

# European partnership for a sustainable Future of Food Systems

First Joint Transnational Co-funded Call



## FutureFoodS Call 2024

*Transforming Food Systems - reshaping food system interactions, fostering food innovations and empowering sustainable food choices*

Version 01, 06 November 2024

**Call launch: 6 November 2024**

**Submission platform:** <https://futurefoods.ptj.de>

**Webinar for applicants: 21 November 2024, 11:00-13:00 CET**

**Deadline for pre-proposals: 15 January 2025, 13:00 CET**

**Deadline for full-proposals: 09 July 2025, 13:00 CEST**



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## History of changes

n.a.

## Definitions and abbreviations

Call Board	CB	The CB consists of all Funding Organisations giving funding to the co-funded call. The CB will make the final decision on the selection of projects based on the ranking lists provided by the IEP and on the availability of funds.
Call Office	CO	The CO is responsible for administrative support in relation to the co-funded call, call documents and procedures, submission platform and webinar.
Code of Conduct		A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the norms, rules, and responsibilities or proper practices of an individual party or an organization.
Co-funded call		The 1 <sup>st</sup> FutureFoodS co-funded call for proposals also referred to as the “call”.
Conflict of Interest	Col	
Coordinator		The Coordinator coordinates and manages the project consortium at pre- and full-proposal stage, and over the entire lifetime of the transnational project. Details on the role, responsibilities and tasks of a Coordinator are described in section 5.6.
Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication	DEC	
End-term report	ETR	Report that all projects funded under the co-funded call need to provide after the end of the project
European Commission	EC	
Evaluation Office	EO	The EO is responsible for the management of the evaluation and supports the CB and the IEP.
Funding Organisation	FO	FO is the Funding Organization listed in Table 3 which participates in the co-funded call and provides funding for the selected topic(s).
Independent Observer	IO	An independent expert who will observe the selection procedure and its requirements (in particular, for the peer review evaluation and the ranking) and will document his/her observations in a report.
International Expert Panel	IEP	The IEP consists of international experts in the fields covered in the topics of the co-funded call. Members of the IEP will evaluate each proposal according to the evaluation guidelines (see section 7 of this document). During the IEP meeting, the IEP will rank the proposals.
Key Performance Indicators	KPI	
Mid-term report	MTR	Report that all projects funded under the co-funded call need to provide at midterm of the project runtime
National Contact Point/ Regional Contact Point	NCP/ RCP	National and Regional Contact Points of each FO. NCP/RCP will provide support in of the event that potential applicants have

		nationally or regionally specific questions regarding eligibility and national/regional funding procedures.
Proposal		In this call document the term “proposal” refers to pre-proposals and full-proposals. Where the text refers specifically to either the pre-proposal or the full-proposal, this will be written explicitly.
Redress Committee		The Redress Committee has the role to evaluate the requests for redress ensuring fair and equal treatment of applicants (see section 7.3).
Research and Innovation	R&D	
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs	

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*Annex B Overview of National Contact Points / Regional Contact Points (NCP/RCP)*

*Annex C Pre-proposal template*

*Annex D Full-proposal template*

*Annex E Letter of commitment template*

*Annex F Data Management Plan*

*Annex G Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication Plan*

*Annex H List of FutureFoodS partners allowed to participate in co-funded projects*

*Annex I Regional/ national regulations*

# 1 Preamble

## 1.1 Background

The European Commission (EC) has identified an urgent need to make our food systems future-proof. This is due to various impacts that our food systems are facing, such as those linked to climate change, land degradation, biodiversity loss, hunger, malnutrition, diet-related diseases, food and packaging waste, safety, scarcity of fresh water and (renewable) resources, social and economic inequalities, political tensions, and the need to safeguard our food cultural heritage.

The transformation of food systems is key to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a central element with respect to ending poverty and protecting the planet (Rockström et al., 2009<sup>1</sup>), and is necessary to ensure that all people have access to safe and affordable diets that promote health and wellbeing (FAO and WHO, 2019<sup>2</sup>). Food is an element that connects all 17 SDGs given the interplay between the economic, environmental and the social dimensions of food systems.

A sustainable food system for the EU should “...provide and promote safe, nutritious and healthy food of low environmental impact for all current and future EU citizens in a manner that itself also protects and restores the natural environment and its ecosystem services, is robust and resilient, economically dynamic, just and fair, and socially acceptable and inclusive. It does so without compromising the availability of nutritious and healthy food for people living outside the EU, nor impairing their natural environment.” (SAPEA, 2020<sup>3</sup>).

## 1.2 The FutureFoodS Partnership

The FutureFoodS Partnership is one of eight cofunded partnerships launched by the EC under Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe to drive green and digital transitions. While the partnerships AGROECOLOGY, EUPAHW, SBEP and AgData also look at various aspects of agricultural and food production, the FutureFoodS partnership has a clear focus on food post-harvest.

The vision of the FutureFoodS Partnership is to collectively achieve environmentally friendly, socially secure and fair, economically viable, healthy and safe food systems in Europe by 2050.

This is based on three identified priority needs:

- 1) The need for transformation of the current types of production, processing, distribution, and consumption in linear food chains towards circular food systems functioning within planetary boundaries;
- 2) The need for an overarching food systems approach to address several challenges in an integrative manner and empowering all relevant stakeholders, diverse voices and geographical regions;
- 3) The need for food that is safe, sustainable, healthy and from fair and trusted value chains for everyone.

The FutureFoodS Partnership aims to generate impact (summarized in General & Specific Objectives) through a combination of interrelated activities like case studies in living labs, agendas for research, innovation, policy-science topics and education and joint transnational calls for research and innovation (R&I) proposals across four thematic areas:

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<sup>1</sup> Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, Å., Chapin, F. S., Lambin, E. F., ... & Foley, J. A. (2009). A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature*, 461 (7263), 472-475

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable healthy diets, Guiding principles: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ca6640en>

<sup>3</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, *Towards a sustainable food system – Moving from food as a commodity to food as more of a common good – Independent expert report*, Publications Office, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/282386>

- i. 'Change the way we eat';
- ii. 'Change the way we process and supply food';
- iii. 'Change the way we connect with food systems' and
- iv. 'Change the way we govern food systems.

Its potential impact is closely related to the capacity to align actors of the food system around the goals identified by the European Green Deal and the UN's SDGs and to quantify contributions to the objectives in the Farm to Fork Strategy: The FutureFoodS beneficiaries represent 86 partners from 22 EU Member States, six associated countries and one third country - 29 countries in total.

The incorporation of research actors from social sciences and humanities, of policy makers and the involvement of external experts and stakeholders ensures the consideration of multiple perspectives, needs and experiences in the planning and implementation of FutureFoodS activities.

This clearly reflects the partnership's mission to mobilize R&I to accelerate the transition towards sustainable food systems with a wide range of actors, who are joining forces in this partnership.

## 2 FutureFoodS ambition - Food Systems Approach

The FutureFoodS Partnership is planning to launch up to six calls for transnational R&I projects during its ten-year lifetime. As the first call of the partnership, the current call draws the applicants' attention to essential guiding elements that articulate the partnership's ambition for this call, as well as for all subsequent calls.

Central to the FutureFoodS Partnership is the ambition that tackling the complex challenges making current European food systems unsustainable requires mobilizing knowledge, actors and resources through a **food systems approach**. An approach of this kind is important as it propounds a holistic view when addressing wicked problems, acknowledging enduring dependencies between food system actors, as well as identifying drivers and leverage points within systems.

**Food systems approach**<sup>4</sup>: „a system that embraces all **elements** (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure, institutions, and power relations, markets and trade) and **activities** that relate to production, processing, distribution and marketing, preparation and consumption of food. A systems approach acknowledges the **interactions** between natural resources/ecosystems services, primary food production (farming, aquaculture and fishery), food processing, packaging, logistics, marketing, retail, food services, food consumption and waste management/recycling and the many **feedback loops** between them, which together defines the degree of **complexity**“.

The European food system R&I-community has an important role to play in promoting the design and realisation of a food systems approach involving relevant food system actors. The proposals submitted to this call should clearly delineate and characterise the particular food system under inquiry. What are its key actors? What are the main dependencies within the system? What levers may induce enhanced sustainability of the system? How does the chosen one connect to other food systems?

