



Co-funded by
the European Union

Expression of Interest for Venture Studio Founders

EIT Food / Expression of Interest for Venture Studio Founders in Southern,
Central and Eastern Europe / 2026

EIT FOOD

Leuven, Belgium

23rd October 2026

Version: 1.0

eitfood.eu

History of Changes

V1.0	First version	
------	---------------	--

Table of Contents

History of Changes	1
Expression of Interest.....	3
Background	3
From pre-accelerator to venture builder	3
Addressing geographical imbalances for European founders.....	3
Seedbed Foundations	4
Studio Founder Profile.....	6
Who are we looking for?.....	6
The Process	8
Phase 1: Selection.....	8
Phase 2: Induction	9
Phase 3: Development.....	9
Phase 4: Inception grant	10
Phase 5: Funding	11
Evaluation: How will your Expression of Interest be evaluated?.....	11
Timeline	11
How to Apply.....	12
Funding and collaboration principles	12
FAQ.....	13
About applying	13
About the programme	14
Money and expenses.....	15
Ownership and independence	16
What am I expected to build?	17
Selection	18
Annex 1 – Eligibility	19
Annex 2 – Characteristics of a Venture Builder or Studio	20
Annex 3 – Seedbed Venture Catalyst	21

Expression of Interest

We are looking for talented, experienced and ambitious entrepreneurs to set up new venture studios in southern, central or eastern Europe.

Following a rigorous selection process, up to 10 individuals will be welcomed into a “Venture Builder for Venture Builders” programme run by EIT Food and our collaborating Seedbed venture builders.

Participants will receive support and training from these venture builders for three months as they explore the viability of setting up a new studio in their home region.

If they successfully complete the programme a grant¹ of €30,000 is available to set up their studio in their home region. Once established, an additional €300,000 in co-funding² is available from EIT Food to support the studio’s first two years.

Background

For the past 6 years EIT Food Seedbed has supported new startups to bring to market new innovations that address the challenges facing the food and farming system, helping more than 300 startups who have gone on to raise nearly €40M in funding.

From pre-accelerator to venture builder

From 2019 to 2025, Seedbed was a startup accelerator programme, providing enormous value to many founders and stakeholders and helping to build the European agrifood ecosystem into what it is today.

In 2025 we completed a detailed review of the startup landscape across Europe and concluded that the classic accelerator approach delivered by Seedbed in the past was probably no longer the best way to help startup founders in the agrifood tech sector to build successful companies.

Food and agriculture tech startups typically have much longer pathways to market than startups in other sectors. Their technical and regulatory needs are often more complex and specialised, and their capital requirements are significantly higher than the software or ecommerce startups for whom the accelerator model was originally designed. We believe instead that the *venture builder/venture studio*³ is a better model - and all Seedbed’s initiatives now reflect this decision.

In 2026 we took our first step towards implementation with the launch of Seedbed Venture Catalyst⁴ an initiative that supports startups from leading agrifood venture building programmes in Europe.

Addressing geographical imbalances for European founders

In the process of developing Venture Catalyst, we analysed startup ecosystems across Europe and two conclusions were clear: firstly, that founders in southern, central and eastern regions faced significantly greater challenges finding support for their new startups than founders from other regions. And secondly, that most established venture building programmes were located in northern and western Europe.

¹ Funding is awarded through competitive open call. Applications are evaluated by external evaluators.

² Funding is awarded through competitive open call. Applications are evaluated by external evaluators.

³ A description of the main features that characterise a Venture Builder or Venture Studio can be found in Annex 2)

⁴ Details of the Seedbed Venture Catalyst initiative can be found in Annex 3

This imbalance in opportunity and provision has important consequences - not least because of its impact on delivering economic growth in these less developed regions. But there are other impacts that are especially acute and important for the food and agriculture sector.

Our mission at EIT Food is to help create businesses that will bring to market solutions to the challenges of our food system. The regions in Europe where the effects of climate change are already a reality are also those where much the food we depend on is produced.

Soil degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, invasive diseases and pests, logistics and market access and rural depopulation are already a reality in these regions and solutions are urgently needed. Yet the support infrastructure in these places for new companies that might bring solutions to market is also weakest.

There are researchers and university departments in these regions developing technologies that could begin to address these issues. There are ambitious entrepreneurs who could build the companies to bring them to market. But the lack of support infrastructure means that the technologies often remain in the lab whilst the entrepreneurs either leave to build companies elsewhere or they never even get started.

