Open call for proposals

Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Implementing Participants 2027-2028

EIT Food/Call for EWA Implementing Participants 2027-2028/2026

EIT Food

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www.eitfood.eu/

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1. Introduction

1. About EIT Food - Vision and focus

Over the next decade, we will advocate for a bold transformation of Europe's food system, so that future generations can eat healthy, sustainable food. Through our community, we will fundamentally redesign the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed, so that by 2030 we have viable pathways to transformation at scale, and by 2035 we see tangible change across the food value chain.

Supported by the EU, we invest in projects, organisations and individuals that share our goals for a healthy and sustainable food system. Our innovation projects are delivered with a combination of industry, education and research partners to improve environmental and health outcomes by developing solutions that align with our missions and priority areas:

1. Healthier Lives Through Food

We will make a material difference to quality of life by enabling more consumers to have better choices through access to affordable, healthier food products and actionable information.

2. Food System Resilience

We'll improve food security and safety for consumers everywhere by enabling and establishing resilient and dependable digitally enabled food supply chains.

3. Net Zero Food System

We will enable the transition to a net zero food system, measuring and quantifying the change through reduced CO2 equivalent emissions.

2. Overview of key information on the call

Call ID	EIT Food/Call for EWA Implementing Participants 2027-2028/2026
Call opening and deadline for applications	**Call opening:** 05 November 2026 **Deadline for applications:** 05 January 2027 12:00:00 CET
Evaluation and implementation timeline (indicative)	Evaluation of proposals: from 07-19 January 2027 Communication of results to applicants: 20 January 2027 *Following the communication of results, the selection and contracting process is expected to be finalized within three months.* Tentative start of the projects: February 2027 Tentative end of the projects: December 2028
Maximum funding allocated to this call	The maximum funding allocated to this Call is up to 1,556,000 EUR. Maximum of 120.000 EUR for Module 2 (Grow) and 116.000 EUR for Module 3 (Advance).
List of call documents	Application form as available on the submission platform: MyEITFood Portal Budget template Framework Agreement

	KAVA Contract Other relevant documents available at call webpage in EIT Food Open Calls.
Topics to be addressed	This call is aimed at legal entities in the following RIS countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. It aims to select organisations for the EWA Programme in 2027 covering: Module 2 - Grow (up to 12 entities will be selected from the eligible countries, based on the quality and potential of received applications), and Module 3 - Advance (one entity will be selected from one of the eligible countries). Selected organisations will be responsible for delivering EWA Programme activities. Each organisation will scout, evaluate, train, and connect idea-holders and agrifoodtech startups in alignment with the programme's goals.
Contact point Q&A	Carolina Silva Marques – carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu
Further information to interested applicants	Q&A Session: 4th December 2026 (to be confirmed)

3. Description of the subject matter of the call

1. Purpose and scope of activities

This call has the objective of recruiting participants to implement the Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Programme Module 2 (Grow) and Module 3 (Advance).

The Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Programme, is an initiative by EIT Food that supports women entrepreneurs in the food and agriculture sector. The programme provides training, personalized mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to funding to help them start or scale their businesses. The EWA Programme addresses a gender gap in the agrifood sector and unlocks potential and opportunities for female entrepreneurs.

The EWA Programme offers two complementary modules tailored to different stages of the entrepreneurial journey:

- **Module 2 (Grow)** is designed for individual women entrepreneurs, including idea-holders and early-stage founders. It supports participants in validating and strengthening their business ideas through training, mentoring and connections with local entrepreneurial ecosystems.
- **Module 3 (Advance)** is designed for women-founded startups that have already demonstrated market traction. It supports their commercial and investment readiness, corporate engagement and scale-up ambitions through advanced training, expert guidance and pan-European networking.

More information on the EWA Programme website.

2. Main requirements for applicants

2.1. Role

Applicants in this call can be companies, incubators, accelerators, higher education institutes, research institutes, or non-governmental organisations. Applicants must be organisations acknowledged as **pivotal contributors to the female**

entrepreneurship ecosystem, displaying a robust regional outreach, in case of Module 2 (Grow) and international outreach, in case of Module 3 (Advance). A crucial aspect involves a proven track record of experience in supporting programmes focused on female entrepreneurship, and preferably with experience in the agrifood tech or deep tech sectors.

Furthermore, organisations must demonstrate:

- capacity to design and deliver structured programmes for minimum 10 startups that combine training, mentoring, expert guidance, and ecosystem engagement;
- ability to deliver coaching and training services using either in-house resources or subcontracted experts, ensuring quality, relevance, and consistency across the programme;
- strong operational and event management capabilities, including hybrid delivery of both online and in-person activities;
- access to a broad network of relevant stakeholders, including corporates, investors, research institutions, and policymakers aligned with the selected thematic focus;
- familiarity with EU-funded programmes, performance reporting, and budget accountability;
- a dedicated and competent team with the skills, expertise, and time capacity to deliver the activity;
- capacity to coordinate closely and proactively with EIT Food and other Implementing Participants throughout the programme cycle.

