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# Call for participants

## Straight to Market 2025

### Guidelines

SUP-RIS-25-02

EIT FOOD

Leuven, Belgium 2025

[Eitfood.eu](https://eitfood.eu)

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## Call Fact Sheet

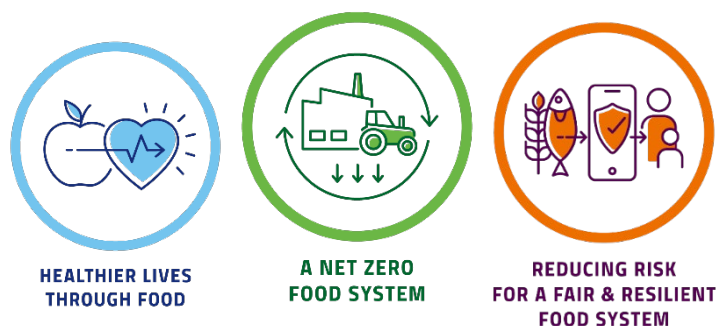
<b>Title of Call</b>	Call for Startups,Entrepreneurs & Students - Straight2Market
<b>Objective and Scope</b>	Selected projects will be tested and marketed.
<b>Call Deadline</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Available Funding</b>	300.000€
<b>Project Duration</b>	July 2025 to July 2026
<b>How to apply</b>	MyEITFood Portal
<b>Contact Information</b>	Izaskun.valle@eitfood.eu

### 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. Purpose and Scope

The RIS Straight to Market (S2M) program supports students, entrepreneurs, startups, scale-ups and SMEs in bringing and testing new or highly improved food products and technological solutions to market.

*\* Small and medium-sized companies, startups and scaleups hereinafter going only by the name of “startups”.*

The RIS Straight to Market programme, seeks to:

- Support startups in launching innovative food products with improved nutritional and sustainability profiles.
- Facilitate Proof of Concept (PoC) projects between startups and retailers.
- Assist entrepreneurs with an MVP in testing and refining their products.
- Train students in retail engagement and preparation through a mentoring program.

## 3. Who can apply?

- Startup, scaleups and/or SMEs
- Entrepreneurs with an MVP
- Students : EIT Food Alumni Students – **Students are not entitled to receive EIT Food funding for this opportunity.**

### STARTUPS/SCALE-UPS/SMEs

1. **Food Products:** New or highly improved at a nutritional/sustainable level, including improvements in ingredients, packaging, nutritional profiles, labelling, and innovative features (with exception of changes in branding or packaging visuals). Below a summary:

EIT Food goal	Type of product
<b>1. Reduction in relative risk<sup>®</sup> of obesity &amp; Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors</b>	Products with levels of salt &/ or free sugars &/or trans & saturated fats reduced to, or below, recommended Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Europe (targeting food groups known to be major sources of these dietary factors); or products on the market with an improved nutritional profile.
<b>2. Products on the market derived from alternative sources</b>	Products on the market derived from alternative sources (e.g., alternative proteins; new plant varieties; alternative production techniques, etc.
<b>3. Reduction in food waste &amp; food loss</b>	New products or processes launched using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams

<b>4. Improvement in food system contribution to outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework and Improved environmental impact of agrifood systems</b>	New products or processes using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food systems side-streams and waste streams. Outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework include inter alia waste management, recycling, competitiveness & innovation. Volume reduction in CO2 equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system through products
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\*All projects should help to achieve [EIT Food's Missions](#).

- The selected startups will have access to participate in product testing with consumers, gathering feedback from them to get their products ready to market.
- The testing takes place in the country where the product is meant to be launched
- Market Readiness Level (MRL): The product must be close to market enough to achieve a successful launch before 31st December 2025 and to reach the level of sales requested by the KPI (10.000€ by 1st July 2026)
- Each selected startup will work to market their new or highly improved food product by 31st December 2025.
- Each startup will commit to achieve EIT Food Impact KIPs for each marketed product by 1st July 2026.