It is therefore vital that we support people from these areas who have the ability and ambition to build startups targeting these issues. They are the ones who can see these problems most clearly. They are the ones who live among the farmers and food producing regions who are dealing with these issues in real time. To define it in a single phrase: “we cannot expect the problems of olive farmers in Jaen to be solved by startups in Helsinki.”

We need to support solutions that are rooted in a regional context and are relevant to local markets. Seedbed Foundations is a small step towards making this a reality.

Seedbed Foundations

Seedbed Foundations is a “venture builder for venture builders”. The aim is not to create individual startups, but to build new venture studios that can act as miniature ecosystems, creating their own successful startups.

Over time these studios and the connections and output they create will nourish the whole local ecosystem, helping future startups and other infrastructure providers to thrive via positive feedback loops.

Seedbed Foundations has been created and funded by EIT Food and will be delivered in collaboration with our existing venture builder partners: Zinc, Kost Studio, Ivoro, Fresh Ventures, Food Founders, Enviu and Carbon13.

These partners will leverage their existing resources and processes for new venture studio founders, helping them to launch independent Foundations venture studios in the under-served regions of Europe.

The miniature local ecosystems they create will consist of entrepreneurs, researchers, finance providers, government initiatives, universities, technology transfer offices, pilot customers, legal advisors and experts. Over time these ecosystems will become a substrate for countless future startups to grow and thrive.

We will provide the funding and support. Our venture builder partners will provide the training, guidance and rigour. But ultimately, the success of Seedbed Foundations will depend on you. You will bring the talent, ambition, charisma, resilience and grit.

Studio Founder Profile

We know that great founders come in all shapes and sizes, so we are reasonably open minded about your background, education and life experience. However, since you will be actively helping new founders to build agrifood startups from scratch, this is not a role for someone without significant experience as an entrepreneur within a startup.

It is essential that you know your way around the world of startups extremely well, and that knowledge should have come from direct personal experience: you need to have been in the trenches, meeting the challenges, overcoming the setbacks and riding the emotional rollercoaster of startup life.

Beyond this concrete requirement, there are characteristics that we believe would make someone the perfect candidate for this programme, and these are described below. But we also recognise that this is more of a wishlist than a checklist, so if you're worried you don't match every point but you feel you're a great fit anyway, we'd like to hear from you, provided you meet the basic Eligibility criteria described in Annex 1

Who are we looking for?

You are someone who gets things done and doesn't allow knockbacks to get you down. You should have had both successes and failures as an entrepreneur, in your career and in life. You are driven to build what does not yet exist and to make things work in spite of the odds. You will knock on doors, cold call strangers, follow up leads, reach out to contacts, activate your networks and do whatever it takes to create new possibilities when others might give up and go home.

You will already have at least one technology startup under your belt, either as a founder, co-founder or very early hire. You may have worked in the corporate world, but you also have been an entrepreneur in your own right – building something from the ground up.

The startups you've built may not have been huge successes or have delivered multi-million euro exits - but they should have included successful fundraising from private investors, to at least Seed round, and should involve some form of technology innovation at the core of the business.

As a result you should be familiar with the pitfalls and complexities of bringing a new technology to market – the challenges and costs of moving up the TRL scale, the complexities of IP protection and licensing, the frustrations of moving from demo to pilot to production.

You should have successfully discovered new customers and sold to them – from a pilot phase to the purchase of a finished product that you shipped. You should have hired staff, built a team and led them to work together to build your vision under conditions of extreme uncertainty. You should have pivoted when sensible and persevered when needed and have learned when it's time to give something up and try a whole new approach – all without losing heart, motivation or momentum.

Over the years you have built up a solid, diverse network of people who have advised, consulted, consoled and coached you; people who have invested in or contributed to your startup journey and whom you can call on when things get tough. In return you have probably given back a fair amount of your time supporting others through coaching, mentoring or as an advisor or an investor.

But the most important part of all is not what you've already built – it's what you're excited to build next. You are now driven to build more than just another startup. You now want to help others to build their own dreams.

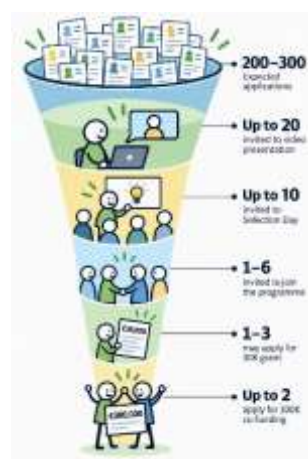
You may have built something great in the place where you grew up, or you may have left years ago to find success in another city, country or continent. Whatever the case, you're now driven to build something new that can make a real difference in a place that really needs it. You are ready to step up and create the future of agrifood entrepreneurship in a place that matters to you.

