European partnership for a sustainable Future of Food Systems
Second Joint Transnational Co-funded Call

FutureFoodS Call 2025

Accelerating Food Sustainability - through Household Dietary Shifts, Trust and Transparency, and Innovations in Circular Food Processing Systems

Evaluation Guidelines

V01 - 05 March 2026

Submission & Evaluation platform:
https://futurefoods.ptj.de/call2-pp
Call Announcement:
https://futurefoods.ptj.de/call2-pp?genericModule=callDocuments&action=download&id=930
Annex A Impact Plan:
https://futurefoods.ptj.de/call2-pp?genericModule=callDocuments&action=download&id=932

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Outline

Definitions

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
Evaluation Office (EO):	The EO is responsible for the management of the evaluation and supports the CB and the IEP.
IEP Chair:	IEP member nominated by the CB and EO supporting throughout the evaluation process, chairing the IEP meeting and attending the final selection meeting in case of need.
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. During the IEP meeting, the IEP will rank the proposals.
Rapporteur:	IEP member responsible to report the evaluation results of a proposal (by writing an evaluation summary of the three evaluators and by presenting the evaluation results during the evaluation meeting) and to finalise the Evaluation report after the IEP Meeting.

1. General information and background of the Joint Call

The European Partnership for a sustainable Future of Food Systems (FutureFoodS) is a co-funded Horizon Europe partnership, bringing together 83 partners from 29 countries to drive green and digital transitions with a focus on food post-harvest. FutureFoodS is thereby contributing to the European Green Deal, the UN´s Sustainable Development Goals and the Farm to Fork Strategy with its vision to collectively achieve environmentally friendly, socially secure and fair, economically viable, healthy and safe food systems in Europe by 2050.

FutureFoodS partnership is planning to launch 6 co-funded calls, second of which was launched on 3rd of December 2025. This call brings together 33 funding organizations from 20 countries and the European Commission, jointly committing approximately 39 million Euros to support innovative research and development projects focused on creating a sustainable food future (see Call Announcement for more info).

Scope of the co-funded call

In its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda[1] (SRIA), FutureFoodS has identified four thematic areas for which better knowledge, advanced know-how and more scalable, innovative solutions can be determinant to fulfil 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.

The objective of this call is to fund transnational research and/or innovation projects addressing one of the following call topics.

Topic 1: Domestic food practices for enhancing sustainable and healthy diets

Topic 2: Towards diverse, sustainable and circular food processing systems

Topic 3: Importance of trust and transparency

Special attention is given to a food systems approach and the following guiding elements are essential for FutureFoodS projects and will thus be part of the evaluation:

Transformative perspective

- **Inter- and transdisciplinarity**
- **Multi-stakeholder engagement**
- **Sustainability**

Proposals will be required to provide an **Impact Plan** towards food systems transformation:

- **Pre-proposal:** Applicants are asked to perform a problem analysis. Based on this problem analysis, the proposal should clearly identify potential solutions and interventions.
- **Full proposal:** Applicants will need to provide a complete Impact Plan, including impact pathways, effective outreach and application-driven interactions and strategic planning of

[1] 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

scientific and innovation activities. Detailed information about food system approach and impact plan is provided in the Call Announcement and Annex A.

Please note that primary production activities such as the growing of food crops (including seafood), other elements of agricultural production and various specific aspects related to it, as well as nutrition- and lifestyle-related diseases are not in focus in this partnership. The focus of FutureFoodS is on issues post-harvest. Primary production aspects are covered in other Horizon Europe partnerships.

Project types

In this call two different types of projects can be chosen that seek to address the broad range of needs in the research and innovation system. The "Exploratory Research" projects shall cover basic and/or applied research, whereas "Accelerating Innovation" projects shall focus on translating scientific knowledge into new practices and smart solutions. The two project types will be evaluated and ranked separately.

2. Time schedule

The call involves a 2-step procedure with submission and selection of pre-proposals and, subsequently, invitation of shortlisted consortia to submit full proposals. Experts should be available for evaluation, according to the following timeline.

First step: submission and evaluation of PRE-proposals	
03 December 2025 – 11 February 2026	Submission of pre-proposals
Until 27 February 2026	Call eligibility and national/regional eligibility checks
Mid-February – Early March 2026	IEP assembly
March and April 2026	Pre-proposal evaluation (online) and selection
PRE-proposal EVALUATION	
02-08 March 2026	Pre-proposal assignment to experts and access to tool
13 March 2026	Confirmation of No Conflict of Interest by experts for assigned proposals
09 March – 10 April 2026	Individual evaluation of pre-proposals
10 March 2026 (12 CET) **13 March 2026 (13 CET)**	IEP webinar (~30 min tutorial, recording will be available in case of absence)
10 April 2026	Deadline for single pre-proposal evaluations (online)
17 April 2026	Deadline for rapporteur summaries
24/27/28 April 2026 (tbc)	IEP meetings step 1 (online)
3 May 2026	Finalization of rapporteur summaries
Early May 2026	Selection meeting (CB), info to applicants and redress period