Module 2 (Grow): The selected organisations will be responsible for delivering a hybrid programme for a local cohort in a local language. The core responsibilities cover: scouting entrepreneurs, evaluating, onboarding, supporting and promoting connections with the local regional ecosystems.

Eligible RIS countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

Operating within the respective country targeted by the call is a requirement.

Module 3 (Advance): The selected organisation will be responsible for delivering a hybrid programme in English for a pan-European cohort. The core responsibilities cover: scouting startups, evaluating, onboarding, supporting, and connecting high-potential agrifood tech startups.

2.2. Key Responsibilities

1. Open Call Management (for Module 2 (Grow) only)

The selected organisations will be responsible for the end-to-end management of the open call for entrepreneurs through a platform of their choice. The process must follow EIT Food guidelines and use the required templates, eligibility and selection criteria, evaluation methodology, timelines, procedures and rules provided by EIT Food.

2. Scouting & Outreach

Promote EWA programme for applications across relevant channels within their ecosystem. Actively scout and engage with female conducting early-stage startups or women with entrepreneurial talent interested in the agrifood system for Module 2 (Grow), or high-potential startups that align with the thematic focus of Module 3 (Advance). Encourage and guide eligible women through the application process, providing at least 20 eligible applications – including at least 25% of entrepreneurs with already registered startups – for Module 2 (Grow) and 40 startups for Module 3 (Advance).

Scout 10 mentors to provide personalized 1:1 mentorship to the mentees throughout the duration of the programme. Mentors should be selected based on their experience and alignment with the specific needs of the mentees. The mentor is not a consultant but rather someone to guide, question and enable the entrepreneur's success.

- Module 2 (Grow): The programme aims to target early-stage women-founded startups with innovative ideas or solutions that show clear potential but require further structuring and validation. It supports founders who are ready to shape, test, and strengthen their business models, translating ideas into clear and actionable market propositions.

- Module 3 (Advance): The programme aims to target women-founded startups with innovative product or solution achieved considerable results in sales and have traction in the market. A fast-track pathway will be available for alumni of selected EIT Food initiatives, enabling high-performing founders from other programmes to access Module 3 (Advance).

3. Application Evaluation

- Module 2 (Grow): The selected organisations will manage the application evaluation process end to end, in accordance with the guidelines, criteria, templates and procedures provided by EIT Food. The process will include:
    - an eligibility screening based on the eligibility criteria set out in the call guidelines provided by EIT Food; and
    - Round 1: a written review of all eligible applications.

  Each application must be assessed by at least one internal evaluator from the selected organisation and at least one contracted external evaluator (to be provided and contracted by EIT Food). Internal evaluators will account for 40% of the final evaluation score, while external evaluators will account for 60%.
  The selected organisations must correctly store all individual and final scorecards on the application platform used to manage the call. Once the evaluation process has been completed and the results communicated to applicants, the final scorecards must be shared with EIT Food.

- Module 3 (Advance): The selected organisation will support EIT Food in:
    - pre-screening all submitted applications to confirm eligibility and thematic relevance;
    - facilitating and co-organising Round 1, consisting of the written application review based on the criteria provided by EIT Food, and presenting a shortlist of the 10 highest-scoring applications; and
    - supporting Round 2, consisting of startup interviews in a pitch and Q&A format, including evaluation, jury moderation and the selection of finalists.

  Internal evaluators from the selected organisation may account for 40% of the final evaluation score.

5. Contracting of Selected Entrepreneurs (for Module 2 (Grow) only)

The selected organisations will be responsible for contracting the selected entrepreneurs directly. They will sign agreements with the mentees using the template provided by EIT Food. The agreement may be adapted where necessary to comply with the applicable national legal framework, provided that any adaptations remain consistent with EIT Food's requirements and guidelines.

The selected organisations will also be responsible for administering payments to mentees (1,000 EUR per mentee) and managing all contractual and legal obligations arising from these agreements, following the programme timeline.

6. Programme Delivery

Implementing participants will deliver a high-quality hybrid programme that supports women entrepreneurs in refining their business models, planning a strategic roadmap for next steps and getting equipped with the necessary tools for successfully running their businesses, in case of Module 2 (Grow); and in developing commercial and investment readiness and scaling-up, in case of Module 3 (Advance).

6.1. Matchmaking and Kick-Off

After the selection of mentees and mentors, a Matchmaking event should be organised to introduce them to the programme (include topics such as: Intellectual Property (IP), Terms and Conditions of the Programme, administration procedures), in each of the cohorts, and to create the mentoring pairs (1 to 1), through an interactive activity.

