

The logo for FARMTOPIA features the word in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'A' is replaced by a green silhouette of a horse's head with a circuit-like pattern. The letter 'O' is replaced by a green sprout with two leaves and a circuit-like base.

FARMTOPIA

Annex 2: Guidelines for Applicants



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1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the Farmtopia Open Call. Including this document, all associated Annexes must be read carefully for the submission of an Proposal.

The overall objective of the Farmtopia project is to democratize digital farming by creating a paradigm shift in the way ADSs for small farms are created, deployed, and paid for. This will be achieved by a) fostering co-creation of ADSs to ensure they will solve real problems and fit the needs of small farms; and b) lowering the cost for both farmers and ADSs providers, by creating a set of reusable software modules, viable business and governance models, and identifying public provision of infrastructure that can enable scale-out of ADSs. Using a multi-actor approach, Farmtopia will engage farmers, ADSs providers, farm advisors, scientists, policy makers, AKIS actors and other relevant stakeholders in eighteen (18) Sustainable Innovation Pilots (SIPs) in ≥fifteen (15) countries across Europe, and guide them in co-creating, deploying, and piloting a range innovative ADSs for small farms, while designing and validating appropriate business and governance models to support them. The focus will be mainly on specific crops and livestock for which current ADS provision is inadequate but also on crops that are of regional importance, strengthening resilience, sustainability, and food security across Europe. Farmtopia comprises 22 partners, representing ADS providers and software developers, farmers and farmers' organisations, universities, research institutes, DIHs, farm advisors and food brand owners. This multi-actor approach is essential to bring together all the related stakeholders and engage them in developing and piloting appropriate ADSs for small farms and the respective business and governance models for enabling their uptake across Europe.

In order to contribute to a dynamic response to a changing policy and technology landscape and boost the overall impact of the project, Farmtopia will organize an Open Call for innovative solutions in order to select and fund nine of the most innovative and ambitious Sustainable Innovation Pilots (SIPs) that will contribute to raising awareness about the benefits of incorporating Agricultural Digital Solutions in farming operations and making these digital technologies more easily accessible to small and medium farms, thus elevating the impact of the Farmtopia project beyond the consortium.

Number of SIPs to be selected	Funding granted per SIP	Time for implementation
9	100,000€	12 months

Figure 1 Farmtopia Open Call in numbers



1.1. Background information on Farmtopia project

All the information about the Farmtopia project, approach of the Open Call and challenge definition relevant for the applicants is described in Annex 1: Open Call Text. Key information about the Farmtopia internal SIPs has also been presented in Annex 1.

1.2. Funding scheme

The funding from the Farmtopia Open Call is deliverable based, provided in three installments, to be distributed upon successful submission of the relevant deliverable and its positive review and approval by the Farmtopia Consortium. As such, there will be no need for cost justifications and getting the funding will be associated with the achievement of the relevant deliverables, which means that the administration burden of the subproject implementation will be removed from the Subgrantees. **HOWEVER**, the Subgrantee is required to keep all documents relating to their sub-project contract for five years after the conclusion of the Farmtopia project (envisaged for August 2026), should the European Commission decide to arrange a financial audit to be carried out. For more details, see Section 7 – Financial audits and controls.

The awarded applicants will receive their funding in three installments for **100,000€** approximately one month upon submitting each of the relevant deliverables, and upon receiving a positive assessment regarding their deliverables from the Farmtopia consortium. The structure of these deliverables will timely be made available to the winners of the Farmtopia Open Call, prior to their submission.

1.3. Timeline – Farmtopia Open Call

Submission to the Farmtopia Open Call will be enabled on the 2nd of October 2024 and will conclude on the 7th of January 2025 at 17:00 CET time (Brussels time).

The table below presents the indicative timeline during which each phase of the Farmtopia Open Call will take place. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the Farmtopia team along the process and are not restrictive.

The Farmtopia consortium reserves the right to cancel the Open Call at any point due to any unforeseen circumstances. The Farmtopia consortium also reserves the right to extend the call and/or launch an additional call, in case not enough proposals of sufficient quality have been received via the Open Call.

