

Interreg
Atlantic Area



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Hub4Food Pilot Projects Application Guide

Version 13/12/2024

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1 About Hub4Food

1.1 Project information

Project acronym: Hub4Food

Project title: Atlantic Food Innovation Hub

Project code: EAPA_0024/2022

Project duration: 01/01/2023 – 31/12/2026 (36 months)

Project website: www.hub4food.eu

The Hub4Food Project – Atlantic Food Innovation Hub – aims to enhance the research, development, and innovation capacities of the food industry and research and technology organisations in the Atlantic Area. It focuses on promoting the development of new and improved food products, particularly of marine origin. Hub4Food will support the adoption of new technologies and processes to boost sustainability and competitiveness in the Atlantic food sector, while also improving support services for businesses, particularly SMEs.

Hub4Food aims to integrate innovative technologies, techniques and processes across the food production of various sectors such as milk, meat, prepared consumer food, and seafood products. The ultimate goal is to improve the connections and abilities of the food industry, especially when it comes to making new and better food products, with a focus on marine resources.

Hub4Food plans to establish a programme driven by market needs. This programme will assess and validate new technologies applicable to the food industry, enhancing SMEs' innovation and business capabilities.

With this purpose, Hub4Food will offer to SMEs the possibility to participate in pilot projects in collaboration with the project Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs). These pilot projects can allow the implementation of feasibility studies, exploitation and demonstration activities, in order to test different technologies applicable to relevant needs of food industry companies.

1.2 Hub4Food partners

Hub4Food Research and technology organisations (RTOs)

France	Ireland	Portugal	Spain
<p>LEMPA LABORATOIRE D'ESSAIS DES MATÉRIELS ET PRODUITS ALIMENTAIRES LEMPA Laboratoire National de la Boulangerie Pâtisserie (Normandie)</p> <p>PRAXENS RECONSTITUTION MICROBIOLOGIE FERMENTATION PRAXENS (Normandie)</p>	<p>TEAGASC AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TEAGASC Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Southern region)</p>	<p>CATAA CENTRO DE APOIO TECNOLÓGICO AGRO ALIMENTAR CATAA Associação Centro de Apoio Tecnológico Agro Alimentar (Centro)</p> <p>MARE</p> <p>IPL escola superior de turismo e tecnologias do mar instituto politécnico de leiria MARE – Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (Centro)</p>	<p>ANFACO CECOPESCA ANFACO Asociación Nacional de Fabricantes de Conservas de Pescados y Mariscos – Centro Técnico Nacional de Conservación de Productos de la Pesca (Galicia)</p>

Hub4Food RTOs will be in charge of the implementation of project pilots selected through this call.

Hub4Food clusters and associations

France	Ireland	Portugal	Spain
<p>Valorial OSONS L'ALIMENT PLUS INTELLIGENT Valorial (Bretagne– Normandie–Pays de la Loire)</p>	<p>BIA INNOVATOR CAMPUS BIA Innovator Campus (Northern and Western regions)</p>	<p>desde 2009 INOVCLUSTER Associação do Cluster Agro-Industrial do Centro Inovcluster Associação do Cluster Agroindustrial do Centro (Centro)</p>	<p>clúster alimentario de galicia Clusaga Clúster Alimentario de Galicia (Galicia)</p> <p>eit Food EIT Food Basque, S.L. (País Vasco)</p>

Hub4Food clusters and associations will act as contact points to disseminate the Hub4Food call in their respective regions and to provide information and/or clarification.

2 Call scope and requirements

The present document provides information about the conditions, requirements and process for SMEs to apply to participate in these Hub4Food pilot projects.

2.1 Summary of conditions for the pilot projects

- Pilot projects will be implemented in collaboration between a food SME (section 2.6) and a Hub4Food RTO (see section 1.2).
- Pilot projects are at TRL6 or higher.
- Pilot projects are estimated to have a duration of around 8 months. This duration can change depending on the specific pilot.
- Ideally, pilot projects address at least one of the main target food subsectors (section 2.2) and propose products or solutions related to the target market trends (section 2.3).
- Also, pilot projects should aim to integrate marine resources (see section 2.4).
- 12 pilot projects are expected to be selected under this call.

Further details are provided throughout this document.

2.2 Main target sectors

The Hub4Food project aims to focus on a series of food subsectors which have been identified to be of common interest to the regions participating in the project:

PRIMARY TARGET SECTORS

- Bakery and pastry
- Marine and seafood products
- Meat products
- Milk and dairy products

In addition, each region in Hub4Food has identified additional sectors of interest:

SECONDARY TARGET SECTORS

- Ireland > Prepared consumer foods
- France > Fruits & vegetables
- Spain > Beverages
- Portugal > Olive oil

Proposals should address at least one of the aforementioned subsectors.

