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# Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Call Guidelines

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**EIT FOOD**

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**eitfood.eu**

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## Call Fact Sheet

<b>Title of Call</b>	Request for Implementing Participants of Building Entrepreneurial Capacities for Women in the Agrifood Sector (EWA Programme).
<b>Objective and Scope</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>It aims to select organisations for the EWA Programme in 2026 covering: Module 2 (one entity will be selected from Turkey, one from Ukraine and up to 10 entities will be selected from the remaining eligible countries, based on the quality and potential of received applications), and Module 3 (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.</p>
<b>Call Deadline</b>	03.03.2026 23:59:59 CET
<b>Available Funding</b>	658,000 EUR (maximum 50,000 EUR per selected organisation implementing Module 2 and 58,000 EUR for the selected organisation implementing Module 3).
<b>Project Duration</b>	March 2026 – December 2026
<b>How to apply</b>	Please submit your online application, including necessary attachments via <a href="https://myeitfood.eu">myeitfood.eu</a> .
<b>Contact Information</b>	Carolina Silva Marques – <a href="mailto:carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu">carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu</a>

## 1. Introduction

EIT Food is the world's largest food innovation community, creating connections right across the food system. Supported by the European Union (EU), we invest in projects, organisations and individuals which share our goals for a healthy and sustainable food system.

We have built a unique not-for-profit business to carry out transformative programmes in skills, education, entrepreneurship, start-up investment and communications. We deliver these programmes in partnership with our members to create a culture and build a community which sees the long-term value in the food innovation we fund.

### Our Missions

EIT Food's Missions respond to major societal challenges within the food system. The alignment of our chosen challenges towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and EU policy is detailed in our main funding [strategy document](#) agreed with EIT (European Institute of Innovation & Technology). For more about our Missions-led approach please visit [our website](#).

## 2. Adding Implementing Participants to Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) programme

This EIT Food Request for Implementing Participants has the objective of recruiting participants to join the consortium tasked with implementing the Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Programme.

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. Read more on the EWA Programme website: <https://www.eitfood.eu/projects/ewa-empowering-women-in-agrifood>.

### 2.1. Description of Activities

The EWA Programme is evolving from one single-track programme to a flexible, three-module structure. The EWA Programme support women at every stage of entrepreneurial journey, providing tailored support:

- **Module 1 (Explore):** at the very beginning of their journey (online educational content, not subject to this call).
- **Module 2 (Grow):** ready to shape and boost their business model (local cohorts from RIS countries). Groups of up to 10 women entrepreneurs per country are selected and mentored by the experts based on their potential to turn ideas into clear, actionable business models. Delivered in local languages, the programme's core value proposition is business model refinement for early-stage, high-potential female-led ventures with growth potential within and beyond their local ecosystems. Cohort themes must align with the EIT Food Missions and cover priority areas such as resilient agriculture, biotechnology, and diversified proteins. Selected organisations will be required to propose locally relevant focus areas, grounded in an assessment of their regional ecosystem; these proposals will be subject to review and approval by EIT Food.
- **Module 3 (Advance):** A pan-European cohort of up to 10 women entrepreneurs is selected and mentored by experts based on their potential to become investment-ready, strengthen investor readiness, and scale their operations. Delivered in English, the programme's core value proposition is corporate and investor readiness for female entrepreneurs with the strongest growth potential, scalable business models, or clear investor-readiness needs. Cohort themes must align with the EIT Food Missions and cover priority areas such as resilient agriculture, biotechnology, and diversified proteins. All thematic areas will be addressed through a strong women empowerment lens, ensuring that programme content, mentoring, and investor engagement actively support female leadership and equitable access to growth and funding opportunities.

## 2.2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All **EIT Food funded** projects should achieve relevant Core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each Implementing Participant contributes to these indicators but is not expected to deliver them independently or bear sole responsibility for their fulfilment.

For the EWA programme the main KPIs are:

Code	KPI	KPI Definition
<b>EITHE02.4</b>	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.
<b>EITHE03.1</b>	Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	Number of start-ups supported by KICs for at least 2 months in year N, provided the KIC's services contribute to the company's growth (including potential). Examples of such services are mentoring, consultancy on access to finance and markets, product / service marketing, legal advice, internationalization, matchmaking, etc. The services should be provided for a total period of at least two months. Start-ups and scale-ups will be reported by country of registration of the venture.
<b>EITHE04.4</b>	Startups 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.
<b>EITHE05.1</b>	Startups 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).
<b>EITHE06.1</b>	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.