1	Farmtopia Open Call 02.10.2024 - 07.01.2025	6	Finalization of all preparatory activities 01.06 - 30.06.2025
2	Eligibility checks 08.01 - 15.01.2025	7	Start of Open Call subprojects 01.07.2025
3	Evaluation of applications 16.01.2025 - 28.02.2025	8	Submission of the first deliverable 30.09.2025; payment of the first installment in the following month
4	Consensus meetings, online interviews, rank list creation, communication of results 01.03 - 31.03.2025	9	Submission of the second deliverable 30.04.2026; payment of the second installment in the following month
5	Contracting 01.04 - 31.05.2025	10	Submission of the third deliverable 30.06.2026; payment of the final installment in the following month

Figure 2 Farmtopia Open Call - tentative timeline



2. General information

2.1. Means of submission

The Open Call Hub (OCH) platform (<https://opencallhub.eu/open-call/farmtopia>) will be the entry point for all Applicants' proposal submissions to Farmtopia Open Call. Proposals received by any other channel will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent stages will be sent to the Farmtopia partners managing the Open Call at: farmtopia@opencallhub.eu.

2.2. Language

Proposals for Farmtopia Open Call must be done only in the English language. Submissions done in other languages will be considered ineligible and will be discarded in the **Eligibility check** phase.

The official language of the Project is English and all process documents which include Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour), Annex 5 (Declaration of Conducting Business) for the SME and Annex 5a (Farm Declaration) and Annex 6 (Consortium Declaration) in the **proposal submission stage** and Annex 7 (Bank account form), Annex 8 (Model Subgrantee Agreement) for the **winning applicants**, are also created in English.

The deliverables that the winning applicants will submit to the Farmtopia consortium must also be completed in English.

2.3. Documentation format

Any additional document requested must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing.

2.4. Data protection

In order to process and evaluate proposals, Farmtopia will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. FSH, as the Open Call Manager of the project, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the OCH platform for these purposes. The OCH platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the OCH terms to ensure compliance. Please note that Farmtopia requests the minimum information needed to deliver the evaluation procedures or the support programme. Annexes 7: Bank Account Information and 8 Model Subgrantee Agreement are provided for reference and will only be requested if the applicant is accepted in the Farmtopia Open Call programme. Please refer to <https://opencallhub.eu/Home/Privacy> for more information on OCH platform data privacy policy and security.

2.5. Origin of the funds

All Subgrantees will sign a dedicated Subgrantee Agreement with the Farmtopia consortium. The funds attached to the Subgrantee Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project Farmtopia funded itself by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) and remain therefore, property of the EU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in Farmtopia via European Commission Grant Agreement Number 101083541. As it can be seen in the Model Subgrantee Agreement (Annex 8), this relation between the Subgrantees and the European Commission through the Farmtopia project carries a set of obligations



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to the Subgrantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the Subgrantees to accomplish them, and of the Farmtopia consortium partners to inform about them.



3. Proposal Eligibility Criteria

3.1. Target Applicants

Farmtopia Open Call invites **high-tech** SMEs/startups/scaleups (starting from TRL6¹) and small and medium farms– as explained in the section below (see Annex 1 – Open Call Text). Proposals will be accepted from small consortia of two members – an SME and a small/medium farm. Public entities are not eligible for the Farmtopia Open Call.

Existing consortium members of the Farmtopia project, or any other entities which may cast doubt on the independence of the process, are not eligible for the Open Call.

Definition of SME (Small or Medium sized Enterprise)

An SME will be considered as such if complying with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC² and the SME user guide. As a summary, the criteria which define an SME are:

- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250.
- Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million

Definition of a small/medium farm

The Farmtopia project strategically focuses on small and medium-sized farms (SMF), seeking to address the challenges associated with the low uptake of agricultural digital solutions and provide solutions that are tailored to their unique needs and attributes, essentially contributing to the advancement of digitalization as well as the democratization of digital farming in the European agricultural ecosystem.

Farming in the EU is broadly characterized by three distinct groups: (i) subsistence farming, where the focus is on growing most of the food to feed farmers and their families (ii) small and medium-sized holdings that are generally family-run businesses and (iii) large agricultural enterprises.

Eurostat doesn't provide a specific categorization for small and medium sized farms (SMFs) based on farm size, due to significant variability largely affected by country, sector, value chains and product/crop specific factors. For instance, in France, farms have an average size of 69 hectares, which is relatively large compared to the EU average farm size of 17.4 hectares. Conversely, in Slovenia, agricultural holdings average around 7 hectares.

Eurostat categorizes farms based on their economic size, offering insight into the scale of farm operations (small farms have a Standard Output (SO) between €2,000 and €25,000 and are typically less than 5 hectares, while medium farms have an SO between €25,000 and €250,000 and range from 5 to 49 hectares). Similarly, the European Parliamentary Research Service uses a hybrid approach combining size and financial output variables in their statistical analyses.

