Innovation Prize

PZ-IN-OC-25-01

EIT FOOD

Leuven, Belgium

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eitfood.eu

Contents

1. Overview

As EIT Food, we, our partners and start-ups have continuously invested in innovation since our inception, bringing numerous products and services to market. We want to reward the success of our community and recognise the impact that the products and services derived from EIT Food projects and programmes have had, through a prize challenge.

The prize is open to all organisations who have developed a product or service that has reached the market, following their receipt of support from EIT Food.

Prizes will be awarded across seven categories celebrating different dimensions of innovation and impact: Market Excellence Innovator, Rising Innovator Award, Student Innovator Award, Impact Innovator Award, Global Reach Innovator, Tech Pioneer Award, and Women in Innovation. Each category will reward innovators who have demonstrated leadership, commercial success, measurable impact, resilience, and future potential. EIT Food will award a prize of €10,000 for each category.

Applicants must demonstrate impact in the market, following involvement with EIT Food projects or programmes.

Details of the prize, application process and eligibility are below. The deadline for applications is 17/11/25 at 23:59 CET, and the Prize Winners will be notified within 3 weeks of the application closing date.

Prize Overview	
Maximum funding available	70,000 EUR
Number of prizes	1 per category, 10,000 EUR per prize
Prizes Categories	• Market Excellence Innovator • Rising Innovator Award • Student Innovator Award • Impact Innovator Award • Global Reach Innovator • Tech Pioneer Award • Women in Innovation
How to apply	MyEITFood Portal
Contact Information	Ariane Duvieusart (ariane.duvieusart@eitfood.eu)
Call Timeline	
Application Open Date	October 9th September 2025
Application Close Date	Monday 17th November 2025, 23:59 CET
Communication from EIT Food to selected Prize winners	Within 3 weeks of the closing date
Contracting obligation	Up to two days, after the EIT Food notification (post validation)

2. Market Innovation Prize Challenge

2.1. Prize Challenge outline

The prizes will be awarded to impactful innovations which have reached the market and have achieved a level of commercial success. We are looking for products or services which have been developed or improved in part or in full as a result of your engagement with EIT Food. This could be products/services which were developed whilst receiving support from EIT Food (for example during a project), or products/services which have been developed after receiving EIT Food support (for example after a project has been finalised), using the knowledge gained during the project within 3 years after the completion.

Prizes will be awarded across the following seven categories, each carrying a €10,000 award:

Market Excellence Innovator: Celebrates an innovator who has achieved sustained and significant commercial success in the agri-food sector, demonstrating strong market share, profitability and scalability. This award recognizes proven business performance and lasting customer value.

- Key distinction: Focuses on mature, commercially validated innovations with demonstrated market results.
- Examples: Companies with strong sales growth, repeat customers, significant market share in domestic or international markets.

Rising Innovator Award: Celebrates early-stage entrepreneur (e.g. <5 years from founding) whose early achievements show exceptional potential to grow and shape the future of food.

- Key distinction: Celebrates potential and early momentum, not full maturity.
- Examples: Pre-scale or early revenue innovations with strong market signals.

Student Innovator Award: Celebrates a student or recent graduate (<3 years) from an EIT Food programme who has translated their academic or training experience into a tangible entrepreneurial outcome, such as launched product, validated prototype or start-up.

- Key distinction: Recent learnings, recognizing rapid translation from education to action.
- Examples: Student-led spinouts, competition winners, post-graduate start-ups.

Impact Innovator Award: Celebrates an innovator whose work has delivered measurable social or environmental benefits alongside business success.

Global Reach Innovator: Celebrates an innovator who has successfully expanded their solution beyond their home market, creating value across borders.

- Key distinction: Proven ability to scale internationally and adapt to diverse markets.
- Examples: Companies with operations in multiple countries, adapted product lines for different regions, or global distribution partnerships.

Tech Pioneer Award: Celebrates an innovator applying breakthrough technology to solve critical challenges in the agri-food sector.

Women in Innovation Award: Celebrates an outstanding woman entrepreneur whose leadership has driven exceptional results and inspired others in food innovation.

Applicants will be required to apply to one category only.

2.2. Additional benefits for applicants and winners

Visibility for all applicants: All eligible applicants will have their solution, as well as the individuals or teams behind the innovation, showcased on the EIT Food website. This exposure will highlight their achievements to the wider community, and thanks to EIT Food's strong domain authority, will also contribute to improving the search engine ranking (SEO) of their own websites.