Second step: submission and evaluation of FULL-proposals	
01 June 2026 – 27 July 2026	Submission of full-proposals
Until mid of August	Call eligibility and national/regional eligibility checks for step 2
Mid of August	Start of full proposal evaluations (online)
FULL-proposal EVALUATION	
17 August – 02 October 2026	Full proposal evaluations by experts (online)
~ beginning/mid of October 2026	IEP meeting step 2: ranking of full proposals (in person)
Late October	Selection meeting (CB), info to applicants and redress period
December 2026 – April 2027	Start of the selected projects

3. Evaluation Office

The Evaluation Office (EO) will provide administrative and technical (online platform) support to the experts during the evaluation process. It is the primary point of contact for all general matters in relation to the peer-review evaluation. The EO will be performed jointly by JUELICH and TAGEM.

EO contacts:

Name	E-Mail	Phone
EO	ptj-futurefoods@fz-juelich.de	N/A
Ilkem Demirkesen	ilkem.mert@tarimorman.gov.tr	+90 (0) 312 307 6287
Ahmet Budaklier	ahmet.budaklier@tarimorman.gov.tr	+90 (0) 312 307 6110
Nikola Hassan	n.hassan@ptj.de	+49 (0) 2461 61 96787

4. The Evaluation procedure after submission of research proposals

The co-funded call will follow a two-step submission procedure. The assessment of the submitted pre- and full-proposals (eligibility checks by the call office and the funding bodies, evaluation by the IEP members) will be carried out using the online Call submission platform https://futurefoods.ptj.de/call2-pp. The submission platform is the entry point for applicants, funders and evaluators. It offers a section named "Call Documents", where you can find all published documents.

Submitted research proposals follow a certain outline (see also Annex C: Pre-proposal template or Example pre-proposal available in the Call Document section).

Members of consortia submitting proposals must not be evaluators to avoid conflict of interest. All eligible proposals in terms of general and national/regional eligibility criteria will be peer-reviewed by 3 experts selected from the IEP. The outcome of the experts' evaluation will be 2 ranking lists of projects (for each project type) with scores and a written evaluation summary report. IEP members will meet (online for pre-proposal, envisioned on ~24/27/28th of April 2026) in order to share and discuss their reports and to find a common agreement on the ranking lists. The IEP chair(s) will facilitate

the discussion. The evaluation outputs, finalized after the meeting, will be used by the CB for the final funding decision.

5. International Expert Panel and its constitution

IEP constitution

The International Expert Panel (IEP) for evaluation is constituted of internationally recognised experts chosen for their scientific / technical expertise and knowledge of the sectors covered in the Call. Attention will be paid to attain a balanced participation of experts from academia, stakeholder organisations and industry, an equitable geographic representation and gender balance.

The members of the IEPs have been proposed and nominated by the CB members and the EO, thereby, existing contacts have been taken into account. In addition, experts voluntarily applied to be an evaluator following the invitation published on the FutureFoodS website. The pool of experts was established using an online survey (including upload of a short CV), which was mandatory to be filled and all expert candidates were reviewed by the EO, assigned to the proposals and approved by the Call Board.

Experts have been contacted by the EO for confirmation of availability and the assignment of proposals. An expert can only become a member of the IEP if s/he has no Conflict of Interest and is available during the evaluation process. The final number of experts to build the IEP depends on the number of proposals submitted, the topics addressed and the expertise of the evaluators. Experts are asked to contact the Evaluation Office in case they do not feel their area of expertise matches the assigned proposals.

The names of IEP members will be kept anonymous for the applicants through the whole procedure.

IEP mandate

The IEP has the following mandate:

- Provide a peer review of proposals, on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined in section 6.4;
- Provide a written evaluation summary report for each proposal (rapporteur) to explain the evaluation (ANNEX B) result to the CB. The evaluation summary will be provided to the coordinator of each proposal;
- Provide ranking lists of proposals based on the evaluation scores (one per project type).

A chair and co-chair(s) 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 6.6. All collected data will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Each proposal will be evaluated by three IEP members. They will apply evaluation criteria and score the pre-proposals and full-proposals as described in 6.4 and 6.5, 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 reports 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, the proposals will be introduced and evaluations presented by evaluators, with the rapporteur being the first to present the proposal. The IEP members will discuss the proposals and give feedback on the scores and reports given. If necessary, the three evaluators assigned to a proposal can adjust the average scores and should agree on the average scores per criteria and the overall score (sum of average scores per criteria). In case of disagreements among the three evaluators assigned and high deviations in scoring, a fourth evaluator might be consulted. Based on the final 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. A guideline for evaluation summary reports is provided in Annex B.
The ranking lists and the summary evaluation reports will be shared with the CB.

An Independent Observer (IO) will oversee the entire evaluation procedure in terms of compliance with the Horizon Europe regulations for co-funded calls and will prepare a report.

6. Performing the evaluation

6.1 The online evaluation tool

The evaluation of the call can only be done using the online evaluation tool, accessible under https://futurefoods.ptj.de/call2-pp. All assigned experts will receive an e-mail invitation with log-in details and instructions how to access the tool. All experts are requested to register to the tool until latest March 9th 2026. There will be no restriction regarding the download of all submitted proposals (when no Conflict of Interest is declared).

