



Open Call for innovative projects enhancing the valorisation of agri-food biomass

OPEN CALL APPLICANT'S GUIDE



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1 Introduction

This document provides guidance information to applicants regarding the GRAPPA Innovation Open Call for proposals (hereafter referred to as 'the Call'). The Call is addressed to European SMEs in the agri-food value chain supporting innovation acceleration in order to foster the development, adoption and commercialisation of new and innovative upcycled food ingredients and products, as well as (business) processes and technologies that will allow the valorisation of agri-food biomass and side-streams. The objective of the Call is to assist SMEs to become more technologically advanced, greener, and resilient, while generating added value and potential new sources of income.

1.1 About the GRAPPA Project

Building on previous expertise, the GRAPPA consortium aims at strengthening the economic resilience and sustainability-driven competitiveness of the European agri-food sector in a global environment. It will achieve this by supporting companies, particularly SMEs, in developing and adopting innovative upcycled food ingredients, products, services, processes, and advanced technologies - including digital solutions - and by supporting the diffusion of a systemic approach to enhance the upcycling of the agri-food biomass and side-streams.

The GRAPPA project has the ambition to support SMEs in addressing all aspects linked to system innovation to ensure SMEs are integrated into evolving, sustainable, and interconnected value chains.

The GRAPPA project is co-financed under the Single Market Programme by EC/ EISMEA (General Agreement No 101235085).

For any more information or other enquiry, please contact one of the GRAPPA partners listed below and whose details are available in Annex 1.

- **Belgium:** FLANDERS' FOOD
- **Belgium:** WAGRALIM
- **France:** POLE EUROPEEN INNOVATION ALIMENTATION BIEN-ETRE NATURALITE (INNOV' ALLIANCE)
- **Greece:** Agrotechnologiki Exagogiki Simbraxi AMKE (AGROTECH EXPORT CLUSTER)
- **Spain:** ASOCIACION CLUSTER FOOD+I
- **Spain:** ASOCIACION CLUSTER ALIMENTARIO DE GALICIA
- **Other EU regions:** Agrotechnologiki Exagogiki Simbraxi AMKE (AGROTECH EXPORT CLUSTER)



1.2 GRAPPA Objectives

The project's general objectives include:

- *Strengthening SMEs*: Promoting the adoption of innovative, sustainable, and digital solutions for agri-food biomass and side-streams valorisation to enhance industrial resilience and circularity.
- *Exploiting Existing Knowledge*: Building on insights from previous EU projects to scale up current food processing practices.
- *Supporting Systemic Innovation*: Facilitating the development of new circular value chains and upcycled products, such as food ingredients, nutraceuticals and food complements, green cosmetics, biosolutions (biostimulants, biofertilisers, biocontrol) and animal nutrition.
- *Implementing Financial Support*: Providing SMEs with access to a dedicated Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) programme financing the development and testing of innovative solutions.
- *Reinforcing Skills and Knowledge*: Enhancing the capabilities of agri-food SMEs and clusters' staff in systemic innovation, sustainability, and internationalisation.

The valorisation of agri-food biomass and side-streams is a key area to unlock opportunities for EU agri-food companies to innovate, develop new products and processes, diversify their revenue, improve their environmental footprint and increase the availability of ingredients and processes in Europe. Better resource efficiency can contribute to reducing the dependency on imports of food products, biosolutions, bioactive compounds and other inputs. Agri-food biomass and side-streams still represent a largely untapped resource and offer immense potential for value creation. By transforming these side-streams into upcycled ingredients/foods, nutraceuticals and food complements, cosmetic ingredients, biosolutions or animal feed/pet food & care, companies in the agri-food value chain can contribute to the circular economy while reducing waste and environmental impact.

GRAPPA's ambition is reinforced by the growing market for upcycled ingredients for food and non-food applications (not including energy, construction, textile or plastics) (see figure 1). Consumers are increasingly seeking sustainable and healthy food products, driving demand for snacks, beverages, and other items made from surplus or discarded ingredients. Similarly, cosmetic ingredients derived from agri-food biomass and side-streams – such as fruit peels and seeds – can be transformed into natural antioxidants, exfoliants, and other skincare components. Additionally, valorising side-streams for animal nutrition provides a sustainable alternative to conventional feed sources, helping to reduce the environmental footprint of livestock farming. Finally, upcycling agri-food biomass will accelerate the green transition of the sector.



1.3 GRAPPA's Innovation Open Call

1.3.1 Introduction

GRAPPA project includes a Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) scheme focusing on innovation acceleration. The present Innovation Open Call is part of the FSTP scheme and aims to support projects that address concrete sectorial challenges, **starting from TRL 6 or higher.**

This Innovation Call includes financial support for projects focusing on the development, adoption, and commercialisation of innovative upcycled ingredients for food and non-food applications, products, business processes, and technologies (including digital) that maximise the valorisation of agri-food biomass and side-streams.

SMEs receiving FSTP within this Call are required to participate in specific mandatory project activities, SIRL-tool training, the Pitch & Connect session during the GRAPPA symposium at the European Food Biomass and Bioeconomy Summit (June 2027), and a success story campaign – all aimed at showcasing the benefits of innovation and inspiring broader industry adoption.

GRAPPA consortium will conduct a mandatory survey during and after the project to collect impact data from the innovation projects.

1.3.2 Purpose of the Call

GRAPPA's Innovation Open Call will support financially SMEs to implement innovative projects enhancing the valorisation of agri-food biomass, thus enhancing the competitiveness of the European agri-food sector while supporting the green transition, and more specifically, the valorisation of agri-food biomass and side-streams. The call aims to stimulate the utilisation of digital tools and technologies, where relevant, favouring the twin transition of the agri-food industry.

