FCI4Africa

Fair food and trade systems for Africa through food convergence innovation

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

Annex 4
Applicants' Guide

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Table of Contents

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 Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the FCI4Africa Open Call 1 (OC1) addressed to research and technology stakeholders to test, validate, and enhance the business concepts and tools of the project, including those already developed within the Use Cases or 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. The document in its entirety and all associated documents of the Open Call 1 kit must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

1.1 About FCI4Africa

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.

1.2 FCI4Africa Objectives

The FCI4Africa project aims to empower small-scale, informal, and vulnerable actors in Africa's agri-food value chain, helping them participate in trade within Africa, between Africa and the EU, and globally.

1. Using the Food Convergence Innovation approach, the project addresses key challenges such as fairness, justness, and climate neutrality in African products, ensuring a more sustainable and just food system holistically.
2. Gain an understanding of the impacts of land use change within conventional and organic food production chains on the climate, biodiversity and society at large.
3. Identify the status quo and needs to establish, accredit, and scale-up African climate-neutral, fair, healthy, sustainable, and just food supplies.
4. Support the improvement of Non-Tariff Measure (NTMs) regimes through an inventory of current methods and application of proprietary simulation methods used to study the impact of these NTMs that can be applied to trade within Africa and between the

African Union and EU and how these align with environmental sustainability and welfare goals.
5. Develop and implement digital and analytical tools that will empower chain actors, certification bodies, and policy enforcers with the ability to verify and certify compliance of African agri-food products with criteria of justness, fairness, and sustainability (environmental, health, and social).
6. Pilot, refine, and validate the solutions (business models, tools, and best practices) developed within the project for the scale-up of fair, just and climate-neutral production of African agri-food commodities under real-life conditions of use cases in selected countries within different African regions.
7. Collaborate with other, parallel projects on food safety, agroforestry, and urban agriculture in Africa.

1.3 Use Cases being developed within the FCI4Africa project

Use cases serve as user-centred, open-innovation ecosystems that bring together scientists, practitioners, civil-society actors, and public authorities through a multi-actor approach. Each use case focuses on addressing a specific development challenge or on co-creating, testing, and refining innovative products, tools, or policy instruments. The development process follows a structured pathway, from ideation and co-design to real-life experimentation and practical application, and typically includes:

(i). defining the purpose and scope of the use case,

(ii) contextualizing it within local systems and needs,

(iii) setting up governance and management structures,

(iv) identifying target users, and

(v) building an active community of practice.

Use case implementation is guided by five core principles: operation in real-life settings, inclusive multi-stakeholder participation, strong user engagement, co-creation, and the use of a multi-method approach. The project builds on existing innovations and preliminary business models, co-developing user-driven solutions and sustainable business concepts with stakeholders across the food supply chain to ensure relevance, ownership, and long-term impact.

The following use cases will enable testing and co-development of climate-neutral, fair, and just food system innovations and business models in the real world.

No	Title	Countries
1	Promoting a healthy, safe, and profitable food system through scaling proven food safety technologies	Burgina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria
2	Deploying digital solutions for trade facilitation through compliance with integrated quality standards and non-tariff measures (NTMs)	Kenya, Nigeria
3	Elaborate approaches to increase resilience of rural communities against shocks	Senegal, Nigeria

Use Case #1: Promoting a healthy, safe, and profitable food system through scaling

proven food safety technologies (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria)

Background and objective: Food safety risks are highly regulated in international markets. This results in an asymmetric flow of safe grain to international markets, as opposed to domestic markets. This unfair flow of safe produce puts domestic consumers at risk of the associated negative health risks of exposure to contaminated produce. This use case aims to contribute to reducing the risk of exposure to one major food safety risk – aflatoxin contamination - through improvements in quality assurance processes that improve the traceability through fair mechanisms.

Aflatoxins are extremely toxic compounds of natural origin (categorized as Class 1 carcinogens) associated with the incidence of liver cancers, reduced immunity, and growth deficits in children, among other adverse health outcomes. Aflatoxins are prevalent in many foods produced in many African countries due to pre-disposing climatic and infrastructural conditions. Due to current processes, multiple domestic traders cannot meet regulatory requirements. Consequently, the strict regulatory requirement for international trade has implications for smallholder farmers and domestic consumers: (1) income losses due to penalties associated with product repatriation or consignment destruction, (2) rejected imports with sub-optimal quality redirected to domestic markets posing health risks to domestic consumers.

Consequently, although an unintended outcome, this results in the prioritization of providing safe food to international consumers that puts domestic consumers (producing populations) at risk. Therefore, the objective of this use case is to contribute to improvements in processes for flow and traceability of safe produce in fairness to the producing population.

Proposed solution: Promoting a healthy, safe, and profitable food system through the extension, dissemination, and use of products (Aflasafe®, hermetically sealed bags) counteracting the contamination of pre- and post-harvest of African commodity crops (cereals, maize, peanuts, etc.) with harmful moulds.

The intent of this use case is to bundle social and technical innovations. There are existing technologies that can be scaled to support producers, SMEs including Aflasafe™, a bioprotectant used for aflatoxin mitigation pre-harvest, hermetic storage bags (e.g. PICS bags) for insect management to reduce postharvest risk to aflatoxins, re-usable humidity indicators (e.g. DryCard™) to provide indications of moisture levels associated with aflatoxin concentrations , rapid in situ testing equipment (e.g. Neogen Raptor™) to help with screening produce, and strategic platforms (e.g. Food Convergence Innovation platforms, national and regional bodies relevant for aflatoxin mitigation). These along with social and technological processes that will be developed in this use case, including taking advantage of synergies with other projects (e.g. EU HORIZON projects HD4A, FS4Africa, UP-RISE) will increase the fair flow of safe food to domestic populations that produce food crops for domestic and international trade.

Involved actors: Potential partners in this use case include national bodies such as consumer protection agencies, standard bureaus, crop protection research programs, and SMEs (processors and traders) for international and domestic markets.

Use Case #2: Deploying digital solutions for trade facilitation through compliance with integrated quality standards and non-tariff measures (Kenya, Nigeria)

Background and objective: Despite significant decades-long investments in national food fortification programs in sub-Saharan Africa focused mainly on regulation and establishing industrial processes and capabilities, food fortification quality remains inconsistent in many markets. The main reasons behind poor commitment from the industry are the lack of integration of food fortification into day-to-day business processes, the absence of appropriate incentives, and a lack of transparency around food fortification compliance with product quality standards. These barriers to compliance are analogous to those that limit the uptake of fairtrade, sustainability and just agronomic and business practices. Recognising that food processors have a centre of gravity in agri-food value chains as anchor demand for quality attributes of inputs and as channels to consumer food security, harnessing their competitive nature to drive improved food quality through self-regulation is proving to be a cost-effective mechanism for quality assurance (and establishing and sustaining the systems that support it).

