



ERA-NETs SUSFOOD2 and CORE Organic Cofunds

Joint Call 2019

Pre-Announcement

“Towards sustainable and organic food systems”

Envisaged launch of the Call: 2nd September 2019

Envisaged deadline of pre-proposals: 4th November 2019

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These projects have received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No 727473 and 727495, respectively.

1 Background of the Joint Call

1.1 About ERA-NET SUSFOOD2 and CORE Organic Cofund

The ERA-NET Cofund instrument under Horizon 2020 is designed to support public-public partnerships between EU Member States (and associated countries) for the implementation and coordination of networking activities in different fields of research. The ERA-NET SUSFOOD2 and CORE Organic Cofunds (SF/CO) build a joint network with 21 funding bodies from 18 countries/regions committing 9.485.000€ to launch this Joint Call (Annex B).

The ERA-NET Cofund SUSFOOD2 “SUSustainable FOOD production and consumption” started in January 2017, and is the continuation of the FP7 ERA-NET SUSFOOD (2011-2014). The strategic goal of SUSFOOD2 complements the EU bioeconomy and food policies, and aims to reinforce cooperation in research, development and innovation between EU members and associated states in order to maximize the contribution of research to the development of more sustainable food systems from production to consumption. The scope of SUSFOOD covers the entire food supply chain, with the main focus on food chain sustainability beyond the farm gate. The farm level is considered if it has direct impact on the sustainability of the other steps in the food chain.

For more information, please consult <http://susfood-era.net>

The ERA-NET CORE Organic Cofund is the acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems". It started in December 2016. The CORE Organic Cofund is the continuation of the ERA-NETs CORE Organic I, II and Plus, that started in 2004. The objective of CORE Organic is to improve the knowledge basis and innovation capacity necessary for supporting further development of organic food and farming as a way to respond to significant societal challenges in Europe’s agriculture and food systems.

For more information, please consult <http://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/>

1.2 Rationale and scope of the Joint Call “Towards sustainable and organic food systems”

Rationale

Food systems need to meet the global societal challenges, comprehensively formulated under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹, such as the supply to an increasing population, and at the same time preventing food loss and waste and averting the depletion of non-renewable natural resources.

Considering the above, there is an urgent need for change to unleash the enormous potential that improved food systems on land and sea can contribute towards a sustainable future.

¹ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015.

More information: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

SUSFOOD2 defines sustainability of food systems as “A food system that supports food security, makes optimal use of natural and human resources, and respects biodiversity and ecosystems for present and future generations, and which is culturally acceptable and accessible, environmentally sound and economically fair and viable, and provides the consumer with nutritionally adequate, safe, healthy and affordable food”. Likewise, CORE Organic’s work is guided by the principles of organic agriculture: ecology, care, health, and fairness; the network shares the vision and the values of SUSFOOD2 in defining the sustainability of food systems.

CORE Organic further understands sustainability as eco-functional intensification, meaning “more efficient use of natural resources and processes, improved nutrient recycling techniques and innovative agroecological methods for enhancing the diversity and the health of soils, crops and livestock, [where] eco-functional intensification is characterized by cooperation and synergy between different components of eco-systems and food systems, with the aim of enhancing productivity and stability of agro-systems.”²

Scope of the Call

This Joint Call initiative by SF/CO network was initiated under the premise that attaining food security and high quality nutrition standards for food in the future will require a transition from current linear food production systems, to sustainable, cyclical oriented systems that also respond to consumers demand for a diverse, healthy, safe and attractive diet. Such a future will have to be accompanied by substantial progress in the organisation and management of food systems and supported by the development of novel technologies. Innovation will therefore be key to increase food systems resilience and for this to operate within natural resource boundaries and diminish climate change impact. In this regard, system approaches based on agroecological principles are gaining recognition as a pathway to enable sustainable intensification of food production and consumption, not only for organic food production, but also in the conventional sector.

