



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

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

**Annex 11
Frequently Asked Questions**



**Funded by
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1. Where can I find more details on the Open Call? Any Guide for Applicants?

The FCI4Africa Open Call 1 kit (with all relevant documents and instructions) can be found on the FCI4Africa project website under the Open Call tab (<https://fci4africa.eu/open-calls/>).

2. Are single applicants eligible to apply, or is this call meant for consortia only?

The call is specifically designed for single applicants. An eligible applicant must be a single legal entity, namely a research and technology stakeholder. Consortia are not allowed.

3. How many applications can one (1) entity submit? And how many of them can be selected for funding?

Applicants can participate in only one (1) proposal. If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all such project applications will be rejected. Additionally, if multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated.

4. Can entities from non-EU countries submit proposals to the FCI4Africa Open Call?

Applicants from non-EU countries may apply if they are eligible under the Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/695 and the List of Participating Countries (Horizon Europe: V3.8 – 12.02.2026) and are explicitly included in the list of eligible countries provided in Section 2.2.5 of the Applicants' Guide. Applicants from countries not included in this list are not eligible to participate in the FCI4Africa Open Call 1.

5. Can successful applicants receive payment in advance after contracting?

In all selected sub-projects, payments are deliverable-based, meaning that the sub-grantees need to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase to receive the payment (no prefinancing is foreseen). First payment will take place after the submission and evaluation of the first deliverable in M03.

6. For how long will the platform accept proposals?

The platform will open for proposal submission on the 7th of April 2026, and it will remain open until 17:00 CEST on the 30th of June 2026.

7. Are the sub-projects funded under Open Call 1 expected to participate in the training and mentoring activities of the Innovation Hubs selected in Open Call 2?

Yes. One of the core objectives of Open Call 2 is to support the use cases and the sub-projects funded under Open Call 1 through dedicated training, mentoring, and acceleration services. Participation in the training and mentoring activities by the Open Call 1 sub-projects is an integral part of their acceleration pathway.

8. What is the procedure for submitting an application for funding?

Applications to Open Call 1 must be submitted electronically exclusively through the official Open Call platform (<https://opencalls.fund>). The process requires applicants to register on the platform, prepare their proposals using the official templates from the Open Call 1 Kit, and submit the complete application before the deadline. Submissions sent via email or any other alternative channel will be disqualified.

9. Are non-profit associations, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations eligible to apply

as single entities?

Yes, entities such as non-profit organisations, NGOs, and Civil Society Organizations are eligible to apply as single entities, provided they fall within the category of "research and technology stakeholders". Such applicants must clearly demonstrate in their proposals how they contribute to research, innovation, or technological development relevant to the call.

10. Can individuals (natural persons) or unregistered start-ups apply, or is a registered legal entity strictly required?

Individual persons and unregistered start-ups cannot apply directly. Proposals must be submitted by a formally established entity holding a recognized legal status.

11. Are organizations and SMEs registered in EU Member States, Horizon Europe associated countries, or other non-African countries eligible to apply?

Yes, applicants established in EU Member States or countries eligible under Horizon Europe rules can apply. However, the proposed activities must be implemented within Africa and directly target local African food systems, actors, and value chains

12. Are specific African countries automatically eligible, and can an organization submit a single proposal for activities across multiple countries?

Applicants established in low- to middle-income countries listed in the Applicants' Guide are automatically eligible for funding. A proposal may encompass activities in more than one African country, as long as the implementation approach is coherent, feasible, and well-justified within the project's duration and budget limits.

13. Must applicants be established in one of the specific Use Case countries, and must the project be executed only in those countries?

No, an applicant does not need to be established in a specific Use Case country to apply. Furthermore, project activities do not need to be restricted to the countries where FCI4Africa Use Cases are being piloted; activities may take place in any African country, provided they target local food systems and align with the Open Call objectives.

14. Given that consortia are not allowed, is it acceptable for a single applicant to work with local implementation partners or subcontractors?

Yes, although proposals must be submitted by a single legal entity, applicants are permitted and encouraged to collaborate with other local actors. This involvement can be structured through subcontracting provided they are clearly described, justified, and appropriately documented in the budget.

15. What level of formalized partnership (e.g., MoUs, letters of support) is required at the time of proposal submission?

Letters of support, letters of intent, and MoUs are not mandatory and do not form part of the minimum eligibility criteria. Applicants may refer to existing or planned collaborations within their proposal narrative, but there is no specific requirement or upload field for these documents during submission.

16. How should the budget for multiple implementation partners or subcontractors be presented in the Annex 6 template?

Table 1 and Table 2 of the budget template must be populated exclusively with information and budget lines for the single applicant entity. Any paid services provided by third parties or partners should be budgeted under the "subcontracting" line and must comply with the call's subcontracting limits and justification rules.

17. Does the program cover activities related to the broader agri-food ecosystem, such as farm input markets, aquaculture, or livestock value chains?

The Open Call does not explicitly restrict proposals to specific commodities or segments of the agri-food sector. Applicants may address broader food-system challenges (including aquaculture, livestock, and inputs), provided that their proposed solutions demonstrate clear alignment with the Open Call's objectives of improving fairness, sustainability, resilience, and efficiency in African food systems.

18. Can capacity-building course modules or training programs be included in the proposal?

While the call does not consider training programmes or course modules as standalone eligible activities, capacity-building and training can be included if they support knowledge dissemination, stakeholder engagement, and impact maximization. They must be well-integrated, justified, and directly contribute to the primary objectives of testing, validating, or enhancing tools and business models.