Deploying digital solutions for trade facilitation through compliance with non-tariff measures (NTMs) for fairness, justness, and sustainability (e.g., geolocation of deforestation-free products), as well as public health targets (e.g., micronutrient fortification). For example, the existing applications for micronutrient fortification index (TSN's MFI) currently being spearheaded by TechnoServe could be combined with additional features (deforestation-This should be applied to selected commodities traded among countries in regional economic blocks and/or across the continent, which are mainly targeted by these NTMs or nutritional interventions (cereals and other staple foods poor in vitamins/essential elements/protein). Identify possible inconsistencies in NTMs. TechnoServe, in partnership with AINFP, USAID, and Partners in Food Solutions, will create a stronger food processing sector by providing technical assistance and sector-wide training to food processors in East and Southern Africa. This project will provide food processing companies in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia with a financially viable business model for at least five (5) years with a minimum capacity of 2MT/day, five employees, and sources from smallholders. In Kenya, this is focused on wheat and maize flour; In Nigeria, wheat, edible, salt, and sugar are focused on commodities.

Sustaining large-scale and good-quality food fortification requires strategies that incentivize food processors to invest in and consistently meet national food fortification standards where they exist. A standardized Micronutrient Fortification Index (MFI) piloted in Nigeria has provided a ranking of fortified branded products for each participating company based on a score aggregating the effectiveness and efficiency of the company's systems and levels of product fortification. The MFI has demonstrated the significance of brands as a focal point for investment and industry accountability in food fortification and the power of harnessing the competitive nature of businesses to drive their food fortification performance.

Proposed solution: This subset of use cases will build on the Nigeria Micronutrient Fortification Index (MFI – use case 2a) that ranks over 36 brands of 20 companies that collectively capture at least 85% of market share in the country for wheat flour, maize meal, vegetable oil and sugar, and on the Kenya Millers Fortification Index (KMFI - use case 2b) that ranks the brands leading food processors that are members of the Kenya Cereal Millers Association (CMA) also capturing at 85% of market share for wheat flour and maize meal, to explore the integration of product quality criteria that drives incentives for sustainability, fairness and just systems from farm inputs, commodity production, aggregation and storage, processing and trade. Using enterprise-level and market data, a shared digital backbone will facilitate the traceability, self-regulation and integration of quality attributes that can be sustained commercially, and that will improve competitive performance of companies.

To ensure validity, it was integral that the index is built upon a strong foundation of data and serves as a structured and predictable instrument, one that incorporates the following criteria:

- Sets benchmarks for improved performance
- Demonstrates compliance across a range of quality standards
- Measures and monitors the business/industry
- Encourages learning and enhanced performance
- Improves communication within the business/industry and among investors

To this end, the MFI mechanisms present an opportunity for the private sector to intensify its efforts at incentivising and conveying key quality attributes of agri-food products with increased industry ownership of innovative solutions that follow a strong business case.

In support of the current project co-led by TechnoServe, this use case will support activities within the ongoing project, such as providing specialized assistance, local consultancy operations, and promoting women-led processors programs and women networks. We will leverage the decision analytics tool developed in WP1 to generate insight on (a) factory diagnostics in partner factory diagnostics to identify opportunities to increase local, intra-African, and inter-Africa-EU trade, (b) trade of fortified commodities to nutrient deficiencies locally and in neighbouring countries, and (c) promote fair and just trade at different scales. Additionally, the knowledge platform to be developed in WP4 will be tested in this use case to ascertain whether the platform can provide an opportunity to integrate local knowledge, experiences, and services among local food processing networks and women-led enterprises.

Involved actors: Women-led processors groups, women entrepreneurs, policymakers, industry experts, and civil society organizations.

Use Case #3: Elaborate approaches to increase resilience of rural communities against shocks (Nigeria, Senegal)

Background and objective: Elaborate approaches to increase resilience of rural communities against shocks such as weather extremes, economic adversities, and sociodemographic trends (e.g., urbanization) that could negatively affect productivity, justness, and sustainability in the long run. This could be done according to the principles of the Food Convergence Innovation, addressing both technical-scientific and socio- economic aspects, such as gender issues and fairness of income distribution across the production chain. A working example of a resilient community in Senegal will be taken as a starting point, of which the outcomes will be evaluated for the possibility to extrapolate them to other regions within Africa.

The Resilient Community concept being implemented in Senegal targets vulnerable households who are involved in at least one segment of the agricultural value chains; At least 100 women lead household involved in the activity.

The government allocates 1 ha of land to each female headed household, with a continuous supply of water, solar energy, greenhouse, and fish pound for the production of high value products (vegetable, fish, chicken) for own consumption and the sale of their produce to local and regional markets. The female heads of the Resilient households are provided with continuous training, mentorship and coaching to enhance their skills and capabilities in managing their family farms and taking their produce to lucrative markets.

The case investigated the extent to which the concept constitutes a structural response to the issue of food insecurity, in Senegal and the Sahal region, in general, providing innovative economic and institutional responses to an environmental and humanitarian crisis. It hinges on addressing critical bottlenecks to vulnerable segments of the rural population (women and youth), by providing them access to customised information on the resource's basis of their territories, integrated technological packages and technical advice to beneficiate their household resources and gain access to lucrative markets.

It will also build on the initiatives previously carried out within the region by various international organizations to render communities less vulnerable to climate change and optimize outputs and profitability.

Proposed solution: Evaluation of the Emergent Territory Program and assessing its effectiveness and efficiency in providing support to local people's response to an environmental and humanitarian crisis.

- Assessing the impact of the Resilient Territory and Household program and approach to enhance the nutrition status, incomes and resilience on vulnerable segments of Senegal rural people.
- To assess the extent to which and the conditions required for the gains of the program will be sustained in the long run and scaled to other regions in Senegal and neighbouring countries.
- Develop and benchmark a set of support systems, tools and guidelines for decision making (household, district, region) on issues pertaining to production, consumption and trade in Senegal and in West Africa.

Involved actors: Women heads of household, rural youth active in agricultural research, agribusiness, and service provision; local mayors and locally elected officials dealing with land tenure systems; technical experts (crops, fisheries, forests, trade), investors and traders involved in cross border commerce. Additionally, École Nationale Supérieure d'Agriculture (ENSA) and National Research Institute (ISRA) are involved in Use Case #3.

1.4 FCI4Africa Open Call 1 (OC1)

1.4.1 Approach & Planned Open Calls Realisation

FCI4Africa aims to enhance sustainable, fair, and healthy food systems within Africa, focusing on free and fair trade, Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) harmonization, and digitization in food systems, alongside promoting knowledge development through open science and digital platforms. In order to provide financial support to third parties activities, the Consortium will launch **two Open Calls for single applicants**:

1) Open Call 1 (OC1) addressed to research and technology stakeholders (start-ups, SMEs, research organisations, and other multidisciplinary actors) to test, validate and enhance the business concepts and tools of the project or develop ideas and tools or prepare data sets that contribute to project's objectives, which can then be introduced to the market.
2) Open Call 2 (OC2) to innovation hubs in order to train use case partners, open call beneficiaries by providing mentoring and accelerating innovative business concepts, including social innovation and upscaling in view of African or European food business entrepreneurs and start-ups. The activities can be either virtual or in-person.

