



EIT FOOD GENDER ACTION PLAN 2025-2027

EIT Food – Improving Food Together

EIT Food is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Leuven | XX of XXXX 2025

www.eitfood.eu

Co-funded by the
European Union





Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE.....	3
3	ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 3-YEAR ACTION PLAN.....	4
4	EIT FOOD GENDER ACTION PLAN 2025-2027*	5



1 INTRODUCTION

The Gender Action Plan for EIT Food is based on the core values of EIT Food Gender Mainstreaming Policy:

- caring for all,
- making things accessible for all,
- recognizing the strengths of all.

The process of shaping the new GAP 2025–2027 followed the co-definition of the EIT Food’s core organisational values, which underpin its culture:

- **Innovative**
With clear evidence that diversity enhances innovation, EIT Food aims to lead in promoting inclusive innovation in the agrifood sector.
- **Inclusive**
By making its activities accessible to all who wish to engage, EIT Food demonstrates its commitment to an inclusive transformation of the food system.
- **Collaborative**
In the spirit of breaking down silos and operating as a unified organisation, EIT Food encourages collaboration among all employees, partners and collaborators, irrespective of background, gender, age, or area of expertise.
- **Constructive**
To contribute meaningfully to an inclusive food system, EIT Food promotes equity and diversity both internally and externally, ensuring the organisation remains accessible and inclusive.

These values reflect EIT Food’s explicit commitment to inclusivity—particularly relevant in the context of increasing resistance to DEI initiatives. By embedding inclusion into its practices, co-creating solutions that are relevant to all, and striving for long-term societal impact, EIT Food reinforces its role in building an inclusive European innovation ecosystem for food systems. It is also important to further align the D&I and gender mainstreaming efforts across all EIT Food offices and regions where EIT Food is providing its services.

2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The European Commission has taken steps to advance gender equality across EU Research and Innovation (R&I) Programmes.

This priority forms part of the Horizon Europe Programme, which explicitly addresses gender disparities in innovation, technology and research. There are three key objectives aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women and men within the European innovation landscape:

- Improving gender balance across the programme, with a target of 50% female representation on Horizon Europe-related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees (compared to 40% in evaluation panels and expert groups, and 50% in advisory groups under Horizon 2020). Gender balance within research teams is also used as a criterion when ranking proposals with the same score.
- From 2022, a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) became a mandatory eligibility criterion for public sector bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions.
- Integrating the gender dimension into R&I content (i.e. sex and/or gender analysis) is now a default requirement, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the topic description. This is assessed under the 'excellence' evaluation criterion.

As part of the EIT Community, and partially funded through Horizon Europe, EIT Food is committed to advancing the gender equality objectives outlined in the programme. As the first Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) to adopt both a Gender Mainstreaming Policy and a Gender Action Plan (in 2021), EIT Food continues to play a leading role in promoting gender mainstreaming and wider diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts across the EIT Community.

In alignment with participatory policy-making approaches, EIT Food integrated elements of participatory and service design into the development of its Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2025–2027. To begin with, an evaluation of the 2020–2024 Gender Action Plan was commissioned in 2024 to assess the achievement of Gender Mainstreaming Policy objectives. This evaluation provided a robust impact assessment of actions taken over the past four years and offered recommendations for the upcoming programming period. Building on these findings, the co-creation of the new GAP 2025–2027 took place between January and May 2025. This process involved desk research, co-creation workshops, and interviews, with the goal of analysing the current state of gender equality practices in the agrifood sector, identifying gender-related challenges within EIT Food, and designing targeted actions and solutions to address the identified gaps.

The objectives and structure of the new EIT Food GAP were informed by the EIT Gender Equality Action Plan 2025–2027, which served as a key reference point.

3 ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 3-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The goal of the EIT Food Gender Action Plan 2025-2027 is to continue implementing the vision and objectives set in the EIT Food Gender Mainstreaming Policy by taking actions in various areas of EIT Food. The delivery of the plan and progress against its aims and objectives will be regularly assessed and reported on an annual basis. Ongoing review of findings and progress will also provide space for learning and feedback to enable adjustments and improvements to interventions.

As part of its commitment to gender mainstreaming and to the values of diversity and inclusion, the EMT has appointed a Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, who will work closely with the EMT, leadership, HR and representatives of all portfolios. Specific tasks requiring additional support and expertise will be delivered by external subcontractors based on the allocated budget.

EIT Food has an ambition to implement GAP at all levels of organization and in activities carried out within its frames. Successful implementation of Gender Action Plan requires consistent and active participation by all EIT Food staff at all levels. Responsibilities and actions require collaboration and effective linkages across departments and units.