Extra visibility for winners: Winners will gain additional exposure for their work through promotional activities and media outreach by EIT Food, including but not limited to:

- A news article and spotlight on the EIT Food communication channels.
- The opportunity to present their initiative at an EIT Food-organised webinar, e-breakfast, or other events.

Recognition: Winning the competition will serve as a prestigious recognition of their achievements and may open doors for future career opportunities.

3. Eligibility Conditions

- The prize is open to all organisations that meet all the following criteria:

EIT Food Support

- The organisation must have been a named recipient of support from any EIT Food Innovation, Education, Public Engagement, Business Creation, RIS project or programme, from 2022 to 2025.
- Eligible organisations include both current participants in EIT Food programmes and alumni.

Marketed Innovation

- The developed product or service must have reached the market following the receipt of support from EIT Food and must relate to the work done on the project or programme.
- Both organisations that have already reported a marketed innovation with documented sales revenue of at least **€10,000**, and those that have not yet reported this milestone, are eligible.

- For this competition, organisations can only apply to one category. Within this category, organisations may apply multiple times with different innovations.
- An organisation cannot win more than one prize for this competition.

Exclusion criteria: The Prize is not open for entrants of the previous edition of the Marketed Innovation Prize (in 2022 and 2024).

Organisation Eligibility	Each organisation must:
	• Be a legally incorporated entity in one of the EU or Horizon Europe eligible country listed above. • Provide a PIC Number: https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf
Application Eligibility	Each application must:
	• Be complete, with all mandatory application documents uploaded. • Be submitted on time via our submission template. • Be fully written in English.

Please see Annex 1 for additional eligibility restrictions.

4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All **EIT Food funded** activities aimed at testing, launching, or scaling products and services should achieve relevant Knowledge Performance Indicators (KPIs). For the Innovation Prize the main KPI is called **Marketed Innovations (EITHE02.4)**, which is an indicator of products reaching the market and generating sales.

EIT Food tracks **Marketed Innovations** by requiring specific reporting documentation at the end of the funding period to prove the number of innovations introduced on the market during the project duration.

Definition: [EITHE02.4] Number of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion with sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented.

Legal entities from non-Horizon Europe Associate countries can participate in this Prize but are limited to funding of 60 000 euros per Grant Agreement. This funding is implemented under the Grant Agreement 101101912. 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.

5. How to Participate

To submit your application, you will need to complete the online application form, including mandatory supporting files, in MyEITFood Portal. The deadline for submission is Monday 17th November 2025 at 23:59 CET.

Your submission must include:

- A complete Application Form including supporting evidence listed below.
- Mandatory uploads:
- The Marketed Innovation Description Form (Annex 2)
- The Marketed Innovation Declaration Form (Annex 3)
- The Invoices - Documented proof such as an invoice or an online sales record demonstrating that the purchases totalling to at least 10 000 EUR has been made by a customer.

6. Evaluation and Selection Process

All submitted applications will undergo an eligibility check and evaluation.

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.

All entries will be evaluated against the four core criteria:

Impact	The extent to which the innovation has delivered, or has potential to deliver, measurable benefits to society, the environment, or the food sector. Focuses on significance, scale, and durability of outcomes.
Novelty	The degree of originality and differentiation compared to existing solutions. Focuses on how the innovation introduces new concepts, technologies, or approaches that set it apart.
Commercial traction / Potential	The evidence of current or potential market success. Focuses on revenue, customers, partnerships, investment, or growth pathways appropriate to the stage of development.
Leadership & Resilience	The entrepreneur's role in driving the innovation forward. Focuses on initiative, vision, team-building, overcoming challenges, adaptability, and ability to inspire others.

The weighting and scoring descriptions are tailored per category. This information is provided in Annex 4.

Applications will be evaluated by an EIT Food evaluation panel of a minimum of 3 members (2 external and 1 internal expert), chaired by the Chief Impact Officer. EIT Food will ensure the absence of conflict of interest of the members of the Evaluation Panel, ensuring a fair, transparent evaluation and equal treatment of all entries and participants. Evaluators must contractually agree to recuse themselves in the event of a conflict of interest.
Entries will be evaluated based on the Selection Criteria specified above, and on the impact achieved.

7. Appeal on Evaluation Results

All applicants will be alerted in writing to the outcome of their proposal.