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<sup>4</sup> FutureFoodS SRIA, cited from: Halberg, N. & Westhoek, H. 2019. SCAR SWG Food systems Policy Brief: The added value of a Food Systems Approach in Research and Innovation? *European Union Publication*. ISBN 978-92-76-08794-6.

What are guiding elements for FutureFoodS projects?

**A. Transformative perspective**

- Research should be solution- and impact-driven (proposals are required to set up an **Impact Plan** for food system transformation which follows a theory of change)<sup>5</sup>;
- Projects should investigate the context in which they operate (the Impact Plan is expected to include a problem- and context-analysis);
- The diversity of European food systems means that solutions for a more sustainable food system may vary depending on the context<sup>6</sup>, e.g. different geographical conditions, different institutional settings, different demographical or cultural settings.

**B. Inter- and transdisciplinarity<sup>7</sup>**

- Project consortia need to bring together scientific approaches from multiple academic disciplines or research fields (linking life sciences with social sciences and humanities);
- Consortia can choose the level of cross-disciplinarity, appropriate for the R&I questions under inquiry, project specific aims and Impact Plan.

**C. Multi-stakeholder engagement<sup>8</sup>**

- Engagement of stakeholders from different sectors, governance levels and countries to foster real-life relevance and applicability of R&I actions;
- Engagement should encompass all stages of the R&I-process, from design to implementation and monitoring.
- The participation of a broad range of food system actors is encouraged along the “quadruple helix” (science, policy, industry and society), e.g. citizens/ consumers, civil society organisations, food companies, research organisations, regional authorities, decision makers, municipalities and the food nutrition and health community.

**D. Sustainability**

- Projects should take all three dimensions of sustainability (environmental/ economic/ social incl. nutrition and health<sup>9</sup>) into account, but are not obliged to address all dimensions to the same extent;
- Projects should envisage clearly how they will contribute to the transformation towards sustainable food systems (see SAPEA definition on p. 4).

The guiding elements will be part of the proposal evaluation and should be described in corresponding sections of the proposal and especially in the **Impact Plan** towards Food system Transformation (Annex A).

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<sup>5</sup> a theory of change is a conceptual model for planning R&I activities that makes explicit key assumptions that underpin the realisation of a long-term goal and anticipate the effects of a desired outcome/change

<sup>6</sup> Determinants of food choices are context-specific (European Commission, 2022) [scoping-paper\\_sustainable-food-consumption.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/food/system-changes/scoping-paper-sustainable-food-consumption.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Further info can be found here: <https://km4djournal.org/index.php/km4dj/article/view/170>;  
<https://www.nwo.nl/en/knowledge-platform-for-interdisciplinary-and-transdisciplinary-research#background-information>

<sup>8</sup> Please consult the eligibility guidelines of your national/ regional funding organisation to ensure what activities/ which actors can be supported

<sup>9</sup> [Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/sustainable-food-systems-concept-and-framework/)

## 3 Call description

### 3.1 Scope and objectives of the call

In its **Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)**<sup>10</sup>, FutureFoodS has identified **four thematic areas** for which better knowledge, advanced know-how and more scalable, innovative solutions can be determinant to fulfill food system transformations: (i) change the way we eat, (ii) change the way we process and supply food, (iii) change the way we connect, and (iv) change the way we govern food systems.

Within these four thematic R&I Areas, the partnership has identified a subset of high priority topics, with regards to the need for new knowledge and innovations in society and the food sector, that require specific attention within the framework of this first call.

The objective of this call is to fund transnational research and/or innovation projects addressing one of the following call topics. Each call topic brings together several of the priority thematic areas identified by the partnership and presented here above. Proposals are expected to lie within technology readiness level three to seven<sup>11</sup>, depending on national/ regional funding regulations.

Applicants shall demonstrate the originality of their approach and build on the results of existing EU level initiatives. Funded projects shall foster synergies with other initiatives and shall have the capacities to take a changing policy environment into consideration - also during the life-time of the project.

Each application submitted under this call should focus on one of the three call topics listed below. The topic chosen should be clearly indicated in the proposal:

**1 The way towards sustainable and resilient food systems**

**2 New foods** – Fostering innovations in food design, processing and supply via demand-and-supply reorientation

**3 Empowering sustainable food choices** – Enabling food environments and dietary shifts

**Please note that primary production (on land and sea/water), such as growing food, agricultural production and other specific aspects related to it, as well as diseases related to nutrition and lifestyle are not in focus in this partnership. These aspects are covered in other Horizon Europe partnerships. However, dependencies and impacts related to these aspects may need to be reflected upon in a project to fully embrace a food systems approach.**

### 3.2 Call topics

#### 3.2.1 Topic 1: The way towards sustainable and resilient food systems

The European food sector is highly polarised with few actors dominating globalised process-and-supply chains. Recent external shocks and geopolitical shifts have revealed the high volatility of global food markets and lasting vulnerabilities of European supply chains. Achieving more sustainable and resilient food systems in Europe is central to EU's Green Deal, striving for a green and digital transition. Doing so necessitates continued efforts to, i.e. improve food security and safety and finding new ways to optimize flows, optimise the use of natural capital and ecosystems services, generate less waste and reduce main environmental and climate impacts, and discourage unhealthy diets in times of resource scarcity and climate uncertainties.

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<sup>10</sup> Sustainable Food Systems Partnership for People, Planet and Climate: STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AGENDA (SRIA) <https://scar-europe.org/food-main-actions/food-systems-partnership>

<sup>11</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/manual-scientific-entrepreneurship/major-steps/trl>

This call topic aims to explore new approaches for reshaping food system interactions through novel market-based arrangements, business models, policy actions and experimental practices. The call topic seeks to promote food system sustainability in all its dimensions, i.e. respecting business profitability, ecological stewardship and societal well-being. Projects funded within this call topic shall especially address the importance of renewed collaboration and networking among food system actors to boost the society and sector's readiness to embracing transformative and innovative solutions.

### *Suggested R&I aspects*

Applicants choosing to address this call topic might touch upon some of the aspects listed below in their proposals. Applicants may choose to address other issues, either way a clear argumentation about how the chosen relate to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Understanding interfaces and potential leverage points in the food system and developing opportunities and solutions to overcome current technical, economic and policy-related barriers and lock-ins (including harmful subsidies) for sustainable and resilient food value chains.
- Exploring technological, social and organizational innovations to prevent and reduce food waste for sustainable value chains, for instance using place-based approaches or valorising by-products.
- Designing and experimenting scaling principles, in particular under stress conditions, using data-driven, hybrid models for innovative, diverse, resource-efficient and competitive processing and supply schemes for both terrestrial and aquatic resources.
- Developing scenario-based approaches strengthening risk assessment, risk management and adaptability by food actors in relation to food safety and security shocks.
- Designing, testing and scaling the deployment of digital technologies sustaining food system resilience and green transition (big data, AI, innovative data sets, information exchange models, transparency, flexible production systems etc.).
- Addressing the polarisation and fragmentation in food systems and finding innovative ways to work together towards sustainable and resilient food systems also considering the question of equity (profitability, affordability and accessibility for all)
- Learnings from large and small systems (i.e. short chain, local and alternative sub-systems, community supported-, place-based initiatives etc.), corresponding interactions and practices looking at problems and solutions in a particular context

### *3.2.2 Topic 2: New foods – Fostering innovations in food design, processing and supply via demand- and-supply reorientation*

The diversification of food demand and supply represents an untapped potential for simultaneously addressing key challenges in European food systems, i.e. unhealthy food habits, high toll on the environment and climate, over-reliance on imports for food and feed. There is an urgent need to expand the palette of foods produced and consumed across Europe. Doing so requires new approaches to food design, processing and supply to propose a greater variety of healthy, sustainable and also minimally processed food alternatives. Key leverage points include the adoption of more plant-based foods combined with animal-based foods of lower environmental impact. Biotechnologies may play a central role in enabling such a dietary shift. It also raises important questions, i.e. about consumer acceptance, the role of the food industry in proposing more robust business models and modern supply chains, as well as compliance to existing and future food safety legislation.

This call topic aims to develop systemic approaches to design, process and supply new types of foods, stemming from various raw materials, such as plants (e.g. pulses, grains, nuts, seeds, algae), edible mushrooms, as well as employing microorganisms and cell-culture based food. Meeting the demand for proteins will increasingly rely on alternatives next to animal-based food with lower climate- and environmental impact. Foods investigated within the scope of this call topic may also refer to regional, ‘forgotten’ foods, i.e. food that are no longer part of modern diets in different parts of Europe but whose nutritional qualities and ecological characteristics could make them a suitable addition to a more diverse food consumption.

