EUnita | EU Grant Advisory & Consultancy

OPEN CALL ANALYSIS

EIT Food

Proof-of-Concept (PoC) Co-Financing Instrument 2026

Up to €60,000 for an agrifood startup–corporate pilot, with a corporate client that commits 60% of the budget

Programme	EIT Food (Horizon Europe KIC) · lump-sum subgrant (cascade funding)
Call title and round	Proof-of-Concept Co-Financing Instrument · 2026 edition, Guidelines V3/2026 · call ID not published
Deadline	Final cut-off 30 November 2026, 12:00 CET (13:00 Bucharest). 30 October 2026, 12:00 CET: to be confirmed
Analysis date	8 October 2026

Prepared by: EUnita — EU Grant Advisory & Consultancy · Funding Strategy

Verified against official EIT Food documents on 8 October 2026. Not an official evaluation; EUnita does not guarantee eligibility, selection or funding.

1. Executive summary and EUnita strategic reading

The EIT Food Proof-of-Concept (PoC) Co-Financing Instrument funds **one agrifood startup at a time** to run a proof-of-concept or small-scale pilot **with a large corporate client**. It is a lump-sum subgrant of up to **€60,000** per project from a **€1.5 million** call budget, for projects of 1 to 12 months, assessed on rolling cut-offs. The final cut-off is **30 November 2026, 12:00 CET (13:00 Bucharest time)**.

- **The corporate is the gate.** The corporate must sign a Letter of Intent, meet a turnover test (≥ €1 billion, or documented open-innovation capability below that), and commit to a fee of **60% of the project budget** under a separate agreement with EIT Food.
- **Narrow applicant.** One micro or small company, incorporated for at least 12 months in an EU or Horizon Europe-eligible country (Romania qualifies), aligned with one of EIT Food's three Missions. No consortia.
- **Light package, real scoring.** Letter of Intent, pitch deck, project plan and budget template, submitted in English through MyEITFood; scored by at least two external evaluators (Excellence 35%, Impact 35%, Implementation 30%; threshold 3.5 of 5).
- **Cash flow.** The guidelines stage payment as 50% pre-financing and 50% after Deliverable 1 is accepted, with no actual-cost reporting; the template contract does not mention pre-financing.
- **Obligations outlast the money.** A marketed-innovation KPI (documented sales of at least €10,000 during the project or within three years after) and monitoring for up to five years after completion.

EUnita reading. This is a good instrument for a specific profile: a startup that already has a large corporate ready to pay for a pilot and wants EIT Food to de-risk it. It is a poor instrument for a startup hoping a grant will create a corporate relationship. Two points in EIT Food's own documents are unresolved and should be clarified before anyone builds a plan on them: whether the **30 October 2026 cut-off** exists (the guidelines and call page list it; the call calendar does not), and **what share of the project budget EIT Food actually finances** (not stated for 2026).

Verified official facts

- Open since 16 April 2026; final cut-off 30 Nov 2026, 12:00 CET
- Lump sum up to €60,000; call budget €1.5m; project costs under €60,000
- Single micro/small applicant; corporate client with Letter of Intent; corporate fee = 60% of project budget, payable to EIT Food
- Criteria weights 35/35/30; threshold 3.5; appeals within 15 days
- Romania eligible (EU Member State)

Unconfirmed items

- 30 Oct 2026 cut-off: in guidelines and call page, absent from call calendar
- Share of project cost financed by EIT Food; co-funding ratio to enter in the budget
- Application form limits, any pitch step, 2026 corporate agreement, State aid treatment, FAQ and webinar
- Not confirmed in the available official sources.

2. Call at a glance

Programme	EIT Food (Horizon Europe Knowledge and Innovation Community, supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology); financial support to third parties under EIT grant agreement GA 101269771
Instrument	Lump-sum subgrant (cascade funding) to a single startup; separate corporate agreement with EIT Food
Exact call title	Proof-of-Concept Co-Financing Instrument (call page); PoC Co-Financing Instrument Guidelines, EIT Food / PoC Co-Financing Instrument / 2026
Call ID / round	Call ID not published. 2026 edition, Guidelines version 3/2026 (17 August 2026)