The 2 Open Calls will result in 12 sub-projects in total.

- Eight (8) sub-projects (max) will be selected for OC1 (total OC1 budget €400k – up to €50k for each third party)
- Four (4) sub-projects (max) will be selected for OC2 (total OC2 budget €200k – up to €50k for each third party)

In total, €600k budget will be allocated for financial support to third parties.

Open Calls	Total Amount	Sub-Project Size	No. of Projects
OC1	€400k	Up to €50k	≤8
OC2	€200k	Up to €50k	≤4

The OCs will be carried out in compliance with the basic principle calls of the European Commission, which are: Excellence, Transparency, Fairness, Impartiality, Confidentiality, Efficiency and Speed.

Single entities will receive funding for testing, validating, and enhancing the business concepts and tools of the project or developing 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 is not responsible for verifying the ownership authenticity of the proposed solution.

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., equipment, analytical tools, or software) into 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.

To minimise administration and financial errors, each selected Applicant (sub-project) will receive the funding on a lump sum basis and according to the terms of the contract signed between the Applicant and FCI4Africa project. No pre-financing is foreseen, and the financial support is provided in the form of pre-defined lump-sum amounts according to the implementation phases of the sub-projects as described below, linked to the successful completion and acceptance of agreed deliverables. Implementing this approach, rather than a payment tied to complex administrative justifications, will decrease the administrative burden of the Open Call.

The first FCI4Africa Open Call (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.

1.5 Purpose and Objectives of Open Call 1 (OC1)

The purpose of both OCs is to foster climate-neutral, social just fair trade food systems within Africa. In this context, OC1 aims to provide financial support to research and technology stakeholders (start-ups, SMEs, research organisations, and other multidisciplinary actors) to contribute to one of the following objectives:

Objective 1: To test, validate, and enhance the existing business concepts and tools of the project (*see Appendix 1*), 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.

1.6 Call Expected Outcome

Through OC1, ≤8 (maximum eight) additional projects will be funded to either a) **test, validate, and enhance the business concepts and tools** of the project (*see Appendix 1*), including those already developed within the Use Cases or b) **develop ideas and tools** that address specific challenges of FCI4Africa. Single entities are invited to develop and implement solutions that address specific challenges within the food system.

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.

Developed 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.

To summarise:

Open Call	OC1 addressed to research and technology stakeholders
Purpose	Provide financial support to research and technology stakeholders (start-ups, SMEs, research organisations and other multidisciplinary actors) to test, validate and enhance 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
Budget	Eight (8) projects * €50,000 = €400,000 (one (1) entity per proposal)

1.7 Submission procedure

FCI4Africa's Open Call 1 for proposals will be submitted digitally through the opencalls.fund platform developed by reframe.food. The opencalls.fund platform is a digital platform for the management of the applications for financial support to third parties and accelerator programmes. 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.

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.

1.8 Language

English is the official language for the FCI4Africa Open Call 1. **Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated.** English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the FCI4Africa project. This means that all the requested contributions of the application (documents of the OC kit) 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, however if it is deemed essential to facilitate the eligibility check, Applicants may be requested to provide additional documentation (i.e., a translation of the relevant sections of the official document into English–this does not have to be a formal, certified translation) in a timely manner.

1.9 Documentation format

Any document requested by the Applicants in any of the phases (e.g., submission, eligibility check) must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. The provided proposal template (Annex 5) must be used when preparing the proposal and **should not exceed the limit of 15 pages**. All tables, figures, references, and any other element pertaining to the application must be included as an integral part of the application and are thus counted against this page limit. **Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal. The cover page, the Table of Contents (ToC) and the Budget Tables are not included in the limit of the 15 pages.** Removing explanatory text, located below the paragraph sub-titles in the proposal template, is allowed. Removing explanatory text, located below the paragraph sub-titles in the proposal template, is allowed.

The reference font for the body text of applications is Arial and the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. A minimum paragraph spacing of 5 pts and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. This applies to the body text, including text in tables. Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formulas, may deviate, but must be legible. The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) must be at least 15m mm (not including any footers or headers).

Incomplete applications or applications that do not comply with these requirements will be excluded from evaluation as non-eligible.

1.10 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.

More details on the obligations of the Sub-grantees can be found in Chapter 4.

2 Proposal Submission and Selection

All Open Call selected beneficiaries must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the present section, sign and submit the following documents.

At the time of submission, Applicants must submit the following documents:

- **Declaration of Honour:** The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by each entity's legal representative and stamped (with the institution's stamp if applicable).
- **SME Declaration:** Declares that the Applicants are SMEs according to EC standards. The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by SMEs legal representative and stamped (with the SMEs stamp if applicable).

Important notice:

As a general rule, all documents that require to bear stamps and signatures must be signed by the legal representative of the Applicant. **In the case of parties coming from a country where the use of stamps is not mandatory, it is required to provide relevant justification documents in English.** E-signatures are also acceptable and in this case the existence of stamps is not required. PDF Advanced Electronic Signatures (PadES) and CMS Advanced Electronic Signatures (CadES) are acceptable e-signature formats for the FCI4Africa OC.

Although there is no requirement for letters of support, Applicants can include references about their existence in their proposal.

During the contracting phase, selected Applicants must provide the following documents:

- Bank account information. The payments will be made directly from the FCI4Africa OC treasurer.
- The Sub-grant Agreement (indicative model given as Annex 9) will be sent to selected applicants by the Open Call Manager following the evaluation and selection phases.
- Proof of legal existence. Selected applicants will be requested to provide any supporting documentation as proof of their legal existence.

2.1 Open Call Publication

The FCI4Africa Open Call 1 will be published on the EU Funding and Tenders Portal, and FCI4Africa website, it may also publicised via the FCI4Africa project partners' websites/dissemination portals on 7 April 2026 and it will remain open until 30 June 2026, at 17:00 CEST. The OC1 will be widely communicated through social media channels and the FCI4Africa partners' networks and channels.

The publication will be supported by the Open Call 1 Kit, which includes the following documents:

- **Open Call 1 Text (Fiche)**, which provides the scope and objectives of the OC.
- **Hand Out Summary**, which provides a summary of the OC including its key information in one page.
- **Applicants' Guide** (present document)
- **Proposal template**, word document to be completed by the Applicant, saved, and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase.
- **Budget template**, excel document to be completed by the Applicant, saved and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase
- **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, which confirms the ability of the single entity to execute

the sub-project (if selected), exclusion of conflict of interest, etc. (signed and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase).

- **SME Declaration**, which informs on the legal entity status securing that the applicants are eligible for the OC (in terms that they are SMEs according to the EC rules). Start-ups are also required to fill in the declaration.
- **Bank account information**, which collects information of single entities' bank accounts where the FCI4Africa payments will be transferred to (only for selected beneficiaries, it's applicable only at the contracting stage).
- An indicative **Sub-grant Agreement contract**, just as a reference for the Applicants. The final official document will be shared with successful Applicants during the contracting phase.
- A **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** document, which will be updated throughout the entire OC1 duration.