So, if this resonates, if you want to join us, we very much look forward to receiving your application.

The Process

This Expression of Interest is the first step towards receiving EIT Food financial support for your new venture studio. If successful, you may receive co-funding to help support the studio for its first two years of existence. But you should be aware that the journey will be long and competitive. It will last at least 6 months and will involve a significant commitment of your time that will be unpaid. There is no money offered by EIT Food for at least the first 4 months and no guarantee that your project will be chosen for funding at the end.

The image on the right gives an idea of the funnel for this process. The text and images below explain in detail what happens at each stage. You should review the FAQ if you have questions and you can also attend the online Webinar where we will try to answer any specific questions that are not covered here. You should also review carefully the Eligibility section of this document in Annex 1.

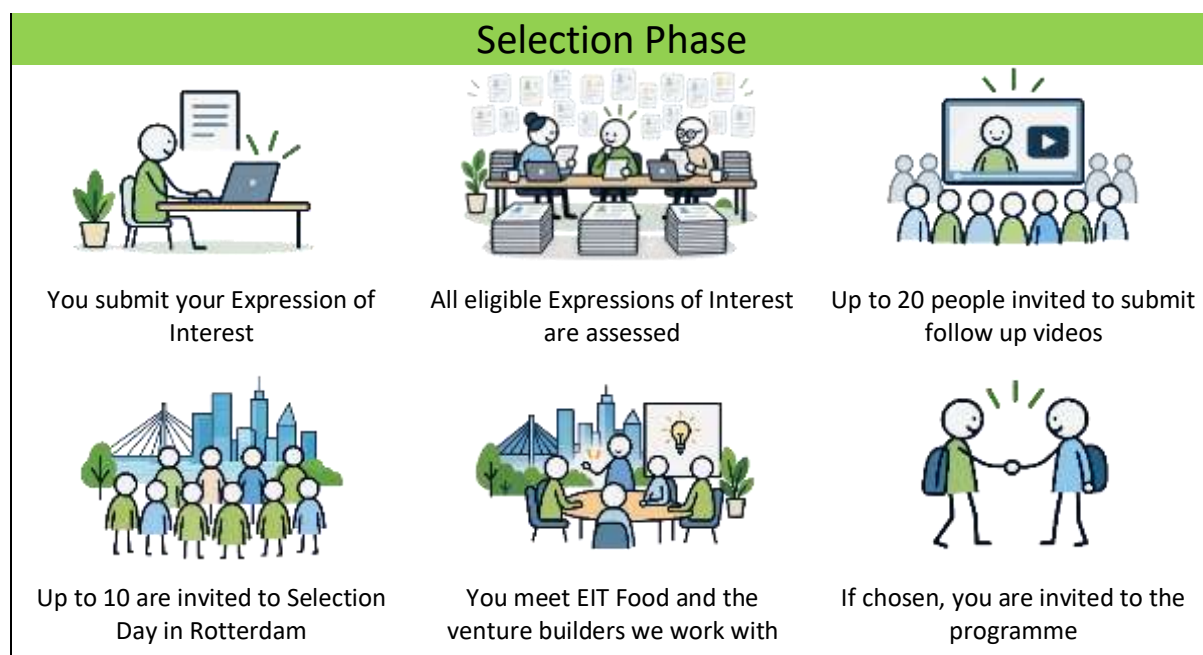


Phase 1: Selection

All eligible Expressions of Interest will be assessed by the Seedbed Foundations team. Up to 20 people will be asked to submit a short follow-up video presentation, from which 10 will be invited to an all-day Selection Day in Rotterdam in late January or early February. EIT Food will provide hotel accommodation in Rotterdam, but you will need to cover your own travel costs.

Selection Day is an opportunity for us all to get to know each other and for you to present your vision for the venture studio you wish to build. You will meet the Seedbed team and the seven agrifood venture studios we work with.

After Selection Day, venture studios will choose the individuals whom they will invite to join their own “venture builder for venture builders” programme.