Senior management and leadership will be responsible for:

- overseeing the implementation and monitoring process;
- aligning the gender mainstreaming policy with general KIC strategy and Impact Pathways;
- supporting persons responsible for introducing and deploying specific activities (especially Gender and Diversity Senior Manager and HR Manager) in communicating the gender mainstreaming process to EIT Food employees;
- securing enough human and financial resources to perform the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and GAP;
- communicating the gender mainstreaming policy values to agrifood community within and beyond EIT Food.

Programme and Project Managers will be responsible for:

- including gender perspective in designing and performing the activities within respective KAVAs;
- reporting on gender disaggregated data according to the EIT Food data collection strategy
- understanding impact of their activities with regard to influence on gender equity;
- implementing specific actions assigned to them within the Gender Action Plan;
- communicating the gender mainstreaming policy values to agrifood community within and beyond EIT Food.

All EIT Food employees and contractors are part of this gender mainstreaming process aimed at cultivating inclusive organizational culture, which allows everyone in EIT Food to grow regardless of their age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, race and disability.



4 EIT FOOD GENDER ACTION PLAN 2025-2027

Thematic area	Objective	Activity	Results/Indicators	Responsible(s)	Timeline
1. Innovation	Increase participation of women in the EIT Food innovation programmes to 30%	Active outreach to and recruitment of women innovators e.g. through tailored communication channels and targeted marketing activities	Aim for 30% of EIT Food start-ups created off/for innovation have woman CEO/Owner [KPI EITHE04.1/gender]	EIT Food Innovation Team	Annually. Participation target to be reached by December 2027
		Provide tools to help better understand and address D&I related issues for selection panels, programmes' leads, supported startups	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among selection panels, programmes' leads, supported startups and/or training session if needed	EIT Food Innovation Team and Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually
		Address gender-balance in selection panels, evaluation committees, advisory boards	Aim for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within selection panels, evaluation committees, advisory boards	EIT Food Innovation Team, Calls Team	Annually



<p>Ensure that EIT Food-supported innovations, unless specified otherwise in the topic description, incorporate gender dimension</p>	<p>Apply gender-budgeting within the innovation projects</p>	<p>Setting-up EIT Food relevant KPIs/targets for the percentage of budget dedicated to support women innovators.</p>	<p>EMT, EIT Food Innovation Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager</p>	<p>Target to be set by December 2026</p>
<p>Apply gender mainstreaming in Innovation call for proposals</p>	<p>Incorporate gender dimension into EIT Food Innovation Calls for Proposals (incl. Impact Funding Framework) among general award criteria, unless specified otherwise in the topic description.</p> <p>Where relevant, include intersectionality, diversity & inclusion.</p>	<p>EIT Food Innovation Calls for Proposals (incl. Impact Funding Framework), unless specified otherwise in the topic description, include incorporation of gender dimension among general award criteria and include as a recommendation gender-balanced teams at all levels. The Call Guidelines will include specific ways of how applicants may incorporate gender dimension in their proposals.</p>	<p>EIT Food Innovation Team, EIT Food Missions and Strategic Programmes Team, Calls Team</p>	<p>Annually</p>
	<p>Include a section in the application form that asks the applicants to explain what measures they are taking to advance D&I either within their</p>	<p>EIT Food Innovation Calls for Proposals (incl. Impact Funding Framework) application forms include D&I section</p>	<p>EIT Food Innovation Team, EIT Food Missions and Strategic, Programmes</p>	<p>Annually</p>



	organizations or with the clients/customers they serve		Team, EIT Food Operations Team, Calls Team	
	Adress gender balance among evaluators pool	Aim for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within evaluators pool	EIT Food Innovation Team, Calls Team	Annually
	Provide tools to help evaluators understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among evaluators and/or training session if needed	EIT Food Innovation Team and Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually
	Provide tools to help Partners and implementors deploying projects understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among Partners and implementors deploying projects and/or training session if needed	EIT Food Innovation Team and Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually
Communication of Innovation activities	Monitor and report on EIT Food most impactful good practices and success stories on increasing participation of women, and bringing gendered innovation to the market,	Annual EIT Food Gender Mainstreaming Report includes information on the most impactful good practices and success stories on increasing participation of women and	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Innovation Team	Annually