6.2. Training Programme

The selected organisations will be responsible for designing and implementing a training itinerary for the mentees considering their needs – based on an initial group/individual diagnostic and the expected competences to be acquired during the programme. The training should tackle the following areas:

- Module 2 (Grow):
    - leadership skills (team management, diversity and inclusion, public speaking, pitching, negotiations, active listening, empathy, time management);
    - business skills (financial management, legal matters, IP management, data management, successful sales, market mapping);
    - agrifood expertise (new trends in agrifood sector, new regulations in agrifood sector – country wise and at the EU level incl. New Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy, food security requirements, supply chain in agrifood).
    - self-development (natural talents, emotional intelligence in business and coaching)
    - business-specific elements like law, finance, marketing or logistics.
- Module 3 (Advance):
    - commercial readiness (market entry strategies, customer profiling, pricing validation, sales planning, distribution channels)
    - investment readiness (financial forecasting, valuation assumptions, funding instruments, investor pitching, due diligence preparation)
    - corporate readiness (partnership development, procurement processes, risk management, regulatory compliance, governance structures)
    - scaling-up (growth planning, internationalisation pathways, organisational design, operational expansion, talent and resource management).
    - design and organise a Masterclass event aimed at complementing the online educational activities by providing high-level coaching and targeted networking opportunities, thereby increasing overall programme impact. For Module 2 (Grow), the Masterclass may focus on specific business dimensions or on strengthening transversal skills such as public speaking, media relations, sales, negotiation, or personal branding. For Module 3 (Advance), the Masterclass should be specifically designed to facilitate meaningful connections with the investment ecosystem, including investors and relevant financial stakeholders.

6.3. Demo Day (Pitching and Awards Ceremony)

The demo day should be organised with the aim of exposing mentees to public speaking and business competition, selecting two winners of 1st Final Grant (10,000 EUR gross) and 2nd Final Grant (5,000 EUR gross), in case of Module 2 (Grow), and 1st Final Grant (20,000 EUR gross) and 2nd Final Grant (15,000 EUR gross), in case of Module 3, granted by EIT Food, and additionally networking them with the startup ecosystem (investors, Business Angels, innovators, corporates and industry representatives). It should serve as a platform to discuss the current challenges in the agrifood system and present the EIT Food activities to the invited audience – it can be a panel discussion or inspirational speech aimed at reinforcing female entrepreneurship in agrifood sector in the local ecosystem. The presence of a role model from the female entrepreneurship scene would be highly recommended.

Responsibilities include:

- design, organisation and promotion of the Demo Day - including activities such as the contract of venue, catering, audio-visual materials, facilitators and speakers. At least part of the event must be open to general public. It should include a panel discussion, training session, inspirational speech or co-creation workshop.
- providing at least 3 independent members to be part of the Jury to assess the pitching (part of the overall score). Selection criteria for mentees' pitching evaluation will be shared in advance by EIT Food.

- evaluate the final business deck of each mentee (part of the overall score).

Audience: Minimum 40 people (excluding mentors, mentees and organisers).

Note: Selected Organisation is welcome to be creative and introduce more features to the proposed format of event. The selected organisations will work closely with EIT Food on customising the format and schedule of the event to the specificities of the agrifood and startup ecosystem.

7. Communication of the Project

Responsibilities include:

- contribution to the dissemination of the project's activities and news, using adequately communication and social media channels, and providing a separate communication and dissemination report on press appearances, number of social media publications and dissemination strategies.
- ensure correct branding, EIT Food visibility and respect of the EWA visual identification in all communication materials in accordance with the guidelines provided by EIT Food.
- distribution of project materials to mentees.
- sending evidence of at least 3 media publications in the national press, in case of Module 2 (Grow), and international press, in case of Module 3 (Advance) (digital or paper).
- encourage and foster participation of the selected women on social media, interviews on media and in EIT Food channels.

5. Ecosystem Engagement

Facilitate tailored connections between entrepreneurs and startups, with key stakeholders, including experts, corporates, investors and potential customers, based on their needs.

6. Project Internal Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting

The selected organisation will ensure to maintain regular coordination with EIT Food, appoint a dedicated contact point, comply with the project contract, use all required platforms and tools, distribute materials to participants, deliver a final implementation report, share success stories and good practices, and apply EIT Food branding consistently across all communications.

Responsibilities include:

- track startup progress and capture relevant data and evidence throughout the programme lifecycle.
- report on programme activities, impact, and use of funds in compliance with EIT Food's financial and administrative guidelines.
- maintain regular coordination with EIT Food (e.g. participate in weekly calls and joint planning sessions).
- ensure strategic and operational alignment across all programme elements.

3. Main requirements for project implementation

3.1. Project duration and implementation

The programme is delivered on an annual basis, typically running from **February 2027 to December 2028**, with the following key phases:

Module 2 (Grow) 2027 and 2028:

- **March-May** – Call for Individual Participants (Idea-holders or Startup Founders or Representatives); Call for External Evaluators and Contracting External Evaluators

- **May** – Applications Evaluation and Contracting Individual Participants
- **June-November** – Programme Delivery
- **December** – Reporting

Module 3 (Advance) 2027 and 2028:

- **February-April** – Call for Individual Participants (Startup Founders or Representatives)
- **April/May** – Applications Evaluation
- **September-December** – Programme Delivery
- **December** – Reporting

Applicants must comply with gender equality, diversity and inclusion principles in line with Annex 5 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement, Specific Rules, Values) and the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan 2025-2027.

