



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

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

**Annex 3
Hand out Summary**



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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)

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.

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].

Through the FCI4Africa OC1 a maximum of eight (≤ 8) sub-projects will be selected (total OC1 budget €400k – up to €50k for each third party).

Open Calls	Total Amount	Sub-Project Size	No. of Projects
OC1	€400k	Up to €50k	≤ 8

Important notice:

The submission timeline of the OC1 for the proposals is from the 7 April 2026 to 30 June 2026.

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