Food systems comprise activities for food production, processing and packaging, distribution and retail, as well as consumption. Various factors, like environmental and socio-economic drivers, have influence on the system and therefore, different approaches can increase the sustainability of such a complex network.³ In the Joint Call, we will support research projects taking a system approach considering, as far as possible, all relevant aspects in the food system and their potential to increase its sustainability (Topic 1). Promoting the diversity within food systems is crucial for ensuring healthy and sustainable diets, strengthening resilience and enhancing socio-economic and environmental benefits (Topic 2). A significant number of valuable ingredients are destroyed during the

² TP Organics (2009) Strategic Research Agenda, p.59. More information: <https://tporganics.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/tporganiceu-strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-2009.pdf>

³ Kompainsky; Tribaldos; Ledemann (2018): *Food Systems Perspective for Food and Nutrition Security beyond the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, in: *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, Syst. Res* 35, 178–190 (2018)

processing of a food product, hence through mild food processing we aim to preserve the ingredients and to provide high quality, healthy and sustainable food (including organic) to the consumers (Topic 3). A major challenge food systems have to face is the increasing amount of plastic, and the need to prevent food waste and food loss. The idea underlying the development of smart packaging is to protect the food product and reduce waste before spoilage – e.g. by visualising the quality of food via packaging or by applying environmentally friendly resources (Topic 4).

2 Joint Call topics and cross-cutting issues

Interested project consortia should apply to one of the four topics:

Topic 1: Resource-efficient, circular and zero-waste food systems

Topic 2: Diversity in food from field to plate

Topic 3: Mild food processing

Topic 4: Sustainable and smart packaging

We envisage that the transition towards sustainable food systems will need close consideration of the following cross-cutting issues, which should be taken into account across all topics and individually adapted to each project:

- **Multi-actor-approach:** Involve different actors and stakeholders in your research project from the outset (by means of participation as well as transparent communication),
- **Multi-disciplinary approach:** Take account of different viewpoints and involve disciplines beyond your existing network,
- **System approach:** Consider interconnections, synergies or trade-offs between different aspects or actors that directly or indirectly affect your field of research on a systems level (e.g. economic, environmental, social, legislative, geographical, behavioural, business environment, etc.)

The inclusion of these cross-cutting issues is intended to increase the value and impact of projects.

Technology orientated project proposals should stay within the **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)** range of 2 to 5. Please check the national funding regulations (published with the Call Announcement in September) and/or contact your national contact point for any deviations from this range.

For a detailed description of the Call topics, consult the Call text in Annex A.

It is emphasized that due to the joint nature of this Call, proposals must create added value for sustainable and organic food systems in line with the objectives of both ERA-NETs. This means that special attention should be paid to the scope of the Call described in chapter 1.2.

Applicants should avoid redundancy with the open Calls in H2020, including PRIMA.

3 Funding modalities and who can apply

The following partner countries will provide funds for the Call: **Algeria, Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.** A list with the partners including the available funds per country and topics can be found in Annex B.

The funding for transnational projects will be based on a virtual common pot instrument. This means that applicants of projects that have been selected for funding will receive the grant directly from their national funding bodies according to their terms and conditions.

Institutions (legal entities) that are involved in research/innovation and operate in accordance with national rules, including companies and stakeholder organizations, are invited to apply. **Before preparation of the project proposals applicants are strongly advised to contact respective National Contact Points (NCP) (see Annex C).**

- The application must be written in English.
- Research consortia must consist of at least three eligible independent legal entities from a minimum of three different partner countries participating with funding in a specific topic (Annex B).
- Applicants who are not eligible for funding by their national funding body or applicants from countries not participating in the Call are welcome to be partner in a research consortia on their own costs, they cannot be Coordinator and are not counted for the required minimum number of partners
- The maximum duration of a project is 36 months.
- The requested total budget cannot exceed 1.5 M€ per proposal (requested funding).
- Total eligible budget per country must not exceed 70 % of the total eligible project budget in order to achieve balanced partnerships and ensure that responsibility and risks are shared.
- Research consortia are encouraged to consider the cross-cutting issues (see chapter 2) as well as good geographical coverage in order to strengthen the impact of a project proposal.

What to do now?

1. Develop a research idea.
2. Work with colleagues in the scientific community to build a project consortium involving researchers (and possibly industry) from at least three different participating countries.
3. Decide whether you would like to be project coordinator or participant in a project.
4. Get more information on the website www.susfood-era.net and <http://projects.au.dk/co-reorganicofund/>
5. Start drafting your pre-proposal with your consortium.
6. Be alert to the official Call announcement (2 September 2019) and get ready to submit your application online.

4 Time schedule, 2-step-procedure

The Joint Call will follow a 2-step procedure with pre-proposals (Step 1) and full proposals (Step 2). There will be an expert evaluation and selection at both steps. A time schedule is provided below (tentative).