		including on the EIT Food-supported collaborative innovation projects, focusing on women and/or areas and/or conditions disproportionately impacting women.	bringing gendered innovation to the market.		
2. Business Creation & Acceleration	Increase participation of women in EIT Food business creation and acceleration programmes to 35%	At scouting phase active outreach to women-led startups	Aim for 35% of the EIT Food supported start-ups and scale-ups have woman CEO/Owner [KPI EITHE03.1/gender]	EIT Food Business Creation Team	Annually. Participation target to be reached by December 2027
		During the selection: higher scoring for gender-balanced start-ups on the "team" criterion	Setting up the level of additional scoring for women-led, gender-balanced start-ups	EIT Food Business Creation Team, Calls Team	Level to be set by December 2026
		Collect gender-disaggregated data, tracking and reporting progress	Standardise the gender related questions in all BC&A programmes (general and regional)	EIT Food Business Creation Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Standard to be set by December 2026
		Ensure that data on gender of the founders supported by EIT Food is easily retrieved from Salesforce, incl.	Gender disaggregated data collection guidance note implemented into Salesforce	EIT Food Operations Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Guidance to be incorporated by December 2026



measuring number of women founders in EIT Food Corporate Venturing startup/corporate collaboration

Gender mainstreaming in BC&A call for proposals

Introduce gender mainstreaming, inclusive programmes design, among general award criteria in EIT Food Business Creation and Acceleration Calls for Proposals.

Where relevant, include intersectionality, diversity & inclusion.

Include a section in the application form that asks the applicants to explain what measures they are taking to advance D&I either within their organizations or with the clients/customers they serve

EIT Food Business Creation and Acceleration Calls for Proposals, unless specified otherwise in the topic description, include incorporation of gender dimension among general award criteria. The Call Guidelines will include specific ways of how applicants may incorporate gender dimension in their proposals.

EIT Food Business Creation and Acceleration Calls for Proposals application forms include D&I section

EIT Food Business Creation Team

EIT Food Business Creation Team, Calls Team

Annually

Annually



	Address gender-balance within investment committee	Aim for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within investment committee	EIT Food Business Creation Team	Annually
	Provide tools and training to help evaluators and investment committee understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among evaluators and investment committee and/or training session if needed	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Business Creation Team	Annually
	Provide tools to help better understand and address gender related issues to trainers and investors, with whom EIT Food is collaborating in the Business Creation & Acceleration programmes	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among trainers and investors and/or training session if needed	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Business Creation Team	Annually
Communication of BC&A activities	Monitor and report on EIT Food impactful good practices and success stories on increasing participation of women, gender-smart investment, and inclusive Business Creation & Acceleration programme design	Annual EIT Food Gender Mainstreaming Report includes information on the most impactful good practices and success stories on increasing participation of women, gender-smart investment, and inclusive Business	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Business Creation Team	Annually



		Creation & Acceleration programme design			
	Improve/introduce strategies and measures to ensure gender-smart approach to investment	Strengthen and expand the EIT Community SUPERNOVAS ¹ programme to bridge gender gaps in entrepreneurship and investment	EIT Food contribution to the EIT target of: SUPERNOVAS Women Investor Network has minimum 400 Members Minimum 800 women undergo SUPERNOVAS investment and entrepreneurship trainings.	EIT Food Delivery Team	Target to be reached by December 2027
3. Education	Address gender-balance among participants of EIT Food-labelled education, and non-labelled programmes and trainings [representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold]	Active outreach to women (in case of women-dominated programmes - men) through tailored communication. Target male networks with educational programmes where men are underrepresented	Aim for minimum 40% women and men in the EIT KICs -labelled education, and non-labelled programmes and trainings with open access for all genders [KPI EITHE07.4], [KPI EITHE07.5], [KPI EITHE08.1]	EIT Food Education Team	Annually. Participation target to be reached by December 2027

¹ Delivery of the programme dependent on BP26 scope



	Provide tools and training to help education leads, advisory boards, expert groups, programme implementors understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among education leads, advisory boards, expert groups, programme implementors and/or training session if needed	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Education Team	Annually
Ensure that EIT Food education programmes incorporate gender dimension	Introduce inclusive programmes design and incorporate gender dimension into education content among general award criteria in all EIT Food Education Calls for Proposals, unless specified otherwise in the topic description	EIT Food Education Calls for Proposals, unless specified otherwise in the topic description, include incorporation of gender dimension among general award criteria. The Call Guidelines will include specific ways of how applicants may incorporate gender dimension in their proposals.	EIT Food Education Team	Annually
	Address gender balance among evaluators pool	Aim for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within evaluators pool	EIT Food Education Team, Calls Team	Annually
	Provide tools to help evaluators understand and	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT	Annually



	address gender-related issues	evaluators and/or training session if needed	Food Education Team	
	Strengthen and expand the EIT Community Girls Go Circular Programme ²	EIT Food contribution to the EIT target of: 100,000 girls trained by 2028 [KPI EITHE08.1]	EIT Food Education Team	Target to be reached by December 2028
	Expand the D&I education action of the EWA programme ³	EWA curriculum includes standardised part on D&I and WEL implemented in all countries	EIT Food Delivery Team	Annually
	Provide tools to help staff and associated faculty/partners delivering EIT Food education and training understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among staff and associated faculty/partners and/or training session if needed	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Education Team	Annually
Communication of Education activities	Monitor and report on EIT Food impactful good practices and success stories on achieving gender-balance in education programmes, incorporation of gender dimension into education content and	Add a gender column to overview of all impact stories published on the website by Education team	EIT Food Education Team	Target to be reached by December 2025

