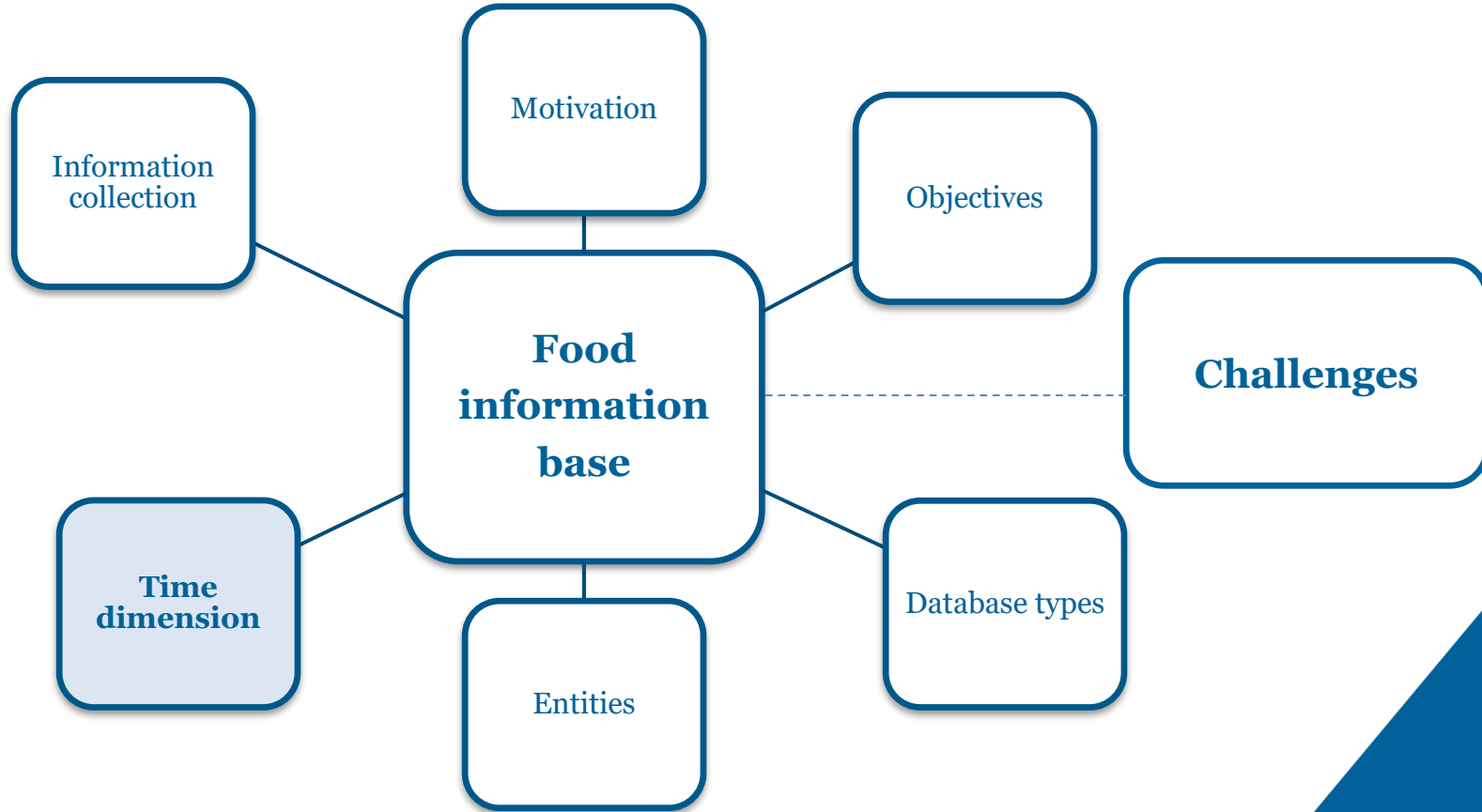
Retailers  
Processing industry

Market / consumers' research  
companies



# Key insights

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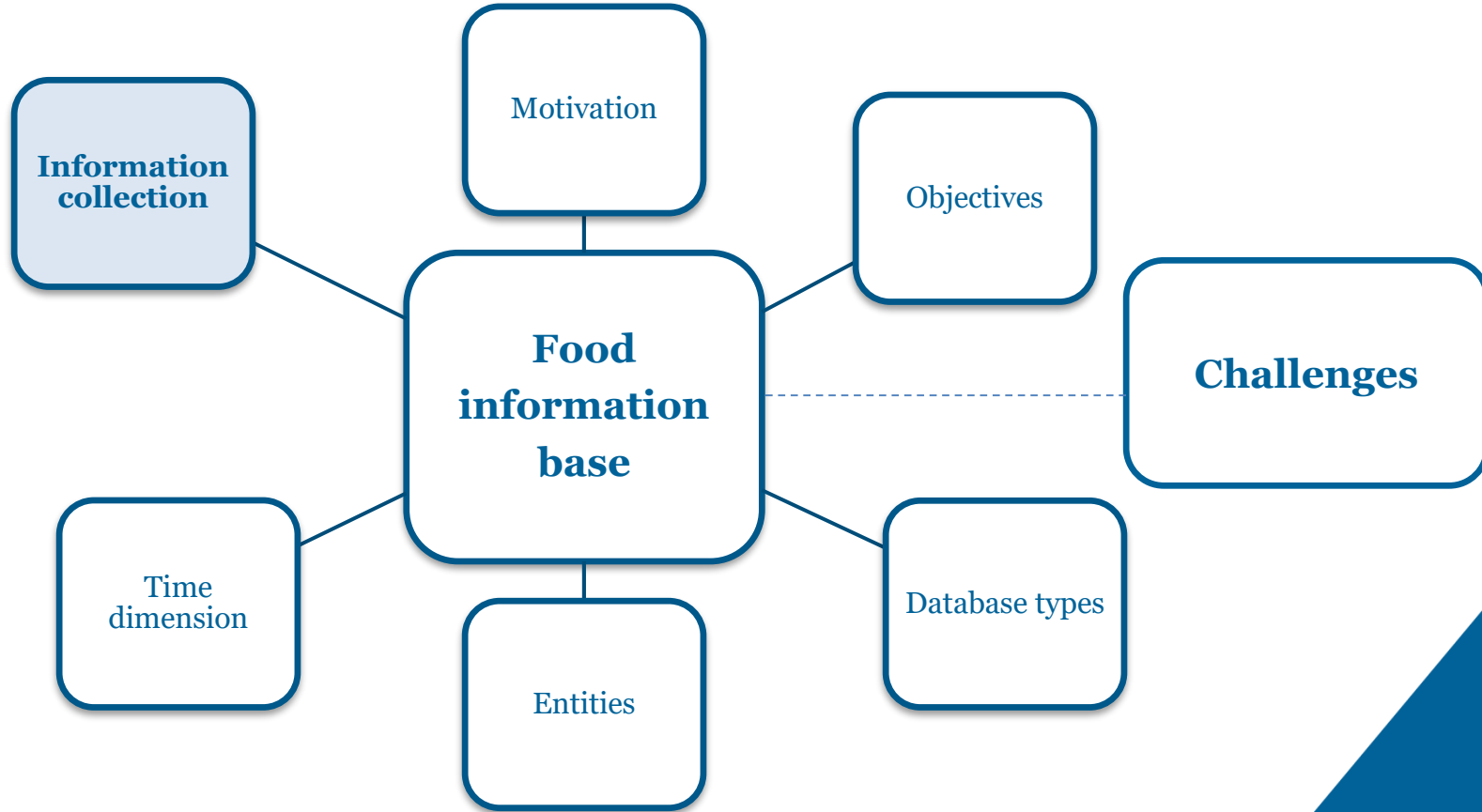
## Food information base: time dimension

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- **Long tradition:** certain sources have been collected regularly for a long time - back to the **beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century** !
- **Other sources are more recent:** data collection has evolved with policy needs, societal and health concerns and technological improvements.
- The collection of information is often dependent on **funding** – especially for food intake / acquisition surveys – data might be updated every 2 years or every 10 years.



# Key insights







# Food information base: information collection

## Surveys

Samples representative of the population

International guidelines exist for food intake surveys

Mostly cross-sectional, few longitudinal panels

At the individual level (intake / health surveys) or household level (purchase surveys)

No clear consensus on the best way to collect data: face to face interviews, telephone, web app)