Given the lack of a universal, standardized classification (as outlined above), Farmtopia has opted to employ a multifactorial, case-to-case analysis approach to determine participating farmers' identification as small and medium sized agricultural holdings. Every case will be evaluated against the following characteristics: surface size, income, quantity of production, number of employees

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2016_2017/annexes/h2020-wp1617-annex-g-trl_en.pdf

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:124:0036:0041:en:PDF>



(workforce size), ownership status, market power, profit margins and presence at different stages in the value chain. In all cases, the categorisation shall remain contingent on contextual and country-specific parameters.

The baseline is that the applicants' farms should not exceed 49 hectares in size and a standard annual output of €250,000. However, eligibility will also depend on contextual and country-specific parameters (such as average farm size) and exceptions may be considered, where relevant.

3.2. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

For all applicants, the following grant eligibility criteria include:

- The applying consortium consists of an SME, legally established and based in one of the EU Member States or an HE Associated Country as defined in HE rules for participation and a small/medium farm which is evaluated accordingly based on contextual and country specific factors.
- Signed Declaration of Honour stipulating that the entity is eligible for financing in line with eligibility rules of HE, with the possibility for requests for additional documentation if/when required.
- The applicant's proposal is in line with the SIP definition, as presented in the Chapter "What constitutes a SIP" in Annex 1 – Open Call Text.

Please note that a signed version of Annex 4 Declaration of Honour, Annex 5 Declaration of Conducting Business, Annex 5a Farm Declaration and Annex 6 Consortium Declaration are mandatory for proposal submission.

3.3. Proposal Eligibility Criteria

The following proposal eligibility criteria for the Farmtopia Open Call include:

- Each applicant may submit only one (1) proposal to the Farmtopia Open Call.
- In case an applying consortium submits more than one proposal in the Open Call, only the last one received (timestamp of the system) will be considered, and the remaining proposals will automatically be excluded from the evaluation process. In case an applicant wants to re-submit the proposal, they need to create a new account to do so, keeping in mind that each account has to have a unique email address, therefore another email address must be used to resubmit the proposal. If the last submitted proposal is declared as non-eligible or below the evaluation threshold upon evaluation, the other submitted proposals will not be taken into consideration.
- The applicants must demonstrate that there is no risk of double funding. The fundamental principle underpinning the rules for public expenditure in the EU states that no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget, as defined in the Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation. In the case of proposals submitted by linked SMEs, all must clearly state the differences between them, including but not limited to, technical aspects, market strategy and team composition, so that no doubt remains that there is no risk of double funding. In order to properly assess these concerns Farmtopia may assign all proposals to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain, exclude all proposals. In case of applying consortia, appearance of an entity



in multiple applying consortia will also be treated as a risk of double funding and consequently, all proposals from consortia where this entity is present will automatically be discarded as ineligible.

- The maximum amount of funding that a SIP can receive via the Farmtopia Open Call is 100,000€ and no member of the consortium can receive more than 60,000€.

3.4. Definition of eligible countries

Association to Horizon Europe is governed by the Horizon Europe Regulation 2021/695³. Legal entities from associated countries can participate under equivalent conditions as legal entities from the EU Member States, unless specific limitations or conditions are laid down in the work programme and/or call/topic text. Such measures could include the limitation of participation in certain actions to legal entities established in the EU alone, or in the EU and specified non-EU countries, in order to safeguard the EU's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security. Limitations or conditions may also be attached to the participation of legal entities established in an eligible country but which are controlled directly or indirectly by an ineligible country⁴. The eligibility will be clearly defined in the work programme. There could also be criteria on the place of establishment of the legal entity to take into account specific policy requirements or the nature and objectives of the action.⁵

All sixteen non-EU countries associated with the previous programme, Horizon 2020, have also expressed interest to become associated with 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):

1. Albania
2. Armenia
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Canada (associated to Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness', including for the institutionalised European partnerships, and for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2024 and onwards)
5. Faroe Islands
6. Georgia
7. Iceland
8. Israel
9. Kosovo⁶
10. Moldova
11. Montenegro

³ 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)

⁴ Based on Horizon Europe Regulation article 22(5).

⁵ Based on Horizon Europe Regulation article 22(6).

⁶ 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.



12. New Zealand (associated to Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness' as from the Work Programmes 2023 onwards, including for the institutionalised European partnerships)
13. North Macedonia
14. Norway
15. Serbia
16. Tunisia
17. Türkiye
18. Ukraine
19. United Kingdom (associated to the entire Programme, with the only exception of the EIC fund⁷, for award procedures implementing Union budget for the year 2024 and onwards⁸)

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):

- Morocco (applicable for the entire Programme)
- Switzerland (applicable to calls under the ERC Work Programme 2024 with opening date after 18 March 2024, and to Starting, Synergy and Consolidator Grant calls under the ERC Work Programme 2025; with regard to other parts of Horizon Europe, legal entities established in Switzerland are currently not covered by the transitional arrangement).