² Delivery of the programme dependent on BP26 scope

³ Delivery of the programme dependent on BP26 scope



		inclusive education programme design			
4. Institutional Transformation	Address gender-balance among members of EIT Food decision making at all levels [representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold]	Include gender as a ranking criterion for candidates with equal scoring	Aim for minimum 40% women and men in the EIT Food decision making	EIT Food HR Team	Target to be reached by December 2027
		Implement targets for % of underrepresented gender on short lists for all decision making positions	Aim for minimum 40% women and men in the EIT Food decision making	EIT Food HR Team	Target to be reached by December 2027
		Provide tools to help selection panels understand and address gender-related issues	Material/leaflet created and disseminated among selection panels and/or training session if needed	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food HR Team	Annually
	Support inclusive, empowering working environment for all	Monitor and combat gender pay gap	Report on Gender Pay Gap in EIT Food	EIT Food HR Team	Report published by December 2027
		Flexible working arrangements, child-care services, and other measures to support staff in combining professional and carrying roles	Create and implement a policy on care and family rights	EIT Food HR Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Policy published by December 2027
	Create a work environment free from gender-based violence including sexual harassment.	Create an anti-harassment policy	EIT Food HR Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Policy published by December 2027	



	Reinforce inclusive institutional transformation	Organise annual meetings between Gender and Diversity Senior Manager and the EMT to discuss progress and setbacks in terms of D&I	Minutes from the meetings	EMT, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually
		Promote D&I values within the onboarding process by ensuring that gender sensitive communication principles are applied in the onboarding process as well as values of diversity and inclusion are well communicated	Implement compulsory e-learning on gender mainstreaming for all new employees as part of onboarding process	EIT Food HR Team	Annually
5. Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality	Build impactful partnerships for gender equality in innovation and entrepreneurship in agrifood sector by 2027	Expand cooperation with the EUIPO on women access to IP, including awareness raising and IP trainings for women entrepreneurs and innovators from the EIT Community	EIT Food contribution to the EIT target of: Minimum 300 women entrepreneurs and innovators from the EIT Community attended EUIPO workshops/trainings on IP rights.	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Education Team, EIT Food Business Creation Team, EIT Food Delivery Team	Target to be reached by December 2027
		Continue cooperation with EIC on European Prize for Women Innovators	Applications from EIT Food alumni for the European Prize for Women Innovators	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager, EIT Food Education	Annually



				Team, EIT Food Business Creation Team, EIT Food Delivery Team	
		Build partnerships for gender equality in innovation and entrepreneurship with key organisations and networks across Europe	Map network of organisations that are already working in this field	Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Mapping to be ready by December 2026
6. Communication for Diversity & Inclusion	Increase awareness of the EIT Food activities, results, and impact on gender equality, women entrepreneurship & leadership, in Europe and beyond	Organize impactful events and communication campaigns on women entrepreneurship and leadership, gender equality in innovation, including involvement of press and targeted social media campaigns	EIT Food organizes minimum 1 panel discussion and/or communication campaigns on women entrepreneurship and leadership, gender equality in innovation per year as part of an impactful event	EIT Food Events Team	Annually, target to be reached by December 2027
		Organise events with gender-balanced speakers	Aim for minimum 40% women and men on speakers lists and in panel discussions at all EIT Food events	EIT Food Events Team	Annually
		Apply gender- inclusive communication (images and texts)	Apply inclusive communication checklist to	EIT Food Communication Team	Annually



	all visuals and texts published by EIT Food		
Address participation of WEL/D&I experts/ champions in speaking roles at key events	Aim for participation of WEL/D&I experts/ champions in speaking roles in at least 35% of EIT Food flagship and satellite events	EIT Food Events Team	Annually, target reached by December 2027
Add WEL/D&I speaking points to briefings for high level speakers	Briefings for all key events include speaking points on gender equality/ women entrepreneurship & leadership/ D&I	EIT Food Events Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually
Incorporate women entrepreneurship & leadership/gendered innovation/ diversity & inclusion topics into key EIT and KICs events	Aim for including thematic panel discussion or adding WEL/D&I questions for panellists in at least 35% of EIT Food flagship and satellite events	EIT Food Events Team, Gender and Diversity Senior Manager	Annually, target reached by December 2027