Action	Schedule
Step 1	
Launch of the Call	2 September 2019
Webinar for interested applicants	September 2019 (tbc on the website)
Closing date for submission of pre-proposals	4 November 2019 – 3 p.m. CET
Evaluation (Peer Review)/Selection	until 27 January 2020
Notification letters sent to applicants	27 -31 January 2020
Step 2	
Closing date for submission of full proposals	27 March 2020 – 3 p.m. CET
Evaluation (Peer Review)/Selection	Until mid-June 2020
Notification letters sent to applicants	End of June 2020
Contract negotiations	July-August 2020 onwards
Start of projects	~ September 2020
End of projects	~ August 2023

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Annex A: Call text

Topic 1. Resource-efficient, circular and zero-waste food systems

Topic description

A sustainable food production system is one that makes efficient use of renewable, sustainably produced resources and maintains them in the economic cycle as long as possible. Thereby resource-efficiency can be achieved by optimising inputs, reducing water and energy use and this in turn helps diminishing the environmental impact of food production, while sustaining productivity. However, the challenge remains to balance sustainability aspects of food production with preserving the product quality (including safety and nutritional value) and important characteristics required by the consumers (e.g. ensuring the organic label).

This approach includes valorisation and use of side streams following a zero-waste philosophy, making use of new and innovative tools (e.g. Industry 4.0), and a systemic concept that considers all the steps involved in food production from farm to fork to support the transition towards a resilient, efficient and competitive food and drink sector. To achieve this, there is a need to rethink how food production systems function, including aspects such as the use (and re-use) of sustainable and organic materials, products, processes and services. A need is envisaged for supportive marketing strategies that promote new value chains and systems where benefits and burdens are shared along them.

Tools such as scenario and model building can help greatly in improving our understanding of options to achieve the transition towards sustainable systems, whereas the monitoring of established changes will generate key information on how system performance gains can be attained.

Possible subtopics

a. Food system analysis and models, for example

- Identification of critical points (barriers, pressures and enablers, evidence gaps and levers) or ‘win wins’ for transition to more sustainable/organic food systems
- Impact of different diets (e.g. animal-based foods/ vegan/ vegetarian) underlying effects of related food production systems (e.g. intensive farming, organic, etc.) on sustainability [see definition]
- Evaluate and review existing metrics (e.g. indicators or standards) and/or development of new ones to establish relevant methods and tools (e.g. environmental footprint methods, carbon accounting etc.) in order to track sustainability [see definition]; labelling for transparency and authenticity

b. Food system solutions, for example

- Innovative technologies to enable resource recycling and closing gaps in resource and nutrient cycles throughout the whole food system

- Advanced approaches to shorten and create more efficient supply chains of commodities and food products
- Concepts for minimisation of food losses and waste
- Valorisation of new, under- or inefficiently exploited and heterogeneous raw material (e.g. from organic production) from land and sea, and of side/waste streams

c. Food system management, for example

- Alternative models for food systems organisation and management, considering interrelationships as well as equitable sharing between different actors
- Modelling and simulating redesigned processes at various scales including business and distribution models (including comparative studies of different approaches and policy scenarios)

Expected outcome/ impact

- Providing research, knowledge and innovation to support the shift towards sustainable and organic food production from land and sea, by improving sustainability, resilience and resource efficiency, reducing impact on the environment and food losses and waste.
- Increasing the knowledge base by better understanding and measuring effects and impacts of transitions towards sustainable and ecological food systems.
- Identify intervention points to enable resilient systems that use resources more intelligently and in an equitable manner.

Topic 2. Diversity in Food from Field to Plate

Topic description

It is estimated that three quarters of the global crop production comes from nine plant species and the livestock production relies only on few animal species. Over the last century, plant genetic diversity and crop varieties have rapidly declined, and few high-yielding varieties now dominate the fields and people's diets.

Product chains have undergone a progressive specialisation, intensification and vertical and horizontal segregation. Both plant and animal production are often obtained in separate farms, value chains or regions. These food production systems have been acknowledged to have an environmental and social impact.

Diversity contributes to sustainable food systems via its links to seed and production systems, dietary choices and environmental impacts. Agrobiodiversity enhances food systems resilience (e.g. to pests and climate change), nutrition quality, food security, biodiversity, and ecosystem services. Dietary diversity is key for healthy and sustainable diets while dietary changes can influence environmental impacts, including climate change. Consumer demand can act as an important driver promoting the development of more sustainable and diverse food systems. The globally increasing organic sector provides a good example.