2.3 Main target market trends

The Hub4Food project has identified a series of market trends in terms of development of new products and according to the target subsectors identified. These market trends are:

- Healthy snacks & on the go format
- No /low alcohol
- Personalised products & probiotics
- Plant-based products
- Products with low carb/low fat and/or high proteins content
- Products with reduced salt content
- Products/ ingredients good for health, wellness and immune system
- Superfoods and functional ingredients and products

Pilot project proposals covering these market trends will be prioritised, although others are not excluded.

2.4 Integration of marine resources

Incorporating marine resources into the food sector has become increasingly important for enhancing nutrition, promoting sustainability, and supporting local economies. Marine resources, such as fish and shellfish, are high in essential nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Additionally, innovations in marine-based alternatives, like seaweed and algae, are also gaining popularity in plant-based diets.

The Atlantic Area regions have a great potential to take advantage of its marine endogenous resources to develop new, innovative, healthy and sustainable food products and ingredients.

Pilot project proposals aiming to use or explore marine resources as a source for ingredients or products will be prioritised, although other proposals are not directly excluded.

2.5 New technologies, techniques and processes

A wide range of new technologies, techniques and processes can be explored by SMEs in collaboration with the Hub4Food research and technology organisations through the pilot projects to be selected through this call, such as vacuum or modified atmosphere processing, high-pressure technologies, use of enzymes and biotechnologies, eco-friendly technologies (biodegradable packaging and recycling food waste), ...

The following is non exhaustive list of possible topics which could be explored in collaboration with the Hub4Food RTO partners through the pilot projects:

- Develop new strategies to extend the short shelf life of seafood
- Design, development and test innovative food formulations with functional properties
- Marine biorefineries
- Design, development and test innovative marine-based products with higher added value, for improved use of undervalued fish and by-products from the fisheries and aquaculture
- Advanced image processing case studies
- Production of Fish Protein Hydrolysates (FPH)
- Extraction of hydrocolloids from seaweeds
- High pressure technology application
- Healthy validation of food products

Pilot projects should be at TRL6 (Technology Readiness Level) or higher, meaning that the technology already has a working prototype or a representative model totally functional.¹

¹ For more information, see <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/manual-scientific-entrepreneurship/major-steps/trl>.

2.6 Eligibility conditions

Proposals will be eligible and will enter the evaluation phase only if the following conditions are met:

- 1) Applicants **must be a SME** and declare their SME status in accordance with the SME definition of the European Union ([link](#)).
- 2) Applicants need to be active in one of the following categories:
 - a. **Food production and processing** chain;
 - b. **Process technology providers** (machinery, packaging, etc.).
- 3) Applicants need to be active/provide technology in one of the **following sectors**:
 - a. Seafood;
 - b. Milk and dairy;
 - c. Meat;
 - d. Bakery and pastry;
 - e. Prepared consumer foods;
 - f. Fruits and vegetables;
 - g. Beverages;
 - h. Olive oil.
- 4) Applicants must be established in the regions of Atlantic Area, that covers the western part of the Atlantic Ocean and includes all regions of Ireland and Portugal, as well as several French and Spanish regions close to or on the Atlantic Ocean coast. See the eligible regions in Annex 1 and www.atlanticarea.eu/about-us/interreg-atlantic-area-2021-2027.
- 5) Applications should only include activities that demonstrate an already developed and tested product, process, or technology and therefore clearly state that product, process, or technology currently is at Technology Readiness Level (TRL 6) or higher.

3 Open call process

3.1 Calendar for call and project implementation

The following is the expected calendar for the call process:

Stage	Expected deadline
Call opening	13/12/2024
Proposal application deadline	31/01/2025
Selection of proposals	31/03/2025
Implementation of pilot projects	01/05/2025 – 30/09/2026 (tentative)

3.2 Call promotion

This call for pilot projects will be disseminated in order to attract different SMEs from the involved regions to implement the pilot projects together with the RTOs members of the consortium.

This will be done in the form of networking events in the regions involved, through the Hub4Food communication channels ([website](#) and [LinkedIn profile](#)), and through the communication channels and networks of the project partners.

3.3 How to apply

- 1) Applicants must **fill in the application form** available at www.hub4food.eu/pilots
- 2) Applications must be **written in English** and maximum words per section must not be exceeded.
- 3) Applications should be saved in PDF format as "Hub4Food_application_SMEname.pdf".
- 4) Applications must be **sent in PDF format to info@hub4food.eu**.
- 5) Applications must be submitted by 17:00 CET of the deadline date for the Open Call (**31st January 2025**).
- 6) After submission the applicant will receive an e-mail which will confirm the submission.