Status	Open since 16 April 2026; rolling cut-offs (31 July and 30 September 2026 have passed)
Cut-offs (12:00 CET)	30 October 2026 (listed in guidelines V3 and call page, not in the call calendar: unconfirmed); **30 November 2026 (final)**. The guidelines print the label “Cutoff date 2” twice
Bucharest time	13:00 on 30 October and 30 November 2026 (EET, UTC+2)
Call budget	Maximum €1,500,000 across all cut-offs
Per project	Lump sum up to €60,000; project costs “less than” / “under” €60,000 (the Fact Sheet and LoI say “up to”)
Corporate contribution	Fee of 60% of the project budget, separate agreement with EIT Food (Guidelines 5.1); Letter of Intent commits the 60%
Payments	50% pre-financing; 50% on completion of Deliverable 1 (Guidelines 5.2)
Duration	1–12 months; start from September 2026, latest start April 2027
Applicants	One micro or small company, ≥ 12 months of business activity, EU or Horizon Europe-eligible country, PIC number, solution aligned to an EIT Food Mission
Consortium	Not allowed (mono-beneficiary)
Corporate client	Annual turnover ≥ €1,000,000,000, or demonstrated verifiable open-innovation capability
Platform / language	MyEITFood portal (registration first) · English only
Evaluation	≥ 2 external evaluators; Excellence 35% · Impact 35% · Quality and efficiency of implementation 30%; threshold 3.5
Contact	Christoph Mandl, christoph.mandl@eitfood.eu · technical: support@eitfood.eu

3. What is funded and what falls outside scope

3.1 Funded

EIT Food targets “proof-of-concepts and small-scale pilot projects between startups and prospective corporate clients with less than €60.000 in project costs” (Guidelines section 2). Projects must show a clear pathway to commercial success, and activities must be “strictly related to deliver on the proof-of-concept or pilot project proposed together with the corporate client”. EIT Food's examples, which are not exhaustive: sample creation, field trials, functionality and property tests, and efficiency assessments.

The single deliverable is a **Proof of Concept Progress Report**, due between month 1 and month 12 from the project start (the subgrant template calls it a “Proof of Concept Technical & Market Validation Report”). The headline outcome EIT Food tracks is the KPI **EITHE02.4 – Marketed innovations launched into the market**: an innovation introduced during the project or within three years after completion with documented sales revenue of at least €10,000.

3.2 Outside scope (EUnita reading)

EIT Food publishes no list of excluded activities: **Not confirmed in the available official sources.** Reading the “strictly related” test and the cost rules together, the following are unlikely to be accepted:

- General R&D, product development or marketing that is not needed to deliver the pilot with the named corporate client.
- Costs that do not comply with Horizon Europe eligibility rules (the guidelines apply Article 6 of the Model Grant Agreement to the budget even though the funding is a lump sum).

- Projects with total costs of €60,000 or more, or lasting more than 12 months.
- Pilots with a corporate that cannot show the turnover or open-innovation evidence EIT Food asks for.
- Work already covered by another EU grant (Subgrant Agreement Article 6.1) or by an EIT Food-funded 2026 project for a similar solution in a similar market.