Interested Applicants have to regularly check the FAQ section in the opencalls.fund platform and/or the FCI4Africa website.

2.2 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.

2.2.1 Overall eligibility criteria

FCI4Africa will only **accept applications from one 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 Section 1.3:Use Cases being developed within the FCI4Africa project) or relevant thematic areas.

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 (as defined in Section 2.2.5);
- Only one (1) entity per proposal, namely a research and 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). Particularly, 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 entities[1] 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.

2.2.2 Definition of Research and Technology stakeholders eligible for the FCI4Africa Open Call 1

Research and technology stakeholders are individuals or organisations that contribute to, influence, or are affected by research, innovation, or technological development activities. They include actors involved in the creation, regulation, funding, adoption, or societal use of research outputs and technologies, such as universities and research institutes, technology developers and R&D SMEs, and innovation-driven start-ups among others[2].

2.2.3 Definition of a start-up eligible for the FCI4Africa Open Call 1

A start-up is an early-stage business entity that:

- Has recently been established: Typically, within the past 10 years;

[1] Affiliated entities (formerly called 'linked third parties') are entities with a (usually legal or capital) link to a beneficiary and which implement parts of the action and are allowed to charge costs directly to the grant.

[2] Blok, V. (2023). Putting responsible research and innovation into practice: a multi-stakeholder approach (p. 284). Springer Nature.; https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/59325/978-3-031-14710-4.pdf?sequence=1

- ➢ Focuses on innovation: develops or leverages innovative products, services, or business models;
- ➢ Is scalable: Has the potential for high growth, market expansion, or significant social impact.

2.2.4 Definition of an SME eligible for the FCI4Africa Open Call 1

An SME is considered as such if it complies with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC[3], and the SME user guide[4]. In summary, the criteria which define an SME are the following:

- ➢ Independent, partner or linked enterprises, with financial and staff figures calculated in accordance with instructions given by the EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC;
- ➢ It is a legal entity established and based in one of the EU Member States or an HE Associated country as defined in HE rules for participation (see Section 2.2.5);
- ➢ Head count in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250;
- ➢ Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million.

If Applicants are not sure whether they comply with the SME criteria, an online SME self-assessment tool[5] is provided by the EC, for these purposes.

2.2.5 Definition of eligible countries

Association to Horizon Europe is governed by the Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/695[6]. Legal entities from associated countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the EU Member States unless specific restrictions or conditions are set in the work programme and/or call/topic text. Such measures could include the limitation of participation in certain actions to legal entities established only in the EU, or in the EU and specified non-EU countries, in order to safeguard the EU's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security.

Important notice:

The Open Call 1 adheres to the Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506 that stipulates that legal commitments must not be entered into with any public interest trusts established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust, concerning inter alia financial support to third parties. Consequently, the concerned Hungarian entities are excluded from receiving FSTP (financial support to third parties) from this Open Call. For further information please follow this link. It is important to mention that entities established in Hungary that are not affected with this decision are fully eligible to apply.

Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes

[3] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361&locale=en

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/42921

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/sme/public

[6] Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ 12.5.2021 L 170/1)

participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

According to the EU Grants: List of Participating Countries (HE): V3.8 – 12.02.2026[7], all 16 non-EU countries associated to the previous programme, Horizon 2020, have also expressed interest to become associated to Horizon Europe. Other third countries have also expressed an interest in association.

The association agreements with the following countries have now started to produce legal effects (either through provisional application or their entry into force) (listed in alphabetical order): Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo[8], Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

Until association agreements start producing legal effects either through provisional application or their entry into force, transitional arrangements may apply if provided for in the particular Horizon Europe Work Programme. The transitional arrangements apply with regard to the following countries and legal entities established in these countries, with which association negotiations are being processed or where association is imminent (listed in the alphabetical order):

1. Egypt (applicable to the entire Programme for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2025 and onwards).
2. Japan
3. Morocco (applicable for the entire Programme).
4. Liechtenstein does not intend to associate with Horizon Europe.

Participants from the following low- to middle-income countries are automatically eligible for funding[9]:

- Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi
- Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Congo (Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba
- Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic
- Ecuador, Egypt (Arab Republic), El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia
- Fiji
- Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana
- Haiti, Honduras
- Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic), Iraq

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

[8] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

[9] Subject to the respect of EU restrictive measures: Please note that entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 are NOT eligible to participate in any capacity (including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties, if any).

- Jamaica, Jordan
- Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea (Democratic People's Republic), Kyrgyz Republic
- Lao (People's Democratic Republic), Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya
- Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar
- Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria
- Pakistan, Palestine[10], Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines
- Rwanda
- Samoa, São Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, , Turkmenistan, Tuvalu
- Uganda, Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic), Vietnam
- Yemen Republic
- Zambia, Zimbabwe

The list is correct at the time of adoption of this Guide. Applicants are advised to consult the HE List of eligible countries of the EU Funding & Tenders Portal for an up-to-date list of these countries.

2.3 Eligible costs

The financial support is provided as pre-defined lump-sum amounts per implementation phase, linked to the successful completion and acceptance of agreed deliverables as specified in the Sub-grant Agreement.

Each selected entity will receive the funding on a lump sum basis. To justify the lump sum, Applicants need to provide a detailed explanation with cost estimations. The cost estimations are subject to the basic eligibility rules of Horizon Europe, that is the proposed budget may be adjusted to exclude costs that are deemed ineligible. If the evaluators find overestimated costs, this is recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report and will be reflected in a modified lump sum amount in the sub-grant agreement. If the Sub-grantee does not agree with the amount of the grant offered, they are at liberty of withdrawing their proposal.

The following cost categories are considered eligible:

- **Personnel costs** – Costs of the personnel realising the work and preparing the deliverables/reports during each of the three (3) phases. Applicants must calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of their country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions. For the proposal template, only the final amount allocated to personnel costs is necessary. Personnel costs are considered direct costs and can't be managed as indirect costs.
- **Subcontracting** – Subcontracting should be clearly justified. Costs must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management. Coordination tasks cannot be subcontracted. Applicants should ensure that there are sufficient details for the action tasks, the estimated budget, and the procedure that will

[10] This designation is not to be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

be followed to ensure best value-for-money. Any kind of organisation could be subcontracted, provided that they are not part of the FCI4Africa consortium. The evaluators will assess the scope and value-for-money aspects of subcontracting, and their assessment will be reflected in the score of each proposal. Subcontracting is allowed for up to a maximum of 25% of the proposed budget when properly justified. When submitting the proposal, Applicants should only write the total amount for subcontracting. Selected Applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project implementation. Procurement must comply with the national and European regulations applicable to each applicant's institution.

- **Purchase costs**
  - **Travel costs** – Travel costs necessary for the execution of the sub-project.
  - **Equipment costs** – Borrowing or lending the necessary equipment is not eligible. Only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.
  - **Other goods & services** – Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the methodology, translations, and publications.
- **Indirect costs** – Indirect costs (overheads) could be up to 25% of the direct cost. Subcontracting is not included in the calculation of the 25% ceiling for indirect costs.

