

FAQ Document - Open call for proposals: Request for EIT Food Accelerator Network Programme Implementing Participants 2027-2028

What is the EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN)?

The EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) is EIT Food's flagship startup acceleration programme supporting high-potential agrifoodtech startups across Europe. The programme helps startups validate their technologies, strengthen their commercial and investment readiness, and accelerate market adoption through tailored support, industry connections, investor exposure, mentoring, and training.

EIT FAN is delivered through a network of thematic Hubs, each specialising in a specific agrifood innovation area. In 2026, the programme is being delivered through six Hubs:

- Helsinki Hub – Circular Solutions for Food Systems
- Paris Hub – Biotech Ingredients, Products and Processes
- Warsaw Hub – Future Resilient Agriculture
- Munich Hub – Smart and Low-Carbon Supply Chains
- Wageningen Hub – Digital and Autonomous Farming Solutions
- Catania Hub – Water-Smart Agrifood Systems

Which thematic areas are included in this call?

For the period 2027-2028 this call seeks Implementing Participants in two new thematic focus areas:

- Circular Solutions for Food Systems
- Nutrition Innovation & Food as Medicine

Nutrition Innovation & Food as Medicine

Translating food innovation into health impact through personalised nutrition, preventive health approaches, and consumer-focused wellbeing solutions.

In Scope

Precision Nutrition & Metabolic Health

Personalised nutrition, biomarkers, digital nutrition, GLP-1 nutrition solutions, metabolic health, and nutrition-based prevention.

Healthy Ageing & Life-Stage Nutrition

Healthy ageing, longevity, cognitive health, muscle health, women's health, children's nutrition, and sports nutrition.

Functional Foods

Microbiome solutions, probiotics, prebiotics, postbiotics, bioactive ingredients, antioxidants, functional foods, food-as-medicine approaches, and clinical evidence generation.

Consumer Health Innovation

Behaviour change platforms, digital health solutions, consumer engagement tools, and innovations that support healthier food adoption.

Circular Solutions for Food Systems

Turning side streams and waste into high-value food, feed, ingredient, and packaging solutions while improving circularity across the food system.

In Scope

By-Product & Waste Stream Valorisation

Nutrient recovery, extraction of high-value compounds, upcycled food and feed ingredients, and ingredients derived directly from side streams.

Upstream Process & Feedstock Optimisation

Low-energy extraction technologies, yield-maximising pre-processing, and circular process design.

Circular & Sustainable Food Packaging

Biobased and compostable materials, reusable and refill systems, and packaging solutions that support a more circular food system.

Please note: Following the selection of implementing partners, the final theme names and subtopics may be refined or adjusted in collaboration with EIT Food based on strategic priorities and ecosystem needs.

EIT Food reserves the right to amend the thematic scope of the call prior to the call closing date.

Who can apply to this call?

Any legal entity that meets the eligibility requirements outlined in the call guidelines may apply. Applicants must demonstrate experience in startup acceleration, incubation, venture support, ecosystem building, or related activities and have the capacity to deliver an EIT FAN Hub.

How can organisations apply to this call?

Organisations can apply either as a **single organisation (mono-beneficiary)** or as a consortium. EIT Food's preferred implementation model is a mono-beneficiary application, and organisations with the capacity to deliver the programme independently are strongly encouraged to apply individually.

Applicants that wish to combine complementary expertise, networks, or capabilities may also apply as a consortium. In such cases, the consortium must consist of at least two independent legal entities. For operational efficiency and to ensure a seamless experience for participating startups, EIT Food recommends consortia of no more than two organisations, based in the same country.

Can an organisation submit more than one application?

Applicants may only submit one application for one thematic focus area. Each application must select one specific Hub theme.

How many new Implementing Participants will be selected?

EIT Food intends to select two Implementing Participants to deliver the two new thematic Hubs focused on:

- Circular Solutions for Food Systems
- Nutrition Innovation & Food as Medicine

The highest-scoring application per thematic area will be selected, subject to meeting the quality threshold and call requirements.

What is the duration of the project?

The project runs from January 2027 to December 2028. Selected organisations will deliver activities over a two-year period.

What is the financial sustainability aspect of this call?

EIT FAN is transitioning towards a financially sustainable delivery model to ensure the long-term continuity and impact of the programme. Applicants must demonstrate how they will contribute to the financial sustainability of their Hub through either:

- **Co-financing (preferred):** Securing external financial contributions that support Hub delivery without reducing the EIT Food grant.
- **Co-funding:** Contributing financial resources that are managed directly by the implementing partner and proportionally reduce the EIT Food grant.

Applicants should outline their proposed approach, expected funding sources, and sustainability strategy in their application.

