

Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA) Programme 2025

Terms and Conditions

Table of Contents

General information about the programme	2
EWA Programme's activities	2
Eligibility criteria for applicants	3
Selection procedure and criteria	3
Application method	3
Procedure for selection.....	3
Scoring approach	3
Number of participants to be selected	4
Financial Support.....	4
Mentee obligations	5
Final grants criteria	5
Visibility Pack	8
Ownership and intellectual property	8
Personal data processing	9
Contact details	10

General information about the programme

The objective of the Empowering Women in Agrifood Programme (“**EWA Programme**”) is to boost enterprise development in RIS countries targeted at emerging female entrepreneurs. The EWA Programme aims to provide women entrepreneurs (10 by country every year) (“**Mentees**”) across [RIS countries](#) with the required knowledge, confidence, support and networking opportunities to successfully start and develop sustainable businesses.

The [EWA Programme](#) will run for a period of 6 months supporting representatives of female-led early - stage startups and women with a business idea in the agrifood field and it will seek out and assist women to grow and develop their businesses with a tailored, focused approach that specifically considers the concrete challenges, which female entrepreneurs face generally, as well as the barriers that can limit their entrepreneurial activity due to other discriminating factors. In 2025, EIT Food will implement the EWA Programme in EIT RIS targeted countries, namely in **Albania, Estonia, Greece, Italy, North-Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye and Ukraine**.

The EWA Programme will be managed by respective Co-Location Centres – South (“**EIT Food CLC South**”) and North-East (“**EIT Food CLC NE**”) - in cooperation with local organisations (“**Organisations**”) specializing in boosting female entrepreneurship.

Organisations and Mentees will be selected through an open call in each country participating in the EWA Programme.

The EWA Programme contains business training, 1:1 mentoring and networking opportunities. There is also a platform dedicated to the creation of women entrepreneurs' community in the agrifood sector in respective countries and at the European level.

EWA Programme's activities

1. The EWA Programme is organized around the following steps:
 - a. Open application for EWA programme's participants - **March- May 2025**;
 - b. Evaluation and selection of applicants - **May 2025**;
 - c. Kick-Off and Matchmaking activity - **beginning of June 2025**;
 - d. Mentoring and training including Masterclass activity - **June – November 2025**;
 - e. Pitching event (“**Demo Day**”) - **November 2025**;
 - f. Next Bite: Accelerating Innovation Through Female Leadership – pan-European gathering for female entrepreneurs in agrifood – **December 2025**.
2. The application is open to potential participants for a minimum of one month and requires the completion of a dedicated document on a special internet platform. The dates of activities at local levels are determined on a working basis for the benefit of EWA Programme participants.

3. Next Bite: Accelerating Innovation Through Female Leadership is a gathering with the objective to connect entrepreneurs and experts of the EWA Programme all across Europe. The exact date and location in Europe will be disclosed at least 3 months in advance to facilitate travel arrangements.
4. Participation in EWA Programme constitutes acceptance of devoting additional time to the implementation of the necessary EWA Programme guidelines and the preparation of mandatory materials.

Eligibility criteria for applicants

1. Eligible applicant must:
 - a. Identify as a woman,
 - b. Be a resident of, and in case of start-up representatives, having a company registered in **Albania, Estonia, Greece, Italy, North-Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye or Ukraine** (with excellent or native proficiency of local language),
 - c. Have interest and preliminary commitment to attend Programme activities, trainings and events,
 - d. In case of running a business – have the company registered for a maximum of 3 years,
 - e. In case of prior investment for the development of this idea – received investment totalling in less than 60,000 Euro.

Selection procedure and criteria

Application method

Interested candidates complete and submit the application form online at F6S platform at the appointed time.

Procedure for selection

The selection panel is formed by external evaluators and representatives from CLC NE and CLC South, who will score the applications based on the scoring approach described below.

Scoring approach

Selection of Mentees will be based on eligibility and quality criteria.

Eligibility criteria scored as Yes or No:

- a. Identification as a woman,
- b. Coming from RIS country,
- c. Less than 3-year startup,

- d. Less than 60,000 EUR raised,
- e. Availability to participate in all the EWA Programme events.