4. Eligibility and individual/consortium requirements

Requirement	Rule	Source
Applicant structure	One legal entity only; proposals with multiple beneficiaries are ineligible. A startup may submit several projects with different corporate clients.	GL 4, 5
Company size	Micro (fewer than 10 employees, turnover or balance sheet below €2m) or small (the guidelines say “less than 49 employees” and below €10m) under Recommendation 2003/361. The Recommendation itself says fewer than 50: a 49-employee company should ask EIT Food. Partner/linked-enterprise rules of the Recommendation apply by reference.	GL 4
Age of the company	Legally incorporated for a minimum of 12 months of business activity. No maximum age; “startup” is not otherwise defined.	GL 4
Country	Legally incorporated in an EU Member State or a Horizon Europe eligible country. Romania qualifies as an EU Member State; no regional restriction.	GL 4
Fit with EIT Food	Technology, product, service or solution aligned to one of the three EIT Food Missions. EIT Food partnership is not required.	GL 4
PIC number	Mandatory; an entity without an REA-validated PIC (and no previous EIT-funded project) goes through PIC validation and may sign a Declaration of Honour.	GL 4, 9
Corporate client	Turnover of at least €1,000,000,000 based on the latest approved annual financial statements; below that only with established, verifiable open-innovation capability (documented programmes, structured startup collaboration frameworks, dedicated innovation units, corporate venture activity or other formalised mechanisms). EIT Food decides whether the evidence suffices.	GL 4
Letter of Intent	Signed LoI from the corporate client to EIT Food (template provided), committing 60% of the project budget.	GL 4; LoI
Complete package	LoI, pitch deck, project plan, budget plan; fully in English; submitted on time via the platform. Obvious application or technical errors may be corrected within 3 calendar days after EIT Food's notice.	GL 4
Double funding	Ineligible if a beneficiary in an EIT Food-funded project in 2026 conducting similar testing or marketing for a similar solution in a similar market with the same legal entities. The lump sum must not already be funded under other EU grants.	GL 4; SA 6.1
Exclusion grounds	Insolvency or winding-up, final findings on tax or social security breaches, grave professional misconduct, fraud/corruption/money laundering, attempts to influence the decision or obtain confidential information.	GL Annex 1
Restricted entities	Russian entities in any role; public interest trusts established under Hungarian Act IX of 2021 and entities they maintain.	GL Annex 1

4.1 How the corporate test works in practice

The corporate is not just a letter-writer: it signs the LoI, enters a separate agreement with EIT Food and pays the fee. A corporate above the €1 billion turnover line passes on its published accounts. A smaller corporate must evidence open-innovation capability, and EIT Food keeps discretion. The LoI template has no field for turnover or innovation-capability evidence and the guidelines do not say where it is uploaded: **Not confirmed in the available official sources** - ask EIT Food and prepare a short evidence note in any case. The 2025 edition only required a non-SME corporate in any location; do not rely on 2025 practice.

4.2 Romania and the Regional Innovation Scheme

Romania is an EU Member State and therefore eligible; EIT Food's RIS page lists Romania among the RIS countries for 2026–2028. The PoC guidelines contain no RIS-specific rule, bonus, funding rate or regional restriction: **Not confirmed in the available official sources** that RIS status offers any advantage in this call.

5. Topics or strands

There are no separate strands, budgets per topic or topic-specific criteria: **Not confirmed in the available official sources.** The only thematic filter is alignment with one of EIT Food's three Missions, assessed under Impact. The Mission pages on eitfood.eu give the following headline targets:

Mission	Headline targets (EIT Food Mission pages)
Net Zero Food System	• Establishing regenerative agriculture as a commercially viable option in key value chains • Reducing food loss and waste • Growing the circular food economy through packaging and labelling
Healthier Lives Through Food	• Improving product choice and supply for a balanced diet for people and planet • Diversifying protein choices for food products • Optimising the nutrient density of food
Food System Resilience	• Improving sustainable and resilient food production practices • Improving urban integration of shorter supply chains • Investing in the growth of fair and resilient business models supporting food security

6. Funding, budget, co-financing, payments and cash flow

6.1 What the €60,000 is

The funding is a **project-based lump sum** “based on project-based lump sum and value for money” (Guidelines section 5), paid by EIT Food to the startup against one deliverable. The allocated value of Deliverable 1 is “up to 60,000€ (100% of the lump sum)”. The subgrant does not require records of actual costs (Subgrant Agreement Article 6.4), but the budget plan is still built from Horizon Europe cost categories and “all costs, including co-funding, need to comply with Horizon Europe regulations regarding the eligibility of expenses”.

The **corporate** must “enter into a separate agreement with EIT Food, committing to a fee that covers part of the EIT Food Proof-of-Concept programme costs. This fee amounts to 60% of the project budget submitted by the startup” (Guidelines 5.1). The LoI repeats the 60% and the €60,000 ceiling. Illustrative arithmetic, not an official example: a project budget of €50,000 implies a corporate fee of €30,000; a budget of €59,000 implies €35,400.