- 2. Technology:** Focused on the reduction of food waste and food loss. Proposals should present innovative solutions that minimize food loss across the retailer's operations and enhance the customer experience, contributing to a more sustainable and efficient food system. Below a summary:

EIT Food goal	Type of technology
<b>Reduction in Food Waste and Food Loss</b>	Reducing food loss across retailer's activity and client experience.
<b>Circular Solutions for Food Systems</b>	Addressing critical areas for retailers like sustainability and waste reduction.
<b>Resilient Supply Chain</b>	Tackling challenges in building robust and adaptive supply chains with an emphasis on leveraging AI and digital tools.

\*All projects should help to achieve [EIT Food's Missions](#).

- Proof of Concept (PoC) implementation with retailer.
- The selected projects will be presented and matched with a retailer. If the collaboration is approved, both organizations must work together on the preparation and implementation of the Proof of Concept (PoC).
- Each PoC is expected to test and/or launch in the market at least 1 new product or service by 31st December 2025. Each startup will commit to achieve EIT Food Impact KIPs for each marketed product by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.

## ENTREPRENEURS

**Food Product:** New or highly improved at a nutritional/sustainable level, including improvements in ingredients, packaging, nutritional profiles, labelling, and innovative features (with exception of changes in branding or packaging visuals). Below a summary:

EIT Food goal	Type of product
<b>1. Reduction in relative risk<sup>®</sup> of obesity &amp; Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) prevalence in target populations due to known dietary factors</b>	Products with levels of salt &/ or free sugars &/or trans & saturated fats reduced to, or below, recommended Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for Europe (targeting food groups known to be major sources of these dietary factors); or products on the market with an improved nutritional profile.
<b>2. Products on the market derived from alternative sources</b>	Products on the market derived from alternative sources (e.g., alternative proteins; new plant varieties; alternative production techniques, etc.
<b>3. Reduction in food waste &amp; food loss</b>	New products or processes launched using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food system side-streams and waste streams
<b>4. Improvement in food system contribution to outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework and Improved environmental impact of agrifood systems</b>	New products or processes using revalorised &/ or reintegrated food systems side-streams and waste streams. Outcomes under EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework include inter alia waste management, recycling, competitiveness & innovation. Volume reduction in CO2 equivalent tonnes from Agri-Food system through products

- The selected projects will have access to participate in product testing with consumers, gathering feedback from them to get their products ready to market.
- The testing takes place in the country where the product is meant to be launched.
- If the startup is not yet registered as a company, registering before December 31, 2025, will be highly valued.
- Each selected startup will work to market their new or highly improved food product by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.
- Each entrepreneur will commit to achieve EIT Food Impact KIPs for each marketed product by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2026.
- Selected entrepreneurs must register their company by December 31, 2025 (if not already registered).

## STUDENTS

The selected students will have access to participate in the retail engagement mentoring programme designed to help future entrepreneurs prepare for and engage with retailers. Benefits of attending the programme:

- Retail Expertise: Gain access to experience and knowledge with European retailers and manufacturers.
- Tailored Mentorship: Receive personalized guidance based on your challenges.

- Practical Tools: Acquire actionable strategies, pitch decks, and action plans for engaging with retailers.

## 4. Funding

The total budget for this call is 300.000€. Recipients will receive a subgrant to fund their cost. This is cascade funding:

The project runs from July 2025 to July 2026. The maximum funding available for that period per application is 30.000€.

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 01101912. 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 actual costs. 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](#).