3.4 Support to potential applicants

Hub4Food clusters and associations (section 1.2) will act as contact points to disseminate the Hub4Food call in their respective regions and to provide information and/or clarification and additional support to SMEs in relation to this call.

3.5 Evaluation process

3.5.1 Evaluation committee

An evaluation committee, composed by a transnational representation of project partners, from different countries and profiles, will be created in order to evaluate the applications received from enterprises.

- i) Each proposal will be evaluated by a representative of an RTO and a Cluster. The Cluster will be from the same country from the applicant SME. The RTO will be from a different country from the applicant SME, and it will be chosen according to the subject of the pilot project to be evaluated.
- ii) All participants of the evaluation committee will be members of the team, but transnationality and diversity of profiles will be pursued.
- iii) The selection process will be transparent, fair, and objective, and should take into account the established requirements and criteria for the pilot projects, as well as the overall objectives and goals of Hub4Food.
- iv) Evaluators will be selected avoiding any conflict of interest.
- v) Proposals shall only be made available to the evaluation committee.

3.5.2 Evaluation process

Only the proposals that meet the eligibility conditions (section 2.6) will enter the evaluation phase. The evaluation will be based on a set of criteria shown in Table 1 below. The following aspects will be considered during the evaluation process:

- i) The pilot projects should count on the participation of at least one RTO of the project and one external enterprise (the applicant SME).
- ii) Transnational cooperation is encouraged, although not mandatory.
- iii) Technical expertise: The SMEs should have relevant technical expertise and should be able to demonstrate its capability to implement the pilot project (e.g. apply the advanced technology or develop the innovative food product).
- iv) The pilot projects should have a TRL6 or higher.
- v) Relevance of the need or challenge: The proposal should clearly explain the need that the SME aims to address and how the project will be beneficial for the SME
- vi) Feasibility: The proposed pilot project should be feasible and realistic, taking into account the technical, financial, and operational capabilities of the applicant SME and the RTOs.
- vii) The pilot projects should be about 8 months long.
- viii) The projects should be relevant and aligned with the target sectors, market trends, marine relation, and new technologies, techniques and processes identified in the scope of this call (section 2).
- ix) Impact potential and replication: The proposed pilot project should have the potential to deliver significant benefits and impact, both in terms of the development of new and innovative food products and in terms of the uptake of advanced technologies by the SMEs and the wider sector.
- x) Sustainability: projects should be sustainable. Projects contributing to climate change mitigation and/or adaptation would be considered.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria	
Technical excellence, feasibility, and viability (40 points)	Technical expertise of the applicant
	Scope: relevance of the need or challenge
	Feasibility to implement the project
	TRL (Technology Readiness Level)
Innovation (30 points)	Alignment with call prioritised market trends
	Incorporation of marine resources
	Application of advanced technologies
Impact (30 points)	Economic
	Environmental
	Technological

3.6 Selection

The applications evaluated will be ranked by score and those with the best score per region will be selected up to a maximum of 2 pilot projects per RTO (total of 12 pilot projects). The rest of applications in the ranking list will be in a reserve list.

Applicants will receive an e-mail about the outcome of the assessment along with instructions for the next steps in case the application is selected.

3.7 Collaboration agreements

Successful SME applicants will be requested to sign an agreement with the RTO to formalise the partnership and the specific conditions for the collaboration.

RTOs have a budget through Hub4Food to dedicate to the pilot projects, which may be used to purchase materials and external expertise and services, as well as for the RTO staff costs derived from the pilot projects. Therefore, before the start of the pilot projects the RTO and the SME should agree the technical scope of the project (which affects the budget that the RTO will allocate to the pilot project). All these details should be agreed between the RTO and SME and defined in the partnership agreement.

In case a pilot project collaboration agreement is not reached between the SME and the RTO, the SME application will be discarded and the next application in the application ranking list will be contacted and invited to work on a collaboration agreement.

4 Annex 1 – Eligible regions

The eligible regions are the following:

- España: Galicia; Asturias; Cantabria; País Vasco; La Rioja; Navarra; Andalucía; Islas Canarias.
- France: Nouvelle Aquitaine; Pays-de-la-Loire; Bretagne; Normandie.
- Ireland: Northern and Western; Southern; Eastern and Midland.
- Portugal: Norte; Centro; Lisboa; Alentejo; Algarve; Região Autónoma dos Açores; Região Autónoma da Madeira.