Possible subtopics

- a. Diversity in farming systems (not commonly used species, varieties and crops including protein crops and perennial crops, functional diversity for crop protection and improved soil health, diverse and resilient livestock, vertical and horizontal integration of tree (agroforestry), plant and animal productions)
- b. Diversity in processing (e.g. functionality, quality and nutritional characteristics of products, new raw materials)
- c. Diversity in supply chain/retailing (e.g. short supply chains)
- d. Diversity in consumption and diets (socio-economic aspects of dietary choices, communication and education towards diverse plant-based diets)

Expected outcome/ impact

Providing research evidence methodological frameworks for comparison of different solutions, trade-offs and policy recommendations for a diversity of food that promotes sustainable and organic food systems (along the entire supply chain - from field to plate) by increasing biodiversity and genetic diversity, food functionality, quality and nutritional values, and decreasing the environmental impact of food.

Topic 3. Mild Food Processing

Topic description

Novel food technologies will play an important role in supplying the growing world population with high quality, healthy and sustainable foods, including organics.

New mild processing technologies, using mild temperatures and limited amounts of processing aids, have been developed to improve the preservation of foods while lowering the use of energy and water. These novel technologies can achieve nutrient preservation, good nutritional quality of food and bioavailability, extend the shelf life of products, optimise the individual components, and maximise final functions (technical functionalities, sensory attributes, biological preservation, and nutrition composition).

Mild food processing can be described as minimal processing, gentle processing or as careful processing. It can be divided into non-thermal/ thermal and conventional/novel processing methods. Unprocessed or minimally processed foods are conventionally processed by means of slight modifications, such as heat/moist drying, enzyme technology, fractioning or non-alcoholic fermentation, sterilization and pasteurization. Novel mild food processing technologies include emerging technologies such as high-pressure processing (HPP), pulsed electric field processing (PEF), ultrasounds or microwaving.

Mild processes gives the opportunity to make side streams available for new, high-quality applications, change single process operations or the re-design of the entire food supply chain.

Possible sub-topics

- a. Development of resource efficient, environmentally friendly, innovative solutions for careful food processing. For example; fermentation, membrane processes, and other alternative methods
- b. Solutions for maintaining or improving the beneficial nutritive compounds (e.g. unsaturated fatty acids, dietary fibre, prebiotics) throughout the whole food chain, and methods to increase both nutritional value and added value of food products. Easy-to-use food products to support healthy nutrition and sustainable living
- c. Development of food ingredients to improve stability, texture, flavour and overall acceptability that can also suit the organic scheme. They may be, for example; natural aromas, aromatic preparations and colourants or coatings as well as novel food additives
- d. Solutions for improved food safety and increased shelf life of minimally processed, fresh or perishable food products that will also reduce the food waste

Expected outcome/ impact

Development of new, resource efficient and sustainable solutions for the food sector, considering the specificity of organic raw material and organic food. More resource-efficient and innovative technologies and approaches, which increase value throughout the whole food chain, encouraging environmental friendly and climate smart food processing and sustainable food consumption habits, as well as human well-being and health - comparing existing methods to support knowledge-based decision-making.

Topic 4. Sustainable and smart packaging

Topic description

Food packaging is an integral part of food safety as it helps to maintain the benefits of food after the production process is completed. Quality of food products can decrease significantly during storage, handling and transportation. Deterioration is one of the main reasons why food is ultimately destroyed. A large percentage of the totality of food losses takes place in the supply chain at distribution, retail and household levels. Packaging is also one of the main processes directed to preserve the quality of food products through long distance transport and ensures fit to eat and wholesome food at the time of consumption. Packaging can minimise spoilage and reduce food loss and waste by food preservation and protection. This can be achieved through approaches such as intelligent and active packaging, which can, for example; improve the condition of the packaged food or monitor and collect data on the quality of products and the conditions outside using sensors, indicators or radio frequency identification (RFID) systems. The collected and generated information can be provided to stakeholders at different stages of the food supply chains to facilitate decision-making if necessary. It can also be used to inform the consumers about the edibility of a food product to avoid that it is wasted before spoilage. However, packaging technology must strike a balance between the benefits derived from food protection (safety, quality and waste reduction) and the energy and material costs of packaging materials and processes.