Selected applicants may start the project before the Grant Agreement is signed, at their own risk. Activities may not start before the tentative project start date specified in these Call Guidelines and should follow the project start date indicated in the approved proposal. Provided that the Grant Agreement is subsequently signed, eligible costs incurred from the approved project start date may be reimbursed in accordance with the Grant Agreement. Any activities undertaken before the Grant Agreement is signed remain at the applicant's own risk.

3.2. Deliverables

Grant recipients must submit project deliverables. For this activity the deliverables include:

Deliverable	Description
Report on Scouting and Selection Procedure	Structured summary of the outreach process, including key statistics on applications received (e.g. volume, geographic distribution, demographics, sector focus) and summary of the selection process, including applications, evaluation reports, contracts and payment invoices to entrepreneurs,
Learning Itinerary	Detailed outline of the programme curriculum, specifying the topics covered, session formats, timeline and the experts or facilitators responsible.
Cohort Overview	Compilation of one-page profiles for selected entrepreneurs and projects, presenting key information such as venture description, development stage and objectives within the programme.
Mentees' Entrepreneur Journey Roadmap for Module 2 (Grow) and Mentees' Startup Readiness Plan for Module 3 (Advance)	Structured document developed by each participant throughout the programme, reflecting on key topics addressed and outlining the venture's development path and priorities.
Evaluation Matrix	Consolidated record of assessments conducted by mentors and jury members, including evaluation criteria and scoring, forming the basis for final prize allocation.

Final Report	Summary of the programme's execution, detailing activities delivered, participation levels, key outputs and overall results achieved against the intended objectives.

Grant recipients have obligations on communication, dissemination and visibility rules. Please see Article 17 of the Model Grant Agreement and EIT Food's Brand Guidelines.

Grant recipients must adhere to EIT Food Intellectual Property´s (IP) Policy which complies with the IP provisions outlined in Article 16 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement.

3.3. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All EIT Food funded projects should achieve relevant Core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For the Building entrepreneurial capacity for women from rural areas in agrifood, the main KPIs are:

KPI Code	KPI description	Minimum target expected
EITHE 02.4 (Marketed innovations)	Number of innovations introduced on the market during project duration or at the latest within 3 years after the completion of the programme with sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented. Innovations include new or significantly improved products (goods or services) and processes sold.	20 (10 in 2027 and 10 in 2028)
EITHE 04.4 (Start-ups created)	Number of start-ups established in year N as a result / based on the output(s) of KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than three years after the completion of KAVA) having financial transactions of at least 10 000 EUR for services/products (result of the KIC KAVA) sold to customers or at least EUR 200,000 raised via private investment into start-up equity.	8 (3 in 2027 and 5 in 2028)
EITHE 05.1 (Start-ups created from labelled programmes)	Number of start-ups established in year N by students enrolled and graduates from EIT labelled MSc and PhD programmes or by learners / participants in other EIT labelled activities. To be eligible, a start-up should be created during EIT labelled programme (by students, participants) or within 3 years from the graduation (by graduates or within 1 year in case of other EIT Label activities).	10 (5 in 2027 and 5 in 2028)
EITHE 06.1 (Investment attracted by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups)	Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted within year N by supported start-up/scale-ups (per country) that have received KIC business creation services support of total duration of at least two months, within a maximum of three years following the last received KIC KAVA support activity.	2 million EUR (1 million EUR in 2027 and 1 million EUR in 2028)
EITHE 07.1 (Graduates from EIT	Sum of graduates from EIT labelled master's, PhD programmes and other educational activities awarded EIT Label (in year N).	600 (300 in 2027 and 300 in 2028) - minimum 10 per implementor per year

labelled programmes)		

Please note: At the end of the funding period, EIT Food requires specific structured data and documentation to verify the achievement of KPIs. Grantees must report their KPI achievements through the grant management tool and ensure that all required structured data and supporting evidence is submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided (see EIT Food KPI Guidance Document for details).

3.4. Monitoring and reporting

The project will be monitored and may be audited. All Activities selected for funding undergo continuous monitoring by EIT Food to ensure effective progress and implementation in accordance with the Project Agreement.

EIT Food may request regular reporting of actual costs incurred with the subgrant, as well as regular reporting of KPIs and deliverables, together with the supporting documentation. The monitoring process may result in an amendment to the Activity workplan and/or budget, however the Financial Return Mechanism Agreement cannot be re-negotiated following the approval of the Activity.

In the case of under-performance, significant delay of implementation, misconduct, misalignment with the project specifications in the grant management system or any other reason jeopardizing the timely implementation of the Activity identified during the monitoring process, EIT Food reserves the right to discontinue or restructure the funding of the Activity at any point during the Activity duration.

A formal ex-post impact assessment within at least five years of the end of the activity and its outputs is required for each activity, including those implemented by third parties.

4. Financial aspects of the call

1. KIC funding, co-funding rate and cost eligibility

The total budget for this call is 1.556.000 EUR. Recipients will receive a subgrant to fund their cost.

Should additional budget become available, EIT Food reserves the right to increase the number of countries selected under this Call for the implementation of the EWA Grow Module. The guidelines will be amended to reflect the funding available.

The project runs from February 2027 to December 2028.

