



**Fair food and trade systems for Africa through food
convergence innovation**

**Open Call 1 (OC1) addressed to research
and technology stakeholders**

**Annex 2
Open Call 1 Text (Fiche)**



**Funded by
the European Union**

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List of Abbreviations

Term	Description
AfCFTA	The African Continental Free Trade Area. AfCFTA is one of the Flagship Projects of Agenda 2063 Africa's development framework. The AfCFTA aims at accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations.
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report. A report that all applicants receive after their proposal has been evaluated. Applicants can submit a request for redress if they believe there was a shortcoming in the evaluation process detailed in their ESR.
EC	European Commission. The executive branch of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, and overseeing EU programs.
EU	European Union. A political and economic union of 27 European countries.
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions. A set of common questions and answers about the OC to support applicants.
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties. A mechanism used by the FCI4Africa project to provide funding through its Open Call to beneficiaries.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation. The EU regulation governing the protection of personal data and privacy.
HE	Horizon Europe. The EU's main research and innovation funding programme.
IP	Intellectual Property. Creations of the mind (inventions, software, data, etc.) that can be legally protected.
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights. Legal rights that protect intellectual property, such as patents, copyrights, and trademarks.

MFI	Micronutrient Fortification Index. A scoring system that ranks companies or products based on their fortification performance and compliance with standards.
NTMs	Non-tariff Measures. Regulatory or procedural requirements (such as standards, certifications, inspections) that affect trade but are not tariffs.
OC	Open Call. An invitation for proposals through which external beneficiaries can apply for funding to carry out specific activities that support the project's objectives.
OCAB	Open Call Advisory Board. The board responsible for conducting the eligibility check of submitted proposals. It is composed of the coordinator (IITA), the scientific coordinator (WR), and the Open Call Manager (RFF).
PICS	Purdue Improved Crop Storage Bags. A hermetic solution that eliminates post-harvest losses and the need for pesticides.
TRL	Technology Readiness Level. A scale used to assess the maturity level of a technology.
UC(s)	Use Case(s). User-centred innovation environments where scientists, practitioners, civil society, and public authorities work together through a multi-actor approach. Each use case addresses a specific challenge by co creating, testing, and improving products, tools, or policy solutions.
VAT number	Value Added Tax number. A unique identification number assigned to businesses for Value Added Tax purposes. It is used in invoices, tax reporting, and financial transactions within and outside the EU.

1 The FCI4Africa project

The FCI4Africa project responds to the growing demand for sustainable, fair, and just food trade between Africa and Europe. Under the EU Green Deal, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, as well as the Deforestation-Free Regulation, agri-food products entering the EU must meet stricter environmental, social, and ethical criteria. These evolving rules can either limit or unlock opportunities for African producers and SMEs. In parallel, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is creating a single market of 1.3 billion people, harmonizing technical standards and non-tariff measures, and aligning with the African Union's Agenda 2063 to double productivity, cut post-harvest losses, and integrate African food systems into regional and global value chains.

FCI4Africa aims to bridge these two transformations by enabling ethical, traceable, and climate-resilient trade. It combines policy-oriented research with bottom-up innovation to ensure that sustainability standards translate into tangible benefits for smallholders, processors, and consumers. The project develops and tests digital tools, analytical methods, and participatory business models that verify product provenance, food safety, and social fairness; assess the impacts of non-tariff measures; and strengthen self-regulation and certification systems such as fortification and aflatoxin-safe indices. By linking farmers, SMEs, regulators, and certification bodies through data-driven and transparent systems, FCI4Africa supports a new generation of African agri-food products that are competitive, verifiable, and trusted in both domestic and international markets.

2 FCI4Africa Open Call 1 (OC1)

2.1 General Information

FCI4Africa will launch its **first Open Call (OC1)** addressed to research and technology stakeholders (start-ups, SMEs, research organisations, and other multidisciplinary actors) to foster climate-neutral, social just fair-trade food systems within Africa.

