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# Test Farms Startups Call Guidelines

SUP-RESAG-26-01

**EIT FOOD**

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**eitfood.eu**

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## Call Fact Sheet

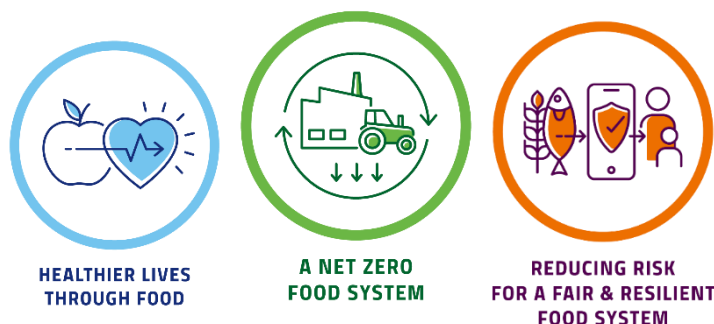
<b>Title of Call</b>	<b>Test Farms Call for Startups</b>
<b>Objective and Scope</b>	This call aims to attract TRL 6–9 startups that are ready to demonstrate the value of their technologies and scale their impact. Through Test Farms, selected startups will gain access to farmers, agronomists, testing sites, and visibility opportunities that help drive commercial adoption and investor interest.
<b>Call Deadline</b>	2nd of February 12:00pm CET Time
<b>Available Funding</b>	4000 EUR grant per startup
<b>Project Duration</b>	March-November 2026
<b>How to apply</b>	<a href="#">MyEITFood Portal</a>
<b>Contact Information</b>	<a href="mailto:oksana.hrynevych@eitfood.eu">oksana.hrynevych@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. Recruiting startups pilot activities within Test Farms

This call has the objective of recruiting startups to join Test Farms, an EIT Food programme which aims to support startups in testing their innovative solutions that make agri- and aquaculture more efficient, sustainable and environmentally beneficial. Testing an innovative solutions (TRL 6-9) with farmers aims to obtain feedback on the usefulness, functionality and quality of the offered products

or services and by improving it – increase the chances of commercialising the ideas. To know more about the programme please visit this [webpage](#).

## 2.1. Description of Activities

This call aims to attract TRL 6–9 startups that are ready to demonstrate the value of their technologies and scale their impact. Through Test Farms, selected startups will gain access to farmers, agronomists, testing sites, and visibility opportunities that help drive commercial adoption and investor interest.

Through this call, EIT Food is looking for startups that want to:

- Participate in real-world testing and validation of their agritech or aquatech solutions on European farms or aquaculture sites.
- Engage directly with farmers and agronomists to refine their products based on practical needs and field performance.
- Generate evidence, data, and validation of results that strengthen their commercial readiness and investor attractiveness.
- Showcase their solutions to potential clients, partners, and funding sources through visibility and promotional activities.
- Contribute to a more sustainable and efficient agrifood system, bringing digital, biotech, circular, regenerative, or aquatech innovations to market.
- Deliver strong business KPIs, including sales growth, funding attraction, and measurable validation metrics aligned with the programme’s objectives.

## 2.2. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All **EIT Food funded** projects should achieve relevant Core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For the Test Farms, the main KPIs are:

Code	KPI	KPI Definition
EITHE02.4	Marketed Innovations	Number of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion with a sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented.
EITHE06.1	Investment attracted by supported startups	Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted by supported startup within a maximum of three years following the programme.

**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).

## 2.3. Deliverables and Milestones

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

- Final report

The Final Report summarises the full implementation and outcomes of the Test Farms pilot. It provides a clear account of the testing activities carried out, the performance and validation results of the solution, and the key learnings gathered through collaboration with the farmer or test site. The document should outline the tested technology, describe the methodology used during the pilot, present quantified and qualitative results, and assess the solution's market readiness and scalability potential. It should also include feedback from farmers, highlight environmental or economic impact, and indicate next steps for development or commercialisation.

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

- **Design and Execution of the Pilot:**  
Implement and carry out field or on-site testing activities according to the jointly agreed pilot plan, ensuring that the solution is deployed, monitored, and evaluated under real-world farming or aquaculture conditions.
- **Technical Leadership & Adaptation:**  
Provide the technical expertise necessary to install, configure, or adapt their product or service to the specific testing environment, ensuring the accuracy, safety, and reliability of the trial.
- **Data Collection & Performance Evaluation:**  
Collect, analyse, and report performance data, including qualitative and quantitative indicators required to evaluate the impact, feasibility, and scalability of the innovation.
- **Contribution to KPIs & Deliverables:**  
Startups must contribute directly to programme KPIs—such as validation metrics, farmer engagement, environmental performance indicators, or commercial follow-up—by providing evidence-based results and participating in programme monitoring.
- **Farmer & Stakeholder Collaboration:**  
Work closely with selected farmers and other operational partners, ensuring open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the smooth execution of testing activities.
- **Showcasing & Dissemination:**  
Participate in the Demo Day and share pilot outcomes, learnings, and validated benefits with industry representatives, corporates, and investors.