## Sales

Data collected at the store / restaurant level

Often for market research purposes

Big data: lots of information

## Food composition

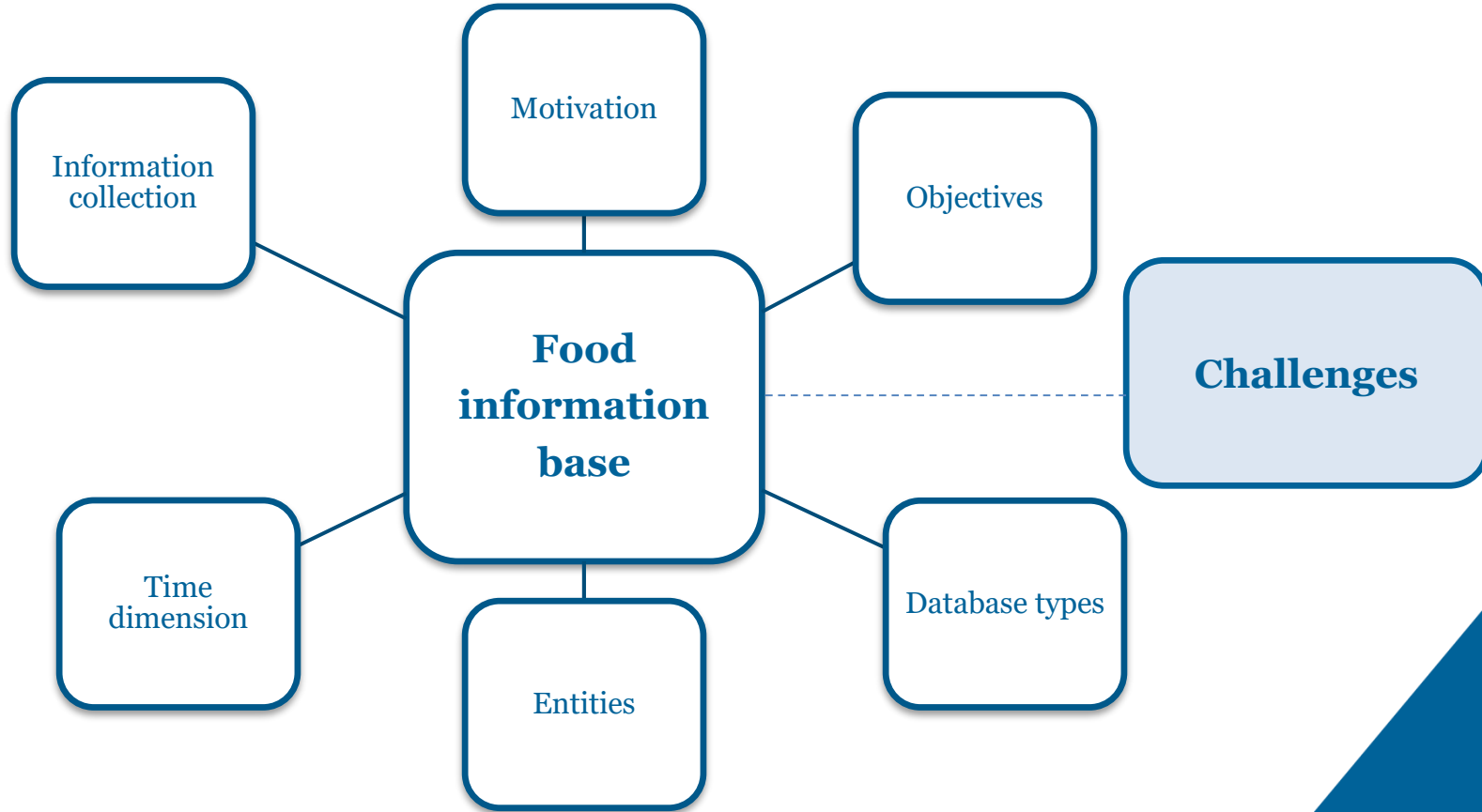
Composition databases: **Laboratory tests** based on composite samples

Nutritional information: **Computer based analysis** to fit obligatory nutritional reporting

**Market research companies (and also civil society)** collect information on new products



# Key insights





# Food information base: challenges

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## Challenge # 1 :