1.3.3 Structure of the Call

Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) is a lump-sum scheme providing targeted financial support to SMEs to foster innovation and facilitate technology adoption.

The scheme is implemented through one (1) open call with two (2) cut-off dates:

- Cut-off 1: 26 May 2026 - 17:00 CET
- Cut-off 2: 20 October 2026 - 17:00 CET

The Innovation Open Call total budget is **€2.020.000** distributed over minimum 35 SMEs.

An SME can receive up to a **maximum of €60.000** in this call.

- Reserved budget for cut-off 1: €1.380.000
- Reserved budget for cut-off 2: approximately €640.000



1.3.4 Outcomes of the Call

The expected outcome of GRAPPA's Innovation Open Call will be the financing of approximately **35 (thirty-five) innovation acceleration projects**.

2 Innovation Open Call: General Conditions & Guidelines

2.1 Introduction

The GRAPPA project drives the **adoption of advanced technologies**, helping SMEs modernise processes, increase resource efficiency, reduce waste, and develop new products, surpassing the reliance on outdated practices.

The project leverages twin transition –green and digital– as a driving force to address critical challenges within the agri-food system through an innovative and systemic approach. This holistic method will be adapted by SMEs considering technology, policy, behaviour, business, and value chains, moving beyond traditional, siloed methods.

2.2 Thematic Priorities

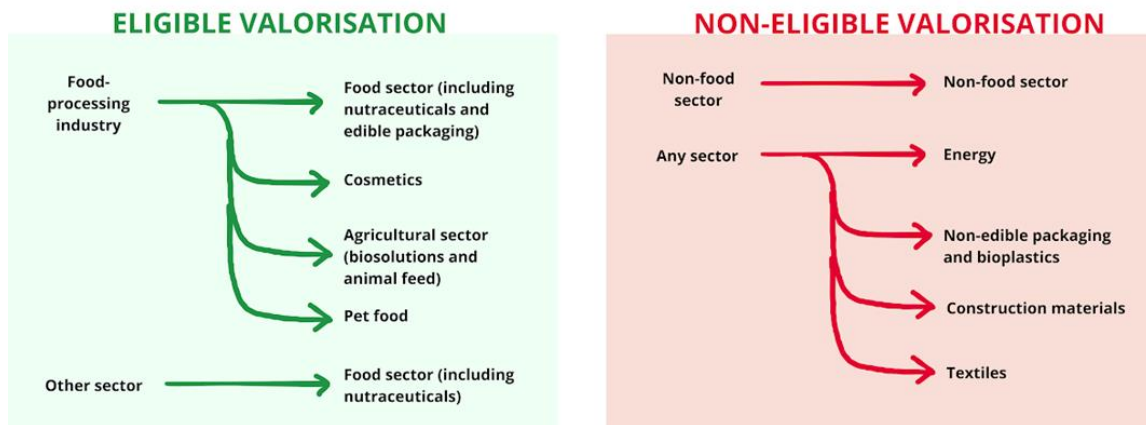
This call targets innovative **SMEs developing solutions that increase the valorisation of biomass**, contributing to more sustainable and resilient agri-food ecosystems through the development of new processes, services and products.

Eligible for receiving the Financial Support for Third Parties are the following:

1. SMEs in the agri-food production and/or processing sector;
2. SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector;
3. SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise their own biomass/by-products/side-streams for the agri-food sector;
4. SMEs offering solutions and/or technology for the valorisation of biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector (development and application of new technologies or processes).



Figure 1: Eligible vs non-eligible valorisation types



An indicative list of examples of eligible projects follows:

- Extraction of dietary fiber from fruit by-products for applications in the food industry
- Extraction of polyphenols and antioxidants from wine by-products for applications in nutraceuticals, cosmetics, functional beverages, etc.
- Functional ingredients from brewer spent grains
- Biostimulants from agri-food by-products
- Food flavourings from agricultural by-products
- Food flavourings from cosmetic by-products

An indicative list of examples of non-eligible projects follows:

- Biostimulants developed from agricultural by-products
- Non-edible bioplastics developed from brewer spent grains
- Agri-food by-products for compost

2.3 Call Definitions

For the purpose of the GRAPPA Open Call the following definitions withstand:

- **Biomass** is defined as organic waste, by-products or residues produced either, only from plants, or from plants and algae or from plants and animals, or from any combination of the above.
- **Food processing companies** are engaged in what could be thought of as “first level” manufacturing. They take raw materials and turn them into refined ingredients to be used by manufacturers:
 - Ingredients providers (seaweed powder, processed fruit & cereal & juice, aromas, tomato paste, spices, essential oil, etc.)
 - B2B processing SMEs, e.g., blending, cutting, heating, canning, freezing, drying, milling, fermenting, etc.
 - Companies that use agri-food biomass to extract bioactive compounds for their ingredients (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc.).