The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel template provided. Applicants will then save the excel sheet as .pdf and upload it on the opencalls.fund platform.

Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities (a minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of information/field days, workshops and informal events to promote the FCI4Africa results).

Applicants **should explain and justify[11] 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, must justify it,and specify the role of subcontractor.

Important notice:

In terms of financial monitoring of the sub-projects' implementation, no financial justification is required by the project, however the Sub-grantee shall keep the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the Contract for at least three (≥3) years after final payment. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the Grant Agreement.

[11] Budget justification means providing an explanation as to what the budget will go towards and why this cost is necessary.

2.4 Application process

2.4.1 Applicant's registration

Applicants should register at the FCI4Africa Open Call 1 page on the opencalls.fund platform. This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The information on the FCI4Africa Open Call 1 will be available on FCI4Africa website (Open Call section), as well as on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

Important notice:

Only individuals registered on the opencalls.fund platform will be in a position to apply for the FCI4Africa Open Call 1 and submit questions to the dedicated FAQ section on the opencalls.fund platform.

Questions can be submitted until 26 June, 2026 at 17:00 CEST through email to the FCI4Africa support team at fci4africa@opencalls.fund or the FAQ section of the opencalls.fund platform. Answers will be provided using the same channel through which the question was posed.

2.4.2 Application preparation

Applicants should follow the steps below:

1. Applicants must register on the platform prior to the submission of the proposal.
2. For the application preparation, applicants are requested to apply online and provide all necessary information. Applicants must submit all requested documents on the opencalls.fund platform. Incomplete submissions will not be accepted.
3. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the platform the completed documents per case in .pdf format, will not be able to submit the application.
4. Applicants must submit the required documents on time after uploading them and confirming that the complete application is online. Late submissions will not be accepted.
   Important notice: The platform supports only files in .pdf format. The size of each file can be up to 10 MB. Compressed files in .zip format are not acceptable.
5. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the FCI4Africa OC support team at: fci4africa@opencalls.fund.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Technical issues may occur with large documents in different formats. The FCI4Africa project does not bear responsibility for technical problems at any stage. Make sure to check and test upload on time. If technical issues do arise, Applicants may contact the FCI4Africa OC team for support, via email to: fci4africa@opencalls.fund until 24 June, 2026 at 17:00 CEST.

2.4.3 The application reception

Applications will ONLY be submitted via the opencalls.fund platform. The application reception will close at 17:00 CEST (Brussels time) on 30 June, 2026.

2.4.4 Use of generative AI in proposal preparation

The FCI4Africa project follows the same guidelines regarding generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in proposal preparation as is stated in the applications for Horizon Europe projects.

Applicants are expected to exercise caution and carefully consider the use of generative AI in the preparation of their proposal. Content generated in such a manner should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicant to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and compliance with IP regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal, including those elements generated by AI and must be transparent in disclosing which tools were used and how.

Especially, applicants must:

- ➢ Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of AI generated content and citations, and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- ➢ Provide a list of sources used to generate the content and citations. Make sure sources are properly cited.
- ➢ Be aware of potential plagiarism. Check original sources to avoid plagiarism.
- ➢ Acknowledge the limitations of the tool, such as potential of error, bias and/or gaps.

2.5 Evaluation process

2.5.1 Eligibility check

Once the Open Call is closed (30 June 2026) and before assigning the applications to external evaluators, each proposal will be checked against the overall eligibility criteria. During July 2026, the eligibility check will be carried out by the FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board (OCAB), consisting of representatives from: (i) project coordinator (IITA); (ii) scientific coordinator (WR); and (iii) dissemination, exploitation, communication and open call managing expert (RFF). Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing or incomplete information will be discarded.

This procedural part of the evaluation will check the eligibility of the submitted proposals against the overall eligibility criteria according to Section 2.2.1.

Proposals that do not comply with these criteria are not eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

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 / documents are not provided at the specified time, their application will be discarded and will not move on to the evaluation round.

Important notice: The designated contact person in the opencalls.fund, will be responsible for all communication during the eligibility phase. If further clarification is required, the Open Call (OC) team will notify the applicant via the email address provided. Failure by the contact person to respond within the specified deadline for submitting the requested clarifications will result in the rejection of the application, and the OC team will not be held accountable.

2.5.2 Remote Evaluation and key points

Each proposal will be reviewed by two (2) external evaluators with specific experience in the agrifood sector and their academic, technical and/or industry knowledge surrounding agriculture, food safety, climate change, biodiversity and sustainability. The evaluators will have to evaluate each proposal under the specific evaluation criteria.

All eligible proposals will be assessed by two expert evaluators against the following **award criteria**:

Concept and feasibility [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Proposed solutions must align with the Call objectives.

- ➢ **Clarity, practicality of the concept and alignment with the timeline and budget:** Is the implementation of the proposed solution(s) practical and achievable within the project's timeline and budget?
- ➢ **Relevance and alignment with the FCI4Africa's Use Cases or the project's specific objectives:** To what extent does the proposal align with the objectives and expected results of the FCI4Africa Open Call 1? How does the proposed solution(s) strengthen FCI4Africa project?
- ➢ **Work plan coherence:** Is the project plan well-structured, with clear tasks, milestones, deliverables, and timelines?
- ➢ **Soundness of the proposed solution(s):** including the involvement of a wide range of food system actors and relevant stakeholders (especially considering women) and engaging them in developing and implementing realistic solutions aimed at enhancing sustainable, fair, and healthy food systems within Africa. What is the food system challenged addressed by the proposal and the associated opportunity?
- ➢ **Ethics and compliance:** Does the proposal address ethical concerns and adhere to relevant legal and regulatory frameworks?
- ➢ **Gender and inclusivity:** Does the project promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities?

Technology readiness and innovation development [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Sub-projects must demonstrate the maturity of the proposed solution.

- ➢ **Technical feasibility:** Is the proposed technology or method viable and implementable?
- ➢ **Approach and methodology:** Are the methods and processes clearly defined and appropriate for achieving the project's goals?
- ➢ **Innovation readiness level (TRL):** Does the solution have the required maturity level (e.g., starting at TRL3-4 and reaching TRL6)?

Impact & Exploitation [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Applicants must demonstrate the sub-project's potential to deliver measurable social, economic, or environmental benefits and outline strategies for dissemination, upscaling, sustainability and multi-actor collaboration.

- **Demonstration of impact on the FCI4Africa ecosystem:** Describe how the proposal aims to create an impact on target stakeholders (e.g., Food System Stakeholders, Certification and Accreditation Actors, Technology and Innovation Sector, Academic & Research Organisations, Policy Makers and Regulators, General Public). Highlight how the implementation of the selected solution(s) can enhance sustainable, fair, and healthy food systems within Africa.
- **Dissemination and Policy Uptake:** Strategies for disseminating and exploiting the project's results such as commercialisation, dissemination of knowledge, or policy influence.
- **Long-term Value, Scalability:** Assess if the sub-project's outcomes create value for African food systems and if they can extend beyond the sub-project implementation, be scaled or adapted to other contexts.