6.2 Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct Agreement

Before performing an evaluation, an agreement on confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct (Annex C) need to be downloaded, signed (digital signature, if feasible) and uploaded once. For each proposal, the assigned expert will then need to decide on a possible Conflict of Interest, based on a visible summary and research consortium information of the proposal. Full access to a proposal will only be granted when **no** Conflict of Interest exists.
Evaluators shall ensure that proposal documents are not stored on unsecured devices or shared via unauthorized cloud services. Proposals must not be forwarded or retained beyond the evaluation process.

6.3 Tasks of the IEP

The IEP shall peer review proposals and provide consolidated evaluation feedback considering the given timeframes (see timeline). Each proposal is evaluated by three experts. In case of highly contradictory evaluations an additional expert or the IEP chair could be invited to do a further evaluation.

It is suggested (but not required) that experts read more than the assigned proposals in order to have a more complete overview of the applications (not assigned proposals are accessible in a reading mode).

One of the 3 experts evaluating a proposal will be appointed as rapporteur, which means s/he will prepare an evaluation summary report based on the single evaluations (see Annex B). All experts will be required to act as rapporteur in 2-5 proposals, prepare and submit an evaluation summary report and present the proposal and evaluation results during the evaluation meeting. In case of strong disagreement on the evaluation, the rapporteur should inform the EO to seek a solution (e.g. involving an additional expert or the IEP chair).

An overall IEP chair person will be nominated among the experts (by the CB and EO). Tasks of the chair include assistance in case of disagreements among experts, chairing of the evaluation meeting of the IEP and to attend the CB selection meeting to explain the evaluation results if needed.

6.4 Evaluation criteria

All eligible proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria (and additional subcriteria) given below. Criteria/ sub-criteria written in italic are only applied in the full-proposal evaluation. A detailed description of each criterion (including subcriteria and supportive questions) is provided in table 1 below.

Excellence (threshold 3/5)

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art;
- Soundness of the proposed overall methodology,
    - Including the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content as well as open science practices
    - *including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary 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. (full-proposal only)*

Impact (threshold 3/5)

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, 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 dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities (full-proposal only).*

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

- *Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and 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.*

The criteria are equally weighted and will be scored independently. The result of the evaluation will be one ranking list per project type based on the final scores, resulting from the sum of the mean scores for each criterion.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria, sub criteria and supportive questions

EXCELLENCE	
Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives	• To what extent will the proposed project contribute to tackle the challenges at hand (question of relevance)? • How well does the proposed project fit the overall scope of the call and the aims of the Partnership? • To what extent are the proposed objectives and research questions adequate to contribute to the thematic priorities of the call?
Extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art	• How /innovative is the proposed work? • 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?) • Are knowledge gaps clearly identified and described? • To what extent is the proposal contributing to and/or increasing the advancement of its field and across different fields (inter- and transdisciplinarity)? • Does the proposal offer a potential breakthrough or have significant leverage points been identified?
Soundness of the proposed overall methodology, including the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content as well as open science practices/ including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary 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.	• 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? • To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original concepts that support a systems approach (see section 2)? • Does the consortium show an inter- or transdisciplinarity character and involvement of a diversity of actors? • Is the involvement of social sciences and humanities convincingly integrated? • 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? • 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)?
IMPACT	
Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and	• Is the project´s Impact Plan (including the problem analysis at pre-proposal level and the impact pathway at full-proposal level) clear and

significance of the contributions from the project	does it follow logically from the expected results of the project? • Is the Impact Plan both suitably ambitious and actionable and to what extent does it follow FutureFoodS guiding elements of a systems approach (transformative perspective, inter-and transdisciplinarity, multi-stakeholder engagement and sustainability)? • Is there a strategic impact in terms of solving sustainability-related (environmental, economic and social) food system challenges at different scales (local to global)? • Can contribution to sustainable development and Agenda 2030 including gender equality be expected? • To what extent is the benefit from a transnational approach clearly argued and addressed in comparison with a regional/ national one?
Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities (full-proposal only)	• Is there a feasible plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the project´s scientific results (including management of intellectual property rights - IPR) • Are the expected results or the knowledge acquired of importance for economic/ societal sectors and for future development? • Are the plans for strategic activities clear and appropriate, including communication, stakeholder engagement, monitoring, evaluation and learning and capacity building? • 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?
QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION (full-proposal only)	
Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall	• Is the proposed organisation and management of the scientific project adequate to achieve the proposed objectives? • Are the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management properly developed and laid out? • Is the estimated effort/ allocation of resources appropriate? • Are the resources assigned to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables? • Is the planned work feasible in terms of workload allocation (time/ person months)? • Is the project inherently coherent and do the individual workpackages interlink well with one other?
Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.	• Do participants in the proposal have the required competences to carry out the tasks assigned to them (necessary expertise)?