The maximum funding available for that period per application is 120.000 EUR for Module 2 (Grow) and 116.000 EUR for Module 3 (Advance).

This funding is implemented under EIT GA 101269771 There is a 6 million EUR limit per participants from Member States of the European Union (EU) and from Horizon Europe Associate Countries for the whole 3-year Grant Agreement. Legal entities from non- Horizon Europe Associate countries can participate in consortia but are limited to funding of 60 000 over 3 years for a Grant Agreement. In those limits are included all the EIT Funding awarded to an organization across all the activities and prizes for the 3-year grant agreement.

The Subgrant is based on actual costs and value for money. All costs, including co-funding, need to comply with Horizon Europe regulations regarding the eligibility of expenses. Please refer to Article 6 of the Model Grant Agreement and the Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

When subcontracting, participants must comply with the Horizon Europe procurement rules, particularly the principles of fair competition, equal treatment and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

Other EU funding is not an eligible source of co-funding under this scheme.

2. Payment arrangements

EIT Food will disburse funding in instalments. A proportion of the Activity budget will be pre-financed based on the company size, with subsequent annual payments linked to the eligible costs reported by the recipient. For more information, check the EIT Food Payments Schedule.

For more information, please see EIT Food Project Financing Policy.

Please note: the amount and timing of funding is dependent on the dispersal of funds to EIT Food from the EIT.

3. Financial sustainability requirements

The EWA Programme is entering a transition phase towards a financially sustainable model. This shift is designed to ensure the long-term delivery and impact of the programme beyond the current EIT funding framework.

As part of their proposal, applicants should propose a coherent and feasible financial sustainability model for delivering the programme, describing any current or planned mechanisms for generating or attracting funding. EIT Food particularly encourages the mobilisation of co-financing from public institutions, foundations, banks, and other mission-aligned organisations, as this approach provides a more resilient and scalable foundation for the future of the Empowering Women in Agrifood Programme.

Applicants are expected to secure external financial contributions of a minimum of 10,000 EUR in 2027 and 15,000 EUR in 2028. This contribution will be allocated to finance participant prize grants under the programme. Co-financing contributions are paid directly to EIT Food and do not reduce the EIT Food grant allocated to the implementing partner.

Any co-financing secured will be subject to a separate agreement.

EIT Food reserves the right to request any additional documentation necessary to support its decision-making process and to approve or reject a sponsor's participation based on alignment with its strategy, priorities, ethical values and overall strategic fit.

5. Call criteria

Following the deadline for submission, the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria checks will be performed for each proposal in line with the following criteria.

1. Admissibility

Please note that completing the following two steps is a mandatory prerequisite for submitting an application for EIT Food Calls.

- First, applicants must register their organisation on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal in order to obtain a unique nine-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC); if unsure whether a PIC already exists, organisations can verify their registration directly via the EU Portal.
- Second, applicants must register, access and complete their submission through the platform MyEITFood.eu.

Only proposals complying with the following conditions will be considered admissible for further evaluation:

Applications must be submitted in English before the call deadline, submitted using the forms provided inside MyEITFood.eu, complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.

Any proposals submitted after the deadline will be inadmissible.

2. Entities eligible to participate and eligibility for funding

Any legal entity, based in one of the RIS countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine) is **eligible to participate**, provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met (e.g. the entity is not under EU sanction, please refer to annex 2 and 3), along with any other conditions laid down in the specific call/topic.

This call targets mono-beneficiaries. Consortium are not eligible under this granting scheme.

This call is open to all eligible entities, considering the following eligibility criteria:

For this call, a 'legal entity' means any legal organisation created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

Only proposals satisfying all the eligibility criteria shall pass on to the selection and evaluation stages.

3. Award criteria

3.1. Award criteria, subcriteria and maximum scores

The following criteria and weighting will be used in the assessment:

Excellence (25%) Assesses the applicant's expertise and relevance to the specific thematic focus of the work package.	Maximum score
Expertise & Track Record Proven experience in supporting agrifoodtech startups through acceleration, incubation, or ecosystem building	1-5
Thematic Relevance Relevance of applicant's domain expertise and network the main themes: resilient agriculture, biotech, diversified proteins.	1-5
Experience with Female Entrepreneurship Experience in implementing programmes supporting female entrepreneurship.	1-5
Gender mainstreaming and integration of gender dimension into innovation and education content	1-5
Impact (20%) Evaluates the applicant's ability to engage the ecosystem and deliver long-term impact for startups and stakeholders within the thematic area.	Maximum score
Ecosystem Connectivity Depth and breadth of networks relevant to the Hub theme (e.g. startups, corporates, research, investors).	1-5
Startup Value Generation Ability to connect startups with high-value opportunities (e.g. pilots, investments, partnerships).	1-5