- Technology/engineering companies developing solutions for valorisation of agri-food side streams¹
- **Food producing companies** are the next step in the supply chain, as they conduct “second level” manufacturing by using specific ingredients made by processors and combining them to create a more complex product:
 - food & beverage (prepared meal, dairy, snacks, pastry, meat, spirits, beers, etc.)
 - food supplement
 - etc.
- **Food processing and producing (FPP) companies** are either using primary sector’s raw materials to produce new ingredients and/or final products for consumption thus creating organic waste (production of biomass) or developing (engineering) solutions for the valorisation of agri-food side streams (use of biomass).
- The **TRL**, which stands for “**Technological Readiness Level**”, is a scale system (from 1-9) to estimate the degree of maturity of a specific technology. This scale helps to determine the level of readiness of a technology before it can be used on a large-scale. TRL spans from the initial conceptual stages, where innovators have their first “Eureka!” moment, to the final stage where the technology is fully developed and available on the market. TRLs describe the different stages of development of a technology, product or service on a scale from 1 to 9. The TRLs have the following structure, each representing a distinct stage in a technological development:
 - **TRL 1** – Basic principles observed.
 - **TRL 2** – Technology concept formulated.
 - **TRL 3** – Experimental proof of concept achieved.
 - **TRL 4** – Technology validated in the lab.
 - **TRL 5** – Technology validated in a relevant environment.
 - **TRL 6** – Technology demonstrated in a relevant environment.
 - **TRL 7** – System prototype demonstrated in an operational environment.
 - **TRL 8** – System complete and qualified.
 - **TRL 9** – Actual system proven in operational environment.

Each step provides clear progression from theoretical research to real-world application, offering a common language for innovators, investors, and stakeholders to discuss progress.

¹ Companies specialised on valorisation of side streams.



- **System Innovation (SI)**² offers a powerful framework to overcome structural, financial, and technological barriers that prevent the full uptake of circular and scalable solutions.
- **A System Innovation Readiness Level Tool (SIRL)**³ assesses an organization's capability to develop, support, and scale innovations by evaluating people, processes, and technology. These tools, such as the ILVOs SIRL (Belgium) Framework (<https://sirl.app/>), identify strengths and weaknesses to create roadmaps for moving ideas from conception to market, often focusing on dimensions like technology, customer, team, and business model maturity.
- Applicants can use the following website to check if they fulfil the requirements of a **SME status**: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/>. Applications selected for funding will be requested to submit the results of the self-assessment check using this tool.

3 Proposal Submission

3.1 Documents Required

All Open Call applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 3.3 below. The Application Form is available for download at the GRAPPA website: <https://i4be.eu/grappa/>

The Application Form comprises the following two sections:

1. *The Applicant's Proposal Form*: This section describes technically and financially the proposed innovation project.
2. *Declaration of Honour*: This section provides certain legal information about the applicants' status and proves its capability to execute the proposed project.

At the time of submission, both sections must be filled in appropriately, signed and stamped by the entity's legal representative and together converted into one (1) single pdf file that needs to be uploaded in the online form at the GRAPPA call website: <https://i4be.eu/grappa/>

This requirement is obligatory and will be checked at the eligibility check stage. If the applicants fail to provide a duly signed and stamped Application Form (including both sections), they will **not** be eligible to continue to the evaluation stage.

All documents requiring a signature must be duly signed and stamped by the legal representative of the applicant's organisation. Signatures may be provided:

² Additional information can be found in GRAPPA Deliverable: Guidelines in System Innovation, adapted to businesses.: <https://i4be.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/GRAPPA-D1.1-Guidelines-on-system-innovation-adapted-to-businesses.pdf>

³ GRAPPA Training webinar on SIRL tool can be consulted [here](#)



- either as a handwritten signature accompanied by the official stamp of the organisation,
- or as a verified electronic signature. Where a verified electronic signature is used, the official stamp is not required.

3.2 Innovation Open Call publication

The GRAPPA Innovation Open Call will be published and promoted on the following platforms:

- GRAPPA’s Innovation Open Call dedicated webpage: <https://i4be.eu/grappa/>
- EU Funding & Tenders Portal⁴
- European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)⁵
- European Enterprise Network (EEN)
- GRAPPA’s Partners’ websites and networks.

The publication of the Innovation Open Call will be supported by the following documents:

- *Applicants’ Guide*, that includes all information about the Call and instructions to the applicants.
- *Application Form*, that includes the Applicant’s Proposal Form and the Declaration of Honour to be submitted as pdf in the application phase

3.2.1 Innovation Open Call specifications

1. The Innovation Open Call targets:
 - SMEs in the agri-food production and/or processing sector;
 - SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector;
 - SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise their own biomass/by-products/side-streams for the agri-food sector;
 - SMEs offering solutions and/or technology for the valorisation of biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector (development and application of new technologies or processes).
2. The project must lead to the implementation of either a new process, a new product, or a new service or a combination of them.
3. The Open Call will have one (1) launch date and two (2) cut-off dates
 - Launch of the Open Call: **March 26, 2026**
 - First Cut-off date: **May 26, 2026** - 17:00 CET

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

⁵ https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/funding?f%5B0%5D=status%3A1_open



- Second Cut-off date: **October 20, 2026** – 17:00 CET
4. The maximum duration of the Innovation Projects is of **1 year**. Projects with shorter duration should justify their choice of duration.
 5. Proposals can be submitted either by a single SME or by an SMEs consortium with **up to three (3) SMEs**.
 - Collaborative projects should include minimum 1 SME in food processing/producing. Its role could range from being the biomass provider to that of the final beneficiary of the project.
 - For collaborative projects, the coordinator (main applicant) of the consortium could be any of the involved SMEs.
 - The coordinator (main applicant) is responsible to complete all administrative information into the online tool and upload the application form in pdf format.
 - The GRAPPA team will interact only with the coordinator (main applicant).
 6. Applicants can be SMEs registered at EU Member States and countries associated to the Single Market Programme
 7. Projects must have a Technology Readiness Level (**TRL**) **of at least 6**.
 8. For Single SME projects, the maximum lump-sum grant per project (1 SME) is **€60.000**.
 9. For collaborative projects, the maximum lump-sum grant per project (2-3 SMEs) is **€90.000**.
 10. Interested SME/consortia can apply with only one (1) proposal per cut-off date.
 11. Interested SME/consortium can apply for both cut-off 1 and cut-off 2.
 12. The maximum amount to be granted per SME shall not exceed €60.000 in total (combined cut-off 1 and cut-off 2).
 13. Innovation grants must be **matched by at least 15% private financial contribution** (debt or own financial resources), with proof required.
 14. Applicants must present a well-defined project addressing the Call's challenges, including a budget estimation, results and impacts, commercialisation strategy, and involve the use of a System Innovation Readiness Level (SIRL) assessment tool (See Section 2.3: Call Definitions).
 15. Applicants should explain and justify the budget (for each budget category separately). For personnel costs, indicate the number of person-months, and link such personnel effort to the contents (tasks, goals) of the proposal. If Applicants use subcontracting, they must justify it and specify the role of subcontractor.
 16. Projects can begin their implementation **only** after contracting. Expenses can occur **only** after contracting and within the duration of the project in order to be eligible.
 17. Project progress will be monitored in mid-term. A final overall performance and progress report will be required, along with the respective deliverables validating the work, within one (1) month after project completion.