	• Is their role clearly defined and do they complement each other well? • 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)? • Is gender equality sufficiently integrated in the consortia as well as the work plan, including the distribution of power and influence?

6.5 Evaluation scores

Individual scores will be attributed only to the main criteria (two for pre-proposals/ three for full-proposals).

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 be reflected by awarding a lower score for the criterions 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 2 Scoring system

0	Failure	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.

A 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 pre-proposals, and as a derogation from the Horizon Europe general annexes, a threshold of three out of five will be applied; i.e. pre-proposals with a score less than three in any of the two criteria will not be recommended for invitation to submit a full-proposal. For full-proposals, the general annexes fully apply, i.e. full-proposals with a score less than three for any of the three criteria will not be recommended for funding. For full-proposals, a second overall threshold of 10/15 will be applied with respect to the total score (sum of the three 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.

6.6 Ethics assessment

It is mandatory for applicants to fill an ethics self-assessment and provide respective statements following the Horizon Europe standard procedure. The ethics assessment will be evaluated separately by the FutureFoodS Ethical Board during the full-proposal step. Evaluation of ethical issues is therefore not part of the IEP tasks, but all evaluators can pose relevant comments with regard to ethics if deemed relevant. Any proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles will be excluded from selection.
In case serious ethical concerns are identified, they shall be flagged for appropriate follow-up.

6.7 Individual evaluation reports and evaluation summary reports

All experts will provide an online evaluation consisting of 4-5 questions (see Annex A) including a general comment on the transformative potential, the excellence and impact and an overall summary on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. The report has to be sufficiently detailed and in line with the given scores. In case of a proposal failing to reach the threshold, a clear and consistent justification should be given.

Rapporteurs will write an evaluation summary report (approx. half a page, see Annex B) for the proposals assigned. The summary report should follow a recommended structure to ensure high quality and a comprehensive and harmonized style across all IEP members. In case of strongly contradictory reviews among the 3 evaluators, the rapporteur should contact the Call Office and an additional expert or the Chair might be involved. Evaluation summary reports will be discussed during the evaluation meeting, and finalized without further delay after the meeting by the rapporteur. They will be communicated to the applicants as part of the notification letter.

7. Evaluation meetings

Online IEP meetings covering the call´s topics and the two project types will take place around 24th and 28th of April 2026 for the first step evaluation. A physical IEP meeting will be held mid of October 2026 for full-proposal evaluation (further details will be communicated in due time). All experts will receive the evaluation summary reports before the meetings.

All International Expert Panel members are welcome to take part in the discussions during the Panel meeting, if they have not declared any Conflict of Interest.

The IEP will a) discuss projects where scores between experts are still diverging, b) align the scoring and recommendations between proposals and c) agree on a ranking list.

The International Expert Panel will be chaired by the IEP chair(s), who will moderate the discussion but will not influence the evaluation.

The meeting will start by taking one project at a time, and will be followed by a general discussion:

1. Each project will be introduced and commented on by the assigned rapporteur (one expert per proposal). In case a proposal fails the threshold, the draft evaluation report will have to be agreed upon and will be shortly discussed, unless there are strong objections against the presented overall score.

2. The Panel Experts will discuss each project and agree on a score for each criterion and the overall score (sum of single scores) and the evaluation report. The overall score will be rounded to full numbers (min 0, max 10 for pre or 15 for full-proposal).

3. It is compulsory for IEP members to attend IEP meetings since the final score will be determined after discussions. In case of unexpected unavailability for physical meetings, online participation should be organized. In case an expert is completely unavailable, substitution by a chair or a fourth expert should be ensured. The final score and evaluation outcome will be decided by the experts present during the discussion.
4. The proposals will be ranked in **two** lists (per project type). A discussion among all the experts will ensure that the ranking lists reflect a linear progression of quality among all proposals. Scores may be modified in this process with due justification and in case of unanimous decision.

5. Full-proposal step only: in addition, evaluators will be asked to give a clear recommendation for funding (A = highly recommended for funding / B = recommended for funding /C = not recommended for funding).

After the meeting the Expert Panel members will finalize the evaluation summary reports as soon as possible. The IEP's ranking and recommendations will form the basis for the CB final funding decision.

8. Compensation

IEP members will be reimbursed for their evaluation, meeting attendance and travels costs as given in the table 3 below.

Table 3 Compensation of expert evaluators

Item	Reimbursement
Pre-proposal evaluation	50 € per proposal
Attendance to online evaluation meeting	150 €
Full-proposal evaluation	100 € per proposal
Attendance to physical evaluation meeting	200 €
Chair*	1000 €
Travel costs	Based on actual costs (travel and accommodation)

Proposal volume:

Pre-proposals: approx. 25 pages with 5 pages of project description approx. 5-12 pre-proposals per expert
Full-proposals: approx. 35 pages with 15 pages of project description approx. 4-8 full-proposals per expert

Special roles:

**Chair*

The CB and EO will nominate one or more chair persons among the experts, who needs to be available during the whole time of evaluation process and will be reimbursed with 1000 €. Besides the overall tasks of evaluators, the chair has the following special tasks:

- Support in case of unclear evaluation results (disagreement among the 3 experts assigned)
- Chairing the evaluation meeting
- Guiding the overall evaluation of proposals with the goal to receive a sound ranking list
- Attending the selection meeting to provide additional information to funders (if needed)

Rapporteurs

Each proposal will have a rapporteur appointed from among the experts who were assigned to it. All experts will be required to act as rapporteur in 2-5 proposals and attend the evaluation meeting to present the proposal and the online evaluation results. The rapporteur is also responsible for summarising the joint evaluation result following the pre-given structure for evaluation summary reports, which will be passed to the applicants.