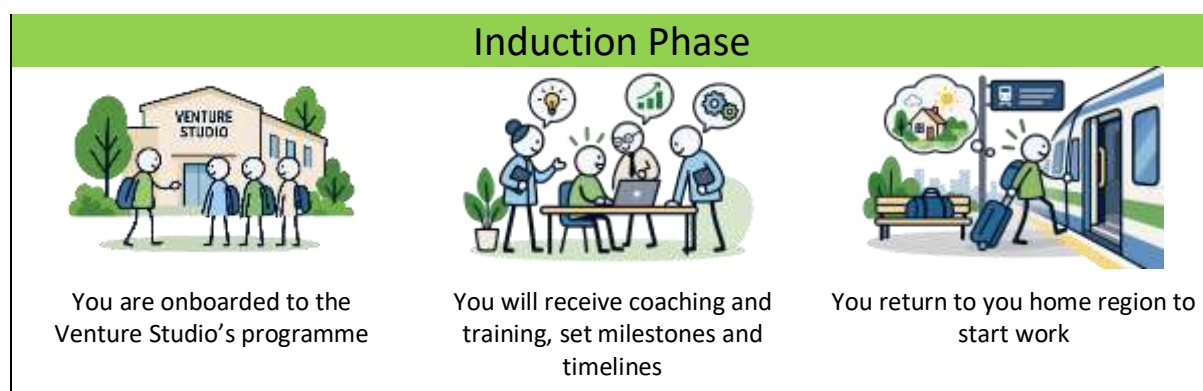


Phase 2: Induction

If you are invited to join the programme at one of the venture builder partners, they will become your “host studio”.

During induction you will spend 3-5 days at your host studio. In this time you will be onboarded and will meet the studio’s team. EIT Food will contribute to your accommodation costs for this visit, but you will need to pay for your own travel.

During the visit you’ll receive training from venture studio staff to help you hit the ground running when you return home. You will also set up a coaching plan for the next three months and establish timelines and stage gates where your progress will be assessed. You will agree the milestones that you will need to achieve in order to remain in the programme.



Phase 3: Development

Once you have completed the Induction phase and are onboarded into your host programme, you will return to your home region⁵ for three months to work on the Development phase of your project for three months.

These three months of Development are the critical part of the whole process. During this time you will be building the foundations of the studio, with support from your host venture builder. You will have periodic check-ins with the host and they will assess your progress and ensure that you are meeting the milestones that they expect. Those who are not making progress will leave the programme.

The support you get from your host will certainly help you - but ultimately this phase is a test of what you can do on your own. It is your chance to show what you can actually achieve: what doors you can prise open, what partnerships you can secure, which funding sources you can access, what networks you can activate, what people and organisations you can convince to join your mission at this earliest stage. These are the connections and resources you will need if your studio gets off the ground and your ability to secure them from the start is the strongest signal that you are the right person to be running things.

Those who can show this will return to their host programme after three months with a clear picture of the landscape and a clear and realistic plan for launch. At the very least, by this stage you should

⁵ The “home region” is the place where you will create the studio. It does not necessarily have to be the place where you currently live, but you should have a strong connection to the home region that you choose.

have identified and mapped all the key players in the ecosystem. You should know who can help you bring your project to life and they should be excited about your plans.

But more than this, you should have made meaningful progress in getting these people on board. “Meaningful progress” means things like signed letters of intent or actual commitments from local stakeholders - such as the regional government’s economic development department. And local private investors and public funds. Relevant TTOs, universities, business schools and research centres. Commercial sponsors and partners willing to offer funds, resources or workspace. Lab facilities and pilot plants in the region. Farmers or manufacturers interested in running trials. Specialists like IP lawyers or consultants with relevant expertise. In short, you should be confident that the foundations of your future programme are reasonably solid before you return to your host programme to present it.



Phase 4: Inception grant

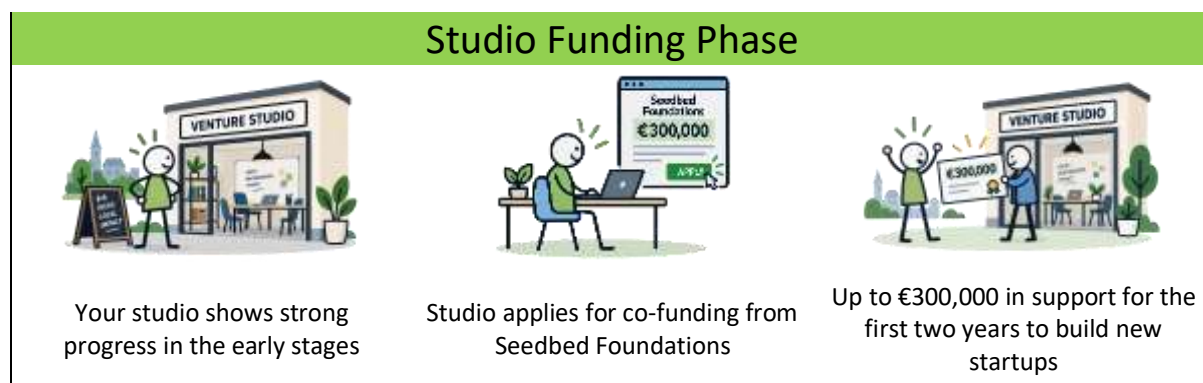
If you have been successful during the Development phase, you will be eligible to apply for €30,000 in grant funding under the Seedbed Venture Catalyst programme.