18. Applicants under the innovation call will **not** fund purchase or installation of advanced technologies, but support acceleration of their uptake by knowledge validation, testing of new process and/or decision-making tools, recipes' adaptation, production lines adds-on, traceability solutions, etc.
19. SMEs applying as a consortium should fill in only one (1) application form submitted by the coordinator (main applicant).
20. The applicants must firmly indicate their intention to participate in a number (minimum 2) of supportive activities organised by the GRAPPA Consortium, such as upcycling community workshops, pitching preparation workshops, applied system innovation workshops, upskilling sessions, training activities, communication/ dissemination activities (on-line).
21. Laureates of the innovation projects must participate in a pitch presentation at the GRAPPA summit during the 2nd European Food Biomass and Bioeconomy Summit in June 2027. This requires in-person participation.

3.3 Eligibility

3.3.1 Eligibility Criteria

Before evaluation, an initial eligibility check will be performed by the Supervisory Committee (SC) based on the following criteria:

1. Applicants should upload the Application Form dully signed and stamped before the submission's deadline.
2. Applicants must be a SME and confirm their SME status in accordance with the SME definition of the European Union in the application form⁶.
3. Applicants must be:
 - a. SMEs in the agri-food production and/or processing sector;
 - b. SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector;
 - c. SMEs in other sectors (ex. cosmetics, nutraceuticals, etc) that valorise their own biomass/by-products/side-streams for the agri-food sector;
 - d. SMEs offering solutions and/or technology for the valorisation of biomass/by-products/side-streams from the agri-food sector (development and application of new technologies or processes such as system integrators, ICT solutions, machinery, packaging, etc.).
4. Applicants must provide a justification covering a minimum of 15% of the total budget by private financial resources (in form of debt and/ or equity).
5. Maximum grant per SME: **€60.000**.

⁶ Applicants can you use the following website to check if they fulfill the requirements of a SME status: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/SME-Wizard/>. Applications selected for funding will be requested to submit the results of the self-assessment check using this tool.



6. A consortium of maximum three (3) SMEs can apply for a grant of up to **€90.000**.
8. Applications must be written in English (applications (partially) written in another language are not eligible) and must not exceed the maximum length stated in the predefined template of the Applicant's Proposal Form.
9. Applications must be submitted through the online submission tool accessible via GRAPPA webpage (<https://i4be.eu/grappa/>), applying the requested submission procedure, at the latest **on May 26, 2026 at 17:00 CET** for cut-off 1, and on **October 20, 2026 at 17:00 CET** for cut-off 2.

3.3.2 Eligible Costs

Since the granting of a lump-sum does not foresee the delivery of a detailed financial reporting and timesheets, the use of the project budget will be controlled considering the technical advancements by the technical reviewers. The final technical evaluation will assess the coherence of the spent money with the achieved results. The beneficiary is responsible for providing all necessary documentation of the costs in case of an audit.⁷ (see Section 5.4.1: Financial Audit & Control). If any problem occurs in course of an audit, the GRAPPA Consortium is not responsible for possible subsidy reductions or claims that may be made to the beneficiary/ies for an incorrect justification. Applicants must comply with their national accounting procedures.

Only costs generated during the lifetime of the project are eligible⁸. Costs described in the submitted budget must be determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practices of the beneficiary.

Eligible costs are:

- **Direct Staff costs**: costs hours of the staff contracted by the beneficiary dedicated to actual work under the project (Maximum 80% of the total project budget, this rule applies per SME in case of a consortium).
- **Subcontracting costs (external expertise)**: work carried out by a provider which has entered into an agreement on business conditions with the applicant. SMEs cannot subcontract more than 30% of the project's budget to Universities, Research Institutes or other RTOs.
- **Other Direct costs**: further direct incurred costs can be claimed for:
 - Travel costs - Travel costs necessary for the execution of the project. This includes travel costs to attend the pitch presentation at the GRAPPA summit during the European Food Biomass and Bioeconomy Summit.

⁷ The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the Project and up to five years after the end of the GRAPPA project (foreseen for 30 June 2028), arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including in the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF), on the Subgrantee.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules. In addition, the EC may carry out on-the spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the EC, in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

⁸ Period of costs' eligibility is from the Subgrant Agreement signature date until the end of the project.



- Equipment costs - Depreciation costs are eligible if they represent the wear and tear of equipment used for the project, calculated based on the beneficiary's usual accounting practices and straight-line depreciation over its useful life. Only depreciation for the project duration is eligible. Costs for renting or leasing equipment, infrastructure or other assets are also eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment, infrastructure or assets and do not include any financing fees.
- Other goods & services - Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination materials and activities, intellectual property rights, translations, and publications.