Quality criteria scored from 1 to 5:

	Quality Criteria	Scoring
1	The extent to which the applicant possesses the background, capability and motivation to enable her business idea to enter or further develop on the local agrifood market.	1 to 5
2	The extent to which the applicant holds potential for fulfilling the aims of the EWA Programme and delivering against EIT Food Missions.	1 to 5
3	The extent to which the project demonstrates strong potential, with a well-defined market need and a feasible approach. This includes how well the idea is structured, described and positioned to create impact and gain market traction.	1 to 5
4	The extent to which the idea/project holds market potential as a scalable product or service and/or can be the subject of an IP protection.	1 to 5
5	The extent to which EWA Programme's mentoring, online trainings and funding will make a difference and allow further development of applicant's business idea.	1 to 5

Note: If the selection panel lacks information required to evaluate some applications, the candidates who submitted those applications may be asked for additional information or an online interview to determine the final selection.

Number of participants to be selected

EIT Food informs all candidates about the selection results and invites **10 applicants** with the highest score from each country targeted by the EWA Programme for the Matchmaking activity.

Financial Support

1. A total of **1.000 euros gross is available per Mentee** to support their costs of participation in the EWA Programme activities ("**Financial Support**").
2. The Financial Support will help to cover travel and accommodation costs during activities in each country, as well as costs of care over dependent family members (children, seniors, people with disabilities) during the activities related to the project, internet and materials needed for the business idea development (buying books, access to online data repository etc.). The Financial Support was estimated by looking at average costs within different countries in Southern and Central and Eastern Europe.

3. This Financial Support will be released after verifying that the participant's obligations were met, never later than 31/12/2025. The payments will be made to Mentee's personal bank account.

Mentee obligations

1. Each Mentee must:
 - a. attend a minimum of 80% of the training activities planned within the EWA Programme in the respective country (will be defined and communicated in advanced by organisers),
 - b. attend the Demo Day and main events (at least 3/4 of the EWA Programme main events – Kick-Off and Matchmaking, Masterclass, Demo Day and the Next Bite: Accelerating Innovation Through Female Leadership),
 - c. complete a minimum of 80% of the time allocated for Mentor & Mentee sessions,
 - d. timely complete the obligatory documents provided during training and mentorship ensuring capturing relevant progress and business information from the participant,
 - e. support EIT Food and provide information before and after the activities within the EWA Programme that allow participant's business progress monitoring (satisfaction surveys, mentoring feedback, business idea progress report for final grants winners),
 - f. support EIT Food in EWA Programme dissemination and comply with the branding requirements.
2. Only if these minimum participant obligations are met, the Financial Support will be released. A Proof of Successful Completion will be issued acknowledging the competences gained during the EWA Programme.

Final grants criteria

1. The third event within the EWA Programme, organised face to face (Demo Day) will be organised with the aim of exposing Mentees to public speaking and business competition, selecting **1st (10.000 EUR gross)** and **2nd (5.000 EUR gross)** ("**Final Grants**") winners and networking all participants with the local startup and innovation ecosystem.
2. Final Grants will be granted based on:
 - a. Progress score over the EWA programme (50%) - quantitative score based on a progress evaluation of Mentees prepared by Mentors, as well as business deck evaluation by Organization's representative (comparing the first business deck (for Matchmaking) and the last one (for Demo Day)).