### *Suggested R&I aspects*

Applicants choosing to address this call topic might touch upon some of the aspects listed below in their proposals. Applicants may choose to address other issues, either way a clear argumentation about how the chosen relate to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Investigating and testing of new market opportunities for processing technologies and biotechnological innovations for future foods.
- Developing and experimenting new solutions to valorise by-products and side-streams for food uses in circular food systems.
- Examining challenges and finding solutions on food safety aspects, i.e. with regard to new food sources or alternative proteins.
- Developing and testing digital solutions combined with innovations in packaging, labelling and marketing to prevent waste and improve the traceability for foods process-and-supply chains.
- Investigating and employing sociocultural factors influencing the acceptance and adoption of new foods.
- Designing and implementing new business models and marketing approaches for new foods, strengthening the interplay between industry-led innovations and policy-driven experimentations.
- Monitoring the potential and impact of new foods on the realisation of food system transformation, the green and digital transition and the modernization of the European food economy.
- Investigating the potential of territorial diets and solutions in promoting regional or forgotten foods and enhance their accessibility and affordability towards more sustainable and climate-friendly food systems.

### **3.2.3 Topic 3: Empowering sustainable food choices – Enabling environments and dietary shifts**

The transition towards sustainable food systems is only possible by embracing sustainable food choices, both individually and collectively, which might require changing norms, attitudes and habits. The current situation of a triple burden of malnutrition combined with negative effects on our environment shows that this is far from easy. Looking through the lens of systems approach the importance of food environments is of high interest – this could mean the overall context for one’s purchase and consumption choices as well as enablers and barriers of adoption of sustainable food practices, for instance related to various access to information and affordability. A stronger connection and integration of individual food environments and overall food ecosystems may strengthen food literacy and bring issues related to food sustainability closer to citizens while respecting food cultural heritage.

This call topic asks for an overarching systems approach to address challenges hindering the adoption of sustainable food practices across Europe and promoting enhanced empowerment of consumers for making informed sustainable food choices. The potential for redesigning both digital and physical food environments as a way to influence food consumption shifts towards safe, healthy, nutritious, environmental and climate responsible, affordable, accessible, equitable and culturally acceptable and tasteful foods which are central to the scope of this call topic.

### *Suggested R&I aspects*

Applicants choosing to address this call topic might touch upon some of the aspects listed below in their proposals. Applicants may choose to address other issues, either way a clear argumentation about how the chosen relate to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Investigating and finding ways to employ the ‘social tipping points’ to accelerate the adoption of sustainable and healthy diets and lifestyles for different consumer groups. What kind of hindrances are there?
- Developing solutions for strengthening the influence of digital and physical food environments on sustainable food consumption behaviours through new forms of public-private collaborations.
- Investigating and enhancing the role of AI, including regenerative AI, and digital solutions in promoting food democracy, food and digital literacy and consumer engagement and mitigating the risk of misinformation affecting consumer choices, individually and collectively.
- Developing innovative ways to enhance the role of public procurement, food label and ethical marketing practices in shaping inclusive food environments in the public space.
- Designing and testing policy actions improving the availability and affordability of healthy and sustainable foods for different consumer groups, and especially for the more vulnerable groups (e.g. young children, elderly, disabled).
- Developing new policy approaches combining multi-level and place-based governance perspectives supporting and learning from place-based initiatives towards sustainable and affordable diets. Both sector/ domain specific policies as well as horizontal policies, which may directly or indirectly impact the functioning of governance systems in scope, are to be considered.

## 4 Timeline, Call Office (CO) contacts and funding opportunities

### 4.1 Timeline

Table 1 Timeline

1. STEP: PRE-PROPOSAL PHASE	
<b>16 September 2024</b>	Pre-announcement
<b>06 November 2024</b>	Launch of the co-funded call (opening of the electronic submission system + the partnering tool)
<b>21 November 2024</b>	Webinar for applicants
<b>15 January 2025</b>	Deadline for pre-proposal submission
<b>Mid January – mid April</b>	1. Step eligibility check, evaluation and selection
<b>Mid April 2025</b>	Communication of eligibility check and evaluation outcomes to project Coordinators
<b>16-30 April 2025</b>	Period for pre-proposal phase redress
<b>May 2025</b>	Evaluation of redress requests and communication of decisions to applicants
<b>May 2025</b>	Invitation to submit full-proposals
2. STEP: FULL-PROPOSAL PHASE	
<b>18 June 2025</b>	Deadline to inform about exceptional changes (see section 6.2.1)
<b>09 July 2025</b>	Deadline for full-proposal submission
<b>Mid July – mid October</b>	2. Step eligibility check, evaluation and selection
<b>Mid October 2025</b>	Communication of eligibility check and evaluation outcomes to project Coordinators
<b>Mid October 2025</b>	Period for full-proposal stage redress
<b>End October 2025</b>	Evaluation of redress requests and communication of decisions to applicants
<b>End October 2025</b>	Communication of the funding decision to the project Coordinators
NATIONAL/ REGIONAL CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS	
<b>November 2025 - March 2026</b>	Start of projects
FUNDED PROJECT MONITORING AND MEETINGS (tentative timeframe)	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2026</b>	Kick-off meeting
<b>Project month 18</b>	Mid-term report (MTR); depends on runtime (given for 36 months)
<b>By mid of 2027</b>	Mid-term meeting
<b>By end of 2028</b>	Final meeting
<b>Project month 36</b>	End-term report (ETR); depends on runtime (given for 36 months)

The submission of proposals will be carried out using an online submission platform, where applicants will find all of the information necessary for the preparation and submission of proposals. The submission platform is available at <https://futurefoods.ptj.de>.

**How to start:** to prepare a proposal, the coordinator needs to register and generate the proposal first. The coordinator can then assign partners, who will receive an invitation to join and register themselves to the submission platform. More info can be found on the submission platform itself.

**Submission platform:** <https://futurefoods.ptj.de>

## Partnering tool

A partnering tool is attached to the submission platform, where interested parties can submit and search partner profiles.

**A webinar will be hosted on 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2024 from 11 am to 13 CET** for all interested applicants. The webinar will provide an overview of all relevant aspects of the call and a short introduction to the submission platform. The webinar is open to everyone interested and no registration is required.

### Access information to the webinar:

<https://ptj-fzj.webex.com/ptj-fzj-en/j.php?MTID=m79555138feb274fdd065ea75f20c446c>

### Webinar password:

**food** (3663 when dialing from a phone or video system)

Webinar number:

2795 697 3021

## 4.2 Call Office contacts

The CO will be operated by Project Management Juelich (Germany).

Table 2 CO contacts

Name	E-Mail	Phone
CO	<a href="mailto:ptj-futurefoods@fz-juelich.de">ptj-futurefoods@fz-juelich.de</a>	N/A
Emilie Gätje	<a href="mailto:e.gaetje@ptj.de">e.gaetje@ptj.de</a>	+49 (0) 2461 61 96367
Frank Hensgen	<a href="mailto:f.hensgen@ptj.de">f.hensgen@ptj.de</a>	+49 (0) 2461 6185443
Nikola Hassan	<a href="mailto:n.hassan@ptj.de">n.hassan@ptj.de</a>	+49 (0) 2461 61 96787

All technical issues with the submission system are to be addressed to the CO.

## 4.3 Overview of participating Funding Organisations and funding opportunities

The following table provides an overview of the countries and FO involved, as well as the financial contributions committed to the call and individual topics. For further guidance on the applicable national/regional regulations please consult your NCP/RCP (Annex B) and the information given in Annex I.

A total of approx. 39 million EUR have been provisionally allocated for this Joint Transnational Call by the participating FOs combined with the contribution from the European Union (EU).