6.2 The unresolved point: what share does EIT Food finance?

Question	What the 2026 documents say	What is not stated
Who pays whom	Corporate pays a fee to EIT Food (Guidelines 5.1). Startup receives a lump sum from EIT Food (Guidelines 5; Subgrant Art. 6).	That the startup's lump sum equals 100% of the project budget.
Prior edition	The 2025 service agreement's statement of work: EIT Food “shall pay 100% of the PoC total project budget to the selected startup as a subgrant” and invoices the client for its 60%.	Whether the 2026 structure is identical; no 2026 service-agreement template is published.
Budget template	Columns “EIT Food funding” and “Co-funding”, with an automatic co-funding rate. Guidelines 4 require a budget plan “including co-funding ratio”.	Which co-funding ratio the applicant should enter when the corporate pays EIT Food directly.

Practical consequence. Build the budget as total project cost strictly below €60,000, treat the corporate's 60% as a commitment toward EIT Food (as the guidelines state), and ask EIT Food in writing how the co-funding ratio is to be entered before submitting. Do not assume that the startup receives the whole budget until EIT Food confirms.

6.3 Budget template

The Excel template is a protected, generic EIT Food workbook (instruction sheet; participants and work packages; budget per work package; annual budget per participant for 2026, 2027 and 2028; annual budget justification). Cost categories: A personnel, B subcontracting, C1 travel, C2 depreciation, C3 other goods, works and services, D2 internally invoiced goods and services, E indirect costs. Indirect costs are calculated automatically as **25% of A + C1 + C2 + C3** (subcontracting is excluded from the base). Work package 1, “Activity Management”, is marked mandatory. The 2025 caps (subcontracting at most 40%, depreciation at most 20%) are not repeated in 2026: **Not confirmed in the available official sources.**

6.4 Payments and cash flow

Step	Amount	Trigger and source
First instalment (pre-financing)	50% of the total budget	On signature of the lump-sum agreement (Guidelines 5, 5.2). The Activity Implementation Guidelines (Annex 2, lump-sum projects) add: once all agreements are signed and the entity is onboarded and validated.
Second instalment	Remaining 50%	Upon successful completion of Deliverable 1; the Activity Implementation Guidelines say payment follows within two weeks of the validated final milestone.
Deductions	Up to the value of the incomplete deliverable	Deliverables not completed or only partly fulfilled (Guidelines 5).

Step	Amount	Trigger and source
Caveat	-	Amount and timing depend on EIT paying funds to EIT Food (Guidelines 5.2). The template Subgrant Agreement (Art. 6.1, 6.3) pays only “upon the agreed Deliverables being achieved” and does not mention pre-financing: treat pre-financing as stated in the guidelines but to be confirmed in your contract.

No equity, revenue share, repayment or applicant co-financing is mentioned in the 2026 documents; State aid and de minimis are not addressed. All of these are **Not confirmed in the available official sources.** Note the EUR 6 million cap per participant over the three-year grant agreement for all EIT funding: irrelevant for a single €60,000 award, but aggregated across EIT Food awards.

7. Calendar

Date	Event	Note
16 Apr 2026	Call opens	Guidelines 6.1; call calendar launch date
29 Apr 2026	Guidelines V2	Amendment of Deliverable 1
31 Jul 2026, 12:00 CET	Cut-off 1	Passed
17 Aug 2026	Guidelines V3	“Amendment of cutoff dates”
11 Sep 2026	EIT Food call calendar V1.15	Lists only 31 July (first cut-off) and 30 November (second cut-off) for the PoC call
30 Sep 2026, 12:00 CET	Cut-off “Cutoff date 2”	Passed
30 Oct 2026, 12:00 CET (13:00 Bucharest)	Cut-off, labelled “Cutoff date 2” again	To be confirmed: in guidelines V3 and call page, absent from the call calendar
30 Nov 2026, 12:00 CET (13:00 Bucharest)	Final cut-off (“Cutoff date 3”)	Stated as the application deadline in Guidelines 6.2
After each cut-off	Evaluation within 15 days; results within 30 days	Counted from “submission” in the guidelines; panels sit “after each cutoff date”
+ 30 days	Standstill, onboarding, validation and contracting	Project cannot start before the standstill ends
By April 2027	Latest project start	Guidelines 6.1
Up to 12 months from start	Deliverable 1 due (month 1 – month 12)	Guidelines 3.2
Up to 3 / 5 years after completion	KPI sales window / monitoring	Guidelines 3.1, 8

Indicative timing per cut-off (EUnita calculation, assuming the 15 / 30 / 30-day periods run from the cut-off; EIT Food does not state when the clock starts):

Cut-off	Evaluation by	Result notified by	Contracting complete by
30 Oct 2026	14 Nov 2026	29 Nov 2026	about 29 Dec 2026
30 Nov 2026	15 Dec 2026	30 Dec 2026	about 29 Jan 2027

The Activity Implementation Guidelines give an indicative 47 days for onboarding (15), validation (22) and award letter (10), against the 30 days in the call guidelines; plan for the longer period.