Demonstration of previous experience with EIT Food Example of activities done in collaboration with EIT Food and impact generated.	1-5
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (15%) Assesses the applicant's ability to effectively implement the programme, including the strength of the delivery team, quality of the proposed activities, financial planning, and ability to meet performance and coordination requirements.	Maximum score
Programme Design Quality and relevance of the proposed startup support programme, including the structure and clarity of workshops, mentoring, networking, and events, as well as the suitability of proposed experts, mentors, and speakers.	1-5
Team and Operational Capacity Experience, complementarity, and readiness of the delivery team to deliver the programme, meet reporting obligations, and coordinate effectively with EIT Food.	1-5
Value for Money Efficiency and justification of the proposed budget in relation to the expected programme outcomes and overall impact. Inclusion of a programme budget for a minimum of 10 startups with the possibility to have additional startups.	1-5

Strategic fit (40%) KIC Portfolio strategic fit and compliance with the financial sustainability principles and knowledge triangle integration	**Maximum score**
Alignment with EIT Food Strategy Degree to which the applicant's vision, competencies, and proposed activities are aligned with EIT Food's strategic priorities and Hub objectives, including clear contribution to innovation, sustainability, and long-term system-level impact in the agrifood sector.	1-5
Financial Sustainability Model Quality and feasibility of the applicant's strategy for securing complementary funding from non-EU sources, with co-financing to begin no later than 2027.	1-5
Demonstration of previous experience with EWA Programme Success of activities done in collaboration with EIT Food under the past editions of the EWA Programme and impact and results generated.	1-5

Each evaluation criteria will be scored from 1 to 5 using the following scoring system.

1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses

2	Fair	Application broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses
3	Good	Application addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
4	Very good	Application addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
5	Excellent	Application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The quality threshold for selection is a total weighted score of 3.5. The highest-scoring application will be selected.

6. Evaluation procedure

1. Admissibility and eligibility, exclusion and selection stages

This funding opportunity follows the timeline below:

Call Open Date	05 November 2026
Call Deadline	05 January 2027 12:00:00 CET
Evaluation	07-19 January 2027
Communication to applicants	20 January 2027
Standstill period, Onboarding, Validation and Contracting	30 days after selection
Indicative start of project implementation	February 2027

2. Evaluation of proposals

All submitted applications will undergo an eligibility check and evaluation to determine their feasibility and suitability for funding opportunity.

During the eligibility check, if EIT Food identifies obvious or technical errors in a proposal, applicant will have the opportunity to correct or resubmit their proposal within three (3) calendar days following the call submission deadline. Such errors may include system malfunctions, typos, or missing supporting documents.

The correction window is intended to ensure that these issues do not unduly affect the evaluation of otherwise eligible proposals. Please note that this opportunity is strictly limited to rectifying technical errors and does not permit substantive modifications to the proposal content.

The evaluation will be conducted by 3 external evaluators and 1 internal evaluator, based on the criteria specified in section 5.4.1 (Award criteria, subcriteria and maximum scores). External evaluators score the award criteria Excellence, Quality and Efficiency of Implementation and Impact. Internal evaluators only score Strategic Fit. The internal evaluator score does not outweigh the external assessment.

The evaluation consists of a remote evaluation phase where internal and external evaluators conduct their assessment based on the stated criteria.

All external evaluators have been selected in an open and transparent process. All evaluators, both internal and external, are trained extensively on the European Union´s Code of Conduct for Evaluators, namely on the importance of transparency, fair treatment of all applicants, confidentiality and how to avoid conflict of interest. Evaluators must contractually agree to recuse themselves in the event of a conflict of interest. EIT Food aims for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within evaluation committees.

Expert evaluators are obliged to use the Horizon Dashboard during the assessment and to provide evidenced justification on the assessment of the proposal's budgets.

3. Communication of evaluation results to applicants

3.1. Communication of evaluation results

Following the award decision, all applicants shall be informed of the result in writing. All applicants shall receive their assessment, in the format of evaluation summary report, including their final score.

Successful proposals will be invited to the financial support agreement preparation stage/onboarding, the other proposals will be rejected.

3.2. Requirements for selected proposals

If the proposal is selected, the communication on the evaluation results may include a set of recommendations/conditions as a result of the outcome of the evaluation. These requirements may not entail a substantial modification of the proposal.

If the applicant fails to comply with the provided recommendations/conditions or does not respond in the time allocated, the EIT Food reserves the right to withdraw the conditional notification. Should this occur, the next proposal will be contacted following the ranking list.

Entities that have never been part of projects funded by the EIT Food and that do not have a PIC validated by the Research Executive Agency (REA) of the European Commission will be subject to a PIC validation process.

As part of the onboarding process, selected entities must:

- Sign and submit the Declaration of Size.
- Sign and submit the Financial Information Form.
- Sign the Declaration of Honour (DoH) in accordance with the EU Financial Regulation.
- Register on EIT Food grants management platform.
- Additionally, EIT Food reserves the right to request the EIT Community Onboarding Service a Financial Assessment Capacity to check the financial capacity of any entity of a selected proposal. In such case, EIT Food may require:
    - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several liability for all subgrantees or joint and several liabilities of Affiliated Entities if any
    - prefinancing paid in instalments (multiple/additional prefinancing)
    - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees

  or

    - propose no prefinancing or
    - request that the entity be replaced or, if needed, might reject the entire proposal

In other words, if the assessment results are not satisfactory, EIT Food might reject the participation of this entity and will then check whether the proposal is still eligible.