Table 3 Overview of participating FOs and funding opportunities

Country	FO full name	Abbreviation	National/regional call contribution (provisional)		Topic		
			Indicative budget in EUR (provisional)	Maximum national/regional amount in EUR per project	1	2	3
<b>Austria (AT)</b>	Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds	FWF	1.000.000	300.000-450.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Belgium (BE)</b>	Fonds de la recherche scientifique	F.R.S.-FNRS	300.000	300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Belgium (BE)</b>	Fonds Voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen	FWO	700.000	350.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Belgium (BE)</b>	Service public de Wallonie, Département de la Recherche et du développement technologique	SPW	1.000.000	1.000.000	Y	Y	N
<b>Belgium (BE)</b>	Vlaanderen Agentschap Innoveren & Ondernemen	FIO/ VLAIO	2.750.000	500.000/375.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Bulgaria (BG)</b>	Bulgarian National Science Fund	BNSF	383.468	127.822	Y	Y	Y
<b>Denmark (DK)</b>	Danish AgriFish Agency	DAFA	1.000.000	300.000/500.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Denmark (DK)</b>	Innovationsfonden	INNOFOND	1.000.000	300.000/500.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Estonia (EE)</b>	Sihtasutus Eesti Teadusagentuur	ETAG	300.000	100.000/300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Estonia (EE)</b>	Regionaal- ja Põllumajandusministeerium	REM	100.000	100 000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Finland (FI)</b>	Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö	MMM	600.000	250.000/300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>France (FR)</b>	Agence nationale de la recherche	ANR	2.000.000	300.000 / 350.000*	Y	Y	Y
<b>Germany (DE)</b>	Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft	BMEL/ BLE	500.000	250.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Germany (DE)</b>	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung	BMBF/ PtJ	2.000.000	350.000	Y	Y	N
<b>Iceland (IS)</b>	Rannsóknamiðstöð Íslands	RANNIS	300.000	300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Ireland (IE)</b>	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	DAFM/ Teagasc	1.248.000	350.000/124.000	Y	Y	Y

Country	FO full name	Abbreviation	National/regional call contribution (provisional)		Topic		
			Indicative budget in EUR (provisional)	Maximum national/regional amount in EUR per project	1	2	3
<b>Italy (IT)</b>	Ministero dell'Agricoltura, della Sovranita' Alimentare e delle Foreste	Masaf	1.100.000	300.000*	Y	Y	Y
<b>Italy (IT)</b>	Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca	MUR	1.000.000	200.000/ 250.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Italy (IT)</b>	Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano/ BOZEN	PROV.BZ/ BOZEN	225.000	300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Lithuania (LT)</b>	Lietuvos mokslo taryba	LMT	300.000	150.000- 250.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Lithuania (LT)</b>	Lietuvos Respublikos Žemės Ūkio Ministerija	ZUM	120.000	120.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Norway (NO)</b>	Norges Forskningsrad	RCN	~1.300.000	~260.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Portugal (PT)</b>	Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia	FCT	500.000	250.000*	Y	Y	Y
<b>Romania (RO)</b>	Unitatea Executivă pentru Finanțarea Învățământului Superior a Cercetării, Dezvoltării și Inovării	UEFISCDI	500.000	200.000/ 250.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Spain (ES)</b>	Agencia Estatal de Investigación	AEI/ FECYT	1.000.000	175.000/ 275.000/ 325.000*	Y	Y	Y
<b>Spain (ES)</b>	Centro para el Desarrollo Tecnológico y la Innovación E.P.E.	CDTI	1.000.000	n.a.	Y	Y	Y
<b>Spain (ES)</b>	Elika Nekazaritzako Elikagaien Segurtasunarako Euskal Fundazioa	ELIKA	100.000	100.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Spain (ES)</b>	Agencia de Ciencia, Competitividad Empresarial e Innovación Asturiana	Sekuens/ FICYT	250.000	150.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Sweden (SE)</b>	Forskningsrådet För Miljö, Areella Näringar Och Samhällsbyggande	Formas	2.700.000	300.000/ 450.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Sweden (SE)</b>	Verket for Innovationssystem	Vinnova			Y	Y	Y
<b>The Netherlands (NL)</b>	De Staat, Vertegenwoordigd door de minister van Landbouw, Visserij, Voedselzekerheid en Natuur	MIN-LVVN	2.000.000	350.000/ 450.000	Y	Y	Y

Country	FO full name	Abbreviation	National/regional call contribution (provisional)		Topic		
			Indicative budget in EUR (provisional)	Maximum national/regional amount in EUR per project	1	2	3
<b>The Netherlands (NL)</b>	Nederlandse organisatie voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek	NWO	2.000.000	400.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>The Netherlands (NL)</b>	Regieorgaan SIA	SIA	900.000	300.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Türkiye (TR)</b>	Tarımsal Araştırmalar ve Politikalar Genel Müdürlüğü	TAGEM	200.000	100.000	Y	Y	Y
<b>Türkiye (TR)</b>	Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu	TÜBİTAK	500.000	150.000	Y	Y	Y

\*See details in the national/regional funding regulations

## 5 Funding modalities

The FOs participating in the co-funded call are listed in Table 3. The funding for transnational projects will be based on a virtual common pot mechanism. This means that the partners (applicants) in the projects selected for funding will receive the grant directly from their corresponding national/regional FO, according to their legal terms and conditions for project funding (see national/regional funding regulations, Annex I).

**All applicants need to check terms on conditions of the respective national/ regional funding regulations (Annex I). In addition it is strongly recommended to contact the NCP/RCPs from one's FO (Annex B).**

### 5.1 Who can apply

Universities and universities of applied sciences, research institutes, non-profit legal entities (i.e. non governmental organisations, associations, societies, cooperatives, federations etc.), small and medium sized enterprises and large enterprises and public bodies (i.e. municipalities, regional/ national administrative bodies, authorities etc.), subject to the national/ regional funding regulations and eligibility criteria (see also Annex I).

**Please, see the Annex I for the eligibility rules of the FO to which you submit an application.**

Conditions for the participation in the call of beneficiaries of the FutureFoodS Partnership:

Research teams from some of the organisations that are also beneficiaries of the FutureFoodS Partnership may participate in this co-funded call; the list of the beneficiaries of FutureFoodS allowed to participate in the projects' consortia is indicated in Annex H. Firewall measures are being implemented within the partnership to prevent these beneficiaries obtaining any advance or additional insights in to this call so as to mitigate the risk of, perception of, or de facto conflict of interest (Col) or unequal treatment of applicants, including clear segregation of duties. All other beneficiaries of the FutureFoodS Partnership not listed in Annex H may not apply for funding under the co-funded call for proposals.

It is essential that each partner intending to participate in a proposal carefully reads the national/regional funding regulations (see Annex I). If in doubt, applicants should consult their NCP/RCP who can inform them of the relevant regulations.

### 5.2 Eligibility

Proposals must be in line with the general eligibility criteria as described below and applicants requesting funding from participating FOs within this call must comply with national/ regional criteria as established in Annex I respectively.

After the closing dates, the CO will carry out the general eligibility check of the proposals submitted with respect to the criteria cited in this section. Proposals not meeting these minimum requirements will be rejected, following consultation with the Call Board (CB). Each member of the CB will then check the proposals and applicants requesting funding against national/ regional eligibility criteria as described in the national/ regional funding regulations.

Proposals complying with both sets of criteria (general and national/regional eligibility criteria) will advance to the evaluation procedure.

### 5.2.1 General eligibility criteria

After the closing date for submission, all proposals will be checked against the following mandatory general eligibility criteria:

- The minimum requirement for project consortia is to be comprised of three partners 1) from at least three Member States or Associated Countries participating in the call and 2) eligible to request funding from the FOs participating in this call and providing funding for the selected topic (Table 3). There is no rule for setting out the maximum number of partners that may participate in a consortium. The number should be appropriate to meet the project goals and should remain manageable (experience from past calls indicates a range of 4-8 partners per project);
- Each consortium applying must be led by a project Coordinator, who must be from an organisation eligible and applying for funding from a FO of this call;
- In order to achieve balanced consortia and promote collaboration, the proportion of the overall effort that is allocated to all of the partners from a single country shall not exceed 60% of the total number of person months allocated to the project;
- An individual affiliated to several organisations cannot request funding from more than one FO in one proposal. If participating in the call as an affiliate of more than one organisation, the individual must declare which partner and thus which organisation within the consortium they represent. That person will not be considered as two different partners within the same consortium;
- The maximum project duration is 36 months (please check Annex I for specifications);
- Proposals must be written in English;
- Proposals must be complete, respect page limits and the number/type of attachments allowed, including CV templates that are in line with sound principles for project assessment according to the proposal templates (Annexes C and D) and information provided in the online submission system;
- Proposals must be submitted using the online submission system (<https://www.futurefoods.ptj.de>) by **15<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 (13:00 CET) for pre-proposals** and **09<sup>th</sup> of July 2025 (13:00 CEST) for full-proposals**
- The prior submission of a pre-proposal is a requirement for the submission of a full-proposal. The information given in the pre-proposals is binding. No change to the objectives outlined in a proposal is allowed. A limited number of changes with respect to the administrative details/ minor revisions may be allowed upon request and approval by the CO and the FOs concerned.
- Applicants must complete an ethics self-assessment as part of the application;
- Self-funding: partners can join project consortia with their own resources and/ or can bring their own funding (e.g. in the case eligibility to receive funding is not met or due to other reasons). Self-funded partners will not be subject to national/regional eligibility assessments. They will appear within the project proposal as “associated partners” and will need to submit a “letter of commitment” (Annex E) with the full-proposal submission. However, self-funded partners cannot be coordinators of projects, their role should be clear and they are not counted towards the minimum number of eligible partners and countries (minimum of three funded partners from three different countries).