8. Application process, content limits and required documents

8.1 Process

- Agree the proof-of-concept or pilot scope and budget with the corporate client; obtain its signature on the Letter of Intent.
- Register on the MyEITFood portal before submitting (the guidelines warn to allow time for registration); obtain a PIC number if you have none.
- Prepare the pitch deck, project plan and budget plan; submit in English before the cut-off, 12:00 CET.
- EIT Food runs an eligibility check; obvious errors can be corrected within 3 calendar days of its notice. Evaluation follows (section 9).
- If selected: second communication with instructions, lump-sum agreement, conflict-of-interest policy, onboarding forms (section 10).

8.2 Required documents

Document	What it must show
Signed Letter of Intent (corporate letterhead)	Parties and registration data; project title; collaboration purpose; operational commitments (tick-boxes for planning and execution, access to facilities/data/infrastructure, technical or commercial staff, review meetings, other); financial commitment of 60% of total eligible project costs with the estimated total budget and the 60% amount in euro; acknowledgement that a formal agreement with EIT Food follows; authorised signatory with title, e-mail, phone, signature and date.
Company presentation (pitch deck)	Commercial capacity and capabilities of the company and readiness of the product or solution for market entry or expansion.
Project plan	Milestones and activities up to project completion (the marketed innovation).
Budget plan (EIT Food template)	Expected costs for the project scope, including the co-funding ratio; per-category justification in the annual justification sheet.
PIC number	Participant Identification Code from the Funding and Tenders Portal.
Evidence of corporate turnover or open-innovation capability	Not specified as an upload; prepare it (section 4.1).

The MyEITFood application form is online-only and requires registration, so it was not reviewed for this analysis. Page limits, character limits, field structure and any further annexes are therefore **Not confirmed in the available official sources.** The call page links a webinar video and the guidelines refer to a website FAQ; the webinar was not reviewed and no FAQ was found.

9. Evaluation and selection

All applications pass an eligibility check, then are evaluated by **at least two external evaluators** trained on the EU Code of Conduct for Evaluators, with a stated aim of at least 40% of each gender in evaluation committees. Each sub-criterion is scored 1–5.

Criterion (weight)	Sub-criteria	What to evidence (EUnita reading)
Excellence (35%)	• Traction and milestone achievements • Problem–solution fit • Collaboration experience of corporate client	Customers, pilots, revenue and technical milestones; a sharp problem statement; the corporate's track record with startups (innovation unit, earlier pilots).
Impact (35%)	• Alignment with EIT Food Missions • Technology novelty • Ability of the PoC instrument to accelerate the applicant's commercial success	Named Mission target; what is new versus the state of the art; how this pilot converts into sales (and the €10,000 documented sales KPI).
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (30%)	• Scalability / feasibility of implementation • Resource utilisation / cost efficiency • Quality of deliverables	Month-by-month plan inside 12 months; budget lines that match activities; the Progress Report content and acceptance tests agreed with the corporate.

Score	Meaning (guidelines)
1 Poor	Criterion inadequately addressed, or serious inherent weaknesses
2 Fair	Broadly addresses the criterion but significant weaknesses
3 Good	Addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings
4 Very good	Addresses the criterion very well, a small number of shortcomings
5 Excellent	All relevant aspects addressed; any shortcomings are minor

Threshold and selection. The quality threshold is a total weighted score of **3.5**; proposals meeting it are selected “until the funding is exhausted”. The guidelines do not say how sub-criterion scores combine into a criterion score. Assuming a simple average, a profile of 4.0 / 4.0 / 3.0 scores 3.7 (above threshold) while 3.0 / 3.0 / 4.0 scores 3.3 (below). Because Excellence and Impact carry 70%, the first two criteria decide the outcome. No interview or pitch step is mentioned: **Not confirmed in the available official sources.** All applicants are told the outcome in writing; an appeal may be filed within 15 calendar days of the result, only where the eligibility check or the evaluation procedure was wrong (not to contest expert judgement), to Redress@eitfood.eu.