For further information on the implementation of the project, please read the EIT Food Activity Implementation Guidelines for Participants.

3.3. Standstill period

The standstill period is a set time after funding selection for appeals, final administrative checks, and compliance in the award process.

The project cannot start before this period. The standstill period of 30 days applies to this call.

3.4. Appeal process

Applicants can submit an appeal within 15 days of receiving their result, if the evaluation of their proposal has not been carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in this document.

For more details, please refer to EIT Food Redress guidance.

4. Support

If you have any questions about this call, please contact the call manager Carolina Silva Marques at carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu.

Please visit our website for any updates to this call and information about upcoming events to support your application. You will also find our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

7. EIT Food Legal Framework & Legal Documents to be signed

1. Contracting

Selected applicants will receive a second communication with instructions regarding the completion of the following documents, as well as agreeing to EIT Food´s conflict of interest policy:

To be signed between the participant and EIT Food:

1. Framework Agreement
2. Kava Contract

Annexes

1. Annex 1 - Information on the EIT

1. European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is a **European Union body** with a legal personality and a wide legal capacity accorded to legal persons under national law. The EIT was created in 2008 by the European Union (EU) to enhance Europe's global competitiveness by fostering collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and higher education organizations.

The EIT is governed by Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (EIT Regulation), which aligns the EIT's mission with the EU's priorities and the objectives of Horizon Europe on evolving research, innovation, economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness, sustainable growth, higher education and entrepreneurship, by means of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which address specific societal challenges and are established and supported by the EIT.

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 is aligned with Horizon Europe and lays down the priority fields and the strategy of the EIT for future initiatives, capacity to generate the best innovation added-value, objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results, impact, as well as an estimate of the resources needed for the duration of Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe Regulation

The Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695 foresees that the EIT takes part in the implementation of the Horizon Europe Programme in accordance with its strategic objectives for the period 2021 to 2027, as laid down in the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT, and taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe.

EIT and Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) relations

The EIT Regulation defines KICs as large-scale Institutionalised European Partnerships of higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders in the innovation process in the form of a strategic network, regardless of its legal form, based on joint mid- to long-term innovation planning to meet the EIT's challenges and contribute to attaining the objectives established.

According to the EIT Regulation, and without prejudice to the partnership agreements and grant agreements between the EIT and each KIC, the KICs have substantial autonomy to establish their internal organisation and composition, as well as their agenda and working methods, provided that they result in progress towards achieving the objectives of the EIT and the KICs, taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and the strategic direction of the EIT set out in the SIA and by the Governing Board.

2. Contractual framework between the EIT and the KICs

The long-term relations between the EIT and each KIC are based on a **seven-year Partnership Agreement** (PA)[1] laying down the general terms and conditions under which the KIC operates as an Institutionalised European Partnership. Subject to positive performance, interim review and outcome of comprehensive assessment of the KIC, the PA can be extended for another period of a maximum of seven years.

The EIT signed a framework partnership agreement with EIT Food on 1 March 2018, with retroactive effect as of 1 January 2018.

[1] Model Partnership Agreement: Partnership Agreement

The **Grant Agreement** (GA)[2] is the contractual instrument laying down the provisions concerning the implementation of the KIC activities (KIC Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities, etc.) through grants, on an annual or multi-annual basis of up to three years with the KICs. Business plans describe the main objectives and expected results and actions taken by the KICs.

The Grant Agreement 2026-2028 between the EIT and EIT Food entered into force on April 7th 2026, with effect from the action start date of 1 January 2026.

Contractual framework between the KIC and the subgrantees

In accordance with the Grant Agreement (Annex 5), the KIC launches calls (i.e. open calls or KIC partnership calls) in order to select projects or award prizes. The KIC awards a "financial support to third parties" (i.e. the so called "subgrants" and "prizes") for the implementation of these projects and signs **subgrant agreements** ("Financial Support Agreements") with the selected entities or consortia.

2. Annex 2 - EU restrictions on participation

1. EU restrictive measures

Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[3] as well as Article 75 TFEU[4], are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/0522[5].

2. Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine

Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024[6] (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.

[2] Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement: general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
[3] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[4] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[5] Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11)
[6] OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1–11

3. Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals and can participate without receiving EU funding, as associated partners, if allowed by the call conditions. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). In case of multi-beneficiary grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity in any funded role and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

4. Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks

The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States[7]. For further information, please refer to the Horizon Europe, Work Programme 2025, General Annexes, B – Eligibility on page 14[8].

3. Annex 3 - Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the Call and from the award if they are in one of the situations referred to in Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation. Applicants that are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion) or are in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/9534 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
- they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

[7] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.

[8]

- have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to supply that information; or
- were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

As evidence, the applicants (i.e. the Coordinator and all the proposed partners participating in the applicant consortium) will have to submit a **declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest**. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

Successful applicants will go through the legal entity validation process of the **Onboarding Service of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC)**. If not provided in the application, the Onboarding Service will request registration documents and a signed Declaration of honour from the successful applicant. The validation may also include a check of the successful applicants by the EIT in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) of the European Commission.