Organisational capacity and sufficiency [Scoring 1-5; min 3] 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.

- **Team Expertise and Roles:** Does the team have the necessary technical, managerial, and domain-specific expertise?
- **Quality of the team as a whole:** including complementarity, gender balance and diversity
- **Budget Allocation:** Is the budget realistic, transparent, and appropriately allocated to project tasks?
- **Use of Resources:** Are the proposed resources, including equipment, data, and expertise, adequate and effectively utilised?
- **Risk Management:** Are potential risks identified, and is there a mitigation plan in place?

All award criteria have the same weight. Each award criterion can be scored from 1 to 5 with a threshold of 3 points in each category, and a minimum of 12 points in total.

Interpretation of scores:
1 – Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3 – Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4 – Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

A 'minor shortcoming' is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).

A 'shortcoming' is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.

A 'significant weakness' means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way (will lower the score below threshold). This can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, each one of them not rendering the proposal inappropriate for funding, though altogether make the proposal not addressing the criterion sufficiently in an effective way.

In case the difference in total scores between evaluators is significant (**>5**), a consensus meeting between the two evaluators will be held to seek adjustments. In case the consensus meeting is unsuccessful, an online interview of the applicant by the external evaluators (a third external evaluator) will be conducted. The following criteria will be evaluated:

(i) Confirmation of proposed solution (40%);
(ii) Viability of proposed solution (30%);
(iii) Reliability to reach exploitation milestones (30%).

External evaluators may also be requested individually to review their evaluation if their scores and comments for each criterion do not align (e.g., comments describing how excellent the proposal is with no shortcoming but a score of **1**).

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.

The evaluators; scores for each criterion will be averaged, and these averaged scores will then be summed to calculate the total score.

Scores must pass the individual threshold AND the overall threshold if a proposal is to be considered for funding within the limits of the available call budget.

Important notice:

From the pool of eligible proposals, the top eight (8) highest-scoring proposals will be funded, provided that each selected proposal addresses different FCI4Africa's solution(s) to avoid overlaps.

If two or more top-ranked proposals propose the same solution(s), the proposal with the highest overall score will be selected. For example, suppose the top three (3) proposals are: 1. Solution 1 (Score A); 2. Solution 1 (Score B, lower than A); 3. Solution 3 (Score C). Proposals no.1 and no.3 will be funded, then continue down the list until we have eight (8) proposals covering different solutions.

If more than one (>1) proposal shares the same score and is listed at the last place planned for funding, the proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for 'Concept and feasibility'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for 'Impact & Exploitation'. If the scores are equal, priority will be given to the score for 'Technology readiness and innovation development', followed by that of 'Organisational capacity, sufficiency'.

Example:

There are three (3) proposals–Proposal A, Proposal B, and Proposal C–all achieving an overall evaluation score at the threshold for funding. Suppose that Proposal A and Proposal B have an overall score of 12 (the cut-off for funding), while Proposal C scores slightly higher and is already clearly in the funded bracket. To decide between Proposal A and Proposal B for the final funded spot, the following tie-breaker steps would be applied:

1. First, compare the 'Concept and feasibility' scores. If Proposal A received a 3.6 and Proposal B received a 3.4 in this category, Proposal A would be prioritised.
2. If both proposals had identical 'Concept and feasibility' scores, then the next step would be to review the 'Impact & Exploitation' scores. Suppose both proposals scored 3.5 there as well; then the tie-break would move to the next criterion.
3. Next, the 'Technology readiness and innovation development' scores would be compared. If Proposal A scored 3.2 and Proposal B scored 3.4 in this area, then proposal B would take precedence.
4. Lastly, if all previous criteria were also equal, the decision would be based on the 'Organisational capacity, sufficiency in the applicant's background' scores.
5. In the event of an absolute tie, where proposals remain equally ranked after applying all evaluation criteria, the final decision will be taken by the Open Call Advisory Board.

This stepwise approach ensures that even when proposals have very similar overall scores, the selection committee can fairly prioritise the proposal that demonstrates the strongest potential in core areas of the evaluation process, as detailed in the Applicants' Guide.

All four (4) criteria are equally weighted.

At the end of this phase, all proposals will be ranked based on their scores. If a decision still cannot be made, the OC Advisory Board shall make the final prioritisation decision, taking into account the objectives of the Open Call 1.

After completing this process, communication with the OC Advisory Board will be made by RFF, to present the status and propose the outcome of this process to the members. The FCI4Africa consortium, with the approval of the EC, retains the discretion to select a higher or lower number of applications than initially scheduled.

All Applicants will receive their Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

2.5.3 Redress procedure

2.5.3.1 Process for Redress: Eligibility Results

Applicants (single entities) may submit a **written request for redress** to the FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board via email at fci4africa@opencalls.fund **within three (3) working days of receiving the eligibility check notification** if they believe the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect. The FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board will review these requests to ensure coherent interpretation and equal treatment of all applicants. **Requests must relate specifically to eligibility checks, clearly describe the complaint, and include reasons for consideration.** Additionally, they must be submitted within the specified timeframe and by the legal representative of the applicant who submitted the proposal. The OC Advisory Board will examine the requests for redress within a reasonable timeframe taking into account the complexity of the case and the number of requests received. If evidence of a shortcoming is found that could have impacted the eligibility decision, appropriate corrective actions will be taken. The outcome of the redress review will be communicated to the Applicant once the process has been concluded.

2.5.3.1.1 Process for Redress: Evaluation Results

Applicants (single entities) may submit **a written request for redress regarding the evaluation process** to the FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board via email at fci4africa@opencalls.fund within **five (5) working days of receiving the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR)**. This request can be made if the applicants believe there was a shortcoming in the evaluation that affected the decision. The FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board will examine these requests, ensuring equal treatment of all applicants. **Requests for redress must relate specifically to the evaluation process, clearly describe the complaint, and be submitted within the above timeframe by the legal representative of the applicant.** The OC Advisory Board will review the request within a reasonable timeframe taking into account the complexity of the case and the number of requests received. If clear evidence exists that a shortcoming could have affected the final funding decision, partial or full re-evaluation may occur. The outcome of the redress review will be communicated to the Applicant once the process has been concluded.

The final evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be considered definitive and could be lower than the original score. Only one (1) request for redress per proposal will be accepted, and all requests will be treated with confidentiality.

Important notice:

The FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board will not question the scientific or technical judgment of the evaluators, and any requests contesting this judgment will be automatically rejected.

2.5.4 Contracting

Based on the evaluator comments in each ESR, the OC Advisory Board will start negotiations for the contract preparation with the representatives of the selected (winning) proposals (if shortcomings were identified and changes are needed in the proposals). If the negotiations do not finish successfully, the proposal will be rejected and the next highest ranked proposal will be selected. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

reframe.food (RFF) is assigned as the OC Manager and Treasurer and together with the INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE (IITA)-Coordinator is committed to ensuring a competitive and transparent OC process, ensuring confidentiality, equal treatment and no conflict of interest.