If you are successful this money will allow you to set up the studio. You will incorporate a company in your home region, set up a workspace, scout for viable opportunities and begin assembling the scaffolding that will support your new startups. We anticipate that a maximum of three individuals will make it this far.



Phase 5: Funding

Those who incorporate a company and demonstrate strong progress will be eligible to apply for the Seedbed Foundations funding call in late Spring 2027. Only new venture studios that have emerged from a host programme are eligible for this call. If selected by the panel of evaluators, studios will receive up to 300,000 euros over two years to fund the studio's operations.



Evaluation: How will your Expression of Interest be evaluated?

Your EOI will be evaluated on:

- your experience, abilities and past achievements as an entrepreneur
- your ability to create startups that have launched technology products
- your ability to raise funding from private and public investors and funds
- your passion and motivation to build an impactful agrifood venture studio
- your understanding of the situation, challenges and opportunities within the ecosystem of the home region
- your rationale for choosing your home region
- your relevant agrifood experience and expertise
- your network in the home region ecosystem and beyond
- your video presentation (if requested)

Timeline

- Tuesday 27th October 2026: Applications for Expression of Interest open
- Wednesday 11th November at 12:00 CET: Info and Q&A webinar #1
- Thursday 26th November 2026 at 14:00 CET: Info and Q&A webinar #2
- Monday 7th December 2026 at 13:00 CET Applications closed
- Monday 14th - 15th December 2026: Selected applicants receive video request
- Late January - Selection Day (exact date TBC)

How to Apply

Submit your application via the form at myeitfood.eu

If you have questions you can probably find the answers in the FAQ section below. We will also run two webinars where you can find out more. See the timeline above for the dates.

A note on the use of AI during the application process

We recognise that LLMs make applying easier, especially if English is not your native language and you are not confident about writing in English.

We will not reject applications that use AI - but please be aware that using an LLM to generate your answers will not actually give you an advantage. It may, in fact, lead the evaluators to have doubts about the authenticity of your application as a whole. We are looking for real people who can connect with real people – show us who you are.

Funding and collaboration principles

To ensure transparency and fair resource use, applicants will be asked to disclose any other funding received for previous or related projects. This helps us understand the full picture, even if there is overlap.

All selected individuals will sign an Agreement with EIT Food, outlining the terms of engagement for developing and delivering their project.

FAQ

About applying

Which countries and regions are eligible?

The venture studio you create must be established in one of the following countries:

Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and Türkiye.

Which nationalities are eligible?

All nationalities are welcome as founders of the studio but you must demonstrate that you have permanent leave to remain and permission to work in the country in which you plan to establish your studio. (ie you must be able to legally work and live in your studio's "home region")

You should also ensure that you will be able to secure a visa for any visits needed to your host studio. Note: EIT Food cannot help you with this.

What is meant by the studio's "home region"?

This is the place where you will create the studio. It does not necessarily have to be the place where you currently live, but you must have a very strong connection to the home region. You may indeed live there currently, or you may be from there, or you have spent significant parts of your life there. All of these are fine.

In all cases you should speak the main language(s) of the region at an advanced level.

Do I need to live in the region where I want to establish the studio?

Not yet. The place you plan to create the studio is called your "home region" in this document. You do not need to be currently living there.

However during the Development phase you should plan to spend most of your time in the home region. And we expect you to be permanently living there once the studio is incorporated.

Can I apply if I currently live outside the eligible region?

Yes. The place you will set up a studio is called your "home region". You may be living somewhere else right now but you will have to move to the home region when the studio is created.

Can two people apply together?

We would not encourage this. You are, of course free to work with a co-founder once you've been invited to a host studio, provided they accept this, but for this Expression of Interest we will evaluate individuals, not joint applications.

Can an existing organisation apply?

No. This is not a programme for companies or established organisations. Only actual physical human persons may apply.

Do I need to have worked in agrifood before?

It's not a concrete requirement but given that the programme exists because the agrifood sector presents unique challenges for founders, you would need to make a strong case as to why your experience in other fields is sufficient and relevant in this context.

Do I really need to have founded more than one startup?

More than one? No, but at least one.