There is no set maximum overall project budget for the transnational project stipulated as part of the call. The costs must be appropriate to meet the project goals. Nonetheless, individual FOs may have

regulations and/or restrictions concerning the budget they can award within research projects that must be respected (for example, some funders may limit the maximum budget per partner in a project to a certain amount). Therefore it is essential that each project partner carefully reads their national/regional funding regulations (see Annex I). If in doubt, applicants should consult their NCP/RCP who can inform them of the relevant regulations (see Annex B).

In addition, applicants need to respect that entities subject to EU restrictive measures<sup>12</sup> under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) as well as Article 75 TFEU are not eligible to participate in any capacity. In addition restrictions apply to legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine and measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary need to be respected<sup>13</sup>.

### 5.2.2 Regional/ national eligibility criteria

National/ regional eligibility criteria must be respected and the proposed project must be consistent with the national/ regional thematic priorities of the FO, if required in the respective “national/regional funding regulations”. National/regional requirements are described in the document “National/regional funding regulations” (see Annex I). FOs may require additional documents according to their own national/regional or organisational regulations. Certain national/regional FOs may not fund all organisation types (see Annex I).

Applicants must carefully read the national/regional funding regulations and it is highly recommended to contact their NCP/ RCP before submitting a proposal to make sure that they respect all the national/regional eligibility criteria and rules.

### 5.2.3 Ineligibility

After the closing date, the CO will carry out a general eligibility check of the proposals followed by the national/ regional eligibility checks performed by FOs respectively. Proposals not meeting the eligibility criteria listed in the call announcement or national/ regional funding regulations will be rejected after consultation within the CB.

## 5.3 Ethical issues

The evaluation criteria of this call for proposals include the evaluation of compliance with relevant ethical requirements. Applicants should always describe any relevant ethical aspects in their project plans. Any work involving the use of animals or humans should be carried out with the appropriate authorisation, taking into account EU and national ethics requirements. In order to identify any potential ethical issues, applicants are required to complete an ethics self-assessment and provide support documentation referred to in the ethics issues checklist. Please consult the available Horizon Europe programme guidance: [How to complete your ethics self-assessment](#). If any ethical issues are expected to arise during the proposed project, these must be addressed in the full-proposal.

The Horizon Europe guidelines address ethical issues in relation to the following: human embryos & fetuses, human beings, human cells or tissues, personal data, animals, non-EU countries, environment, health & safety, dual use and exclusive focus on civil applications. Applicants can also consult the EC’s Guidance Note – Ethics and Food-Related Research<sup>14</sup> on core issues of ethical concern

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main>

<sup>13</sup> Further information can be found in the Horizon Europe Work Programme/ Annex D: wp-13-general-annexes\_horizon-2023-2024\_en.pdf (europa.eu)

<sup>14</sup> Guidance Note – Ethics and Food-Related Research:

[https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/89847/research-food\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/89847/research-food_en.pdf) (accessed: 9 February 2024)

in the field of food-related research, including an appendix that addresses broader concerns in the field of food ethics.

This self-assessment, as well as any additional ethical issues that are raised by the International Expert Panel (IEP) and the Ethics Advisory Board of FutureFoodS, will be shared with national/regional funders who may stipulate specific ethics requirements, which in turn must be met by successful applicants as part of the national funding contract.

Any proposal deemed to violate fundamental ethical principles will not be accepted. Assessment of the significance of ethical issues will be made applying the criteria published by the EC in its guidelines for the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

Where activities undertaken in non-EU countries raise ethical issues, the applicants must ensure that the research conducted outside the EU is legal in at least one EU Member State.

#### 5.4 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The FutureFoodS Partnership is committed to avoiding any CoI and safeguarding good scientific practice. A code of Conduct related to CoI, confidentiality and non-disclosure is defined and **applies to the CB, Independent Observer and IEP**. An important aspect of this code is the avoidance of any conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the applicants. The CB and related NCP/RCPs, the IO, and the IEP will perform their work impartially and take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the work is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflicts of interest').

The following situations will automatically be considered a CoI (list not exhaustive):

- Being involved in (the preparation of) any pre- and/or full-proposal;
- Having submitted a proposal as a principal investigator or a team member, under the call;
- Being director, trustee or partner or in any way involved in the management of an applicant;
- Being employed or contracted by one of the applicants;
- Having close professional proximity, *e.g.*, being a member of the same scientific institution with a hierarchical or department relation or impending change of the IEP member to the institution of the applicant in a position with a hierarchical or department relation or vice versa;
- Having close family ties (spouse, domestic or non-domestic partner, child, sibling, parent etc.) or other close personal relationships with the applicants of the proposal;
- Having (or have had during the last five years) a close scientific collaboration with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or have had) a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with an applicant of the proposal;
- Having (or have had), a mentor/mentee relationship with a principal investigator of the proposal;
- Having a current or prior (past five years) activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, *e.g.*, scientific advisory boards;
- Having direct or indirect benefit / disadvantage if any proposal submitted is accepted or rejected;
- Having personal economic interests in the funding decision. Other situations preventing the IEP members or reviewers from participating in the evaluation impartially could be considered a CoI and should be reported as such by the IEP members.

Applicants included in a proposal submitted to this call (including all the team members) can not serve as IEP members.

Those beneficiaries of FutureFoodS Partnership that might apply to the co-funded calls are completely excluded from the work of call preparation, selection and project follow-up and monitoring. All call-

related information is inaccessible to these beneficiaries. In this way, the possibility for research units belonging to these organisations to participate in the FutureFoodS Partnership calls for proposals is safeguarded. To ensure complete transparency, the beneficiaries of the FutureFoodS Partnership that may apply to the co-funded calls are explicitly listed in Annex H, emphasizing their absolute exclusion from the process of preparing the calls both in terms of defining the priority areas of the call and the procedures for evaluating and selecting project proposals. Concrete measures to avoid potential Col or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured.

## 5.5 General Data Protection Regulation

All personal data provided to the FutureFoodS Partnership in the execution of the call (e.g., project applications, reviewers and expert assessments, mailing lists, tracking websites, registration for activities and events) will be collected, stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation EU 679/2016). For more information please consult the privacy policy on the online submission platform.

## 5.6 Project Coordinator

Each project consortium needs to appoint a Coordinator. The Coordinator has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Make sure that the national/ regional funding regulations and funding modalities of all partners involved are met – confirmation of compliance provided to the Coordinator by the partners themselves – to ensure the eligibility of the entire project;
- Lead the consortium throughout the application procedure and be responsible for the correct pre-proposal and full-proposal submission. The Coordinator is the one who creates an account for the proposal in the online submission platform;
- Be responsible for the overall project coordination and act as the central contact point for the consortium during the full lifespan of the research project;
- Inform the CO about any situation or event that might affect the implementation of the project;
- Ensure that all work is carried out to a high standard and meets contractually agreed deliverables and milestones presented in the proposal and approved by the FOs;
- Be responsible for sharing all information with consortium partners;
- Be responsible for monitoring data and for the punctual delivery of project reports;
- Be responsible for the set up of a consortium agreement between project partners.

The Coordinator will not be responsible for the financial management of project funding, which shall be handled directly between the consortium members and their corresponding FOs.