10. Implementation and material legal/compliance obligations

Topic	Obligation	Source
Contracting and onboarding	Lump-sum agreement under Belgian law (Brussels courts); register on the grants platform; Declaration of Size; Financial Identification Form; possible Financial Capacity Assessment; EIT Food may reject an entity whose assessment is unsatisfactory; conflict-of-interest policy.	GL 5.3, 9; SA 12–13

Topic	Obligation	Source
Use of the lump sum	Only for expenses incurred during the project duration and related to the budget headings, to achieve the deliverable and meet reporting; the recipient must remain eligible under Horizon Europe throughout.	SA 4
Reporting and monitoring	Justification of deliverable achievement; reporting on KPIs and deliverables with evidence; continuous monitoring (deliverables, KPIs, risk, finance, quality, communication, commercialisation); EIT Food may discontinue or restructure funding for under-performance, delay or misconduct; KPI monitoring up to 5 years after completion.	GL 3, 8; SA 5, 6.3
KPI EITHE02.4	Marketed innovation with documented sales revenue of at least €10,000 during the project or within 3 years after completion, reported through the grant management tool. Whether a missed KPI reduces payment under this lump sum is not stated (the generic implementation guidelines show a 20% reduction rate for a missed marketed-innovation target): **Not confirmed in the available official sources.**	GL 3.1; AIG Annex 1
Records and audit	Keep records and evidence of use of funds during the project and for 5 years after termination; checks, reviews and audits under the EIT grant agreement apply. No records of actual costs required.	SA 5, 6.4, 10
Intellectual property	Results are owned by the party whose employees generate them; Background is not transferred; EIT Food and the recipient may agree additional arrangements; recipient adheres to the EIT Food IP Policy (Horizon Europe MGA Art. 16). No startup–corporate IP terms are prescribed: agree them separately with the corporate.	SA 8; GL 3.2
Confidentiality and data	Information marked as sensitive is protected for 5 years; GDPR compliance required.	SA 11, 13.9
Visibility	Co-branding rules and MGA Art. 17; no use of EIT Food name or logo without prior written approval.	GL 3.2; SA 7
Ethics and values; gender	Compliance with EIT grant-agreement clauses on conflict of interest, ethics and values, information obligations; measures to promote equal opportunities between women and men.	SA 10; GL 7
Termination and recovery	14 days to remedy a breach; termination for substantial breach or prolonged force majeure; suspension or recovery of payments possible.	SA 3.2
Corporate fee agreement	Separate agreement between the corporate and EIT Food. The 2026 template is not published; the 2025 template provides one invoice payable within 30 days and, on early termination due to the client's fault, the full fee remains due.	GL 5.1; 2025 template

11. Strong-fit and poor-fit applicant profiles

Strong fit	Poor fit
• Micro or small agrifood company with 12+ months of activity and a solution tied to a Mission target • A named corporate (≥ €1bn turnover, or a documented open-innovation programme) that has agreed in principle to a paid pilot • A pilot scoped at €40,000–€59,000 with a measurable sales conversion path • Romanian or other EU startups, in any region • A startup that wants to run a second pilot with a different corporate	• No corporate partner yet, or a corporate unable to commit a cash fee • Medium or large companies, companies under 12 months old, consortia • Projects needing €60,000 or more, or more than 12 months • Teams that cannot document sales within three years of completion • Applicants relying on pre-financing arriving before the contract, or on the 30 October cut-off with no LoI in hand

12. Possible strategic directions

These are generic patterns that fit the call's wording, not real projects. Each assumes the corporate has already agreed to the pilot.