4. Annex 4 – Other terms and conditions

1. Acceptance of the call conditions

EIT Food reserves the right to make reasonable amendments and additions to the call conditions. Amendments and additions to the call conditions shall be valid only before the submission deadline, and if made available to all potential applicants at the same time on the call page of the EIT Food Calls webpage.

EIT Food may declare the call unsuccessful in case no applications are received, if the applications do not meet the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria, or if none of the applications reach the thresholds laid down in this call text.

By submitting the application form, the applicant agrees to the present call conditions. Applicants agree that they have no legal entitlement to funding.

2. Cancellation of the call

EIT Food reserves the right to cancel the call at any time before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement(s) without the obligation to compensate applicants, in particular where its objectives can no longer be met, provided that the applicants are informed in a transparent manner in writing as follows:

- if the cancellation takes place before that award: on the call page of the EIT Food Calls webpage,
- if the cancellation takes place following the communication of the results to the applicants, during the standstill period, or anytime before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement: in writing directly to the selected applicants.

3. Data protection

EIT Food ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (General Data Protection Regulation or "GDPR"). As a data subject, you have the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. If you have a question about personal data processing or want to exercise your data subject rights, you can contact us at: privacy@eitfood.eu.

Personal data will be deleted 5 years after the announcement of the results of the call in case of unsuccessful applications and 7 years for successful applicants.

By submitting your application to this call, you consent that EIT Food will collect, transfer, process, store, and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

For more information on the processing of your personal data, please consult the privacy statement of EIT Food at: www.eitfood.eu/privacy.

4. Confidentiality

EIT Food undertakes to use any confidential information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the evaluation process.

Confidential information shall mean data and/or information (in any form) that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public, or that has not yet been revealed whether in tangible or intangible form, that is identified as confidential in writing or when disclosed orally.

Confidential information included in the application form must be expressly labelled by the applicant as such in the form. As regards confidential information expressly labelled as such in the call process, EIT Food undertakes to (i) not disclose them in any way and any form, without the prior written authorization of the applicant; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the call.

Confidential information may be shared among EIT Food and its subsidiaries (e.g. KIC Co-Location Centres) solely for the purposes of the call process. EIT Food undertakes to impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the conduct of the call, including as members of the Evaluation Committee, may have access to such confidential data and information.

The applicants agree that data and information regarding the selected projects' implementation (e.g. success stories) not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the activities of EIT Food.

5. Avoidance of conflict of interest

EIT Food is committed to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest (regarding all actors) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management.

Measures to avoid potential Conflict of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured including through appropriate conflict of interest declaration and assessment process, established written communication channels and independent and fair complaints/redress procedures.

In case an applicant becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest affecting the conduct of the call process, it shall notify the EIT Food of the conflict of interest without any delay.

6. Ethics and values

The proposal must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.

No financial support/EIT funding can be granted, within or outside the EU, for activities that are prohibited in all Member States. No financial support/EIT funding can be granted in a Member State for an activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

Please refer to the financial support agreement for further requirements.

7. Intellectual property rights

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. Applicants retain ownership of results generated from this activity, including potential intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, applicants affirm that they hold ownership or have legally secured the right to use all elements of the innovative product or service included in their application.

Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless EIT Food and/or any assignee or affiliate from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of applicants. Applicants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing, and distributing products, services, and technology. Applicants agree to respect the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Rules (Article 16) of the General Model Grant Agreement and Article 10 of the Financial Support Agreement (Common Subgrant Agreement Model).

8. Withdrawal of the funding – Recovery of undue amounts

EIT Food may withdraw the funding after its award and recover all payments made in line with the provisions of the Financial Support Agreement, including in the following cases:

- in case the applicant committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud;
- in case the applicant committed serious breach of obligations under the Financial Support Agreement or during its award (including non-compliance with the call conditions, submission of false information, failure to provide required information, etc.)
- it is established that the awarded applicants were not eligible or should have been excluded.

9. Checks, reviews, audits and investigations

EIT Food retains the right to initiate checks, reviews and audit on an applicant that has been awarded funding, in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the call conditions and of the legal and contractual framework referred to above.

EIT Food may request any information and data from applicants that have been awarded funding for 5 years after completion for these purposes, as well as in relation to monitoring by the EIT.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the KIC as well as the Financial Support Agreement, the EIT and/or the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations in relation to the call and the implementation of the projects.

10. Applicable law

The present call is governed by the applicable European Union legal framework(i.e. in particular the EIT Regulation[9], the EU Financial Regulation[10], the Horizon Europe Regulation[11]), supplemented if necessary by the national law of Belgium.

The applicants agree to observe the obligations outlined in the Partnership Agreement and the Grant Agreement signed between the EIT and EIT Food. Applicants agree to comply with the terms of the Model Financial Support Agreement between successful applicants and EIT Food, available here.

[9] Regulation (EU) 2021/819
[10] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509
[11] Regulation (EU) 2021/695

11. Settlement of disputes

All disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

History of Changes

Version	Publication Date	Changes
Version 1.0	05 November 2026	Original Version