<b>EITHE 07.1</b>	Graduates from EIT labelled programmes	Sum of graduates from EIT labelled master's, PhD programmes and other educational activities awarded EIT Label (in year N).
<b>EITHE 17.1</b>	People reached through communication activities	Number of people reached through communication activities.

**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).

In addition to the Core EIT KPIs, the EWA Programme tracks additional indicators related to EWA's Impact Framework. The guidelines and tools to implement the Framework will be provided by EIT Food at the beginning of the implementation.

### 2.3. Deliverables and Milestones

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

- **Deliverables Phase 1:**
  - Report on Scouting
  - Learning Itinerary
  - Cohort Overview
  
- **Deliverables Phase 2:**
  - Mentees' Entrepreneur Journey Roadmap for Module 2 (Grow) and Mentee's Startup Readiness Plan for Module 3 (Advance)
  - Evaluation Matrix
  - Final Report

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. Description of Role & Profile

### 3.1 Role

**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.

**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 agrifoodtech startups.

### 3.1.1. Key Responsibilities

#### **1. 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 already registered startups – for Module 2 (Grow) and 40 – all already registered 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.

- a. 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.
- b. 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).

#### **2. Application Evaluation**

Support EIT Food in pre-screening all submitted applications to ensure eligibility and thematic relevance.

Support EIT Food in facilitating and co-organising round 1 (written application review), based on the criteria provided by EIT Food and present a shortlist of the 20 applications highest scored.

Support with round 2 (startup interviews in a pitch + Q&A format), including evaluation, jury moderation and selection of finalists.

#### **3. 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).

##### **3.1. 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.

##### **3.2. Training Programme**

The selected organisations will be responsible for:

- a. 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:
  - a. Module 2 (Grow):
    - i. leadership skills (team management, diversity and inclusion, public speaking, pitching, negotiations, active listening, empathy, time management);
    - ii. business skills (financial management, legal matters, IP management, data management, successful sales, market mapping);
    - iii. 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).
    - iv. self-development (natural talents, emotional intelligence in business and coaching)
    - v. business-specific elements like law, finance, marketing or logistics.
  - b. Module 3 (Advance):
    - i. commercial readiness (market entry strategies, customer profiling, pricing validation, sales planning, distribution channels)
    - ii. investment readiness (financial forecasting, valuation assumptions, funding instruments, investor pitching, due diligence preparation)
    - iii. corporate readiness (partnership development, procurement processes, risk management, regulatory compliance, governance structures)
    - iv. scaling-up (growth planning, internationalisation pathways, organisational design, operational expansion, talent and resource management).
  - c. 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.

### **3.3. 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 1<sup>st</sup> Final Grant (20,000 EUR gross) and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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:

- a. 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.

- b. 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.
- c. 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.

#### **4. Communication of the Project**

Responsibilities include:

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. distribution of project materials to mentees.
- d. 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).
- e. 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:

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

### 3.1.2. Timeline:

The programme is delivered on an annual basis, typically running from **March to December, for three years**, with the following key phases:

#### **Module 2 (Grow) - 2026:**

- **March-April** – Call for Individual Participants (Idea-holders or Startup Founders or Representatives)
- **April/May** – **Applications Evaluation**
- **May-October** – Programme Delivery

#### **Module 3 (Advance) - 2026:**

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

## 3.2 Profile

Organisations for both Modules must be 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.

Organisations must be legal entities, which could be companies, incubators, accelerators, higher education institutes, research institutes, or non-governmental organisations. Operating within the respective country targeted by the call is a fundamental requirement, in case of Module 2 (Grow). Additionally, these organisations are 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:

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

## 4. Funding

The total budget for this call is 658,000 EUR. Implementing participant recipients will receive a subgrant to fund their cost. This is cascade funding.

The project runs from March 2026 to December 2026. The maximum funding available for that period per application is 50,000 EUR for Module 2 selected organisations and 58,000 EUR for the Module 3 selected organisation.

Where relevant and subject to results achieved during the first year, EIT Food may, explore the possibility of extending the collaboration with selected organisations beyond the initial period (2026), in alignment with the objectives and timeframe of the overall business plan (2026-2028).