They can submit an appeal within 5 days of receiving their result, if the evaluation of their application 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.

8. Onboarding, Prize Agreement and Payment

Onboarding

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 managed by the EIT Community Onboarding Service. All validated entities will proceed with the signature of legal agreements with EIT Food.

As part of the onboarding process, selected entities must:

- Sign and submit the Declaration of Size.
- Sign and submit the Financial Information Form.
- 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, the EIT Food might reject the participation of this entity and will then check whether the proposal is still eligible.

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

Agreement

- The Prize Winners shall receive the Prize amount through a bank transfer and subject to the signature of Prize Agreement between the respective Prize Winner and EIT Food.
- The Prize Winners will have two days, after the communication of their validation, to sign (each team member) and send electronically the “MARKETED INNOVATION PRIZE AGREEMENT” with EIT Food.
- If the Prize Agreement in this section has been successfully completed, the corresponding prize shall be issued to the bank account specified in the agreement.

Payment

- The prize can only be granted as a full package, and not divided.
- The prize winners shall be responsible for all possible taxes, wire transfer costs and other possible costs related to the payment of prize amounts.

9. Support

If you have any questions about this Prize, please contact prizes@eitfood.eu. Please visit our website for any updates to this call.

ANNEX 1 – Eligibility

Please Note:

1. Failing any of the above call specific criteria will make your application ineligible. If an applicant is ineligible, the participant will be informed.

2. According to EU policies and measures, Russian and Belarus entities will not be authorised to participate in any new grant under the EU Research and Innovation programmes. This ban applies not only to their potential participation as beneficiaries, but to their potential participation in any kind of role: beneficiaries, linked third parties/affiliated entities, subcontractors, in-kind contributors, international partners/associated partners, and third parties receiving financial support. Find the full statement from the European Commission here.

3. Pursuant to Article 2 (2) of the Decision 2022/2506 of 15 December 2022 on measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary *where the Commission implements the Union budget in direct or indirect management pursuant to of Article 62(1) points (a) and (c), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046,* ***no legal commitments shall be entered into with any public interest trust established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust****.* This prohibition applies to financial support to third parties (sub-grants and prizes), hence the proposal of any entity or group of entities where a Participant is included in the list of public interest trusts shall be considered as not eligible.

4. Applicants will be deemed ineligible if:

a. bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, where its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, where it is in an arrangement with creditors, where its business Activities are suspended, or where it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations;

b. it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the organisation is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;

c. it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the organisation is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the organisation belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful conduct which has an impact on its professional credibility where such conduct denotes a wrongful intent or gross negligence;

d. is found to be attempting to influence the decision-making process of the call during the process;

e. attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon its undue advantages in the call process;

f. it has been established by a final judgment that the organisation is guilty of fraud, corruption or money laundering.

ANNEX 2 – The Marketed Innovation Description Form

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ANNEX 3 – The Marketed Innovation Declaration Form

ANNEX 4 – Innovation Prize Evaluation

The jury will evaluate all application on the same core criteria below and according to the questions below.

Impact	The extent to which the innovation has delivered, or has potential to deliver, measurable benefits to society, the environment, or the food sector. Focuses on significance, scale, and durability of outcomes. ➢ Describe the scale and significance of your innovation's impact, achieved results or potential reach. Include measurable outcomes where possible. What measurable difference has your work made for society, the environment, or the food sector?
Novelty	The degree of originality and differentiation compared to existing solutions. Focuses on how the innovation introduces new concepts, technologies, or approaches that set it apart. ➢ Explain what makes your innovation unique or different from existing solutions in the market.
Commercial Traction / Potential	The evidence of current or potential market success. Focuses on revenue, customers, partnerships, investment, or growth pathways appropriate to the stage of development. ➢ Outline your current commercial results or, if early-stage, your potential for market success (e.g., pilots, partnerships, revenue, market entry plans).
Leadership & Resilience	The entrepreneur's role in driving the innovation forward. Focuses on initiative, vision, team-building, overcoming challenges, adaptability, and ability to inspire others. ➢ Share examples of how you have demonstrated leadership, built teams, overcome challenges, or influenced others in your entrepreneurial journey.

Scoring Grid per category

Each category will be scored using four weighted criteria (Q1–Q4), with Q5 ("Mission Alignment") used as a qualifying check rather than scored separately.

The weighting and scoring descriptions are tailored per category.