The objective of the contract preparation is to fulfil the legal requirements between the FCI4Africa consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

➢ To validate the status information of the Applicant, the following documents will be required from the Applicant:
    - **Legal existence:** Company Register, 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 (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent. 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 equivalent body) must be provided.
  - **Legal proof** that the applicant's organisation is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
  - **Bank Account information:** The bank account where the funds will be transferred must be indicated using the official form, signed by both the legal representative of the applicant organisation and a bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of each beneficiary. The financial information should not be older than three (3) months.

The Sub-grantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provided. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the Treasurer 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 Treasurer does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the beneficiary who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the FCI4Africa consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The sub-project contract negotiations will be carried out from 1 September 2026 to 31 October 2026 (included). In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

After successful negotiations, the legal representative of the open call winner will be invited to sign a contract, which will then be signed by the FCI4Africa Open Call Manager/Treasurer (RFF) and the FCI4Africa Coordinator (IITA). The final list of accepted proposals will then be published.

3 Implementation of FCI4Africa Open Call 1

3.1 Implementation timeline and activities

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 three (3) phases:

- **Phase 1 – Design** [Deliverable: Activity plan] (November 2026-January 2027) – Payment of 20% of the total fund
- **Phase 2 – Development** [Deliverable: Results demonstration] (February 2027-July 2027) – Payment of 50% of the total grant
- **Phase 3 – Validation** [Deliverable: Report on market or community associated activities] (August 2027-October 2027) – Payment of the final 30% of the total grant

In all selected projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that the Sub-grantees have to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase in order to receive the payment (**no pre-financing is foreseen**).

4 Applicants' responsibility

The selected Sub-grantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that they comply with the obligations set out in HE specific requirements as described in the 'EU-African Union – towards climate-neutral, social just fair trade food systems (HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-11)' topic. The obligations that are applicable to the beneficiaries include (but are not limited to):

4.1 Conflict of interest

The Sub-grantees 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 affiliated with FCI4Africa consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the FCI4Africa consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info here.

The Sub-grantees must formally notify the FCI4Africa consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The FCI4Africa consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If a Sub-grantee breaches any of its obligations, the Sub-grant Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Sub-grant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by a Sub-grantee, the FCI4Africa consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the Sub-grantee and claim the full refund of all payments made to the Sub-grantee up to date.

4.2 Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Prior to granting financial support, FCI4Africa will require Applicants to identify and explain any ethical issues that may arise during the sub-project implementation as part of their project proposals. A dedicated chapter in the proposal template will require from the Applicants to describe how they will comply with European Union ethical rules/principles and outline how ethics principles will be integrated into the project, addressing aspects such as participant involvement, informed consent, privacy protection, data management, and any other relevant ethical considerations. All sub-projects should follow an 'ethics by design'-way of working, whereby ethical and legal principles, on the basis of GDPR, competition law compliance, absence of data bias are implemented since the beginning of the design process.

Once a project is selected for FSTP funding, regular monitoring and reporting will be conducted to ensure ongoing adherence to ethics principles. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the FCI4Africa project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

During the implementation of the sub-project and for at least five (5) years after the final payment of the sub-project, the beneficiaries must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time (Article

6 - Confidentiality).

If an OC beneficiary makes a request for a longer period of data protection and confidentiality, the European Commission and the FCI4Africa consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five (5) years. This will be explicitly stated in the Sub-grant Agreement.

If additional information is identified as confidential during the sub-project execution or through verbal communication, it must be accepted by the FCI4Africa Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of its disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may only use confidential information to implement the Sub-grant Agreement. The OC beneficiaries may disclose confidential information to the FCI4Africa consortium and to the selected external reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

OC beneficiaries will have to submit three deliverables (1. Activity Plan, 2. Results Demonstration, 3. Report on Dissemination Activities and Lessons Learned) during the sub-project implementation. In these deliverables the beneficiaries will report any ethics measures in a dedicated chapter. The deliverables will be reviewed by the FCI4Africa OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager.

By implementing this proposed mechanism, FCI4Africa aims to foster ethical conduct and responsible practices in all projects funded through the FSTP. It establishes a system of checks and balances, providing assurance that the ethical commitments of FCI4Africa are upheld by external entities receiving financial support. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the FCI4Africa project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

Personal data from individuals (such as, name, last name, address, country of residence, phone number, email address) will also be gathered via the Open Call 1 during the process of potential applicants' and evaluators' registration and application on the opencalls.fund platform (to post a question or apply to a specific open call or enter the pool of external evaluators). The majority of the information (if not all of them) that will be required for SMEs and startups as potential applicants, are already publicly available in business registries across Europe (i.e. owners' name, company address and email).

No sensitive personal data will be collected (e.g., health status, race, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinions, religious or philosophical conviction, receipt of social support, victims of violence, criminal records and sexual life).

Personal information (such as, IP address, device type, geographic location, etc.) may also be collected (automatically) for statistical reasons and to better understand the people who visit the opencalls.fund platform, where they come from and what content they are interested in the activities related to the Open Call 1, since personal information received will not be shared by default.

Access to the opencalls.fund platform is also feasible following a registration process and obtaining user credentials. With respect to the personal data protection collected during the Open Call 1, all collected data will be anonymised, encrypted and stored on a server, which will have server-side encryption. Only the required personnel (specifically assigned for this project) will have access to the data. GDPR rules will be applied for data protection.

According to the Grant Agreement, data will be kept for at least five (≥5) years after the completion of the project (or three (≥3) years for data related to Open Call 1 grants of not more than EUR 60,000.00). However, the data will always be stored anonymously and will not be accessible by external third parties.

4.3 Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Sub-grantees must promote the sub-projects, the FCI4Africa project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the FCI4Africa Consortium and highlighting the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the FCI4Africa Coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major results funded by the grant must:

- Acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement ('funded' by the EU)
- Display the FCI4Africa logo
- Include the standard disclaimer: "*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them".*

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g., of beneficiaries), the European emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Sub-grantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the European Commission's web page.

Any publicity made by the Sub-grantee with respect to the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or FCI4Africa consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the FCI4Africa consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Sub-grantee;
- contact address of the Sub-grantee;
- the general purpose of the sub-project;
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the sub-project; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received;
- the geographic location of the activities carried out;
- the list of dissemination activities and/or patent (applications) related to foreground;
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications related to foreground

and, if funded within the sub-project, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- the publishable reports submitted to FCI4Africa;
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and FCI4Africa in the framework of the sub-project.