## 6 Call procedures

The co-funded call is conducted as a two-step-procedure. As a first step, a pre-proposal has to be submitted and following an invitation, a full-proposal can be submitted in a second step.

**Deadline for pre-proposals is 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2025, 13:00 CET**

**Deadline for full-proposals is 09<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, 13:00 CEST**

Proposals that are not submitted within the submission system on time will not be considered for evaluation and will be rejected.

Details on each step are explained in the following sections.

## 6.1 Step1: Pre-proposal phase

### 6.1.1 Submission

The objective of a pre-proposal is to present the project idea, objectives and aim and the consortium without providing much detail on the work plan. The detailed template for the pre-proposal with explanations is provided in Annex C and an example is also available within the document section of the submission platform: <https://futurefoods.ptj.de>.

Following the submission, pre-proposals will be checked against the general and national/regional eligibility criteria as defined in the respective funding regulations (see Annex I). Pre-proposals that do not pass the general and national/regional eligibility check will be rejected.

Only eligible pre-proposals will be evaluated.

### 6.1.2 Evaluation

Eligible pre-proposals will be evaluated against the two equally scored evaluation criteria excellence and impact, as described in section 7.2. The evaluation procedure will be conducted as described in section 7.

### 6.1.3 Selection

The selection of pre-proposals will be decided by the CB based on a ranking list and the availability of funds (see table 3 and Annex I). The Coordinators of the selected pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full-proposal. The Coordinators of pre-proposals that are not selected will also be also informed accordingly by the CO. The decision letter will include the summary evaluation report prepared in response to the pre-proposal.

## 6.2 Step 2: Full-proposal phase

### 6.2.1 Requests for changes in the full-proposal phase

The information given in the pre-proposals is binding and thus, no changes are allowed, unless in case of force majeure or explicitly requested by the IEP, a FO or the CB. However, all changes must comply with the requirements of the call and the respective FOs. The following changes between the pre- and full-proposal stage might be possible, but always require prior endorsement by the respective FOs of the proposal and the CO, as described below for each case.

**Change of budget can be allowed by the relevant FO.** The NCP/ RCP of a FO can decide according to its own rules whether a justification is needed. Prior to such a change, the CO must be informed. Applicants must explicitly indicate any changes made compared to the pre-proposal in the online submission platform.

#### **Changes in the consortium composition:**

- A change of project Coordinator (person and organisation in charge) can exceptionally be allowed in case of force majeure. In this case, a request to change the Coordinator must be submitted to the CO and to all of the FOs from whom the partners in the consortium have requested funding. The deadline for any such request is 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2025;
- Changes in the consortium composition (i.e. addition, removal and replacement of a partner) can exceptionally be allowed in case of force majeure or if explicitly requested by the CB for the particular cases of i) ineligibility of a partner and/or ii) invitation to add a partner that will request funds to an undersubscribed FO (widening option, see 6.2.2). Requests must be submitted to the CO and to all of the FOs from whom the partners in the consortium have requested funding. The deadline for any such request is 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2025. Regardless of the type of changes, the eligibility criteria, both general and national/regional criteria (section 5) must be respected.

**All new partners requesting funding must comply with the applicable national/ regional funding regulations. If a new partner is declared ineligible at Step 2/ full-proposal phase, the whole consortium will be declared ineligible and the proposal will not be evaluated.**

It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to ensure that a new partner is eligible to receive funding from the respective FO before submitting the full-proposal. This includes checking whether the proposal is compatible with the national/regional programme of the relevant FO and thus, whether eligibility of a new partner is verified. All changes have to be explicitly indicated in the online submission platform.

### 6.2.2 Widening option

In case of undersubscription of one or more FOs, a so-called widening option will be offered to all proposals entering the full-proposal phase. FOs are considered undersubscribed if their available budget is significantly higher than the requested budget by successful applicants in the pre-proposal step. This would mean a loss of R&I funding and thus, should be prevented if possible. For full-proposal consortia, the widening option gives an additional opportunity to react on comments or recommendations given in the 1. Step evaluation or by FOs to refine the proposal, i.e. by adding additional expertise/ disciplines/ know-how by involving a new partner fundable by and undersubscribed FO. A list with respective FOs that are undersubscribed will be provided to applicants and optionally, consortia are allowed to include new partners fundable by the respective FOs.

A change following the widening option will only be allowed under recommendation by the CB and under the following conditions:

- The Coordinator of an application considering using the widening option must inform the CO in case the consortium would like to add an eligible partner from an undersubscribed FO. **Please note that only one additional partner requesting funding is allowed.** Information about the additional partner must be given to the CO and respective FO by 18<sup>th</sup> of June.2025.
- The total number and composition of partners including the newly added one from undersubscribed FOs in the consortium must fulfil all eligibility criteria stated in section 5.2.
- The applicants must clearly explain the added value of this additional partner in the full-proposal.
- The eligibility for funding of the new partner must be confirmed by the national/ regional FO. Therefore, it is necessary to contact the respective national/ regional FO of the new partner prior to submission of the full-proposal, in order to comply with national/ regional requirements and receive approval.

### 6.2.3 Submission

Following the invitation to submit a full-proposal, the Coordinator can submit a full-proposal via the submission platform: <https://futurefoods.ptj.de>. Applicants are strongly advised to consult with their NCP/ RCP to clarify any uncertainties or doubts regarding compliance with the applicable funding regulations before submitting a proposal (see Annex B).

The detailed template for full-proposals with explanations is provided in Annex D and an example is also available in the document section of the submission platform.

Note that the inclusion of project partners that participate at their own expense (self-funded partners) is permitted ONLY upon submission of a letter of commitment (see Annex E). The absence of this letter will result in the rejection of the entire proposal (see section 5.2 Eligibility).

National/ regional eligibility criteria, as defined in the respective funding regulation (see Annex I), must be respected and the proposed research project must be consistent with the national/regional

thematic priorities of the FO. The FOs may require additional documents according to their own national/regional or organisational regulations.

**Failure of one applicant to meet any of the eligibility criteria, including the national/regional eligibility criteria, will result in the rejection of the entire proposal. The inclusion of a partner participating at own expense in a full-proposal without a letter of commitment will result in the rejection of the entire proposal.**

After the closing date, the CO will carry out the general eligibility check of the proposals with respect to the criteria listed in section 5.2.1. Proposals not meeting the minimum requirements will be rejected by the CO, following consultation with the CB. The members of the CB will then check the proposals against national/ regional eligibility criteria as described in the funding regulations.

Full proposals complying with both sets of criteria (general call eligibility criteria and national/ regional eligibility criteria) will advance to the evaluation procedure.

#### 6.2.4 Evaluation

Full proposals will be evaluated against the following three equally weighted evaluation criteria excellence, impact and quality and efficiency of the implementation, as described in section 7.2. The procedure will be conducted as described in section 7.

#### 6.2.5 Selection

The selection of full proposals is the sole responsibility of the CB and will be conducted strictly following the ranking lists and based on the availability of funds. This is in accordance with the Horizon Europe regulations for co-funded calls in partnerships.

## 7 Evaluation

### 7.1 International Expert Panel

The EO will establish an IEP. The IEP will be endorsed by the CB and has the following mandate:

- Provide a peer review of proposals, on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined in section 7.2;
- Provide a written evaluation summary for each proposal to explain the evaluation result to the CB. The evaluation summary will be provided to the Coordinator of each proposal by the CO;
- Provide a ranking list of proposals based on the evaluation scores.

A chair and a vice-chair of the IEP will coordinate the work of the IEP with the support of the EO. The IEP members will be independent of the FOs and applicants involved in this co-funded call. The EO will ensure that no CoI exists concerning the IEP members and the proposals evaluated by them. The IEP members will be required to sign a declaration stating the lack of any CoI and a declaration of confidentiality. The online evaluation tool will include a feature that will prevent access to a proposal where a CoI is declared by an IEP member.

Throughout the entire procedure, strict confidentiality will be ensured with respect to the identities of the applicants and the contents of the proposals, unless disclosure of information is required by national law. Proposals will be accessible to the CB, the IEP members involved and the EO. The full-proposals will also be read by the FutureFoodS Ethics Advisory Board in order to fulfil the obligations outlined in section 5.3. All collected data will be handled in accordance with the GDPR, see also section 5.5.