In case of a collaborative project, each partner will have to indicate its proper budget. The project related costs (including related duties, taxes and charges, such as non-deductible or non-refundable value added tax (VAT) are eligible if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions and are bought using the beneficiary's usual practices— provided these ensure the best value for money (or if appropriate the lowest price) and that there is no conflict of interests.

3.4 Application Process

3.4.1 Access to call documentation and contacts

The Open Call webpage (<https://i4be.eu/grappa/>) will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications.

The information concerning the GRAPPA Project and Innovation Open Call will be available on the above-mentioned webpage.

Questions can be addressed via the contact form on this webpage until 19 May 2026 at 17:00 CET (Cut-off 1) or 13 October 2026 at 17:00 CET (Cut-off 2) or via email to the Single Points Of Contact (SPOCs) whose contact details are listed in Annex 1.

Applicants should be aware that the email address that will be used for the submission of the application will be used as the primary contact email for any formal communication during the eligibility and evaluation phases.

3.4.2 Submission of Applications

Applicants are required to prepare and submit their Application Form online, using the submission tool and templates available on the **GRAPPA webpage**, providing all necessary information and uploading all requested documents.

Applicants should respect the maximum text length stated in the predefined template of the Applicant's Proposal Form. All documents, including the proposal, must be uploaded in **English** and in **pdf format**. Compressed files (such as .zip, .rar, etc.) are **not** acceptable. **No** technical annex will be accepted.

Applicants must ensure that the complete Application Form, is submitted before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.



After submission the applicant will receive an e-mail which states the date and time of the submitted proposal.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

3.4.3 Language

English is the only official language throughout the whole execution of the GRAPPA project meaning that all requested documents must be submitted in English to be eligible.

In the case of official documents, as a proof of the legal existence of the applicant, they can be submitted in original language accompanied, in order to facilitate eligibility checks, by a translation of the official document into English (this does not have to be a formal, certified translation).

4 Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked separately for each cut-off.

4.1 Eligibility Check

As soon as the Innovation Open Call is closed and before assigning the applications to the evaluators, each proposal will be checked by GRAPPA against the overall eligibility criteria.

During the eligibility check, the applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious errors, among others. In that case, applicants will have three (3) working days starting from the day after receiving the notification to provide clarifications or additional documents to complete their initial application. If the requested clarifications are not satisfactory or not provided by the specified deadline, their application will be declared ineligible and will not move on to the evaluation stage. All communications will take place through the contact person designated by the SME/SME consortium.

Non-eligible proposals will be informed after the eligibility check and will not reach the evaluation stage. No recess is allowed at this stage.

4.2 Evaluation procedure

Once the eligibility check is concluded, in order to ensure the transparency and equal treatment of all applications, each eligible application will be assigned to an evaluation panel consisting out of three (3) independent expert evaluators. Evaluators are selected by GRAPPA Consortium Partners, ensuring appropriate expertise, gender balance and diversity.



After the evaluation process is over, the scorings of the evaluators will be consolidated to establish the proposal's overall assessment. If significant discrepancies occur between individual evaluations (i.e. a difference of more than three (3) points) in a specific scoring criterion, a consensus meeting between the evaluators will be organised to reach a common assessment. If no agreement can be reached during the consensus meeting, an additional evaluator may be involved to support the final decision.

For each cut-off, once all evaluations have been finalised, proposals will be ranked. In the event of an ex-aequo situation, the project with the highest impact-score will be selected. If impact scores are also tied, a second evaluation round with different evaluators will be conducted until a final decision is reached.

For **Cut-off 1**, the highest-ranked proposals will be funded until the available budget is fully allocated. Should budget remain after all proposals above the evaluation threshold have been funded, the remaining amount will be transferred to the budget of Cut-off 2. No reserve list will be maintained for Cut-off 1. If any laureates failed the contracting process, then the corresponding budget will be transferred to Cut-off 2.

For **Cut-off 2**, the highest-ranked proposals will be funded until the available budget (including any transferred amount from Cut-off 1) is exhausted. Proposals that have reached the evaluation threshold but cannot be funded due to budget exhaustion will be included in a reserve list⁹, in order of ranking.

Only proposals that reach the minimum evaluation threshold per criterion and in total will be eligible for funding.

The assessment period shall take max. two (2) months starting from the closing date of the call. The applicants will receive an e-mail about the outcome of the assessment directly after the assessment is finalised along with instructions for the next steps in the contracting phase.

4.3 Evaluation process

4.3.1 Criteria

Each proposal will be reviewed by three (3) independent evaluators with specific technical and/or business expertise related to the topics of the GRAPPA Innovation Open Call. The evaluators will have to evaluate each proposal under the specific evaluation criteria. Evaluators will sign a Non-Disclosure-Agreement (NDA) and will be strictly bound to confidentiality.

All eligible proposals will be assessed against the following four (4) Award Criteria as described in detail at the table below:

⁹ A reserve list is a ranking list (based on the evaluation's scoring) where projects that have passed the threshold are listed awaiting the final signing of the subgrant agreements from the laureates. In case a laureate does not sign the subgrant agreement, then the first next on in the reserve list takes its place.