For full details on contribution levels, funding sources, and grant allocations, please refer to Section 4.3 of the Call Guidelines.

What level of funding is available?

The total maximum budget available under this call is EUR 960,000.

Depending on the financial model selected:

Co-financing model

- Maximum EIT Food contribution: EUR 240,000 per year
- Maximum EIT Food contribution over two years: EUR 480,000

Co-funding model

- Maximum EIT Food contribution: EUR 120,000 per year
- Maximum EIT Food contribution over two years: EUR 240,000

What is the difference between co-financing and co-funding?

Co-financing (preferred model)

Under the co-financing model, applicants are expected to secure external financial contributions covering approximately 50% of the annual Hub operating costs (implementation, network coordination and subgrants to startups). Under the co-financing model, applicants secure external financial contributions of approximately EUR 180,000-200,000 per year. These contributions are paid directly to EIT Food and do not reduce the EIT Food grant allocated to the implementing partner.

Co-funding

Under the co-funding model, applicants are expected to provide approximately EUR 120,000 per year in co-funding, representing around 50% of the annual Hub programme implementation costs. Under the co-funding model, applicants contribute approximately EUR 120,000 per year through their own resources and/or eligible external funding sources. This contribution proportionally reduces the EIT Food grant allocated to the implementing partner.

How should I display the budget?

Use the budget template provided on the call website.

If you have a co-financing model, you should enter all amounts under the EIT Food column. If you have a co-funding model, you should enter the relevant amount (50%) in the Co-funding column.

Which model is preferred by EIT Food?

While both models are accepted, co-financing is the preferred approach because it strengthens the long-term sustainability of the EIT Food Accelerator Network without reducing the EIT Food grant allocated to the Hub.

What sources of co-financing are acceptable?

Examples of acceptable co-financing sources include:

- Public local, regional or European funding bodies
- Foundations and other mission-aligned organisations
- Implementing partner contributions
- Corporate partnerships facilitated through EIT Food approved mechanisms

Applicants should clearly describe their funding model and expected funding sources in their proposal.

Can other EU funding be used as co-funding?

No. Other EU funding sources are not eligible as co-funding under this scheme, including (but not limited to) Horizon Europe and Erasmus funding.

Will startup grants be managed by the Implementing Participants?

No. Startup subgrants are managed by EIT Food. Implementing Participants are responsible for delivering the Hub programme but are not responsible for distributing startup grants.

What are the main responsibilities of an Implementing Participant?

EIT FAN is delivered through a shared programme framework across all Hubs to ensure a consistent and high-quality experience for participating startups. While all Implementing Participants are expected to follow the core EIT FAN methodology and delivery structure, there is significant flexibility in how each Hub leverages its own expertise, network, and ecosystem.

Key requirements that are common across all Hubs include:

- Actively scouting and attracting high-potential startups aligned with the Hub's thematic focus.
- Supporting and participating in the EIT FAN startup evaluation and selection process.
- Delivering a hybrid acceleration programme aimed at strengthening technology validation, commercial readiness, investment readiness, and corporate readiness.
- Providing mentoring, workshops, networking opportunities, and tailored startup support.
- Organising at least two in-person engagements with the startup cohort, each lasting 2-3 days.
- Facilitating connections with relevant corporates, investors, customers, and ecosystem stakeholders.
- Participating in programme coordination, monitoring, reporting, and regular alignment meetings with EIT Food.

Applicants have flexibility in areas such as:

- The detailed programme design and agenda.
- The selection of mentors, coaches, speakers, and subject-matter experts.
- The format and content of workshops and networking activities.
- The regional ecosystem partners and stakeholders engaged.
- The design of Hub-specific events and showcase activities.

The typical EIT FAN acceleration programme lasts approximately **2-3 months** and forms part of a wider annual programme cycle running from startup scouting and selection through to programme delivery and reporting.

How many startups should a Hub support?

Applicants should demonstrate the capacity to support a minimum of 10 startups. The final number may vary based on annual programme planning.

How will applications be evaluated?

Applications are assessed according to four weighted criteria:

- Excellence (20%)
- Impact (20%)
- Quality and Efficiency of Implementation (25%)
- Strategic Fit (35%)

The highest-scoring application per thematic area will be selected, provided it meets the quality threshold.

Is geographical diversity considered during evaluation?

Yes. The evaluation process gives preference to proposals that contribute to a balanced geographical distribution of EIT Food Hubs, particularly in countries without an existing EIT Food Hub and in EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries.

Will branding and communications support be provided?

Yes. Implementing Participants will operate under the EIT FAN brand and will be expected to follow EIT Food branding and communication guidelines. EIT Food provides central branding and communication frameworks for programme delivery.

Where can applicants ask questions about the call?

Questions can be directed to:

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