19. For Objective 2, must proposals be strictly tied to the existing FCI4Africa tools, platforms, and Use Cases mentioned in the guidelines?

No, proposals submitted under Objective 2 focus on developing applicants' own ideas and tools to address specific challenges and do not necessarily have to be tied to the existing FCI4Africa Use Cases. Applicants must clearly justify how their proposed solutions contribute to the challenges of African food systems.

20. Can a proposal select one objective (e.g., Objective 2) but also include and be credited for elements of the other objective?

Applicants must select either Objective 1 or Objective 2 and complete the corresponding section of the Proposal Template, as proposals should be submitted and evaluated under one selected objective only. If a proposal under Objective 2 involves validation related to an FCI4Africa Use Case, it must clearly remain within the primary scope and requirements of Objective 2.

21. Is the SME Declaration (Annex 8) mandatory for all applicants, including public institutions, universities, NGOs, and research organizations?

The SME Declaration (Annex 8) is required only for applicants that claim SME status according to the applicable European Commission definitions. For public research institutes, universities, NGOs, and other non-SME entities, the SME Declaration is not applicable and the platform field does not need to be completed.

22. Are indirect costs/overheads eligible, and should they be calculated as a fixed percentage within the budget?

Indirect costs (overheads) are eligible and may be included up to a maximum of 25% of the eligible direct costs. Subcontracting costs are excluded from the calculation of this 25% overhead ceiling.

23. Are full equipment purchase costs eligible for funding, or only the depreciation costs over the project duration?

According to the financial rules of the Open Call, only the depreciation costs for purchased equipment over the duration of the project are considered eligible.

24. Can equipment be purchased through a local subcontractor as a service fee to bypass the depreciation cost limit?

Subcontracting is permitted up to the defined threshold, provided it is clearly justified, avoids conflicts of interest, and demonstrates value for money. Applicants proposing to use subcontracted services in this manner must clearly explain the rationale, scope, and necessity of the arrangement within the proposal and budget justification, which will be scrutinized by independent experts.

25. Can a single large project be divided into multiple sub-projects, each requesting the maximum €50,000 budget?

Each applicant may submit only one proposal, and each selected project may receive a maximum funding amount of up to €50,000. Applicants are required to structure their entire proposal and activities within this single maximum funding limit.

26. Which percentage split across the three implementation phases should be used for budgeting and cash-flow planning?

The correct payment structure is: Phase 1 (Design, M1-M3): 20%; Phase 2 (Development, M4-M9): 50%; Phase 3 (Validation, M10-M12): 30%.

27. Does the 15-page limit for the proposal include the cover page, the disclaimer page, the table of contents, and the budget tables?

No, the cover page, disclaimer page, table of contents, and budget tables are not included in the 15-page limit. All other content (including text, tables, figures, diagrams, and references) counts towards the limit, and any excess pages will not be considered during evaluation.

28. Is it allowed to use an A3 or landscape page layout for specific tables or timelines in the proposal template?

No, the entire proposal must be prepared using standard A4 page size. Pages in A3 format should not be used for any graphical elements, tables, or timelines; applicants must adapt their layouts to fit the A4 format.

29. Is there a specific required format for the Project Proposal Acronym?

There is no predefined format for the "Project Proposal Acronym". Applicants are free to choose any short and identifiable abbreviation or name that appropriately represents their project.

30. Are there minimum academic qualification requirements (e.g., BSc, MSc, PhD) for a Principal Investigator, and is there a recommended team size?

The Open Call documentation does not specify any minimum academic qualification requirements for a Principal Investigator, nor does it specify a minimum or recommended team size. Team composition is flexible and should be designed appropriately to handle the

scope and implementation requirements of the specific project.

31. Is it possible to prepare and submit the application documents in French or another language?

The official language of Open Call 1 is English. Applicants are strictly expected to prepare and submit their proposals in English; applications submitted in any other language will be disqualified.

32. What steps should be taken if an applicant registers but does not receive the account verification email or password reset link?

Applicants should check their spam/junk folders for the confirmation or reset email, ensure that their email address is entered consistently without additional spaces, and avoid attempting multiple parallel registrations with different addresses.

33. What is the procedure for editing or replacing annex documents after an application has already been submitted?

As long as the call remains open before the deadline, applicants can replace any submitted documents directly on the platform by deleting the existing files and uploading the correct ones again.

34. Why is the "Executive Summary" text box in the Annex 5 template locked, and how can it be edited?

To "unlock" the Executive Summary table for editing, applicants should right-click on the table or required field and select "Remove Content Control" from the menu.

35. What is the recommended method for converting the Excel budget template to PDF without losing formatting or cutting off sections?

Applicants should use Microsoft Excel for the conversion process, select "Fit Sheet on One Page" or adjust the scaling settings, use the "Print Preview" function to verify that all sections are visible, and export directly using "Save As PDF" or "Export to PDF" rather than printing through third-party PDF software.

36. Will selected applicants be granted access to the existing FCI4Africa digital tools, and is there a required onboarding process?

Selected projects under Objective 1 will be provided with the necessary access to the relevant FCI4Africa tools required for their implementation. Any onboarding or technical guidance will be communicated to successful applicants after the grant award process; applicants do not need to initiate any onboarding procedure before submission.

37. Are examples of successful projects or recordings of previous Q&A sessions available to applicants?

As Open Call 1 is currently ongoing, there are no selected or implemented projects yet to share as examples. Any updates are made available through the official Open Call channels, including the FCI4Africa website.

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Interested applicants after they register to the opencalls.fund platform can submit their additional questions to the designated “FAQ” tab until 26 June 2026 @ 17:00 CEST.