## 5. Eligibility

Organisation Eligibility	Each participating organisation must:
Startup, scaleups and/or SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications will be accepted from organizations having the status of legal entities.</li> <li>• Be a <a href="#">SMALL sized company</a> as defined in the <a href="#">EU recommendation 2003/361</a> (between 3 and 49 employees and less than 10 million turnover or balance sheet).</li> <li>• Comply with requests for documents during due diligence/validation.</li> <li>• PIC Number: <a href="https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf">https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf</a></li> </ul>
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BSc graduates, MSc students, graduates.</li> </ul>
Entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food product with an MVP</li> </ul>
Proposal Eligibility	To eligible proposals must:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose 1 near-to-market food product, commercially viable and with proven added-value for the consumer, with increased healthy/sustainability properties</li> <li>• Commit to deliver at least one Marketed Innovation launched on the market including documented and valid sales revenue of at least 10.000 EUR (ten thousand euros) by July 2026;</li> <li>• Contribute to the EIT Food Missions;</li> <li>• Align with one or more EIT Focus Areas.</li> <li>• Mandatory attachments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business plan or project description.</li> <li>• Budget breakdown and funding sources, <a href="#">using this template</a>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation schedule (Gantt chart).</li> </ul>
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### 5.1 Timeline

This funding opportunity follows the timeline below:

<b>Call Open Date</b>	May 13, 2025
<b>Call Deadline</b>	June 13, 2025
<b>Evaluation</b>	1 week after the deadline
<b>Communication to selected participants</b>	June 27, 2025
<b>Standstill period, Onboarding, Validation and Contracting</b>	4 weeks after the communication
<b>Indicative start of project implementation</b>	July 2025
<b>Market Launch Deadline</b>	December 31, 2025
<b>KPIs achieved</b>	July 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. Selection and evaluation process

All submitted applications will undergo an eligibility check and evaluation to determine their feasibility and suitability for funding. The evaluation will be conducted by a minimum of 2 external and 2 internal evaluators, based on the criteria below.

All 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.

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



Impact (50%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential impact of the solution on the industry and scalability of the solution. (Commercialisation potential (ability to develop new products based on existing and improved manufacturing capacities and to relate with other actors in the commercialisation chain - startups, retailers- through the existing food delivery network)) 40%</li> <li>Proposed food product and demonstrated market and societal need/demand for the proposed innovation.20%</li> <li>Innovativeness of the proposed solution, expected impact on better nutrition, health and/or sustainability provided by the new product; 20%</li> <li>Contribution to specific challenges in the industry listed in the call, including extent of alignment with EIT Food Missions 20%</li> </ul>	1-5
Excellence (30%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soundness/credibility of the business concept and robust commercialisation strategy plan are aligned with the market readiness level feasibility to launch product on the market. 40%</li> <li>Demonstrated understanding of market for the proposed innovation 40%</li> <li>Submitted documents denote the presence of a well thought-out intellectual property strategy and safeguarded know-how/expertise 20%</li> </ul>	1-5
Quality and efficiency of implementation (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for Project delivery (employees and resources capable of facilitating improved and innovative marketed solutions). 40%</li> <li>Relevant experiences (participation in Projects related to new product development in agri-food/packaging sector, marketed innovation and consumer engagement; ability to present the relevance of these experiences for EIT Food; experiences in delivering consumer focused activities, involvement of other relevant KTI actors (Universities, Research Centres, etc) 30%</li> <li>Risk analysis and mitigation plan in place. 30%</li> </ul>	1-5

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. The top highest-scoring applications will be selected.**

Score	Classification	Description
1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
2	Fair	Proposal broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses
3	Good	Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
4	Very good	Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
5	Excellent	Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

## 7. KPI's and Deliverables

### a. KPIs

All EIT Food funded projects should achieve Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In Straight2Market, each of the selected startup and or entrepreneur will have to **achieve the following KPI:**

KPI	KPI description	Supporting evidence	Deadline
EITHE02.4 Marketed Innovations	<p>Number of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or at the latest within 18 months from the start of the project with a sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR documented.</p> <p>Innovations include new or significantly improved products (goods or services) sold. The number and quality of marketed innovations will be evaluated.</p>	<p>Declaration of the product owner describing the innovativeness (new or significant improvement in terms of physical or functional parameters) of a product/process, link to the KIC societal challenge and the KAVA, as well as information on the KAVA investment in the innovation development.</p> <p><b>Documented proof such as an invoice or an online sales records demonstrating that the purchase of at least 10,000 EUR has been made by a customer/s.</b></p>	<p><b>Each "Project" should launch a product in market by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.</b></p> <p><b>Purchase of at least 10.000€ by July 1<sup>st</sup> 2026.</b></p>