ANNEX A: Outline of the online evaluation form

Outline of the online evaluation form

For the pre-proposal evaluation, experts are asked to answer the following 4 mandatory questions:

Transformative potential
Does the project contribute to the Transformation of Food Systems? *Comment field, max. 2000 characters*

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art;
- Soundness of the proposed overall methodology,
    - Including the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content as well as open science practices

Rating (0-5)
Comment field, max. 2000 characters

Impact
Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project.
Rating (0-5)
Comment field, max. 2000 characters

Summary
Please write a short summary of your evaluation incl. Strength and Weaknesses of the proposal
Comment field, max. 1500 characters

ANNEX B: Template for Evaluation summary report

Guideline for the evaluation summary report (rapporteur)

Each expert will be asked to prepare evaluation summary reports for a small number of proposals. In order to achieve high quality and comprehensiveness the following guideline should be respected.

The summary should communicate the panel's judgement to applicants in a neutral, anonymous and constructive way. It must not contain reviewer identities, scores or discussion traces.

What Is A Consensus Summary?

A consensus summary must:

- reflect the panel opinion (not individual reviewers)
- justify the outcome qualitatively
- provide constructive feedback to applicants
- preserve anonymity and confidentiality

How to Structure Your Summary

Section	What to write
Overall assessment	Relevance, ambition, credibility
Strengths	Science, methodology, consortium, impact
Weaknesses	Concrete, constructive limitations
Final judgement	Overall confidence level (no score mentioned)

Model Summary (Reference)

The proposal addresses the objectives of the call and presents a relevant and timely research concept aligned with the topic scope. The overall approach is coherent and the work plan follows a logical structure connecting objectives, tasks and expected outcomes. The methodology is generally appropriate to achieve the proposed goals and the consortium demonstrates complementary expertise covering the main required disciplines.

The project includes a clear scientific rationale and identifies a credible pathway towards impact. The planned activities are mostly realistic and supported by adequate resources. The integration of different work packages is generally well described and the proposed collaboration structure appears workable.

However, several aspects remain insufficiently detailed. The risk mitigation strategy is limited and potential implementation challenges are only partially addressed. The description of task interdependencies and decision points lacks clarity, which reduces confidence in the feasibility of the timeline. In addition, the exploitation and dissemination strategy would benefit from a more concrete description of stakeholder engagement and scalability considerations.

Overall, the proposal demonstrates potential and addresses a relevant challenge, but requires refinement in implementation planning and impact demonstration to fully support the proposed level of ambition.

Check Before Submitting!!!

Anonymity

☐ No expert names
☐ No reviewer numbers (reviewer 1/2/3)
☐ No meeting discussion described

Scoring neutrality

☐ No scores or numbers
☐ No ranking/threshold /funding wording
☐ No comparison with other proposals

Writing style

☐ Written as the panel, not "I/we"
☐ No personal opinions
☐ No instructions ("you should…")
☐ Neutral academic tone

Content quality

☐ Strengths AND weaknesses included
☐ Weaknesses are constructive and specific
☐ Final paragraph gives overall judgement (without score)

ANNEX C: Quick Starting Guide

FutureFoodS Call 2025

EVALUATION - QUICK STARTING GUIDE

(1) Activate your evaluator account:

An automatic email is sent to all assigned experts (please also check your spam folder)
> follow the link to set your personal password

(2) The system will ask you to **Login to the online platform** (https://futurefoods.ptj.de)

(3) Upload Agreement letter:

Please download and read the *"Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct Agreement"*
> please sign (electronically if possible) and upload

(4) The Evaluation Office will check your Agreement letter and release your full access

(5) Login and CoI check:

After login you will see the proposals assigned to you (and also all other proposals in reading mode)
> please check whether a Conflict of Interest exists for any of the proposals assigned to you (to do so you must click on each proposal to see a short summary of the consortium)

a. **NO CoI:** you will get full access to the proposal
b. **CoI:** the proposal will be blocked

*****DEADLINE for CoI check: 13th of March 2026*****

(6) Start Evaluation:

Please download the assigned proposals and start with the evaluation following the procedure, explanations, criteria and scores defined in the Evaluation Guidelines

(7) Finalize the evaluation (once finalized you cannot go back to introduce changes)

*****DEADLINE for pre-proposal evaluation: 10th of April 2026*****

*****DEADLINE for rapporteur summary reports: 17th of April 2026*****

ANNEX D: Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct Agreement

EVALUATOR:

EVALUATOR´S DATA

EVALUATION OFFICE
Project Management Juelich GmbH

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FUTUREFOODS CALL 2025: ACCELERATING FOOD SUSTAINABILITY
CONFLICT OF INTEREST & CONFIDENTIALITY & CODE OF CONDUCT AGREEMENT
DATE (set placeholder, position must not be changed)

Conflict of Interest

FutureFoodS is committed to avoid any Conflict of Interest (CoI) and to safeguard good scientific practices.
The following situations will be considered as CoI:

- 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 relationship with the applicants of the proposal.
- Having (or having had during the last five years) a close scientific collaboration with an applicant of the proposal.
- Having (or having had) a relationship of scientific rivalry or professional hostility with an applicant of the proposal.
- Having (or having had), a mentor/mentee relationship with the principal investigator of the proposal.
- Having a current or prior (past 5 years) activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, e.g. scientific advisory boards.
- Having direct or indirect benefit if any proposal submitted is accepted or rejected.
- Having personal economic interests in the funding decision.

Other situations preventing the IEP members to participate in the evaluation impartially could be considered as CoI and should be reported as such by the IEP members to the Evaluation office.

Confidentiality Agreement

I hereby undertake to treat as confidential all and any information that I receive while participating in the work of the International Expert Panel (IEP) and evaluating project proposals, to use this information

solely for the purpose of evaluation of the proposals, not to disclose it to any third party and not to make it publicly available or accessible in any way, except with the prior written consent of the joint call consortium.

I understand that this confidentiality disclosure agreement is binding towards the European partnership for a sustainable Future of Food Systems (FutureFoodS) who has appointed me as an evaluator and towards (and for the benefit of) any applicant submitting the project proposal to the call. Furthermore, I understand that this confidentiality disclosure agreement concerns all and any information in any form that comes to my knowledge during my participation in the work of the IEP and evaluating respective project proposals.

I understand that I shall be bound by this confidentiality disclosure agreement as on the date of receipt of this signed letter by the Evaluation Office, and that this confidentiality should be maintained even after the IEP has performed its duties or after my participation in the work of the IEP has ended.

I will not identify myself as a reviewer to the applicant(s) or to any third party, while the Evaluation Office will ensure confidentiality concerning my role as reviewer as well.

I will only address any questions concerning a proposal to the Evaluation Office and not to the applicant(s).

Code of Conduct Agreement

Fundamental principles of good research practice and peer-review are essential for research integrity. All parties involved directly or indirectly in the evaluation must ensure the transparency and fairness of the process:

1. Experts as members of the IEP are chosen for their technical or scientific or industrial expertise to cover the topics addressed by the submitted proposals. They should perform their work to the best of their abilities, professional skills, knowledge and applying the highest ethical and moral standards.

2. All parties involved directly or indirectly in the evaluation must act objectively, with no self-interested motives. They do not represent their company, organisation or establishment.

3. The reviewers shall evaluate the proposals based solely upon the information contained in the proposals and in accordance with the Evaluation Guidelines.

4. The experts must immediately inform the Evaluation Office if they cannot fulfill their obligations.

5. The reviewers shall finish the individual written assessment for pre-proposals by 10.04.2026, at the latest and by 18.09.2026 for full-proposals; shall be available for discussions with other evaluators for the consolidation of the consensus report and agree to provide contact details to other evaluators.

6. The rapporteurs shall finish the consensus pre-proposals evaluation reports by 17.04.2026, at the latest and by 30.09.2026 for draft consensus full-proposals evaluation reports; they shall be available to moderate the discussions; they shall finish the final consensus evaluation reports after the EP meeting.

7. At the IEP meeting, decisions must be taken collectively by the IEP members after all arguments have been heard. Furthermore, decisions must be substantiated.

8. Opinions expressed during IEP meetings as well as information which parties are the first to obtain have to be kept confidential. The substance of the IEP debates must remain secret and the individual positions must not be divulged.

9. IEP members should refrain in all cases from identifying external experts to third parties, and from divulging any other information that could compromise their anonymity. Likewise, reviewers cannot contact the applicants nor the other reviewers during the individual evaluation of proposals.

10. If any reviewer is subject to any pressure whatsoever from a project partner, she or he must immediately notify the Evaluation Office.

11. If there is a conflict of interest, the concerned person must inform the Evaluation Office as soon as finding that a conflict exists. The necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the related decision and discussion will not be biased, or suspected to be so (e.g. in requesting the concerned person to leave the room when the project in question is being discussed during the IEP meeting).

12. The chairperson may, on his or her own initiative, consult the Evaluation Office in respect to a real or possible conflict of interest, which has been brought to his or her attention by any means whatsoever.

13. Compensations will be paid only if tasks were accomplished in accordance with the provisions of the Evaluation guidelines, within the given deadlines and in high quality after approval by the Call Board. Compensations may not be paid in case of breach of obligations relating to this Code of Conduct.

I agree to the rules of the confidentiality disclosure agreement,

I undertake to abide by the Code of Conduct:

☐ No ☐ Yes

Signature	

This agreement enters into force on the date of receipt of this signed letter by the Evaluation Office.