Each proposal will be evaluated by a minimum of three IEP members. They will apply evaluation criteria and score the pre-proposals and full-proposals as described in 7.2, respectively. They will prepare individual written evaluation reports, in advance of the IEP meeting. An average score will be formed

for each proposal (automatically by the online system). Following the individual evaluation, a rapporteur (one of the three evaluators will be assigned as rapporteur) will summarise the individual evaluation report and write a draft summary report, which will be used to present the proposal at the IEP meeting and initiate the discussions of the IEP members. During the IEP meeting, all proposals will be introduced and evaluations presented by evaluators, with the rapporteur being the first to present the proposal. The IEP members will discuss each proposal and give feedback on the scores and reports given for each proposal. If necessary, the three evaluators assigned to a proposal can adjust their individual scores. In case of disagreements among the three evaluators assigned and high deviations in scoring, a fourth evaluator might be consulted. Based on the final average scores, a ranking list of proposals will be compiled.

After the IEP meeting, the rapporteur will finalize the summary report and validate with the involved evaluators. The summary reports shall reflect the discussions by the IEP and should be in line with the score. They will be shared with the applicants.

The ranking list and the summary evaluation reports will be shared with the CB.

An IO will oversee the entire evaluation procedure in terms of compliance with the Horizon Europe regulations for co-funded calls and will report to the FutureFoodS coordination team.

## 7.2 Evaluation criteria and scoring system

If a proposal passes the general and national/regional eligibility check, it will be evaluated following the procedure described above. A detailed description of each criterion is provided in table 4 below.

### **Excellence (threshold 3/5)**

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives to the aims of the partnership and the call priorities;
- Extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art, as well as degree of innovation;
- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users where appropriate.

### **Impact (threshold 3/5)**

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts in light of a food systems approach and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project;
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the Impact Plan and the DEC plan (*full-proposal only*);
- The added value of adopting a European transnational cooperation and networking approach in the context of the proposed project.

### **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (threshold 3/5; full-proposal only)**

- Quality and consistency of the work plan, assessment of risks, appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall;
- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Table 4 Evaluation criteria, subcriteria and supportive questions

EXCELLENCE	
<p>Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives to the aims of the partnership and the call priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>To what extent will the proposed project contribute to tackle the challenges at hand (question of relevance)?</i></li> <li>– <i>How well does the proposed project fit the overall scope of the call?</i></li> <li>– <i>To what extent are the proposed objectives and research questions adequate to contribute to the thematic priorities of the call?</i></li> </ul>
<p>Extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art, as well as degree of innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>How /innovative is the proposed work?</i></li> <li>– <i>What is the degree of innovation? (i.e. is the proposed product, process or service state of the art? Is there sufficient technological maturity and risk?)</i></li> <li>– <i>Are knowledge gaps clearly identified and described?</i></li> <li>– <i>To what extent is the proposal contributing to and/or increasing the advancement of its field and across different fields (inter- and transdisciplinarity)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Does the proposal offer a potential breakthrough or have significant leverage points been identified?</i></li> </ul>
<p>Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users where appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>To what extent are the methods and research design clear, feasible and suitable to answer the identified knowledge gaps and/or achieve the proposed objectives?</i></li> <li>– <i>To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts that support a systems approach (see section 2)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Does the consortium show an inter- or transdisciplinarity character and involvement of a diversity of actors?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the involvement of social sciences and humanities convincingly integrated?</i></li> <li>– <i>Does the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-and transdisciplinary approaches, appropriately consider ethical issues according to the EU "Do no significant harm" principle (DNSH), gender dimension in research and innovation content?</i></li> <li>– <i>Does the proposed methodology address, when appropriate, the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of stakeholders and diversity of food system actors (e.g. citizens, civil society and end users)?</i></li> </ul>
IMPACT	
<p>Credibility of pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts in light of a food systems approach and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Is the project's Impact Plan (including the problem analysis at pre-proposal level and the impact pathway at full-proposal level) clear and does it follow logically from the expected results of the project?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the Impact Plan both suitably ambitious and actionable and to what extent does it follow FutureFoodS guiding elements (transformative perspective, inter-and transdisciplinarity, multi-stakeholder engagement and sustainability)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is there a strategic impact in terms of solving sustainability-related (environmental, economic and social) food system challenges at different scales (local to global)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Can contribution to sustainable development and Agenda 2030 including gender equality be expected?</i></li> </ul>

<p>Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the Impact Plan and the DEC plan (full-proposal only)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Is there a feasible plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the project’s scientific results (including management of intellectual property rights - IPR)</i></li> <li>– <i>Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic/ societal sectors and for future development?</i></li> <li>– <i>Are the plans for strategic activities clear and appropriate, including communication, stakeholder engagement, monitoring, evaluation and learning and capacity building?</i></li> </ul>
<p>The added value of adopting a European transnational cooperation and networking approach in the context of the proposed project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>To what extent is the benefit from a transnational approach clearly argued and addressed in comparison with a regional/ national one?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the transnational collaboration well balanced in the consortium?</i></li> <li>– <i>To which extent are interactions with / exchange and transfer of results within the consortium, to stakeholders, other EU initiatives or civil society clearly thought through and described?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION (full-proposal only)</b></p>	
<p>Quality and consistency of the work plan, assessment of risks, appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Is the proposed organisation and management of the scientific project adequate to achieve the proposed objectives?</i></li> <li>– <i>Are the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management properly developed and laid out?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the estimated effort/ allocation of resources appropriate?</i></li> <li>– <i>Are the resources assigned to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the planned work feasible in terms of workload allocation (time/ person months)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the project inherently coherent and do the individual workpackages interlink well with one other?</i></li> </ul>
<p>Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Do participants in the proposal have the required competences to carry out the tasks assigned to them (necessary expertise)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is their role clearly defined and do they complement each other well?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is the scientific workload and financial burden balanced among the partners and countries (e.g. distribution of person months, equipment and facilities, involvement of young researchers to be trained)?</i></li> <li>– <i>Is gender equality sufficiently integrated in the consortia as well as the work plan, including the distribution of power and influence?</i></li> </ul>

Individual scores will be attributed only to the three main criteria, even though the IEP members will evaluate all sub-criteria described above in the scoring system.

For both pre- and full-proposal evaluation, each criterion will be scored out of five (no half marks allowed) based on the following scoring system. The threshold for each criterion is three out of five. Any project with a lower score for one of the main criteria or an overall score lower than 10 at Step 2 (full-proposal) will not be considered for funding.

IEP members will identify strengths and weaknesses (if any) and provide context for their comments based on the application, i.e., IEP members will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted,

rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. When an IEP member identifies substantial shortcomings, they must reflect this by awarding a lower score for the criterion concerned. There should be consistency between the numerical scores and the written comments.

The 0-5 scoring system for each criterion indicates the following assessment:

Table 5 Scoring system

0		The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

An average score is agreed upon for each criterion by minimum of the three IEP members who evaluated the proposal. The agreement on the score will be obtained during the IEP meeting. A threshold of three out of five will be applied for each criterion for both pre-proposals and full-proposals; i.e. pre-proposals with an average score less than 3.0 in any of the two criteria will not be recommended for invitation to submit a full-proposal, and full-proposals with a mean score less than 3.0 for any of the three criteria will not be recommended for funding. For full-proposals, a second threshold of 10/15 will be applied with respect to the total score (sum of the three average scores per criterion); i.e., proposals with a total score under 10 will not be selected for funding. All proposals will be ranked according to the final scores agreed during the IEP meeting. The outcome of the joint evaluation is irrevocable.

### 7.3 Selection and funding decision

The selection of proposals is the sole responsibility of the CB, which is the decision-making body of the co-funded call. The final ranking list will be communicated to the CB, which will meet to decide on the projects to be recommended for funding.

For this decision, the CB will strictly follow the order of the ranking list prepared by the IEP and the availability of funds.

Proposals with the same final scores will be prioritised by the CB taking into consideration the following principles (establishing a priority order). The CB can decide how to use these principles providing that they are used uniformly for all proposals:

- Maximizing the total number of projects funded and thus optimizing the amount of EU financial support to the FutureFoodS Partnership call;
- Maximizing the number of countries/regions involved in the projects funded;
- Assuring a good balance between different topics of the Call;
- Promoting a balanced funding among FOs (favouring proposals which request funding from FOs that have no projects selected yet or have a low amount of funding requested).