You need to have worked in a tech startup from the very earliest stages of that business. Pre-product and pre-investment, or at least pre-Seed round.

We don't insist that you were legally a founder, but you should have been among the earliest hires, you should have played a major role in the development and growth and you should have remained there long enough to have experienced life in that world to the full.

More experience is better.

Do I need to have raised investment beyond Seed?

Probably. Building startups that can raise Seed rounds and go beyond is a critical function of a successful venture studio. If you've never done it you will not be able to help the founders you are supporting. If you've raised multiple Seeds in different companies that is probably OK, but showing you've raised a Series A+ would be better.

Do I need to have a venture studio idea already?

You should have a pretty clear idea of the location for sure and a clear explanation of why. If you have thoughts about the specific tech, mission or other focus that you'd like your studio to have, we'd love to see it.

About the programme

How much time will I need to commit?

Until Selection Day, not much but during Development phase it will be a lot.

If selected for the programme you will need to attend the onboarding at your host venture builder which is 3-5 full days plus travel. In the Development phase you should expect to be working almost a full-time job for three months - or at least a very demanding part-time role. Minimum 25-35 hours a week.

Remember you'll be measured on what you manage to achieve in that time. So if you're not able to make the time to actually go and meet people, and not able to put together the case for why they should help you, you will not make the stage gates that the host studio will expect to see.

Can I continue working or running another business during Development?

If you think you can manage to do it and still dedicate 25-35 hours a week to Development, yes. But remember that you should be actually in the region during this time and you will need to be going and meeting people who you need help from. This means that you will need time during the day for this, so you can't just squeeze it all into evenings and weekends.

What happens during the three-month Development phase?

This is where you will do the work to show to yourself and us that you really can put together the resources you need to make the project work. You're basically putting in place the foundations of your studio.

To be very clear: the right outcome here is not a plan or a funding application. We are looking for people who can come back with real commitments, in writing, from relevant local supporters. From people with money, resources, expertise, IP, workspace, sponsorship and so on.

The studios we will support need to show how they can become self-sustaining and able to create successful startups. Showing that you can secure support during Development is a very strong positive signal.

What am I expected to achieve during those three months?

The specific goals will be agreed with your host studio – but in all cases what is needed is more than a beautiful business plan. Tangible commitments are the hard currency here, and in particular, commitments that show a path to viable co-funding from public or private sources. We will not award the €300,000 to any studio that cannot show a credible path to survival after that money runs out.

What are the stage gates and how will progress be assessed?

These will depend on which studio becomes the host for your project.

How will I be matched with one of the seven Venture Builders?

During Selection Day you will meet the venture builders and if they see a viable match they will invite you.

What happens if more than one Venture Builder wants to work with me?

Your self-belief is impressive! If this happens we're pretty sure that someone with your talents will be able to make this decision on their own.

What happens if none does?

This is an inevitable outcome in a competitive process.

You will be free to try again through future calls – we expect to run another round in late 2027.

Money and expenses

Will I be paid during the Development phase?

No. There is no money attached to this call. If you make it successfully through Development you will be able to apply for a €30,000 grant. If successful this will help to support you as you set up the studio but there is no money available before that stage.

What travel and accommodation expenses will EIT Food cover?

We will make reservations and pay for hotel accommodation for the visit to Selection Day and we will contribute to the costs of accommodation during Induction but you will need to book and pay for your own travel in full in both cases.

What is the €30,000 grant for?

The grant is awarded through a call that is open to people who have successfully completed the Development phase. It is intended to support you in the earliest stages establishing of the studio. You can use it how you like, within the limits of eligible expenses allowed under the Horizon Europe Annotated Grant Agreement.

It will be paid to you in two instalments of €15,000 each. The second instalment will only be paid if you have set up a company to operate the studio in the chosen region within the time period defined in the call.

When does the €30,000 become available?

After you have successfully emerged from the host studio's programme you can submit an application. If successful you should receive the initial tranche of funds in 5-8 weeks.

What can it be spent on?

See answer to "What is the €30,000 grant for?"

How is the €300,000 awarded?

The Seedbed Foundations award is an entirely separate process. It will be open to new venture studios that emerge from the seven venture builders that EIT Food works with under the Seedbed Venture Catalyst initiative.

Important note: Success in this EOI does not in any way ensure that you will be successful in applying for any further funding. Even if you successfully receive the €30,000 subgrant to set up your studio, there is also no guarantee that your application for further funding will be successful.

What exactly does “up to €300,000 over two years” mean?

Studios that are awarded Seedbed Foundations funding will be paid under the terms of an EIT Food grant agreement that defines when and how payments are made and what costs are eligible.