*\*Not applicable for students*

### b. Deliverables

Grant recipients must submit final deliverables at the end of the implementation period. For this activity the deliverables include:

#### **Project Deliverables**

- A detailed product description (including a clear description of improved product characteristics) and plans for market introduction and further commercialisation, including sales forecast following the product launch.
- Submit a document stating product development after the consumers input (including clear scientific data on the specific product improvement).
- Market launch of at least one new or significantly improved product or PoC implemented by December 31, 2025.
- Proof of market success: €10,000 in sales revenue by July 1, 2026.
- Dissemination activities through social media and media outlets.
- **Collaborate with EIT Food in communication and outreach campaigns** about the project or the new product (i.e. providing with interviews, quotes, pictures or news about it).
- **At least 1 publication in social media** to disseminate Results/Good Practices/Lessons Learnt.
- **Participation in at least one EIT Food event** to promote new product after product launch and/or the participation in the programme (if required by EIT Food)

### c. Monitoring and Reporting

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 will request 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.

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](#).

## 8. Support

For technical assistance please contact [support@eitfood.eu](mailto:support@eitfood.eu). For any other questions about this call that has not been addressed in this guidelines or annexes, please contact Izaskun Valle at [izaskun.valle@eitfood.eu](mailto:izaskun.valle@eitfood.eu). Please visit our website for information about upcoming events to support your application. You will also find our list of Frequently ask questions.

## Annex 1

1. Failing any of the above criteria will make your proposal ineligible. Failing to meet the Individual Organisation criteria will make that single organisation ineligible, which might affect the eligibility of the whole proposal, depending on the relevance of the role of the applicant being removed. If an applicant or the proposal is ineligible, participants will be informed.
2. According to EU policies and measures, Russian 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. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if any organisation is:
  - 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 it 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.
4. EIT Food reserves the right to select organizations only in some of the targeted countries, contingent on the quantity and quality of the submitted applications, ensuring the excellence of selected applications, and to relaunch the call for the countries where the present selection process would not yield satisfactory results.
5. EIT Food reserves the right to contact the applicant organisations by e-mail or phone asking for additional explanations or supporting documents, and to schedule selection interviews with the short-listed organisations. All applications will be evaluated using transparent selection criteria, and all applicants will receive concise written feedback, sent to an e-mail account indicated in the application template. Results of the call will be published by EIT Food on its website.
6. The startups selected for the product testing with consumers and PoC commit to reporting and providing EIT Food with evidence of compliance with the KPI (2.0 Marketed Innovations) for the three years following their selection.
7. The startups selected for the consumer testing or PoC commit to reporting and providing EIT Food with

evidence of the product purchase of €10,000 within one year from the product launch.

## ANNEX 2 – ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

### **Onboarding**

Entities that have never been part of projects funded by the EIT 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, where they might be required to provide additional documentation and to sign a Declaration of Honor (DoH). As part of the onboarding process, selected entities must:

- Register on EIT Food grants management platform.
- Sign and submit the Declaration of Size.
- Sign and submit the Financial Identification Form.

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. EIT Food reserves the right to undertake financial due diligence on any applicant and the outcomes of this may result in a range of options from amended pre-financing or grant distribution to rejection. For further information on the project implementation, you will be contacted by Business Support Team.

### **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:

- Framework Agreement
- Kava Contract

### **Payment Schedule**

EIT Food will transfer funding into instalments. A proportion of the Activity budget will be prefinanced, with subsequent payments being linked to the completion of deliverables, EIT label award, and accountable KPIs. The majority of the grant will be transferred at the end of the Activity, once eligible costs have been determined and following the completion of final Activity reporting and the fulfilment of all obligations specified in the Project Agreement. Please note: the amount and timing of funding is dependent on the dispersal of funds to EIT Food from the EIT.

### **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](#).