Sustainable packaging solutions should also consider the minimisation of non-biodegradable packaging, especially plastics, as the environmental impact is very high and the amount of micro-plastics in soil and the water environment has risen significantly in recent years. Therefore, it exists an urgent need to identify sustainable packaging materials.

At the same time, it is important to increase the awareness of the consumers to reduce the amount of plastics and food waste and to increase the acceptance for new packaging solutions.

Possible subtopics

- a. Technological solutions, for example,
 - Identification of existing sustainable technological solutions for food packaging and their contribution to reduce food loss, food waste and the of amount of plastics;
 - Identification of alternative materials (biodegradable) for food packaging including established solutions and those close to market maturity;
 - Cost-benefit analysis of smart packaging solutions (sensors), their possible or existing applications, and potential barriers to their successful implementation.

- b. Demands on food packaging
 - Analysis of consumer's needs, expectations and acceptance for new packaging solutions;
 - Identification of barriers and requirements of the supply chain against new packaging solutions (transportability, storage suitability, protection against external influences);
 - Assessment of the impact of different food packaging solutions on the quality of food (shelf life, taste, properties).

- c. Circular economy for packaging
 - Economic analysis of recycling strategies of food packaging;
 - Policy recommendations to introduce and scale up mainstreaming of smart and sustainable packaging;
 - Assessment of existing approaches to introduce smart and sustainable packaging to the market, e.g. supermarket commitments and voluntary agreements, and feed raw materials back into the circular economy.

Expected outcome/ impact

Providing an understanding of existing and new methods under development for sustainable and smart packaging as well as approaches to reduce food loss and waste. Collecting information of how smart packaging can contribute to improved recycling strategies to reduce waste, especially in regards to plastics recycling and reduction. Better understanding of the needs and barriers to the successful implementation of sustainable and smart packaging in the supply chain. Broader knowledge of consumer perception and acceptance against new packaging solutions.

Annex B: Indicative Call budget (in 1000 EUR).

Country	Institution	Contact person	TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	TOPIC 3	TOPIC 4	Total
Algeria	MESRS	Samira Chader	x	x	x	x	600
Belgium	VLAIO	Marianne Claessens	x	x	x	x	1.000
Belgium	Dep.LV	Marleen Delanoy		x			150
Denmark	DAFA	Julia Gajo	x	x			500
Estonia	MEM	Maarja Malm	x	x	x	x	100
Finland	MMM	Seija Ahonen-Siivola	x	x	x	x	300
France	ANR	Claude Yven	x ⁴				500
France	MAA	Jean-Marc Chourot		x ⁵			400
Germany	BMEL (represented by BLE)	Annika Fuchs Lucie Andeltova	x	x	x	x	1.000
Italy	MIPAAFT	Serenella Puliga Elena Capolino (DISR IV Office)	x	x	x		1.400
		Roberta Cafiero Alessandra Morganti (PQAI 1 Office)					
Italy	MIUR	Mauro Bertelletti			x	x	500
Latvia	AREI	Ligita Melece		x			140
Lebanon	CNRS	Moiun Hamze, Elise Noujeim	x				60
Luxemburg	FNR	Marie-Claude Marx	x	x	x	x	50
Morocco	MO	Abdelouahid Ezzarfi	x	x	x	x	300

⁴ ANR (France) is only funding subtopic 1b and 1c (see Annex A)

⁵ MAA (France) is only funding subtopic 2a (see Annex A)

Country	Institution	Contact person	TOPIC 1	TOPIC 2	TOPIC 3	TOPIC 4	Total
Norway	RCN	Nina Elisabeth Solheim	x	x			400
Poland	NCBR	Joanna Makocka	x	x	x		600
Romania	UEFISCDI	Adrian Asanica	x	x	x	x	500
Spain	ICE	Isabel Gobernado	x	x	x	x	450
Turkey	GDAR	Alay-Vural/Budaklier	x	x	x	x	200
United Kingdom	DEFRA	Victor Aguilera Sophie Rollinson	x	x	x		335 ⁶
Total Call budget							9.485

⁶ The contribution of DEFRA (UK) is £300,000 (sterling); the exchange rate from Sterling to Euros applied will be that at the time of SUSFOOD2/CORE ORGANICS Call publication.

Annex C: National Contact Points (NCP)

Country/ region	Funding body	Name	Telephone	E-mail
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