The Sub-grantee shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and FCI4Africa does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Sub-grantee representative, the FCI4Africa consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

4.4 Financial audit and controls

FCI4Africa partners shall ensure that sub-grantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties set out in Annex 1 of the FCI4Africa Grant Agreement. Financial support is provided under the FCI4Africa consortium's responsibility. Sub-grantees are instructed that certain obligations apply to them (Article 9.4 GA), and that they must cooperate with certain EU instances in case of audit on payments received from the sub-grant part of the FSTP scheme.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the FCI4Africa project and up to five (≤5) years after final payments, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF), and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). Such audits will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Sub-grantee shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Sub-grantee shall keep all sub-project deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the sub-project contract for up to five (≤5) years from the end of the project (or three (3) for grants of not more than €60,000.00). These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Sub-grantee shall ensure that the EC´s services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the sub-project applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the sub-project. For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available. Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete, and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the audit findings a draft audit report will be drawn up and it will be formally sent to the Sub-grantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within 30 days of receiving the notification to make observations. The Commission may decide not to consider observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final audit report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

Based on the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

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 Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

Audits (including audit reports) will be in the language of the Sub-grant Agreement.

4.5 Sub-project Communication

The Sub-grantee representative should:

- ➢ Provide any notices in writing to the FCI4Africa Open Call manager/treasurer (RFF).
- ➢ Notify the FCI4Africa Open Call manager (RFF) immediately of any change of persons or contact details. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.
- ➢ Notify the FCI4Africa Open Call manager (RFF) about the dissemination activities that the Open Call 1 beneficiary will organise.

Please note that until the start of the project implementation phase, all communication surrounding the Open Call 1 will be made exclusively through the Open Call Manager via fci4africa@opencalls.fund.

4.6 Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the Applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. The FCI4Africa consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise as a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

4.7 IPR ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Sub-grantee shall retain ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) attached to the results it generates during the development process, as well as any other results that do not constitute IPRs. Each Sub-grantee is individually responsible for the management and protection of its own IPRs and shall bear any associated costs.

The Sub-grantees funded within the FCI4Africa project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their sub-granted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for FCI4Africa dissemination purposes.

4.8 Liability

The FCI4Africa consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project implemented by the Sub-grantee. The FCI4Africa consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Sub-grantee, the Sub-grantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the FCI4Africa Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Sub-grantee. Sub-grantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third parties' rights.

4.9 Do No Significant Harm

Sub-grantees must always respect the "Do No Significant Harm Principle". This means that the sub-project's methodology should be designed in a manner which does not significantly harm any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation. EU Taxonomy is a science-based classification system for determining whether an (economic) activity can be considered environmentally sustainable. It establishes six environmental objectives (as listed in Article 9 of the EU Taxonomy):

- ➢ Climate change mitigation
- ➢ Climate change adaptation
- ➢ The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- ➢ The transition to a circular economy
- ➢ Pollution prevention and control
- ➢ The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems

While Article 17 specifies what can constitute a 'significant harm' for these objectives. Thus, the regulation provides that no measure should lead to significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.

5 Checklist

- **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in Chapter 2: Proposal Submission and Selection. Make sure that you satisfy the minimum participation requirements (entity from eligible countries).
- **Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory fields on the Open Call 1 Proposal Template?
- **Have you checked all technical details related to submission?** Difficulties with application and submission arising from technical aspects will not be taken into consideration by the FCI4Africa project. Applicants should do test rounds and make sure to submit everything on time.
- **Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/comments?** Proposals should be

precise, concise and must answer requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.

- **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.
- **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.
- **Have you provided the Declaration of Honour (Annex 7)?**
- **Have you described the dissemination activities as 7% of your budget?**
- **Does your planned work fit with the FCI4Africa Open Call 1?** Ensure that your proposed work does indeed address the topics in this open call, particularly the testing and validation of solutions, as well as the development of ideas and tools, that contribute to fostering climate-neutral, social, just, and fair food trade systems within Africa.
- **Do you need further advice and support?** You can reach out to the FCI4Africa Open Call team via email (fci4africa@opencalls.fund). The Technical team can provide assistance to the extent possible, up to 24 June 2026, 17:00 CEST.

6 Points of contact

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by email to fci4africa@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.

Appendix 1

Validating sustainability and material data for African agri-food commodities

Description

This option focuses on the testing, validation, and expansion of sustainability and material data collection for agri-food commodities using the FCI4Africa Digital Knowledge Hub (https://fci4a.ubuntoo.com/), Data Collection and Analysis Tool (https://www.foodsystemsdashboard.org/), and Green Means Go (African Environmental Sustainability Assessment Platform; https://greenmeansgo.ai/).

Proposals under this option are expected to apply these platforms in real-life settings to existing FCI4Africa commodities (cocoa, groundnuts, honey, maize, and palm oil) or new commodities (e.g., bananas), and across existing (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal) or new geographic regions. The objective is to populate, validate, and improve a continental-scale database for sustainability, environmental, and material data, enabling comparability, benchmarking, and evidence-based decision-making.

Applicants may choose to:

- implement and assess recommended sustainability solutions for selected commodities and regions,

  or

- expand data collection to new commodities and regions, contributing to broader African coverage.

Indicative activities:

- Using the Data Collection and Analysis Tool to collect sustainability and material data across multiple value-chain actors (e.g. farms, processors, storage hubs)
- Applying Green Means Go indicators to existing FCI4Africa commodities (e.g. cocoa, maize) or new commodities
- Conducting repeated data collection cycles to assess changes over time following the adoption of recommended practices
- Generating geospatial mappings of commodities and sustainability indicators across countries and regions
- Identifying data gaps, usability issues, and improvement needs of the platforms and reporting them to the FCI4Africa consortium

Expected outputs:

- Validated and expanded sustainability datasets covering multiple commodities and regions in Africa
- Geospatial maps linking commodities, regions, and sustainability indicators
- A report assessing the usability, feasibility, and ease of use of the platforms
- A report documenting data gaps, operational challenges, and lessons learned from the data collection and validation process

Definition of FCI4Africa tools

Data Collection and Analysis Tool (Food Systems Analytics)

A cross-platform analytics tool designed to collect, organise, and analyse data across the entire food value chain. The tool uses a proprietary algorithm to structure a dynamic question bank, enabling the creation of tailored question sets aligned with specific food systems research or implementation objectives.

The tool's collaborative intelligence feature allows multiple researchers and stakeholders, working remotely or on-site, to contribute to different components of a project. All inputs are seamlessly integrated into a unified dataset and workflow, supporting coordinated data collection, analysis, and reporting across diverse actors and locations.

African Environmental Sustainability Assessment Platform (Green Means Go)

Green Means Go is a practical, Africa-centred environmental sustainability assessment platform that supports food companies, farmers, and processing facilities in understanding the environmental footprint of their operations.

The platform provides context-specific sustainability insights adapted to African food systems, enabling users to identify environmental performance gaps, improve resource efficiency, and strengthen climate resilience. It also supports organisations in demonstrating environmental responsibility to consumers, business partners, and regulators, serving as a bridge between sustainability data and actionable improvements across food value chains.

Digital Knowledge Hub

The Digital Knowledge Hub provides access to a Q&A interface that combines the capabilities of Large Language Models (LLMs) with a curated and credible repository of environmental solutions, methodologies, and best practices.

Through a simple interface, users can interact with the content stored in the Hub by asking questions and receiving AI-generated, summarised responses within seconds. The platform supports knowledge discovery, learning, and decision-making by making validated FCI4Africa knowledge assets easily accessible to a wide range of stakeholders.

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