Normally this means that an initial payment is made and later payments are claimed based on cost reporting and evidence of spending. The maximum that can be claimed each year will be €150,000 and the agreement will be for 2 years.

The agreement will also require that studios secure funding from other sources, so this will be a “co-funding” agreement.

To be clear: this will be awarded through a separate call and a separate evaluation process. There is no guarantee that you will receive it, even if you are successfully chosen through this EOI. Even if you are awarded the €30,000 subgrant to set up the studio, access to the €300,000 future funding is not guaranteed and will depend on the evaluation of your application.

Is match funding required for the €300,000?

Yes. This will be a co-funding agreement. The exact amount and proportions will be defined in the call for Seedbed Foundations which will be launched in 2027. It is not part of this EOI.

What costs can the €300,000 cover?

Under EIT Food grant agreements, recipients can be paid for costs that are directly related to delivering that activities that the grant exists to support. These are presented to EIT Food in the application that the studio will make for these funds and are reviewed by external evaluators. They are also required to be reported and justified at the end of each funding period.

The €300,000 is awarded through a separate call and is not part of this EOI.

Can I pay myself a salary from the funding?

Yes. This is a legitimate use of the funds. However you will need to show timesheets and other documentation to claim the funds.

Ownership and independence

Who will own the new venture studio?

You will be the owner. However it is expected that the host venture studio will receive a small equity stake in the new studio and EIT Food may take a stake if you are awarded the €300,000 in funding. Details will be defined in that call.

The €300,000 is awarded through a separate call and is not part of this EOI.

Does EIT Food take equity in the studio?

EIT Food may take a stake if you are awarded the €300,000 in funding. Details will be defined in that call. The €300,000 is awarded through a separate call and is not part of this EOI.

Does the host Venture Builder take equity?

It is expected that the host venture studio will receive a small equity stake in the new studio.

Who owns the IP created by the studio?

This will be negotiated by you on a case-by-case basis. It will likely depend on what IP you work with when creating startups and any other founders you plan to work with in the studio.

Will the studio take equity in startups it creates?

This will be your decision and a key part of your business model.

What happens to the studio after EIT Food funding finishes?

We are only interested in supporting studios that can show a viable path to become self-sustaining. You should therefore start from this assumption work backwards accordingly.

This EOI does not guarantee any funding from EIT Food.

What am I expected to build?

What exactly do you mean by a “venture studio”?

A detailed definition of what we mean by “Venture Building” is given in Annex 2. A venture studio is one type of venture builder. Usually they are smaller and support fewer projects. Sometimes the staff of the studio will operate as founders of the startups in the early stages before they spin out.

Does the venture studio need a permanent physical location?

This is not a requirement during the programme, nor even in the Inception phase. However, it's likely that once you are building startups you will need a place to work that is not a home office, so you should probably plan on having a space by the time you apply for the main Studio Funding phase.

Does my studio have to focus exclusively on agrifood tech?

Not exclusively, and sometimes a project starts in one sector and ends up landing in another. But the vast majority projects you create should be clearly aligned with, and aim to land in, the food and agriculture technology sector.

Can it specialise in a particular technology or food-system challenge?

Sure – we'd love to hear about it.

Does it have to work only within one region?

No – but the aim is to ensure that we are creating a better local ecosystem so it is expected that your studio steps up and contributes as a key node in at least one ecosystem.

How many startups is a funded studio expected to create?

We would hope to see between 2-6 new startups created in the first two years. More would be better, provided they are viable and can secure funding.

Can the studio commercialise technologies originating from universities and research institutes?

Definitely. This is a key aim of the programme.

How is the studio expected to become financially sustainable?

Your ability to come up with a solid answer to this question is a key aspect of the Development phase. Each region is different and every studio needs to carve their own path to survival. But some examples to consider include:

- Public funding – central, local, city or regional funds
- Private funding – angel investor networks, seed and VC funds, family office, your own funds
- Sponsorship – local service providers, large local and international companies
- Consulting and services – providing specialist expertise and service to clients
- Longer term – revenues and equity in spinout companies
- Anything else you can think of and make a viable case for

Selection

How will Expressions of Interest be assessed?

All eligible applications will be assessed by evaluators. They will be graded according to how closely they match the factors given in the Founder Profile section and the Evaluation Criteria.

What will the video presentation involve?

Exact details will be shared by email if you are invited to submit a video but in general terms it will be you presenting yourself, explaining a little about why you are motivated to participate and why you think your studio will be a success.

What happens at Selection Day?