Proposal Award Criteria	Main Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Scoring
1. Technical Excellence/ Feasibility/ Viability <i>[Max Score: 50 - Threshold: 35,0]</i>		<i>The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the five (5) individual main criteria</i>	0-50
	1.1 Innovativeness / Added Value/ TRL Level	1.1.1 Innovativeness of the scope 1.1.2 Added Value of Proposed Solution 1.1.3 TRL Level	0-15
	1.2 Feasibility of Concept/ Work plan coherence	1.2.1 Feasibility of Concept 1.2.2 Implementation Strategy and methodology 1.2.3 Workplan Coherence	0-10
	1.3 Innovativeness from an environmental perspective		0-10
	1.4 Innovativeness from a process perspective		0-10
	1.5 Innovativeness from a value chain perspective		0-5
2. Impact and sustainability <i>[Max Score: 25 - Threshold: 17,5]</i>		<i>The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria</i>	0-25
	2.1 Sustainability	2.2.1 Environmental Impact 2.2.2 Economic Impact 2.2.3 Social and Ecosystem Impact	0-20
	2.2 Scalability/ Replicability		0-5



3. Capacity and team expertise <i>[Max Score: 10 - Threshold: 7,0]</i>		<i>The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria</i>	0-10
	3.1 Team Expertise and quality		0-5
	3.2 Risk assessment		0-5
4. Budget <i>[Max Score: 15 - Threshold: 10.5]</i>		<i>The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria</i>	0-15
	4.1 Justified Budget		0-10
	4.2 Budget Allocation		0-5



A detailed explanation of the above-mentioned proposal award criteria, main criteria and sub-criteria follow below:

1. Technical Excellence/ Feasibility/ Viability:

[Max Score: 50 – Threshold: 35,0]

Proposals must align with the Call objectives.

The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the five (5) individual main criteria below:

1.1 Innovativeness / Added Value/ TRL Level: [max. score 15 points]

The scoring of this main criterion will be the sum of the scoring of the three (3) individual sub-criteria below

1.1.1 *Innovativeness of the scope*

Provision of compelling evidence that the solution (s) addresses GRAPPA's green perspective beyond the state of the art at regional level. If additionally, a digital solution is included this will be valued positively.

1.1.2 *Added Value of Proposed Solution*

Provision of sufficient evidence/ explanation on the added value of the proposed solution. In case of a collaboration project, explanation on the process of cooperation between the actors that will provide the added value.

1.1.3 *TRL Level*

Demonstration of the initial TRL level at the start of the project and the envisaged TRL at the end. Explanation on who initiates the innovation and how it is going to be implemented by the end of the project. How will you prove the achievement of the final TRL of your solution at the end of the project (report, prototype, etc.)?

1.2 Feasibility of Concept/ Work plan coherence: [max. score 10 points]

The scoring of this main criterion will be the average of the weighted scoring of the three (3) individual sub-criteria below:

1.2.1 *Feasibility of Concept*

Provision of justification that the implementation of the proposed solution is feasible and achievable within the project's timeline and budget.

1.2.2 *Implementation Strategy and methodology*

Provision of a well thought out proposal strategy and implementation approach.

1.2.3 *Workplan Coherence*

Provision of a project plan well-structured, with clear tasks, milestones, deliverables, and timelines.

1.3 Innovativeness from an environmental perspective: [max. score 10 points]



Provision of initial evidence that the solution is focusing towards a zero waste or circular economy. To what extent the solution innovatively contributes to preserve environment.

1.4 Innovativeness from a process perspective: [max. score 10 points]

Provision of initial evidence that the solution is beyond state of the art at the regional level. The proposed technology either does not exist in production, or it is in an initial development phase. If additionally, a digital solution is included this will be valued positively.

1.5 Innovativeness from a value chain perspective: [max. score 5 points]

Provision of initial evidence that the solution has added value for the food value chain. To what extent does the solution innovatively affect existing value chains or invent new ones.

2. Impact and sustainability:

[Max Score: 25 - Threshold: 17,5]

Proposals must demonstrate the project's potential to deliver measurable social, economic, or environmental benefits and outline strategies for scaling, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement.

The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria below:

2.1 Sustainability: [max. score 20]

The final scoring will be the weighted average of the three sub criteria below:

2.1.1 Environmental Impact

What is the expected environmental impact of the proposed solution(s) compared to the existing situation? Indicate to what extent your project activities improve environmental performance (e.g. reduced emissions, resource efficiency, waste reduction). Please quantify the impact where possible, providing figures or estimations.

2.1.2 Economic Impact

What is the expected economic impact of the proposed solution(s) compared to the existing situation? Does the project demonstrate clear potential for long-term economic benefits, such as improved competitiveness, business growth, or market expansion? Please quantify the impact where possible, including indicators such as turnover, cost savings, or added value

2.1.3 Social and Ecosystem Impact

What is the expected social and ecosystem impact of the proposed solution(s) compared to the existing situation? Does the project contribute to job creation, social well-being, or broader ecosystem development (e.g. partnerships, value chain strengthening, or



sectoral impact)? Please quantify the impact where possible, including indicators such as job creation, certifications/labels, or other relevant measures.

2.2 Scalability/ Replicability: [max. score 5]

Has the proposed solution the potential of being scaled up (increase the impact within the original context or a larger volume) or replicated (implement the same solution in a different location or sector) increasing economic impact for the company.

3. Capacity and team expertise:

[Max Score: 10 - Threshold: 7,0]

Applicants must provide credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, resources and capacity to effectively deliver the project in the timeframe and budget as specified.

The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria below:

3.1 Team Expertise and quality: [max. score 5]

Provide justification that the team has the necessary technical, managerial, and domain-specific expertise. Provide justification that the team includes complementarity, gender balance and diversity.

3.2 Risk assessment: [max. score 5]

Provide a risk assessment analysis for your proposed solution. What are the potential risks and challenges (related to your project). Give an overview of each, as well as proposed actions to manage and mitigate them. Is there a mitigation plan in place.