	Criteria	Points	Weight
1	Business deck evaluation	10	50%
2	Mentors' evaluation	10	50%

- 1) **Business deck evaluation** will be assessed by Organization's representative, based on the progress and improvements made from the initial business presentation to the final business deck, assessing the following aspects. Each criterion must be scored from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest score and 10 the highest)
 - a) **Problem and market need definition** – Clarity in identifying a market problem and target audience, with improved problem validation.
 - b) **Solution and value proposition** – Strengthening of the solution and clearer articulation of its unique value and differentiators.
 - c) **Business model and feasibility** – Development of a more structured revenue model and improved feasibility.
 - d) **Market potential and traction** – Refinement of market positioning, validation, and demonstration of traction.
 - e) **Presentation quality and clarity** – Enhancement in structure, storytelling, and overall communication effectiveness.
- 2) **Mentors' evaluation** will be assessed by Mentor based on the progress and improvements made from the initial meeting after Matchmaking Event to the final meeting before the Demo Day, according to the following criteria. Each criterion must be scored from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest score and 10 the highest)
 - a) Mentee possesses the background, capability and motivation to enable her business idea to enter or further develop on the local agrifood market.
 - b) Mentee can identify and evaluate the interconnected aspects of production, processing, distribution, and consumption in agrifood systems.
 - c) Mentee's idea/project holds market potential as a scalable product or service and/or can be the subject of an IP protection.
 - d) Mentee has developed a coherent business model for her agri-food startup (it is well structured, described and positioned to create impact and gain market traction).

The overall progress score can amount to 10 points.

b. Pitch score on the day of the Demo Day (50%)

Mentee who wants to compete for a Final Grant, will prepare and deliver a business pitch during Demo Day. Each Mentee will present a **4-minute pitch** and answers questions from the jury panel. The jury panel will be formed with at least 3 independent evaluators and

experts. The jury will evaluate each pitch according to criteria listed below. Each criterion must be scored from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest score and 10 the highest).

	Criteria	Points	Weight
1	Participant clearly understands and articulates the problem she is trying to address.	10	10%
2	The proposed solution is distinctive enough, innovative and appropriate to address the problem it articulates.	10	20%
3	The proposed solution targets the identified market and differs well from competitive offerings.	10	10%
4	The business model articulates a clear path to market, is scalable and realistic.	10	10%
5	Participant has the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to take advantage of the identified market opportunity.	10	10%
6	Participant indicates whether and how the final grant will be a catalyst for the successful exploitation of the market opportunity.	10	20%
7	The business idea has the potential to transform the food system in the country (or region) and generate a social, environmental and economic impact.	10	20%

The overall pitch score can amount to 10 points.

Note: if there is a tie, the winners will be selected based on the combined score received for selection criteria number 4 and 5.

The total score can amount up to 10 points.

3. The two highest scored Mentees will receive the Final Grants upon the signature of a Final Grant Agreement, allowing EIT Food to monitor the Final Grant use and the progress of the business. Mentee who receives a Final Grant is committed and ensures through the final grant agreement signature:
 - a. That the Final Grant will be used for business development purposes
 - b. That she will inform EIT Food after 6 months on Final Grant expenditure through a progress report that will be validated by EIT Food contact point.
4. EIT Food is liable to only grant participants that are committed to register legally their business during the following 3 years after the end of the EWA Programme.
5. In case the business was already registered legally before the EWA Programme, EIT Food is liable to only grant a startup that is committed to launch a new or improve product or service to the market during the following 1 year.
6. Evidence on these requirements could be requested and subject to an audit by EIT Food.

Visibility Pack

1. As part of the EWA Programme, selected Mentees will have the opportunity to participate in the Next Bite: Accelerating Innovation Through Female Leadership, an event taking place in Warsaw, Poland, on the 4th of December 2025.
2. To support this, additional financial support of 1.000 EUR gross (“**Visibility Pack**”) will be awarded to **one Mentee per country**, covering travel expenses to attend and present their business idea at the event.
3. The pitch will be conducted entirely in English and will last a maximum of 5 minutes.
4. The Organization will pre-select three Mentees for this opportunity based on the following evaluation criteria, rated on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 being the lowest and 3 the highest):
 - a. Business idea – Strength, innovation, and potential impact of the business concept.
 - b. Personal development during the Programme – Progress, learning, and commitment demonstrated throughout the programme.
 - c. Level of English proficiency – Ability to communicate effectively in English, as required for the event.
 - d. Communication and presentation skills – Clarity, confidence, and ability to pitch the business idea effectively.
5. A pre-defined Excel template will be provided for Organization to complete and submit evaluations of the top three pre-selected Mentees.
6. Once the Organization has identified the top three Mentees, EIT Food will make the final selection, considering the following additional criteria:
 - a. Business idea – Further assessment of feasibility and impact.
 - b. Alignment with EIT Food’s Missions – The extent to which the project supports EIT Food’s objectives.
 - c. Scoring of the Organization – Evaluation based on programme engagement and performance.
7. The selected Mentee will sign the Annex to the Participant Consent Form, based on which she will receive a Visibility Pack.

