

EIT Food welcomes the Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food

EIT Food welcomes the Commission's Vision for European agri-food systems by 2040 and its emphasis on ensuring a **fair, competitive, resilient and sustainable sector** that **leverages the transformative power of research, knowledge, skills and innovation**.

EIT Food is the EU's leading food innovation initiative. As a **dynamic public-private partnership (PPP) dedicated to agri-food innovation**, EIT Food sparks a network of over 200 public and private partners, spanning businesses, startups, academia, regional authorities, and more – and actively engages even more actors, including farmers and citizens. Together, we are uniquely positioned to **foster collaboration** to build a future-fit European food system. Our mission is to accelerate innovation toward a **more sustainable, healthy, trusted, and resilient food system**.

Looking towards 2040, **public-private partnerships** will be crucial to enabling policy objectives and mobilising public and private capital, accelerating innovation and skills, and bringing innovative solutions to scale with concrete impact on value chain uptake. EIT Food's established programmes and expertise in these fields enable it to provide crucial support in making the most of innovation, both technologic (notably biotechnology or precision farming) and non (such as models of sustainable agriculture alternative to the currently prevailing extractive practices with high input use).

Addressing agriculture and food's investment gap: the role for public-private partnerships

As the Vision for Agriculture and Food indicates, European agriculture suffers from a substantial **investment deficit of about €62 billion¹**, a gap that has increased since 2017. In addition, to successfully transition to more sustainable models, the EU's agricultural sector will require an estimated **€37-52 billion²**. This is an especially significant figure at a time when EU policy priorities suggest an intention to refocus EU funds towards areas other than food and agriculture.

Innovation is key to the sector's competitiveness and sustainability as well as **leveraging EU spending to mobilise private capital and other public investments**. Europe needs a better-balanced mix of subsidies and private investments for a successful transition, particularly to facilitate farmers' access to private capital. **PPPs like EIT Food can serve as platforms to attract blended public-private and purely private investment** in collaboration with traditional business and financial entities by lowering investment risks.

EIT Food fosters public-private collaborations to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the food

¹ European Commission, European Investment Bank (2023). Financing gap in the EU agricultural and agri-food sectors.

² European Commission (2023). Proposal for Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Soil Monitoring and Resilience.

sector through initiatives like the [SmartFoodLogging project](#) and the [Skills-for-Future program](#), which bring together corporations, startups, universities, and NGOs.

EIT Food 2040 commitments for a resilient, sustainable and competitive agri-food system

The Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture and its recommendations created **room for a consensus-building exercise to set the overall direction of the EU's agri-food policy**, reflected in the Vision for Agriculture and Food and the spirit of the new European Board on Agriculture and Food. EIT Food is at the forefront of joint efforts to create more resilient and sustainable food systems and wishes to support this exercise by bringing the insights of innovators from its network.

To support and enhance the Commission's Vision, EIT Food proposes five key commitments:

1. Adopt a comprehensive approach to policymaking

Just as the actors in the agrifood chain face challenges that go beyond 'purely' agrifood issues, solutions can also come from various sources, but these are only possible through well-coordinated and comprehensive action, like in the case of Research & Innovation and agriculture. EIT Food's full value chain focus in programmes such as Regenerative Innovation Portfolio, our consortia-led innovation programmes and 1000+ community of entrepreneurs and startups to be deployed to address the full range of value creation opportunities.

Innovative systems can involve various actors across the food chain, distributing the responsibility and costs of transitioning to a sustainable system more equitably. A more holistic approach can help identify new and complementary income sources, such as agrivoltaics, carbon removal certificates, or nature credits to address, for instance, farmers' low average incomes.

2. Ensure coherence between instruments

To maximise their impact, EU policies need to be more horizontally coordinated and go beyond 'traditional' agri-food instruments. Synergies between EU spending programmes, like the Common Agricultural Policy, cohesion policy, and the EU's 10th framework programme for research and innovation (FP10) are crucial to ensure that public-private partnerships are impactful.

Our successful Think Tanks, combined with policy test beds, test farms, industry consortia and policy innovation research to build demonstrable policy pathways can support the vision's objectives, generate growth and finance for farmers, and improve competitiveness.

3. Leverage food innovation

New genomic techniques and biotechnology at large can introduce additional income streams benefitting farmers. These new practices also ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of innovative practices and, in turn, boost the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU's agri-food value chain. Our Innovation Community has decades of experience in food innovation and working with EIT Food over the past 7 years, our community has brought over 200 new products to

market, raised over €1bn of capital across our startups, and have supported the value chain from farmers to retailers to innovate. Aligned to the vision, we can deploy our innovation community in key growth areas such as Biotech, AI, robotics and drone technology.

4. **Integrating consumers in the Vision**

Consumer engagement is crucial for driving change in the EU's agri-food system based on an accurate reflection of consumer preferences. By enabling informed food choices, consumers can influence the market and production practices. We have developed a detailed understanding of consumer engagement and behavioural effects through our programmes including [EIT Food's Consumer Observatory](#) and the 2024 [Trust Report](#), which provide immediate insights, up-to-date and accurate data on consumer sentiment.

5. **Promote skills and education as key enablers**

Earmarking budget to fund skills, education initiatives, and partnerships (like the [Skills Partnership in the Agri-Food Ecosystems](#)) is crucial for competitiveness, sustainability and generational renewal as they can effectively support skills development and innovation across the value chain. We can leverage and expand our comprehensive food sector education programs, ranging from doctoral studies to professional development courses.

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About EIT Food

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation initiative, and one of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Funded by Horizon Europe, it runs projects in the areas of food innovation, education, entrepreneurship, and public engagement, bringing together the three sides of the 'knowledge triangle': business (companies and SMEs), education institutions and research centres.