ANNEX E: CALL TOPICS

Topic 1: Domestic food practices for enhancing sustainable and healthy diets

The household level is the key level in society where immense food sustainability gains can be unlocked. Indeed, food choices made in the household are related to the more general public context, e.g. related to environmental impacts and public health, and personal life-style choices. In addition, long-term shifts in food consumption habits could potentially reduce emissions from the food sector significantly. However, shifting dietary habits is a highly complex endeavour, as households' food choices are often engrained in the household's identity as a social unit and carry cultural and personal significance strengthening the sense of belonging. Moreover, food preferences also differ significantly for different household types based on age, income, background and location. Factors such as affordability, nutritional value and taste tend to outweigh environmental impacts when households make food choices. Reducing food waste is also prioritized in households educated to university degree level and above and could potentially be expanded to all household categories. Overall, making sustainable food less pricy, more nutritional and sensorially appealing may provide a lasting leverage for the uptake of more sustainable food practices with significant gains for society.

This call topic aims at exploring new ways to promote dietary shifts towards sustainable healthy food choices at household level and ensure access for all population groups, including the most vulnerable ones, to balanced intake of (macro- and micro-) nutrients, fibres, calories and proteins in line with dietary advice and without compromising with food safety and security concerns. Projects should create and develop new scientific knowledge and/or design and implement innovative solutions that shape more virtuous food habits at the household and thus reconnect individuals' consumption behaviour with society's health and environmental concerns. Research and innovation projects are expected to contribute to shifting dietary habits by households towards sustainable healthy food products that can be produced and supplied in various European locales. As interest in food self-sufficiency and sustainable food practices grows, it is essential to combine these efforts with awareness of food safety principles.

Suggested R&I aspects to consider:

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 relates to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Explore and develop strategies to improve access to nutritional options to a wider range of households, particularly for those including vulnerable populations whether physiologically (e.g., early childhood, women of childbearing age, the elderly, people suffering from chronic diseases) or socio-economically;
- Options for redesign of nutrient profiling and household-level dietary strategies to effectively promote healthy and sustainable eating, e.g. increased consumption of potassium-rich foods;
- Understand and address the importance of access to robust, evidence-based information in shaping consumer perceptions of food safety risks, particularly in contrast with non-expert sources as appearing in social media and advertising;
- Investigate and monitor the significance of sociocultural, demographic and economic factors in promoting/hampering the adoption of sustainable, safe and healthy food practices at household level (including household food waste);
- Investigate the potential implications for policy and practice by looking at targeted interventions and policy mixes successfully shifting household choices towards sustainable food products through a combination of demand- and supply-side measures (including role of retail);
- Develop accessible and reliable methods of data collection and sharing, enabling evidence-based food choices and sustainable habits in different household types (including household food waste);
- Design and develop new products, processes and services that can significantly improve the ability of various household types to choose sustainable, healthy food;
- Develop novel understandings and solutions regarding the role of food environments in contributing/hampering the shift of household choices towards sustainable, healthy foods and habits.

Topic 2: Towards diverse, sustainable and circular food processing systems

Making food value chains more sustainable is crucial in order to promote lasting health and societal effects and booster food sustainability transitions across multiple scales and food environments tailored to diverse consumer groups. To achieve and preserve sustainable, resilient and competitive value chains and food systems, the deployment of innovative technologies in processing and distribution, targeted investments in energy-efficient equipment, and the optimisation of production processes are essential. Multiple levers can be activated to reduce the sector's carbon footprint (such as minimising or converting waste, reformulation, resource-efficient methods for processing and storage and shift to renewable or alternative energy sources). Circularity is a strong driver to close nutrient cycles and efficient usage and consumption of resources, food products and by-products. This asks for new recycling, processing and packaging on-demand methods to create added value, prevent food waste and develop tools for efficient production, by-product utilization, product remanufacture to cite a few. Tools for waste reduction guidance (for households, local communities, food service and retailers, producers), safety measures, conservation, hygienic design and disease control are necessary. Stakeholder involvement through co-creation and participatory design can emphasize the visibility and acceptance of circularity as means to more sustainable food systems.

This call topic aims at expanding the knowledge base and developing and testing novel solutions addressing systemic challenges hindering and identifying opportunities for improving the provision of fair, carbon-neutral, environmentally low-impact, safe, healthy, near-zero-waste, and diversified food products and diets. Next to environmental aspects, research and innovation projects applying under this topic are expected to take into account all dimensions of sustainability, including economic and social aspects.