You will meet EIT Food and venture studio staff, present yourself and your project, engage in workshops, interviews and activities that will allow us to get to know you better and understand more about what makes you the right person to participate in the programme.

Do I have to attend Rotterdam in person?

Yes.

Are the dates and locations of the Selection Day fixed?

Not yet. We expect that it will be in Rotterdam and at the end of January but it may be changed for operational reasons. Participants will be advised of the exact date and location before they need to book travel.

Who will assess candidates?

Since the venture studios are the ones who will be supporting you in the Development phase they will ultimately make the decisions themselves but EIT Food will be involved.

What are the assessment criteria?

Depends on the studio. Each will have their own ways of choosing suitable candidates.

When will I know whether I've progressed?

We expect that within a week of Selection Day, the successful candidates will have heard from their host studios. This is an estimate not a promise.

Annex 1 – Eligibility

You must be legally allowed to live and work in the place where you plan to create your venture studio (the “home region”).

The studio you plan to set up must be in one of the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and Türkiye.

Only individuals can apply – no organisations, companies, entities, partnerships or other legal persons.

The selection process and the programme itself is delivered almost entirely in English. You must demonstrate that you can speak and write in English at professional level.

You must demonstrate that you can speak and write in at least one of the main languages of the “home region” at professional level.

You must be able to attend in person the Selection Day event in January or February.

You must be able to commit to at least 25-35 hours of work per week during the Development phase (roughly February-April 2027).

Annex 2 – Characteristics of a Venture Builder or Studio

A Venture Builder or Venture Studio creates new startups from the ground up. They may be funded publicly or privately or a mix of the two. They may operate independently, or they may be associated with other entities or institutions such as universities, TTOs, VC or Seed funds, local or regional governments, NGOs and foundations.

Among other activities, a Venture Builder identifies unmet market needs, develops and tests business ideas, recruits founding teams, and provides “hands-on” operational support across product, design, tech, marketing, finance etc.

It is important to distinguish between Venture Builders or Studios and other startup support schemes, such as incubators and accelerators. Venture Builders begin their work before a company or a team is even formed and they stay closely involved along the journey. Sometimes they act as co-founders to guide ventures through early market and product exploration, team building, initial growth and other crucial parts of the journey towards a successful startup.

As a result, they work with projects for a much longer time than an accelerator or incubator - typically 6-18 months. This deeper engagement means that the number of teams they support may be much smaller – typically fewer than 10 per cohort.

This number is often reduced even further as teams exit the programme due to issues in market validation, team dynamic, tech challenges and so on. A large Venture Builder may produce only 5 actual companies per cohort.

The support provided by a Venture Builder or Studio is also very “hands-on”. Many employ “Entrepreneurs in Residence” or “Venture Partners” (experienced founders and entrepreneurs) to work inside teams for a certain period as a co-founder. Some provide back-office services such as accounting, recruitment, marketing, financial planning or data analysis. Some provide access to production or test facilities as part of their offer.

The programme may be delivered in person, remotely or in hybrid format. Often Founders enter as solo individuals and are matched with each other during the earliest stages of the programme, meaning that the projects they create exist in the programme prior to formation of any company or legal entity. Only those seen as potentially viable, after being subject to several rounds of “stress-testing” will actually become companies.

Some programmes have a defined start and end date and run for 6-9 months from initial recruitment to a project’s “graduation” or launch. All programmes have very clear stage gates at which projects that are not making progress or which face irreconcilable challenges are removed.

Annex 3 – Seedbed Venture Catalyst

Seedbed Venture Catalyst is a programme that supports startups that are created by seven venture builders and venture studios from around Europe who participate in this initiative and who were selected via an open call in early 2026.

Each of these organisations creates their own startups using their own methodologies and with their own specific focus. Some operate as venture studios, and others as larger-scale venture builder programmes. All have a strong food and agriculture focus.

When a project they have supported has progressed through the relevant stage gates within a programme, the founder may apply for funding under the Seedbed Venture Catalyst Call for Startups.

Applicants are evaluated by an external evaluator and, if successful, are awarded a grant of €30,000 in the form of a lump sum agreement. €25,000 of this must be spent in accordance with the budget proposal that the project founder submits in their application. The remaining €5,000 is reserved for professional services such as expert consultancy and specialist coaching.

Most venture building programmes do not provide money to projects whilst they are in the programme. The money Venture Catalyst provides allows founders to overcome blockers to their progress, which can only be overcome with funding. Typical examples include the running of a test batch, securing a licence of essential IP, negotiation of a contract, running a pilot project, bringing on a new co-founder or covering the costs of legal counsel.