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. This funding is implemented under GA 101269771. 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 lump sum 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](#).

In addition to the guidance provided by Horizon Europe, the proposals must comply with the following maximum thresholds:

- Participants are not permitted to give a subgrant to another third party.

### **Note:**

The total call budget and the maximum funding budget per application might be subject to changes pending the approval of the EIT Food Business Plan 2026-2028 from the EIT.

The total lump sum contribution will be disbursed in instalments, one pre-financing with subsequent payments conditional upon the delivery of the project deliverables mentioned above. Each deliverable is associated with proportional cost allocation and deduction rate. In cases where deliverables are not completed or only partially fulfilled, a deduction will be applied up to the amount associated with the incomplete deliverable.

### **Deliverables Phase 1 (due mid-year – date to be confirmed):**

- Report on Scouting; Learning Itinerary and Cohort Overview: 50% of the lump sum

### **Deliverables Phase 2 (due end of the year – date to be confirmed):**

- Mentees' Entrepreneur Journey Roadmap for Module 2 (Grow) and Mentee's Startup Readiness Plan for Module 3 (Advance), Evaluation Matrix and Final Report: 50% of the lump sum

The lump sum is intended to support a broad set of activities aligned with Horizon Europe and EIT Food priorities. It covers the following cost categories:

- **Personnel (up to €18,500):** Partial salaries for core team members (e.g. founders, technical or commercial leads) engaged in product development, commercialization, and investor readiness.
- **Other Goods, Works, and Services (up to €20,000 for Module 2 (Grow) and up to €25,900 for Module 3 (Advance)):** External experts or mentors (e.g. legal, regulatory, or IP), outsourced product development, software tools, fundraising support, and other operational services that drive business growth.
- **Travel (up to €1,500 for Module 2 (Grow) and up to €2,000 for Module 3 (Advance)):** In-person attendance at critical meetings with partners, investors, and pilot collaborators within Europe.
- **Indirect costs (overheads)** are general running costs for your organisation that support a project. They are reimbursed at a **flat rate of 25%** of your eligible direct costs (personnel, equipment, travel, etc.),

#### 4.1. Financial Sustainability

Under the strategic guidance of EIT Food and 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 this call, EIT Food is seeking Implementing Partners able to propose a coherent and feasible financial sustainability model for delivering the programme. Each Implementing Partner is required to secure a minimum contribution of €5,000 from an external sponsor, to be paid directly to EIT Food. This contribution will be used exclusively to finance participant prize grants under the programme and will therefore not affect the EIT Food grant amount awarded to the Implementing Partner.

For any additional co-funding secured beyond the mandatory €5,000, Implementing Partners will be entitled to a 15% success fee, to be paid directly by the external sponsor. Additional co-funding will be paid by an external sponsor directly to EIT Food. This success fee does not increase the value of the grant awarded to the Implementing Partner by EIT Food.

Any co-funding and associated compensation for the Implementing Partner will be subject to a separate agreement.

Applicants should outline a preliminary financial sustainability strategy as part of their proposal, describing any current or planned mechanisms for generating or attracting funding. In particular, EIT Food encourages the mobilisation of co-financing from sources beyond the corporate sector – such as banks, public institutions, or other funding organisations – that can provide stable and mission-aligned support.

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 Timeline and Application

### 5.1 Timeline

This funding opportunity follows the timeline below:

Call Open Date	03 February 2026
Q&A session	18 February 2026
Call Deadline	03 March 2026 12:00 CET
Evaluation of proposals	04-11 March 2026
Communication to selected organizations	12-13 March 2026
Standstill period, Onboarding, Validation and Contracting	30 days after selection
Indicative start of project implementation	25 March 2026

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.

## 5.2 Application Submission

Applications must be submitted via [My EIT Food Portal](#), no later than the call deadline.