- **Net Zero – waste and circularity pilot.** A startup testing a food-loss-reduction or packaging solution on a large processor's or retailer's lines; deliverable = measured waste or emissions reduction versus baseline, which also supports the sales KPI.
- **Healthier Lives – ingredient or product validation.** Sample creation and functionality/property tests for an alternative-protein or nutrient-density ingredient with a food manufacturer's R&D unit; deliverable = tested samples and a commercial supply term sheet.
- **Resilience – supply-chain or farm-level technology trial.** Field trial of a digital, sensor or traceability tool with a corporate's supplier base; deliverable = efficiency assessment and roll-out plan.
- **Second-pilot strategy.** Use the permission to submit more than one project with different corporate clients to build a pipeline; keep activities and markets distinct to stay clear of the double-funding rule.
- **Sequencing with other EIT Food routes.** Treat the PoC as the commercial step after programmes such as the Accelerator Network (2026 cohort page shows closed) or after a venture-builder track; avoid overlapping funded work in 2026.

13. Key risks and mitigations

Risk	Why it matters	Mitigation
No corporate commitment in time	Without a signed LoI the application is ineligible; the 30 October (to be confirmed) and 30 November cut-offs leave little time for a large-corporate sign-off.	Start only with a corporate already in discussion; give the corporate a one-page LoI pack (template, budget, 60% amount) now.
Cut-off uncertainty	30 Oct appears in the guidelines and call page but not in the call calendar.	Plan for 30 Nov 2026, 12:00 CET; ask EIT Food to confirm 30 Oct in writing.
Cost-share ambiguity	The 2026 texts do not state what share of project cost EIT Food finances or how to complete the co-funding ratio.	Ask EIT Food before submission; keep budget below €60,000 and consistent with the LoI.
Contract template inconsistent	Effect date 1 Mar 2026, end date 31 Dec 2026, payment on acceptance and a different deliverable name than the guidelines.	Request the contract adapted to the guidelines before signing; keep the guideline wording in the application.
Corporate evidence	Below €1bn turnover EIT Food alone judges open-innovation capability; no upload route is stated.	Prepare a documented evidence pack (programmes, units, startup pilots) and attach it to the application if possible.
Competition for limited funds	€1.5m covers all cut-offs; at €60,000 that is at most 25 projects; funds are allocated until exhausted and the remaining balance is unpublished.	Apply at the earliest viable cut-off; score for Excellence and Impact first.
Post-funding KPI and monitoring	€10,000 documented sales within three years and monitoring up to five years; payment consequences unclear.	Write a sales conversion milestone into the corporate agreement; keep evidence from day one.
Cash flow timing	Pre-financing is not in the template; EIT disbursement timing can delay payments.	Do not commit own cash on the basis of the 50% advance until the signed contract states it.

Risk	Why it matters	Mitigation
Application form unknown	Form visible only after registration; limits and fields unconfirmed.	Register early on MyEITFood and review the form before drafting.

14. Explained EUnita opportunity score

This score is EUnita's own assessment of the opportunity for an eligible applicant, not an official evaluation score and not a probability of winning. It is applied only after five gates, assessed on 8 October 2026.

Gate	Result	Evidence
G1 Real third-party route now	Pass	Lump-sum subgrants under EIT grant agreement GA 101269771; call open since 16 Apr 2026
G2 Enough official evidence	Pass (with limits)	Guidelines V3, Subgrant, LoI, budget template and call calendar read in full; 2026 corporate agreement not published, FAQ not found, application form (registration required) and webinar not reviewed
G3 No blocking eligibility question	Pass (conditional)	Eligibility is clear; the cut-off set and EIT Food's cost share must be confirmed by EIT Food before applicants rely on them
G4 Not closed	Pass	Two cut-offs passed; 30 Oct (unconfirmed) and 30 Nov 2026 remain
G5 At least 4 weeks to prepare	Pass for 30 Nov; fail for 30 Oct (under four weeks)	A corporate sign-off is the bottleneck

Dimension	Score	Max	Reason
Funding value relative to applicant effort	12	20	Up to €60,000 lump sum, light package, no actual-cost reporting; value depends on a corporate paying 60% and on the unstated EIT Food cost share
Eligible applicant pool and accessibility	9	20	Romania eligible, single applicant; but micro/small only and a ≥ €1bn corporate (or evidenced capability) must commit funds
Scope clarity and credible applicant fit	9	15	Scope and criteria clear; cut-offs, cost share, “startup” definition and corporate-evidence route unclear
Time available for preparation	8	15	Final cut-off 30 November 2026, 30 October to be confirmed; corporate sign-off sets the pace
Funding mechanics and implementation feasibility	10	15	Lump sum and 50% pre-financing per guidelines; offset by template inconsistencies, sales KPI, 5-year monitoring
Total	**48**	**85**	

Applicant attractiveness: moderate. A paid pilot with a large corporate, EIT Food branding and a lump sum without cost reporting are real benefits, but only for companies that have already sold the pilot and can document sales afterwards.