Ownership and intellectual property

1. The applications submitted to EIT Food for the EWA Programme are handled confidentially. Everybody that reads the applications during the review process is bound by confidentiality agreements.
2. Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their intellectual property rights. The organizers and their authorized representatives in the EWA Programme undertake to ensure the confidentiality of the ideas and projects presented and developed throughout

the EWA Programme, until the Demo Day. Mentees must not use proprietary strategies, business models, or ideas from previous or current employers or other companies without explicit authorization.

3. EIT Food shall not be liable in any way related to the actions taken by the Applicant to protect the proposed solution. In particular, the Applicant should check the relevant patent procedure, including the patent priority date.

Personal data processing

EIT Food will process the data collected for the purposes of the EWA Programme. Please see our Data protection clause below:

GDPR information clause

1. Providing of your personal data is voluntary, however in the event of failure to do so, you will not be able to take part in EWA programme (the “**Activity**”).
2. Your data indicated in the application form will be processed by the Controllers pursuant to art. 6 sec. 1 (b) of the general regulation on the protection of personal data of April 27, 2016 ("GDPR") in connection with the implementation of the contract for participation in the Activity, what includes: provide full service, including solving technical and organizational problems, contacting you in connection with registration to the Activity, defence against possible claims, statistical purposes, as well as for the purpose of reporting the Activity under the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Program, including documenting and disseminating the Activity, and therefore, for this purpose, the image of participants of the Activity may be processed and disseminated, where appropriate.
3. Your personal data may be shared with:
 - a. other participants of the Activity in order to conduct the Activity,
 - b. other entities, persons or bodies that will process personal data as their independent controller - to the extent and on the terms set out in the law and the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Program (e.g. project partners, EIT Food iVZW, entities authorized to conduct inspections and audits projects under the Horizon Europe Program
 - c. - the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (“**OLAF**”), the European Court of Auditors) as well as co- organizers of the Activity,
 - d. persons authorized by the Controllers, their employees and associates who must have access to data to perform their duties,
 - e. processors to whom Controllers entrust this task, e.g., those operating ICT systems, our advisors, related entities to the extent that they carry out data processing processes on our behalf (including EIT Food iVZW in the scope of

providing us with resources, including ICT resources), entities providing photo/video services.

4. The Controllers of your personal data in connection with the registration of participation in the Activity are: EIT Food CLC North-East sp. z o.o. with its registered office in Warsaw (00-675), ul. Koszykowa 54, Poland, entered into the Register of Entrepreneurs kept by the District Court for the capital city of Warsaw in Warsaw, 13th Commercial Division of the National Court Register under KRS number: 0000699422, NIP: 5213800253, REGON: 368613861, e-mail: ris@eitfood.eu and EIT Food CLC South SRLNIF. B87964060C/ de Serrano Anguita 1328004 Madrid, Spain. Your personal data will be stored for 5 years, due to the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Program.
5. The Controllers do not intend to transfer your contact data to a third country or international organization, unless it is needed to use special tools that meet criteria of the GDPR.
6. Your personal data is not subject of automated decision-making, including profiling.
7. You have the right to lodge a complaint, when you consider that the processing of your personal data violates the provisions of the GDPR, to the President of the Office for Data Protection (or the supervisory authority dealing with the protection of personal data in another country, in particular in the Member State of your habitual residence, place of work or place committing the alleged infringement).
8. The list of competent authorities for the Member States can be found here: <https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/index.html?t=authority&c=PL&c2=>

Contact details

In case of any question or general inquiries, please contact the EWA team:

Central and Eastern Europe

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