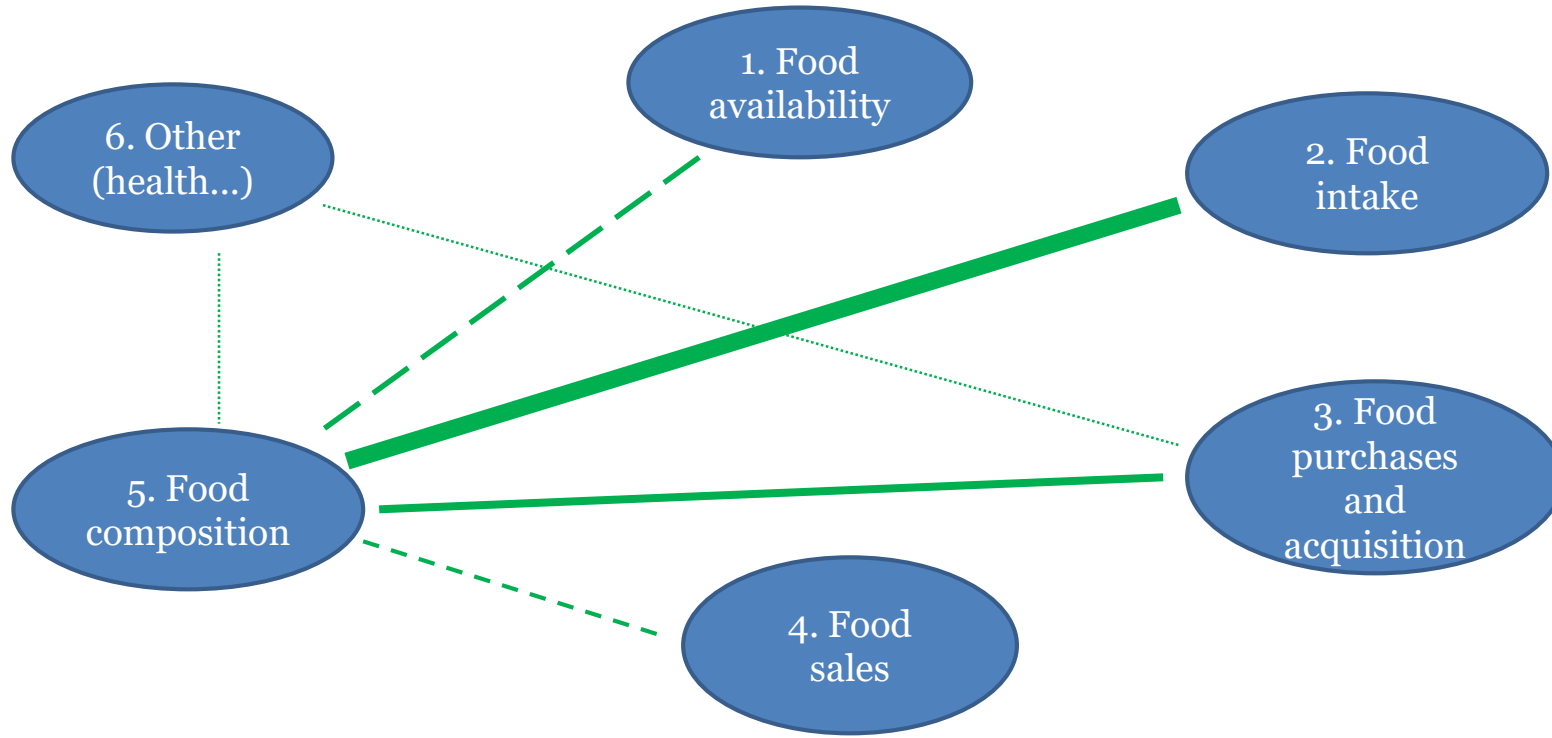
### Fostering connections and comparability

- Different level of aggregation and classification for food products => Matching is difficult
- Difficult to link food consumption data and health data because often only household data are available, no individual
- Too limited information in some databases (nutrients missing...)

=> **Financial costs** appear as the major impediment



# Illustration: databases interactions





## Food information base: challenges

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### Challenge # 2 : Improving the data at the household and individual levels

- Linking food acquisition to food intake => from the household level to the individuals in the household
  - Getting more accurate information: underreporting bias, low response rates, ..
  - Targeting specific groups: lower income people, children, elderly, ..
- => How to overcome privacy issues concerns? Possibility of linking surveys with administrative / tax data.



## Food information base: challenges

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### Challenge # 3 : Developing a better understanding the food environment

- Nutritional composition of new products, product reformulation,
- New ways to consume, **food consumed away from home**
- Information is needed not only on nutrients but also on additives, origin, production methods, ...

=> **Keeping up to speed with the evolving food environment!**



# Food information base: challenges

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## Challenge # 4 : Enhancing data collection methods

- Major necessity: Lowering the costs and the burden
  - **Exploring opportunities related to digital technologies**
  - **Integrating public and private information sources** to expand and update the information base: win-win projects
  - **Involvement of the civil society**
- => **Several avenues to explore !**



# Conclusions

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- **Long tradition of food data collection**
  - A certain number countries are developing an **enhanced food information base** with a particular focus on the food environment and consumers' food choices
  - How to overcome the 4 major challenges identified?
    - Challenge #1: Connections and comparability across databases
    - Challenge #2: Improving data quality at the individual and household levels
    - Challenge #3: Understanding the food environment
    - Challenge #: Enhancing data collection methods
- ⇒ Main topics of discussion today ! We value experience sharing.



Thank you !

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