The outcome of the evaluation process and the funding decision will be communicated to the Coordinators by the CO. Evaluation summaries will be provided to the Coordinators. The Coordinators are responsible for forwarding all of the information to the proposal partners. Following receipt of the

selection letter, the Coordinator and all of the partners involved in the successful proposal will initiate all necessary steps for the project start as described in section 8.1.

The decision on the full-proposals selected for funding will be published on the FutureFoodS website, with a mention that this decision is subject to final approval by the FOs concerned. The following information will be published:

- Project title and project acronym;
- Duration of the project;
- Project summary;
- Total requested funding of the project;
- Name and contact information of the project Coordinator;
- Country, organisation and participant name of each partner.

#### 7.4 Redress procedure

A mechanism will be established according to Article 30 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021<sup>15</sup> to ensure the independent and fair treatment of complaints related to this call. An applicant may request an evaluation review if it considers that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal. This redress procedure only covers the procedural aspects of the evaluation and/or eligibility checks, including the national/regional eligibility checks. The request for redress will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified members of the IEP.

Where redress is sought, the Coordinator of the proposal shall submit their appeal to the FutureFoodS CO via email. The appeal must be submitted within no more than 14 calendar days after the date of dispatch of the evaluation outcome by the CO at the end of relevant phase (pre-proposal or full-proposal phase).

##### **Admissibility of request for redress**

For a request for redress to be admissible the following conditions must be met:

- The request for redress must be submitted by the Coordinator of the (pre- or full-) proposal to which the request for redress relates;
- Only one request for redress per (pre- or full-) proposal will be considered;
- The request for redress must be addressed to the CO;
- The request for redress must be submitted via email within the 14 calendar days deadline.

The request for redress must contain the following minimum information:

- The acronym and the title of the (pre- or full-) proposal;
- A description of the alleged shortcomings of the evaluation procedure.

The request for redress must demonstrate a procedural irregularity, factual error or misuse of powers, or a Col. Requests for redress that do not meet the above conditions, that do not deal with the evaluation of a specific proposal or that express mere disagreement with the result or the reasoning of the evaluation will be judged unsuitable for redress.

##### **Procedure**

Upon receipt of a request for redress, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by the CO at once and no later than within three calendar days.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>

All requests for redress received within the 14 calendar days deadline will be processed together and the decision will be communicated to the Coordinator of the proposal within 14 calendar days from the deadline for submitting requests for redress.

The FutureFoodS CB will establish a redress committee for each request consisting of the nominated IO of the respective call as well as two representatives of participating FOs not involved in the research proposal seeking redress. The role of the Redress Committee is to evaluate the requests for redress according to the procedure, ensuring fair and equal treatment of applicants, with the support of the CO. The committee will provide its opinion on the implementation of the evaluation procedure, based on the available information related to the proposal and its evaluation, and will make a recommendation to the CB. The final decision on the outcome is made by the CB.

A negative outcome of a national eligibility check conducted by a FO cannot be overruled by the Redress Committee. Requests for redress concerning national eligibility decisions will be assessed by the FO responsible for the national eligibility check, which will justify its decision to the Redress Committee, to prove that national funding rules listed in the call text have been applied correctly.

The redress procedure may lead to a (re-)evaluation of all or part of the proposal by independent experts not involved in the previous evaluation or to the confirmation of the initial evaluation.

A re-evaluation will only be carried out if the request for redress shows that the selection procedure was flawed in that there was a breach that affected the evaluation outcome and the final decision on whether to fund the proposal in question. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if the proposal has failed anyway on the basis of another criterion, or if by adding the maximum points for this criterion, the final score remains below the funding threshold.

The score following any re-evaluation will be deemed definitive. It may be lower than the original score. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence and will not prejudice future applications.

## 8 Obligations of funded projects

### 8.1 Contract negotiations

Once the Coordinators have been informed of the funding decision, the partners within the projects selected for funding will either be contacted by the FOs or will need to contact the FOs of their respective countries/regions themselves. This in accordance to the applicable regulations and practices, in order to start the contract negotiation process and accomplish the remaining steps until the project can start. All project partners within the funded projects shall start no later than April 2026. Please be aware that applicable European regulations on all aspects of funding must also be respected, e.g., state aid regulations.

Each FO will fund their respective applicant(s) within the project. Formal funding decisions are made by the participating FOs and funding will be provided according to applicable national/ regional funding regulations and subject to clarification of any specific ethical issues raised by the evaluators.

The start date and end date of the groups within the consortium must be aligned as far as possible.

### 8.2 Contractual requirements

In this call for proposals, being co-funded by the European Union, project partners are considered as third parties of FOs. All project partners commit to the following articles of the Horizon Europe Annotated Grant Agreement<sup>16</sup> and related regulations of Annex 5:

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<sup>16</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf)

- Conflicts of interest (Article 12)
- Confidentiality and security (Article 13)
- Ethics and values (Article 14)
- Visibility (Article 17)
- Specific rules for carrying out the action (Article 18)
- Information obligations (Article 19)
- Record-keeping (Article 20)

Moreover, the bodies mentioned in Article 25 (e.g. granting authority, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)) have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations on the project partners, and in particular to audit the payments received. If access is denied by the project partners, the costs will be rejected.

### 8.3 Consortium agreement

For some FOs, a signed consortium agreement might be required for release of the national/regional funds. It is strongly recommended that successful consortia should negotiate and sign a consortium agreement before commencement of the project to satisfy applicable national/regional funding regulations. The consortium agreement should address at least the following issues:

- Internal organisation and management of the consortium;
- Intellectual property arrangements;
- Settlement of internal disputes.

Support for the preparation of a consortium agreement can be found on the DESCA webpage (<https://www.desca-agreement.eu/desca-model-consortium-agreement/>).

### 8.4 Project monitoring and reporting

In addition to the reporting required by the national/regional regulations of the relevant FOs, reporting will be required half-way through the project in the form of a mid-term report (MTR; M18) and an End-term report (ETR; M36) at the end of each project. Reporting will consist of a project status report and an in-depth monitoring survey to measure project progress and the contribution made to the overall aims of the co-funded call and FutureFoodS's general objectives. All project partners will have to deliver input for these reports. However, it is the responsibility of the Coordinator to submit the complete reports on time (see section 5.6). The MTR and ETR will include an update on the ethics self-assessment and documentation on how potential ethical issues are addressed. These reports will feed into the monitoring of the implementation of the FutureFoodS Partnership.

In order to enhance knowledge sharing amongst the projects and the dissemination of the project results, kick-off, mid-term and final meetings will be organised by FutureFoodS. The Coordinators shall represent their projects at these meetings. Coordinators should include budget for attendance of three mandatory joint network meetings (kick-off in 2026, mid-term in 2027 and final meeting in 2028) in their finance plan during proposal submission. These meetings will take place in Europe (for budgeting purposes it is suggested to assume these meetings will take place in Brussels).

Detailed information on the reporting and monitoring procedures, as well as templates, will be provided to the Coordinators of the funded projects in due course by FutureFoodS.

### 8.5 Dissemination requirements

A list of the funded projects will be published on the website of the FutureFoodS Partnership and all communication channels the partnership is contributing to upon completion of all contract negotiations. Applicants should be aware that certain information obtained from the proposals, as listed under section 7.3, will be published for promotion purposes.

Communication and dissemination of project-related information and results (e.g., oral/poster presentations during workshops or conferences, a webpage, scientific publications or public articles) must provide a clear reference to FutureFoodS. Respective logos will be provided on the submission platform and the FutureFoodS website.

National/ regional funders' regulations in terms of acknowledgement of national/ regional grants must also be respected.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to make sure that any peer-reviewed journal articles they publish are openly accessible, free of charge. Open access is the practice of providing online access to scientific information that is free of charge to the user and is reusable (see Annex G). Please note that the respective FOs may also have specific requirements in terms of open access to data.

## 9 ANNEXES

*Annex A Impact Plan*

*Annex B Overview of National Contact Points/ Regional Contact Points (NCP/RCP)*

*Annex C Pre-proposal template*

*Annex D Full-proposal template (full-proposal only)*

*Annex E Letter of commitment template (full-proposal only)*

*Annex F Data Management Plan (full-proposal only)*

*Annex G Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication Plan (full-proposal only)*

*Annex H List of FutureFoodS partners allowed to participate in co-funded projects*

*Annex I National/ Regional regulations*