## 6. Eligibility, Evaluation and Selection Process

### 6.1 Eligibility

This call is open to all eligible entities. Please read Annex 1, in addition to the following eligibility criteria:

Organisation Eligibility	Each implementing participant must:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a legally incorporated entity in one of the EU or Horizon Europe and RIS eligible country for a minimum of 1 year (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).</li> <li>• Provide a PIC Number: <a href="https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf">https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf</a></li> <li>• Comply with requests for documents during due diligence/validation.</li> </ul>
Application Eligibility	Each application must:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be complete, with all mandatory application documents uploaded: Budget.</li> <li>• Be submitted on time via our submission template.</li> <li>• Be fully written in English.</li> <li>• Adhere to the EWA programme delivery structure for the period 2026.</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with EIT Food principles, including transparency, impartiality, and balance.</li> <li>• Acknowledge that EIT Food is the owner of the EWA programme brand. Applicants must agree to adhere to EIT Food and EWA branding and communication guidelines and understand that, if selected, they will be delivering the</li> </ul>

	programme as EIT Food Hub, under the unified brand identity managed by EIT Food.
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**Equal opportunity:** The call is open to all applicants, including those without an existing partnership agreement with EIT Food. All members of the KIC Partnership (as defined in the Partnership Agreement) shall have equal opportunity to participate in this funding opportunity.

## 6.2 Evaluation Process

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 a minimum of 2 external evaluators and 1 internal evaluator, based on the criteria below.

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.

**Please note:** For Module 2, EIT Food intends to select up to 12 organisations, subject to the quality of the applications received and the outcome of the evaluation process. This includes the selection of 1 organisation from Turkey and 1 organisation from Ukraine, and up to 10 organisations from the remaining eligible countries. The final number of organisations selected may be adjusted depending on the overall quality of proposals and any changes to the available budget, which may impact the final allocation.

### 6.2.1. Evaluation Criteria

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

Criteria	Sub criteria	Score
<b>Excellence (25%)</b>	Assesses the applicant’s expertise and relevance to the specific thematic focus of the work package.	1-5
	<b>1.2 Expertise &amp; Track Record (10%)</b> Proven experience in supporting agrifoodtech startups through acceleration, incubation, or ecosystem building	

	<p><b>2.2 Thematic Relevance (5%)</b> Relevance of applicant’s domain expertise and network the main themes: resilient agriculture, biotech, diversified proteins.</p> <p><b>2.3 Experience with Female Entrepreneurship (10%)</b> Experience in implementing programmes supporting female entrepreneurship.</p>	
<b>Impact (25%)</b>	<p>Evaluates the applicant’s ability to engage the ecosystem and deliver long-term impact for startups and stakeholders within the thematic area.</p> <p><b>2.1 Ecosystem Connectivity (10%)</b> Depth and breadth of networks relevant to the Hub theme (e.g. startups, corporates, research, investors)</p> <p><b>2.2 Startup Value Generation (10%)</b> Ability to connect startups with high-value opportunities (e.g. pilots, investments, partnerships)</p> <p><b>2.3 Demonstration of previous experience with EIT Food (5%)</b> Example of activities done in collaboration with EIT Food and impact generated</p>	1-5
<b>Quality and efficiency of the implementation (40 %)</b>	<p>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.</p> <p><b>3.2. Programme Design (10%)</b> 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.</p> <p><b>3.2 Team and Operational Capacity (10%)</b> Experience, complementarity, and readiness of the delivery team (including any co-applicants) to deliver the programme, meet reporting obligations, and coordinate effectively with EIT Food.</p> <p><b>3.3. Financial Sustainability Model (5%)</b> 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.</p> <p><b>3.4. Value for Money (10%)</b> 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.</p>	1-5
<b>Strategic fit (15%)</b>	Assess how well the applicant and the proposed programme complement EIT Food’s overall strategy.	1-5

	<p><b>4.1 Alignment with EIT Food Strategy (15%)</b> 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.</p>	
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Each evaluation sub-criterion will be scored from 1 to 5 using the following scoring system.

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

Score		Description
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.

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

The recipients of EIT Funding must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action and, where applicable, in line with the gender equality plan. They must aim, to the extent possible, for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level.

### 6.3 Appeal on Evaluation Results

Applicants can submit an appeal within 5 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](#).

## 7. Administrative Items

### 7.1 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](#).

## 7.2 EIT Food Legal Framework & Legal Documents to be signed

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. Lump-Sum Subgrant Agreement

Any other legal agreements to make this grant eligible.

## 7.3 Monitoring

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.

## 7.5 Support

If you have any questions about this Request for Implementing Participants, please contact [carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu](mailto:carolina.silvamarques@eitfood.eu).

Please visit [our website](#) for any updates to this call and information about upcoming events to support your application.

## 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.