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 relates to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Explore long-term benefits and risks associated with the design of food products and services that are more climate-neutral, have less impact on the environment (use of new sources of energy, reduction of environmental pollution) and, at the same time, safeguard healthy and tasteful eating experiences;
- Exploitation of major side streams (up-cycle) for tasty, safe and affordable food products;
- Investigate the potential of novel food processing methods in enhancing the preservation of the freshness of natural raw materials, including vegetables and fruit, with limited transformation of food components and limited use of additives while seeking optimal health properties of food;
- Designing and testing of innovative preservation schemes (storage, packaging, natural preservatives), adaptable to various supply chains keeping shelf-life, while guaranteeing safety, all along the food chain;
- Investigate the potential of biotechnologies (incl. advanced fermentation technologies) in food processing;
- Assess the impact of minimal or gentle processing (including alternative extraction processes) on maintaining the nutritional quality and functionality of a product over time while ensuring food safety;
- Develop innovative methods that prevent or detect the formation/ accumulation of undesirable, harmful substances in the food, including the adaptation of pathogens in recycled processing environments, effect on human micro-biome, risk of accumulation of food safety hazards in an ever-increasing, circular way;
- Explore pathways to adapt food chains to new resources of energy and to make them resilient to power grid disruptions;
- Find solutions to revisit food processing in terms of energy consumption, unexploited co- or by-products, waste and transformation to assess its environmental footprints and develop strategies to improve its overall sustainability.

Topic 3: Importance of trust and transparency

The decoupling between consumers and how food is produced is a well-documented challenge that hampers food sustainability transitions for individuals and society at large. Lack of trust can lead to scepticism, misinformation, and reduced engagement with sustainable food choices. Hence, it is imperative to increase trust and transparency when aiming at reshaping food systems to be more inclusive, participatory and sustainable. Building consumer trust requires a standardized and transparent system of quality signals and

sustainability information, which is evidence-based and designed for the digital and physical food environments where dietary choices are made and sustainable habits are happening.

Integrated labelling systems can be valuable options, if various dimensions of food products (e.g. nutritional, environmental, climate and social dimensions) are encompassed. Thereby, legal requirements on consumer information (accurate, clear, easy and not misleading) must be met and knowledge is missing on how different consumer groups and socio-demographic segments interpret and respond to such holistic schemes, food-related signals and perceived risks in general. Specific metrics and indicators for measuring the effectiveness are a prerequisite and require collection of data. Digital innovations such as technological tools (e.g. QR codes or mobile applications) can provide real-time access to information and offer possible feedback mechanisms to enhance effectiveness by ensuring they meet the needs and expectations of diverse consumer groups.

Relevant research and innovation actions for this call topic will seek new insights for establishing a holistic framework to oversee labelling standards across different products and regions, propose new metrics/ indicators, data methods, digital tools and evaluation frameworks to measure the effectiveness of engagement efforts. Projects should respect existing legal requirements and build on existing efforts in the area of labelling on EU level. Such projects may also take advantage of existing actor networks between academia and stakeholder groups (including relevant policy initiatives) in order to create new leverage points for improving trust and transparency in the food systems also across borders.

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 relates to the scope of this call topic is required.

- Understand how unified frameworks could regulate labelling standards across different products and regions in Europe and promote trust and transparency;
- Test feasibility and highlight potential gains as well as trade-offs of standardized frameworks for different food system actors and segments (including producers, retailers, end-users);
- Establish knowledge and recommendations on how genuine practices can be ensured (including monitoring against label washing or misleading claims);
- Identify and test effective ways to communicate sustainability/ multiple attributes and gain knowledge how consumers, especially those in vulnerable situations, respond to different types of communication with regard to trust;
- Analyse and evaluate different transparency tools, their impact on consumer trust in sustainable production/ trade/ waste and recycling/ circular ingredients or reused components and identify possible barriers for their uptake;
- Explore how smart and dynamic solutions may increase consumer trust (e.g. mobile applications, QR codes, options for real-time access to sustainability, origin, and nutritional data, traceability);
- Investigate interlinkages between governance (who decides on data and formats, accounting of costs and benefits for different actors) and data (space and sovereignty, use of data infrastructures);
- Design interactive processes between citizens and other food system actors, such as retailers, producers (particularly SMEs), national and regional policymakers regarding information provided to consumers (including testing in real-life settings such as living-labs, field validations, data platforms etc)

ANNEX F: DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT TYPES (see also Call Announcement p. 8-10)

	Exploratory Research	Accelerating Innovation
Concept	Basic and/ or applied research focused on knowledge co-creation, mainly researcher-led (comparable to EC- RIA)	Focused to translating scientific knowledge into new practices and smart solutions in industry, public sector or society, clear stakeholder commitment and collaboration with professional practice (comparable to EC- IA)
Foreseen impacts	Develop the state of the art of scientific knowledge laying the ground for an accelerated food system transformation	Increase and develop the adoption and uptake of new sustainable food practices, services, products and processes across Europe
Expected outputs	Classic academic outputs such as articles, books, conference articles, but also open-source datasets, simulation tools, methodological guidelines, e-learning modules etc	Practical and smart solutions for societal issues. Prototypes and pilots, digital tools, business models, consumer acceptance analysis, data analysis frameworks, patents, manufacturing techniques, AI models, regulatory sandboxes etc
Concretion level	Ideas development and implementing proof of concept	Testing and validating prototypes or pilots that are ready for practical application in real life settings
TRL scale (if applicable)	3-5	6-8
Guiding elements for food systems approach	Essential, see section 2	Essential, see section 2