The project will select a maximum of eight (≤ 8) sub-projects in total providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP), as a mechanism to foster climate-neutral, social, just, fair trade food systems within Africa.

FCI4Africa will only accept applications from **single applicants (no Consortia allowed)**. Applicants are expected to contribute to one of the following objectives:

Objective 1: To test, validate, and enhance the existing business concepts and tools of the project, including those already developed within the Use Cases.

Objective 2: To develop ideas and tools that address specific challenges of FCI4Africa.

All funded projects are expected to generate data sets that contribute to the refinement of tools, methodologies, and business concepts.

Applicants are expected to collaborate with local stakeholders to ensure that solutions are contextually relevant and effectively address the unique challenges faced by African communities.

Solutions **do not necessarily have to be tied** to FCI4Africa existing Use Case topics as long

as they align with the broader objectives of the project. Specifically, solutions should address one of the following:

- Lack of sustainability, fairness and justness in the agri-food sector
- Difficulties in complying with new EU legislation and trade policies
- High certification costs creating barriers for African small-scale farmers
- Fragmentation of intra-African agricultural trade
- Limited transparency and data obstructing the integration of the informal sector
- Inconsistency of non-tariff measures across regions

OC solutions are expected to start at TRL3-4 and reach TRL6 by the end of the project.

2.2 Specific requirements for the sub-projects

Single entities will receive funding for testing, validating, and enhancing business concepts and tools of the project or develop ideas and tools that contribute to the project's objectives which can then be introduced to the market.

Proposals must consist of original work by the applicants, and their anticipated developments do not infringe upon any third-party rights. Any disputes or legal challenges stemming from third-party claims resulting from the sub-granted projects are the sole responsibility of the Applicant. The FCI4Africa consortium holds no responsibility for verifying IP ownership of complementary technologies or methods introduced by the sub-granted projects.

This requirement applies specifically to the **content of the proposal document**, not necessarily to the activities within the project. Applicants may incorporate **existing third-party technologies (e.g., detection equipment, software, or analytical tools) in their activities, provided they have the proper rights, permissions, or licenses to use them**. However, Applicants must not falsely claim ownership of intellectual property they do not develop.

Proposals must accomplish an iterative multi-actor innovation process in a real-life environment as a leading principle for adequate involvement of a wide range of food system actors (including research and development organisations, business organisations, civil society organisations, and government) and engage them in developing and implementing realistic solutions aimed at enhancing food and trade systems within Africa.

Applicants will deliver their solution in English language. All applications, deliverables, reports, and communications with the FCI4Africa Open Call team are required to be submitted in English.

The first FCI4Africa Open Call 1 (OC1) with the respective Call for Evaluators will be launched on 7 April 2026. Before assigning external evaluators, each proposal will be verified by the FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board (OCAB), for eligibility according to the predefined criteria of the OC. The proposal evaluation and sub-grant agreement preparation will take place between July 2026 and October 2026. Selected projects will be launched in November 2026 having an implementation timeframe of 12 months (until October 2027). The implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- **Phase 1** – Design (3 months / November 2026-January 2027): Payment of the 20% of the total grant [Deliverable: Activity plan];
- **Phase 2** – Development (6 months / February 2027-July 2027): Payment of 50% of the total grant [Deliverable: Results demonstration];

- **Phase 3** – Validation (3 months / August 2027-October 2027): Payment of the final 30% of the total grant [Deliverable: Report on dissemination activities and lessons learnt].

An initial timeline for FCI4Africa Open Call 1 can be seen in the following figure. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations, are not legally binding, and are to be confirmed by the FCI4Africa team throughout the process and in agreement with the EC.



Figure 1. Timeline for the FCI4Africa OC1.

2.3 Eligibility Criteria

FCI4Africa Open Call 1 (OC1) aims to provide financial support to research and technology stakeholders, including start-ups, SMEs, research organisations, and multidisciplinary actors for the testing, validation, and enhancement of business concepts and tools developed within FCI4Africa, as well as for the development of ideas, tools, or datasets that contribute to the project's objectives and can be introduced to the market.