4. Budget:

[Max Score: 15 - Threshold: 10,5]

Proposals must provide credible evidence that the project budget is justified and realistically allocated.

The scoring will be the sum of the scorings of the two (2) individual main criteria below:

4.1 Justified Budget: [max. score 10]

Provide a justified budget for each involved SME for the implementation of the project.

4.2 Budget Allocation: [max. score 5]

Is the budget realistic, transparent, and appropriately allocated to project tasks.

4.3.2 Scoring

As for the scoring procedure (section 4.3.1) the following clarifications should be taken into consideration:



- The Maximum Score is 100 points while the minimum overall threshold is set at 70 points.
The Maximum Score will be the sum of the scorings of the four (4) individual Proposal Award Criteria.
- The score of each individual Proposal Award Criterion will be the sum of the scorings of the corresponding individual Main Criteria.

The Main Criteria have different weights according to their relevant importance.

The total score of the project will be calculated as the average of the evaluators' scores. Scores must pass the individual threshold (by each of the 4 proposal award criteria) **and** the overall threshold (of 70 points) if a proposal is to be considered for funding within the limits of the available call budget.

4.4 Re-submission of proposals

Companies, not awarded a contract after the 1st cut-off date, will have the right to participate in the next cut-off date by respecting the following:

- Either they re-submit their original proposal **without any changes and keep their evaluation scoring** from the previous cut-off date.
- Or they make adaptations and re-submit a **new proposal subject to a new evaluation.**

5 Contracting

5.1 Contracting process

The Supervisory Committee will start negotiations with representatives of the SMEs selected for funding for the preparation of the contracts **only** when the ranking of the proposals is finalized. If the negotiations with any individual selected laureate do not finish successfully, the proposal of this laureate will be rejected.

Contract preparation will go via administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

Each SME will be required to provide the following documents in order to proceed with the signing of the contract:

1. **Legal existence:** Official Gazette or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration.
2. **Legal proof** that the applicant is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
3. **Bank Account Information:** The bank account to which the funds will be transferred must be indicated. The provided financial information must be issued within the last three (3) months.



4. **SME Status Confirmation:** The document (Model Declaration Information on the SME Qualification) must be filled in appropriately, signed by the entity's legal representative and stamped.¹⁰
5. **Private Financial Sources Justificative:** The applicant must provide justification covering a minimum of 15% of the total budget by private financial resources (in form of debt and/ or equity).

Note that the SMEs assume full responsibility on the bank account information they provided. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the GRAPPA Coordinator proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume responsibility for any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/ or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the GRAPPA Coordinator does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the SME who provided the wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

Each SME involved in successful applications will be requested to sign a formal subgrant agreement with the GRAPPA coordinator within 30 days.

It is necessary that the contracting process for cut-off 1 will be completed by **September 15, 2026**.

For each cut-off, after closing the contracting phase, the list of awarded SMEs (with whom the subgrant agreement has been signed), their awarded grant and the description of their project will be published on the GRAPPA communication channels which are the ECCP website, GRAPPA dedicated webpage and GRAPPA LinkedIn account¹¹. GRAPPA Partners will also share communications on their communication social media/ websites.

5.2 Payment

5.2.1 General Payment Terms

The following are taken into consideration:

- All payments will be made in Euros (€).
- Only costs generated during the lifetime of the project can be eligible¹² starting from the day of the subgrant agreement signature by the SME (i.e. the Subgrantee), for a maximum period of one (1) year, if duly justified, and provided that all other conditions for cost eligibility are met. Expenditures incurred before the subgrant agreement signature date, or after the project duration period are ineligible for remuneration.

¹⁰ <https://www.eusmecentre.org.cn/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/SME-Definition.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/grappa-eu/?viewAsMember=true>

¹² Period of costs' eligibility is from the Subgrant Agreement signature date until the end of the project.



- Costs incurred for the implementation of the project must be used for the sole and close purpose of achieving the objectives of the project and its expected results, in a transparent manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Each subgrantee will receive the payment directly from the GRAPPA project.
- Submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement for funding.

5.2.2 Payment Instalments

Payment will be made in two (2) instalments:

- *pre-financing*: **50% (fifty percent)** of the requested budget will be transferred to the SME within 30 days following the signature of the subgrant agreement, and for Cut-off 1 no later than 30 September 2026.
- *final payment*: **50% (fifty percent)** of the requested budget will be transferred to the SME within 30 days following the completion of the assessment of the final progress/performance report.

5.3 Conflict of Interest

The Subgrantees must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Subgrant Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest (“conflict of interests”). At the same time, applicants cannot be employees of GRAPPA consortium partners.

The Subgrantees must formally notify the GRAPPA consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

If a Subgrantee breaches any of its obligations, the Subgrant Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Subgrant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by a Subgrantee, the GRAPPA consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the subgrantee and claim the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

5.4 Financial Audit & Control

5.4.1 Financial Audit & Control

The selected Subgrantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding.

Lump sum financing is not subject to financial control by the GRAPPA partners but since it is still EU/public funding, audits can occur.

The recipients of the (financial) support from GRAPPA must ensure that the European Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors (ECA) can exercise their powers of control, on documents, information, even stored on



electronic media, or on the final recipient's premises as detailed in Article 22 and 23 of the [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#).

The Subgrantee shall keep all subproject deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies - including electronic copies - of all documents relating to the subproject contract for up to five (5) years from the end of the GRAPPA project (Project end: 30/09/2028). These should be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

5.4.2 Liability

The GRAPPA consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected subgranted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The GRAPPA consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the subgranted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the GRAPPA Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee. Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their subgranted projects do not infringe third parties' rights.