15. Official sources

- Call page: https://www.eitfood.eu/open-calls/proof-of-concept-co-financing-instrument-2
- Call Guidelines V3/2026: https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/OPEN-CALLS/2026_Call-Guidelines_PoC_co-financing_V3.pdf
- Letter of Intent template: https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/OPEN-CALLS/EIT_Food_PoC_Letter_of_Intent_Template.docx
- Budget template: https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/OPEN-CALLS/EIT-Food-Budget-template_2026-04-16-094529_lngf.xlsx
- Lump-Sum Subgrant Agreement (template): https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/OPEN-CALLS/EIT-Food-LumpSum-Subgrant-Agreement_PoC.pdf
- EIT Food Open Calls Programme 2026 (V1.15): https://www.eitfood.eu/files/OPEN-CALLS/EIT-Food_Open-Calls_Programme-2026.pdf
- Activity Implementation Guidelines (v1.3): https://www.eitfood.eu/files/EIT-Food-Activity-Implementation-Guidelines.pdf
- Redress Mechanism (V1.1, Feb 2026): https://www.eitfood.eu/files/EIT-Food-Redress-Mechanism-1.pdf
- EIT Food IP Policy (Update 2024): https://www.eitfood.eu/files/EIT-Food-IP-Policy-Update-2024_-1.pdf
- KPIs document: https://www.eitfood.eu/files/EIT-and-EIT-Food-KPIs-2.0.pdf
- PIC guidance: https://www.eitfood.eu/files/PIC-Guidance.pdf
- Regional Innovation Scheme page: https://www.eitfood.eu/regional-innovation-scheme
- Mission pages: https://www.eitfood.eu/missions/net-zero-food-system ; https://www.eitfood.eu/missions/healthier-lives-through-food ; https://www.eitfood.eu/missions/reducing-risk-for-a-fair-and-resilient-food-system
- Prior edition (closed, context only): https://www.eitfood.eu/open-calls/proof-of-concept-co-financing-instrument ; https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/TEMPLATE_EITF_service_agreement_2025.pdf ; https://assets.eitfood.eu/files/0.1_RFIP_Call-Guidelines_PoC_co-financing.pdf
- Application platform (online only, registration required): https://www.myeitfood.eu/

16. Final EUnita verdict

The call has one strand: a single startup with a single corporate client. **Pursue it if** your company is micro or small, has been active for 12 months or more, can align with an EIT Food Mission, and has a large corporate that is ready to sign a Letter of Intent and pay 60% of a pilot budget below €60,000 before 30 November 2026. **Do not pursue it if** the corporate does not yet exist, if you need a grant that covers costs without a paying client, or if you need to start work immediately (no project can start before the 30-day standstill after selection). Do not rely on the 30 October 2026 cut-off or on pre-financing until EIT Food confirms them. Confirm in writing the share of project cost EIT Food finances and the co-funding ratio before submission.

17. How EUnita can help

- Screen the startup and the corporate against the eligibility gates (size, age, corporate turnover or open-innovation evidence).
- Define a pilot that fits the €60,000 ceiling, the Mission targets and the evaluation grid, and write the project plan, budget and justification.
- Prepare the Letter of Intent pack for the corporate and the evidence note on its turnover or innovation capability.
- Draft and submit the MyEITFood application, then support onboarding, contracting and the KPI evidence plan.

18. Contact

EUnita — EU Grant Advisory & Consultancy
David Gaburici, Managing Partner
david.gaburici@eunita.eu | +40 746 666 090 | www.eunita.eu

EUnita full-call analysis — verified 8 October 2026 against the EIT Food Call Guidelines V3/2026, the Letter of Intent, Budget and Lump-Sum Subgrant templates, the EIT Food Open Calls Programme 2026 (V1.15) and the call page. Any corrigendum, updated FAQ, template revision or instruction issued by EIT Food prevails. EUnita does not guarantee eligibility, selection or funding.