FCI4Africa will only accept applications from one (1) entity per proposal (no Consortia allowed) and proposed solutions must fit within the project's objectives or one of the FCI4Africa Use Cases (as described in Annex 4: Applicants' Guide, section 1.3: Use Cases being developed within the FCI4Africa project) or relevant thematic areas. Detailed eligibility criteria are described in the Annex 4: Applicants' Guide, in Section 2.2 Eligibility Criteria.

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- Legal entity established in countries eligible for funding through Horizon Europe);
- Only one (1) entity per proposal, namely a research or technology stakeholder, including universities and research institutes, technology developers and R&D SMEs, and innovation-driven start-ups among others. The proposal is submitted by a single applicant (consortia are not allowed). In particular for Universities and Research Institutions, the rule applies to each Department. Different departments of the same university or research organisation may participate in different proposals, provided that no single department participates in more than one application;
- Third-party activities are under the domain of African food systems. This requires that the sub-projects' activities are implemented within Africa and directly target local food system actors and value chains;
- Uniqueness of the proposal (one proposal per applicant). Each third party can participate in only one (1) proposal. If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all such project applications will be rejected;
- In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded;
- The proposal must align with the Open Call's objectives;

- Proposals are not pre-selected in the other projects' open calls funded under the same topic (HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-11), e.g., STREAMING;
- Proposed work to be carried out after the selection process;
- Existing consortium members of the FCI4Africa project and their affiliated entities¹ are not eligible for the OC. In addition, Applicants must not be involved in the implementation of the FCI4Africa project and must not have a confirmed, paid relationship with any FCI4Africa consortium partner for the provision of services or activities under FCI4Africa, including through pilot or demonstration plants. Any such relationship constitutes a conflict of interest that may compromise the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project; therefore, the Applicant is not eligible under this Open Call;
- The proposal must be submitted before the defined deadline, applying the requested submission procedure;
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants;
- All applicants must have a valid VAT number and must be active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.

FCI4Africa Open Call team reserves the right to ask for additional clarifications from the applicants during the eligibility check.

Proposals that comply with these criteria are eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

The OC Advisory Board (OCAB) will be formed to run the eligibility check of the submitted proposals and select the external experts who will evaluate the proposals.

2.4 Submission Procedure

FCI4Africa's Open Call 1 for proposals will be submitted digitally through the opencalls.fund platform developed by reframe.food. Interested Applicants should visit FCI4Africa's website (<https://fci4africa.eu/open-calls/>) for any updates and the FAQ section available on the opencalls.fund as well as on the project website.

Submissions received through any other channel will not be considered and will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels indicated by the FCI4Africa consortium in the contracting phase (e.g., via email).

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded.

¹ Definition according to the Article 8 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement: Affiliated entities (in some programmes formerly called 'linked third parties'; new for 2021- 2027) are entities with a (usually legal or capital) link to a beneficiary.

Throughout the entire process, the confidentiality of applicants' identities and the contents of the proposals will be rigorously upheld. Any details pertaining to the proposed solution will be handled with the utmost discretion.

By applying to FCI4Africa Open Call 1, Applicants (single entities) automatically accept the terms and conditions of the Open Call as described in the Open Call 1 Kit.

2.5 Origin of the funds

All Sub-grantees will sign a dedicated Sub-grant Agreement with the FCI4Africa Open Call Manager / Treasurer (RFF) and the FCI4Africa coordinator (IITA). The funds provided to the Sub-grant Agreement originate from the funds of the European Project FCI4Africa which is funded by the European Commission under the Grant Agreement Number [101182485], and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners of FCI4Africa. This relation between the Sub-grantees and the European Commission through the FCI4Africa project carries a set of obligations to the Sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the Sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the FCI4Africa consortium partners to inform them on these.

2.6 Points of contact

All questions concerning the OC1 must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by e-mail to fciafrica@opencalls.fund. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 17:00 CEST on 26 June 2026. Until the start of the project implementation phase, all communication surrounding the Open Call will be made exclusively through the Open Call Manager via this email address.

We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

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