### 3.2 Profile

The Test Farms programme seeks **European-based innovative startups** that are developing solutions with strong potential to transform agriculture or aquaculture. The ideal organisational profile includes:

- **Type of Organisation:**  
Incorporated startup or early-scale-up operating in agri-tech and aqua-tech industry.
- **Technology Readiness:**  
Solutions at **TRL 6–9**, meaning the innovation has been validated in a relevant environment and is ready for real-world testing with end users.
- **Innovation Quality:**  
Technologies that demonstrate clear novelty, strong potential for positive environmental or economic impact, and alignment with Test Farms focus themes (e.g., regenerative agriculture, decarbonisation, digital farming, sustainable feed, circular systems).
- **Operational Capacity:**  
The ability to deploy and support their solution in the field, including sufficient staffing, technical expertise, and resources to carry out the pilot in collaboration with farmers.
- **Data and Learning Orientation:**  
Readiness to collect, analyse, and share performance data to support programme KPIs, contribute to impact measurement, and refine the solution after field validation.
- **Scalability & Market Potential:**  
Solutions that have a clear pathway to commercialisation and scaling across European farming or aquaculture systems.
- **Collaboration & Communication Skills:**  
Willingness to work closely with farmers, technical partners, and EIT Food teams in a transparent, cooperative manner.

## 4. Funding

The total budget for this call is 40.000,00 EUR. Recipients will receive a subgrant to fund their cost.

The project runs from March 2026 to November 2026. The maximum funding available for that period per application is 4.000,00 EUR (lump sum).

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](#).

The total lump sum contribution will be disbursed in two instalments: 50% as pre-financing at the start of the pilot, and the remaining 50% upon submission and approval of the Final Report. It is 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.

### **Deliverable 1: Final report**

▸ Allocated Value: 4000€ (100% 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:

- **Other Goods & Services (up to €500):** to cover the organisation of their Demo Day activities, including printing materials, documentation, or small event-related expenses, as well as any other eligible costs approved by the Test Farms manager.
- **Travel (up to €1380):** to cover up to two essential project-related travels and associated accommodation costs, as well as the transportation of the solution to and from the testing site where applicable
- **Direct subcontracting costs (up to €1650):** to cover essential pilot-related expenses, including field adjustments and installation, as well as the rental of equipment or laboratory services required for testing their solution.
- **Indirect Costs (up to €470):** to cover indirect and overhead costs that facilitate participation in the Test Farms pilot, including administrative, managerial, and communication-related.

#### 4.1. Financial Sustainability

Test Farms applies a flexible, success-based financial sustainability mechanism. Participating startups may choose between a revenue-sharing model (i.e., 2% of sales generated from the validated product for three years) or a success-based fee linked to their next investment round (0.5–1%). This approach ensures a fair, performance-driven contribution that supports the long-term sustainability of the programme while remaining founder-friendly.

## 5. Call Timeline and Application

### 5.1 Timeline

This funding opportunity follows the timeline below:

Call Open Date	11 <sup>th</sup> of December 2025
Call Deadline	02 <sup>nd</sup> of February 2026 12:00pm CET
Evaluation	03-02-2026 to 09-02-2026
Invitation to interviews, panels	10 February 2026
Interviews/Panels with pre-selected startups	12 – 17 February 2026
Communication to selected participants	18 February 2026
Standstill period, Onboarding, Validation and Contracting	19-02-2026 to 19-03-2026
Indicative start of project implementation	March 2026 – November 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 [MyEITFood Portal](#), no later than the call deadline.

## 6. Eligibility, Evaluation and Selection Process

### 6.1 Eligibility

This call is open to eligible legally incorporated entities, startups, SMEs. 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 registered in or after 2016 in one of Horizon Europe eligible countries. 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>• Have developed an innovative solution* in aquaculture and/or agriculture/animal husbandry, <b>having a product with TRL 6-9 ready to be tested in a real environment.</b></li><li>• Have not participated in previous editions of the Test Farms.</li></ul>
Application Eligibility	Each application must:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be complete, with all mandatory application documents uploaded. Please, note that the pitch deck is required to be uploaded.</li><li>• Be submitted on time via our submission template.</li><li>• Be fully written in English.</li></ul>

**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 1 external evaluator 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.