Market Excellence Innovator

Weighting: Impact 30% | Novelty 20% | Commercial Traction 35% | Leadership 15%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Traction (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	Minimal reach beyond small niche	Incremental improvement	No or declining revenue	Limited visible leadership
2	Regional reach	Some originality	Steady but modest growth	Occasional leadership

3	Strong national presence	Clearly differentiated	Consistent multi-year growth	Strategic responses to challenges
4	Multi-market reach	Highly original at launch	Strong market share & profitability	Proven scaling leadership
5	Market leader influencing sector	Market-defining innovation	Sustained global revenue growth	Visionary leadership shaping sector

Rising Innovator Award

Weighting: Impact 25% | Novelty 25% | Commercial Potential 30% | Leadership 20%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Potential (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	No validation beyond idea	Common approach	No early interest	Limited leadership
2	Small pilot/test	Some originality	Minimal customer/investor signals	Basic leadership
3	Positive market feedback	Distinct features	Early adopters or investment	Consistent problem-solving
4	Expanding early presence	Highly original	Multiple signed contracts or strong investor interest	Proactive leadership
5	Early adoption in national/international markets	Disruptive concept	Strong pipeline & investment momentum	Inspirational early-stage leadership

Student Innovator Award

Weighting: Impact 20% | Novelty 30% | Commercial Potential 25% | Leadership 25%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Potential (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	No measurable outcomes	Common student project	No pathway to market	Minimal leadership
2	Prototype tested in limited context	Some novelty	Small-scale informal sales	Emerging leadership
3	Positive pilot results	Distinctive approach	Early customers or grants	Consistent leadership in teams
4	Adoption beyond initial circles	Highly original	Clear growth pathway	Proactive network-building leadership

5	Significant early impact	Breakthrough concept	Strong early sales or partnerships	Inspiring leader among peers & community

Impact Innovator Award

Weighting: Impact 40% | Novelty 20% | Commercial Sustainability 25% | Leadership 15%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Sustainability (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	Minimal measurable change	Common solution	Unsustainable	Minimal leadership
2	Small local impact	Partly novel	Weak financial sustainability	Some leadership
3	Clear benefits for a defined group/environment	Distinct approach	Stable income supporting mission	Strong mission leadership
4	Significant impact in multiple communities	Highly original & replicable	Growing sustainable revenue	Inspiring mission-led leadership
5	Systemic, lasting transformation	Game-changing innovation	Robust, growing impact-linked revenue	Iconic change agent leadership

Global Reach Innovator

Weighting: Impact 25% | Novelty 20% | International Traction 35% | Leadership 20%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	International Traction (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	No overseas reach	Standard offer	No international traction	Limited leadership
2	One overseas pilot	Some adaptation	Minimal sales abroad	Basic leadership
3	Several markets entered	Distinct advantage abroad	Moderate overseas growth	Strong scaling leadership
4	Significant adaptation for diverse markets	Highly original internationally	Strong overseas revenues	Proactive partnership leadership

5	Global brand impact	Globally disruptive	High multi-market revenue	Visionary leadership in global context

Tech Pioneer Award

Weighting: Impact 25% | Novelty 35% | Commercial Potential 25% | Leadership 15%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Potential (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	Untested in real-world	Incremental tech	No readiness	Minimal leadership
2	Early pilot	Some originality	Limited adoption interest	Basic R&D leadership
3	Proven prototype	Differentiated tech	Early adoption/licensing	Consistent tech-to-market leadership
4	Scaling use	Highly original & defensible	Growing commercial uptake	Strong bridge between tech & market
5	Market-shaping impact	Breakthrough, globally relevant	Strong revenues/investment	Visionary tech leadership

Women in Innovation Award

Weighting: Impact 25% | Novelty 20% | Commercial Traction/Potential 25% | Leadership 30%

Score	Impact (Q1)	Novelty (Q2)	Commercial Traction/Potential (Q3)	Leadership (Q4)
1	Limited reach	Minimal originality	Weak/no commercial case	Limited influence
2	Local impact	Some originality	Modest traction	Some leadership
3	Regional/national influence	Distinctive innovation	Stable growth or promising pipeline	Strong role-model leadership
4	Significant sector influence	Highly original	Strong growth or investor interest	Inspirational leadership recognised externally

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5	Transformational sector impact	Market-defining innovation	Sustained high growth or rapid expansion potential	Iconic leadership inspiring systemic change