Participants (other third countries) from the following low- to middle-income countries are automatically eligible for funding:

- 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
- Jamaica, Jordan
- Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea (Democratic People's Republic), Kyrgyz Republic
- Lao (People's Democratic Republic), Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya

⁷ The UK will participate in all parts of the Horizon Europe programme with the only exception of the EIC Fund (which is part of the EIC Accelerator of Horizon Europe that provides investment through equity or other repayable form).

⁸ The transitional arrangements continue to apply to grant award procedures implementing Union budgets 2021 to 2023. However, no Horizon Europe grants will be signed with entities established in the UK for the budgetary appropriations for years 2023 or earlier (even if the grant agreement is signed in 2024 or later), save for exceptional circumstances clearly defined by the work programmes and rules of the Programme (e.g. based on being essential for implementing the action).



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- Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar
- Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria
- Pakistan, Palestine⁹, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines
- Rwanda
- Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, 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.

More information about participating countries in Horizon Europe can be found [here](#).

The protective measures concerning some Hungarian entities (any public interest trust established on the basis of the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity maintained by such a public interest trust.). The Council Implementing Decision 2022/2506 dated 16 Dec 2022. forbids financial support to third parties for these entities. More information can be found at the following [link](#).

⁹ This designation is not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue



4. Proposal Submission

All winners of the Open Call need to fulfill the eligibility criteria stated in Section 3, sign and submit the same documents. At the time of application, all applicants must provide: Annex 4 (Declaration of Honour), Annex 5 (Declaration of Conducting Business) for the SME and Annex 5a (Farm Declaration) for the farm, and Annex 6 (Consortium Declaration).

Winning SIPs must also provide: Annex 7 (Bank account information) and signed Annex 8 (Subgrantee Agreement), which will be given to them upon being declared the winners of the Farmtopia Open Call. The figure presented below presents the phases that will take place for the applying SIPs of the Farmtopia Open Call. The activities within this process are presented in the table below, and the dates are presented in section “**Tentative timeline of Farmtopia Open Call activities**”, however they may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the Farmtopia team along the process and are not restrictive.

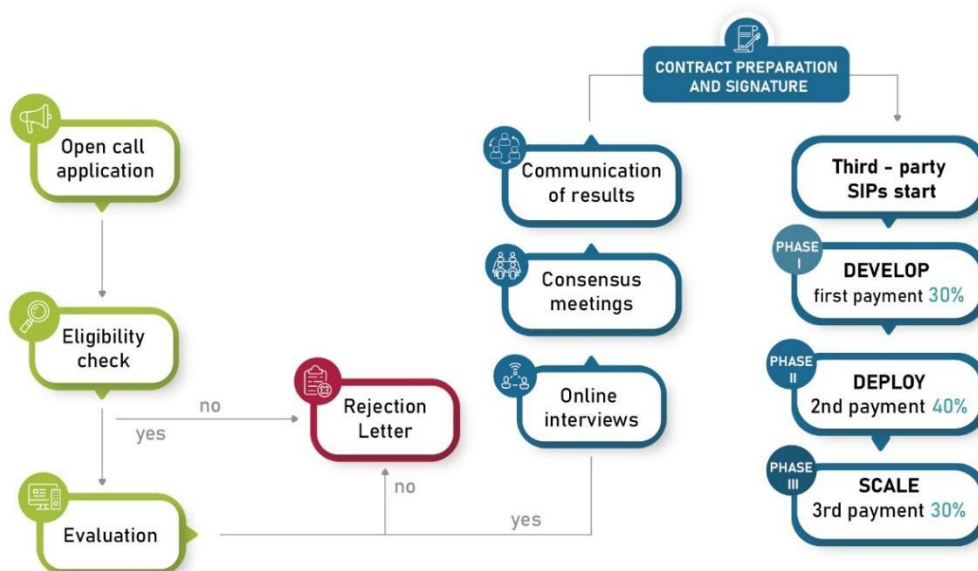


Figure 3 Farmtopia Open Call funnel

The Farmtopia Open Call will be published on 02.10.2024 and will remain open until 07.01.2025. The Open Call submission will follow the tentative steps that are listed in this section.