### 6.2.1. Evaluation Criteria

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

Criteria	Sub criteria	Score
<b>Excellence (35%)</b>	<p><i>1.1 Relevance of the Solution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed product or service addresses a clearly defined and relevant problem in agriculture or aquaculture.</li> <li>The problem is well substantiated and aligned with Test Farms focus themes.</li> </ul> <p><i>1.2 Innovation Potential</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed solution is innovative and clearly differentiated from existing technologies or practices on the market.</li> <li>It demonstrates strong potential to meet underserved needs or improve sustainability, efficiency, resilience, or profitability.</li> </ul> <p><i>1.3 Technical Readiness for Real-World Testing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The solution is at a technological maturity (TRL 6–9) that enables meaningful testing and validation during Test Farms.</li> <li>The proposed testing activities are appropriate for the current stage of development.</li> </ul>	1-5
<b>Impact (25%)</b>	<p><i>2.1 Added Value of the Testing Phase</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The required validation activities logically support the next steps in the product’s development and commercialisation.</li> <li>Participation in Test Farms is expected to meaningfully improve the solution’s readiness for market adoption.</li> </ul> <p><i>2.2 Commercial and Market Impact</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The solution demonstrates a clear route to market, customer need, and potential for scalability across Europe.</li> <li>The innovation has measurable potential to contribute to sustainability goals, farmer resilience, decarbonisation, circularity, or digital transformation.</li> </ul>	1-5
<b>Quality and efficiency of the implementation (15%)</b>	<p><i>3.1 Capability of the Applicant</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The entity demonstrates the necessary experience, technical capacity, and motivation to carry out the test phase effectively.</li> <li>Roles and responsibilities are clear and appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><i>3.2 Feasibility of the Pilot Plan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed testing activities are well-designed, realistic, and achievable within the Test Farms framework.</li> </ul> <p><i>3.3 Resource Requirements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requested resources are reasonable and can be accommodated by EIT Food and project partners within programme constraints.</li> </ul>	1-5

<b>KIC portfolio strategic fit and compliance with the financial sustainability principles (25%)</b>	<p><b>4.1 Strategic Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed innovation aligns with EIT Food’s strategic focus areas (sustainability, resilience, regenerative agriculture, tech transformation, blue economy, circularity, decarbonisation).</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Financial Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant agrees to and aligns with the programme’s financial sustainability mechanism.</li> </ul>	1-5
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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 contract agreement

Any other legal agreements to make this grant eligible.

## 7.3 Payment Schedule

The total lump sum contribution will be disbursed in two instalments: 50% as pre-financing at the start of the pilot, and the remaining 50% upon submission and approval of the Final Report. 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.

To prove that the activity has been successfully implemented, the following compulsory deliverables and KPIs must be submitted and approved.

	<b>Value assigned to deliverables as percentage of total EIT Food contribution</b>
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Deliverable 1: Final report	100% of the subgrant
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**Please note:** the amount and timing of funding is dependent on the dispersal of funds to EIT Food from the EIT.

## 7.4 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 [oksana.hrynevych@eitfood.eu](mailto:oksana.hrynevych@eitfood.eu)

Please visit [Test Farms - EIT Food](#) for any updates to this call and information about upcoming events to support your application. You will also find our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

## ANNEX 1 – Eligibility

Please Note:

1. Failing any of the above call specific criteria will make your application ineligible. If an applicant is ineligible, the participant will be informed.
2. [According to EU policies and measures](#), Russian and Belarus entities will not be authorised to participate in any new grant under the EU Research and Innovation programmes. This ban applies not only to their potential participation as beneficiaries, but to their potential participation in any kind of role: beneficiaries, linked third parties/affiliated entities, subcontractors, in-kind contributors, international partners/associated partners, and third parties receiving financial support. Find the full statement from the European Commission here.
3. Pursuant to Article 2 (2) of the [Decision 2022/2506](#) of 15 December 2022 on measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary *where the Commission implements the Union budget in direct or indirect management pursuant to of Article 62(1) points (a) and (c), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046*, **no legal commitments shall be entered into with any public interest trust established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust**. This prohibition applies to financial support

to third parties (sub-grants and prizes), hence the proposal of any entity or group of entities where a Participant is included in the list of public interest trusts shall be considered as not eligible.

4. Applicants will be deemed ineligible if:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ANNEX 2 - History of Changes

Version	Publication Date	Changes
Version 2	26.01.2026	Amended eligibility criteria under <b>6.1. Eligibility to Be a legally incorporated entity registered in or after 2016 in one of Horizon Europe eligible countries.</b>