

Synergies with EIT Food for prospective EIT Higher Education Initiative applicants

Who we are

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation community, established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Its core mission is to transform the European food system to make it more sustainable, healthy, and trusted by consumers. EIT Food achieves this by connecting major players—start-ups, companies, research centres, and Higher Education Institutions—across the entire food value chain through the Knowledge triangle model. The organization focuses its efforts on three major challenges, known as EIT Food's strategic missions: achieving Healthier Lives Through Food, transitioning to a Net Zero Food System, and enhancing Food System Resilience¹, driving change through programs in education, entrepreneurship, value delivery, and thematic alignment on biotech and resilient agriculture.

Strategic alignment with the EIT HEI Call 2025

The EIT Higher Education Initiative's Call for Proposals 2025 introduces a two-topic structure, including a strong focus on STEM (Topic 1) and strategic collaboration between the European Universities alliances and the EIT KICs (Topic 2). EIT Food may directly support these objectives through its long-term mission and European-wide infrastructure. Our work is guided by the EIT Food Strategic Agenda 2021–2027² and aligned with major EU priorities, including the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU's Union of Skills framework, the EU's Start-up and Scale-up Strategy, emphasized in this EIT HEI 2025 Call. EIT HEI applicants must align with EIT Food's three main strategic Missions¹:

1. Healthier Lives Through Food:

- Objective: To enable consumers to make healthier choices and actively tackle diet-related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).
- Key Priority Areas: Protein Diversification and Optimizing Nutrient Density.

2. Net Zero Food System:

- Objective: To facilitate the transition to climate neutrality in the food system by measuring and actively reducing CO2 equivalent emissions.
- Key Priority Areas: Regenerative Agriculture, Sustainable Packaging, and Waste Reduction.

3. Food System Resilience:

- Objective: To improve food security, ensure food safety, and establish dependable, digitally-enabled food supply chains that are resilient to shocks.

¹ <https://www.eitfood.eu/missions>

² <https://www.eitfood.eu/about-us>



- Key Priority Areas: Traceability, Food Integrity, and Supply Chain Transparency.

What we do

EIT Food delivers concrete services, programmes, and opportunities across the full agri-food value chain. A full overview of activities is available at: <https://www.eitfood.eu/>. EIT Food creates impact aligned to the missions through four interconnected pillars:

1. **Education:** The education team develops entrepreneurial skills for students, professionals, and entrepreneurs through advanced training and programs that lead to food system transformation. We provide a diverse range of learning opportunities for different career stages and stakeholder groups:
 - **EIT Food Academies (Biotechnology Academy and Resilient Agriculture Academy) :** These are flagship initiatives designed as industry-led coalitions to tackle critical skills shortages in strategic focus areas like advanced biotech and regenerative practices.
 - **Degree Programmes:** This includes EIT Label **Master in Food Systems (MFS)** programme, which provides a multidisciplinary understanding of the entire food value chain and innovation processes.
 - **Professional Development:** Short courses, workshops, and training for individuals and businesses aiming to upskill or reskill their teams. Topics often cover areas like **Regenerative Agriculture, Food Safety, and Digital Farming.**
 - **Entrepreneurship Programmes:** Initiatives like the **Global Food Venture programme (GFVP)** or **Inspire Programme** that equip aspiring innovators with the mindset and practical skills (such as design thinking and business development) required to launch or accelerate impactful agri-food start-ups.
2. **Entrepreneurship:** EIT Food supports high-impact agrifood startups and scaleups at all stages with investment and acceleration programmes through the **Seedbed venture catalyst** and the **Acceleration network** programmes. Entrepreneurs benefit from coaching, mentoring, investment readiness support, and access to a Europe-wide industrial network that opens pathways to markets, customers, and strategic partnerships.
3. **Value Delivery:** EIT Food develops research and innovation in products and services to bring market-ready solutions to critical food system challenges. Close collaboration with industrial partners ensures that innovations respond to real market needs and are positioned for successful commercial uptake. Specialized programmes like **Fast Track To Market** or the **Intellectual Property Garden** aim to accelerate commercial success for mature start-ups.
4. **Thematic leadership on Biotechnology/protein diversification and Resilient agriculture:** EIT Food maintains thematic leadership in two interconnected and critical areas of modern food system transformation: Biotechnology/Protein Diversification and the development of Resilient Agriculture. EIT Food is a key driver innovation and policy towards protein diversification and biotechnology solutions. Moreover, EIT Food is focused on the development of new agricultural models, such as regenerative practices to increase food system resilience.



EIT Food and the HEI Initiative

EIT Food has been a delivering KIC within the EIT HEI Initiative since the Initiative's inception in 2021. We have supported projects, spanning 32 countries and 130 partners, on themes of food system innovation, agri-food product valorisation, and deep tech. In addition to supporting and monitoring project grants, EIT Food leads the design and organisation of project implementation activities (e.g., co-creation sessions) aiming at securing long term-sustainability and impact of HEI projects beyond funding.

Relevance of EIT Food for the EIT HEI Call 2025

The EIT HEI Call 2025 highlights the need for stronger STEM-driven innovation capacity, systemic collaboration across HEIs, and enhanced engagement with industry partners. EIT Food brings deep technical and ecosystem expertise to consortia responding to both Call Topics:

For Topic 1 (STEM & EU's Union of Skills Strategic Plan):

- We support the incorporation of entrepreneurial competences (e.g., IP management, regulatory compliance) that are customized for the requirements of the agri-food sector into existing university curricula.
- We support the development of specialized training to address skill shortages in the agri-food sector (e.g., precision agriculture, regenerative agricultural practices, protein diversification, crop predictive analytics, precision robotics, blockchain and traceability, agri food waste stream valorization)
- We connect HEIs with industrial partners facing real-world agri-food challenges.
- We support the transition of academic innovations into market ready solutions in the agri food sector, including start-ups creation and investment attraction.

For Topic 2 (European Universities Alliances & ecosystem development):

- We provide a strong sectoral network for alliances seeking deeper engagement with industry and the EIT Food Academies (Biotechnology and Resilient Agriculture).
- We support the development of innovation ecosystems across multiple countries, regions in alignment with our strategic missions and thematic focus (Biotechnology/protein diversification and Resilient Agriculture).
- We support the incorporation of entrepreneurial competences customized to the requirements of the agri-food sector (e.g., IP management, regulatory compliance) across the European University alliances.

EIT Food may help consortia ensure that their proposals reflect strategic alignment with EIT Food strategic missions while strengthening the innovation capacity of HEIs. EIT Food can contribute its sectoral expertise, innovation infrastructure, and ecosystem-strengthening experience to HEI-led consortia.

Contact:

For more information on our programmes, please visit: <https://www.eitfood.eu/> . For any questions on the strategic alignment of your proposal with EIT Food, please contact: lauraborge@eitfood.eu