6 Enquiries & Complaints

For any enquiries and/ or complaints regarding the GRAPPA Innovation Open Call, please contact either Flanders' FOOD or ATECluster (Contact details in Annex 1).

A request for redress can only be based on objective, clear, and well-documented evidence of the reasons for the complaint. It must clearly identify the application and be submitted by the legally authorised representative of the applicant **within ten (10) calendar days** of receiving notice of your evaluation results to either Flanders' FOOD or ATECluster (Contact details in Annex 1).

A redress committee, composed of representatives from GRAPPA partnership members, will review the case and recommend an appropriate course of action. Its role is to ensure a coherent legal interpretation of requests and equal treatment of applicants.

The redress procedure may concern the eligibility check and/or the evaluation process. It does not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of the independent expert evaluators.

Only one request for redress per application will be considered. All requests for redress will be treated in confidence.



7 Confidentiality & Data Protection

GDPR compliance: The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) guarantee that the processing of data is carried out in compliance with the fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the dignity of the data subject with reference to confidentiality, personal identity and the right to data protection.

By applying, the applicant agrees on the storage and use of its personal data for the execution of the GRAPPA objectives and work plan. The GRAPPA consortium commits to handling personal data confidentially except for the call results, which will contain the following information:

- Information about successful GRAPPA Lump sums applications that will be made publicly available before the end of the project containing: project title, names of project partners and short project description (as provided by the applicant in the application form).
- Information about successful GRAPPA Lump sums that will be made publicly available after the end of the project: project title, names of project partners, awarded funding and updated short project description (as provided by the project partners in the Final Report).

The processing of data that GRAPPA intends to carry out will be based on lawfulness and correctness in the full protection of its rights and its confidentiality pursuant to the general principles of the GDPR and its art.24. Therefore, the competitors are informed of the procedure that the data provided by the applicants will be treated exclusively with reference to the procedure for which they submitted the documentation.

The applicants can exercise their rights towards the data controller, pursuant to article 12 of GDPR. For any inquiries regarding the processing your personal data, please send your request via email to the SPOCs whose contact details are listed in Annex 1. Applications selection and evaluation will be performed under the appropriate ethical conduct and will respect the confidentiality of the information received.

8 Intellectual Property Rights & Dissemination

The applicants are advised to arrange for internal contracts regarding Intellectual Property Rights, the use and dissemination of the results generated by the project teams through the funding obtained via the GRAPPA Innovation Lump-sum.

For details on rights and obligations related to results, the project teams can refer to Chapter 4/ Section 3 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

- For dissemination and use of results generated through the financial support from GRAPPA, the recipients must credit the GRAPPA project through proper citation and appearance of the GRAPPA Logo and EU Logo, including the proper citation *"This project has received funding from the European Union's Single Market*



Programme support under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (SMP COSME) under grant agreement No. 101235085 GRAPPA”.

- In addition to the **Acknowledgement of EU support** (European flag, Funding statement) in case of production of a research/ study content, the applicants also need to use **the Disclaimer below**. *“The content of this [insert appropriate description, e.g. report, publication, conference, etc.] represents the views of the author only and is his/ her sole responsibility; it cannot be considered to reflect the views of the European Commission and/ or the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and the Agency do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.”*

9 Gender Equality

GRAPPA seeks gender balance. Therefore, applicants are invited to take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the action. They must aim for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including supervisory and managerial levels to the extent possible.

10 Disclaimer

Purpose: This guide is explaining the GRAPPA Lump sum scheme for information purposes only. No rights can be claimed based on this document. This document does not reflect the views of the European Commission and EISMEA.

Mistakes or inconsistencies: The GRAPPA consortium is not responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that this text may cause. In the case of inconsistencies, the GRAPPA Executive Board will determine the steps to be taken, in cooperation with the applicant concerned.

Modification of the Guide: The GRAPPA partners, represented by the coordinator, are entitled to modify this Guide for applicants (including re-opening/ closing dates of the calls, in case of non-granting of funds and/ or early depletion of the available funds, or as they see fit) at any time. The current Guide for applicants will be provided on the GRAPPA webpage (under the I4CE webpage) always mentioning the version number.

Consequential damages: In no event shall either party be liable to the other or any of its affiliates for any consequential, incidental, indirect, special, punitive, or exemplary damages (including, without limitation, lost profits, business or goodwill) suffered or incurred by such other party or its affiliates in connection with this lump sum scheme, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.



Annexes

Annex 1 Partners' list of contacts & SPOC details

Cluster	Area covered for support	SPOC (single point of contact) : Name of person in charge and contact Example
Flanders' FOOD www.flandersfood.com	Flanders, Belgium	Gus Verhaeghe gus.verhaeghe@flandersfood.com Ward Van de Velde Ward.vandevelde@flandersfood.com
Wagralim www.wagralim.be	Wallonia, Belgium	Cécile Fontaine cecile.fontaine@wagralim.be Betty Milano betty.milano@wagralim.be
Innov'Alliance www.pole-innovalliance.com	Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	Sara Botti sara.botti@pole-innovalliance.com
CLUSAGA www.clusteralimentariodegalicia.org	Galicia - Spain	Carmen Vilariño programas.eu@clusaga.org Roberto Alonso info@clusaga.org
FOOD+I www.clusterfoodmasi.es/	La Rioja Navarra País Vasco Aragón Cataluña	Raquel Ordoyo : rordoyo@clusterfoodmasi.es
Agrotech Export Cluster www.atecluster.gr	Central Macedonia All eligible regions other than above	Theodoros TSAMOURTZIS t.tsamourtzis@atecluster.gr