4.1 Open Call Publication

The Open Call will be supported by:

- **Annex 1: Open Call Text** that provides information regarding the Farmtopia Open Call for the respective applicants.
- **Annex 2: Open Call Guidelines for Applicants**, that set out the guidelines for participation in the Farmtopia Open Call for respective applicants. It also includes the eligibility and evaluation criteria.
- **Annex 3: Proposal Template**, available at (<https://farmtopia.eu/>), with questions that need to be addressed by the applicants.



- **Annex 4: Declaration of Honour**, which declares that all conditions of the Open Call are accepted by the applying entities' legal representative.
- **Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business**, which evaluates the status of the entity applying for the Farmtopia Open Call.
 - **Annex 5a: Farm Declaration**, which evaluates the status of the applying farm.
- **Annex 6: Consortium Declaration** in which the members of the applying consortium (SME and farm) constitute that they have formed a consortium in order to apply to the Farmtopia Open Call and where they identify the Consortium leader.
- **Annex 7: Bank Account Information**, which collects information on the applicant's bank account where the Farmtopia payments will be transferred to. (Only for winners of the Open Call)
- **Annex 8: Model Subgrantee Agreement**, that the successful SIPs will be requested to sign. (Only for winners of the Open Call) *
- Frequently asked questions & answers published at the community feed (<https://opencallhub.eu/farmtopia/Faq>).

*This document serves as a reference. The Subgrantee Agreement that will be given to the winning applicants will be finalized during the contracting phase.

4.2 Applicants Registration

Interested applicants should register at the Open Call Hub page (<https://opencallhub.eu/opencall/farmtopia>). This will be the central interface for managing the proposals for the remainder of the Open Call.

The Farmtopia Open Call will also be visible at the Farmtopia website (www.farmtopia.eu), as well as the Funding & Tenders Portal.

4.3 Proposal Preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. For the proposal preparation, the applicants are requested to register to the Open Call Hub platform, apply online and answer all mandatory questions (with no exception) at (<https://opencallhub.eu/open-call/farmtopia>). It is important to note that only individuals registered on the Open Call Hub platform will be in position to apply for the Farmtopia Open Call, but also to submit questions on the dedicated FAQ section on the Open Call Hub platform.
2. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the Open Call Hub platform the completed Declaration of Honour (Annex 4), Declaration of Conducting Business (Annex 5) for the SME and Annex 5a (Farm Declaration) for the farm and Consortium Declaration (Annex 6), in PDF format, will not be eligible. Later submissions of these documents will not be accepted.
3. Applicants are encouraged to be concrete and concise. Please examine all the Open Call documents and attend the various events organized by the Farmtopia project (<https://farmtopia.eu/>).
4. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the FSH support team at farmtopia@opencallhub.eu until January 5th at 17:00 CET.



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 or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the proposal as recorded by the submission system will be definitive. Applicants are advised to carefully consider the eligibility of all members of the consortium.

4.4 Proposal reception

Submissions will ONLY be done via the OCH platform on (<https://opencallhub.eu/open-call/farmtopia>). A full list of applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the European Commission for transparency). The proposal reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on 7th of January 2025.

The proposal reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on 7th of January 2025.



5. Evaluation process

5.1 Procedures for the applicants to enter the Farmtopia Open Call

Step 1: Eligibility check

After the Open Call has been concluded, a filtering process will be carried out in order to discard non-eligible proposals. This procedural part of the evaluation will verify if:

- The applicant is eligible for EC funding under the rules of Horizon Europe (HE) [Y/N]
- The applicant consortium consists of a registered SME and a small/medium farm, as defined in section “Target Applicants” [Y/N]
- Is the participation rule as expressed in section “Proposal Eligibility Criteria” followed? [Y/N]
- Is the proposal written in English language [Y/N]?
- The proposal is aligned with the project’s ethics requirements [Y/N]?
- Are all required documentation: Annex 4: Declaration of Honour, Annex 5: Declaration of Conducting Business, Annex 5a: Farm Declaration and Annex 6: Consortium Declaration correctly submitted? [Y/N]

The eligibility check will be carried out by Farmtopia partner managing the Open Call, Foodscale Hub, by mid January 2025. Farmtopia partners will only forward the eligible proposals to the evaluators. Please note that only complete proposals will be considered, those with missing information or missing answers will be discarded.

Step 2: Evaluation

Each proposal will be evaluated by at least two field experts in relevant domains (one business/agriculture expert and one technical expert) external to the Farmtopia Consortium. These external evaluators will be selected by the Open Call Manager (FSH) after a Call for Expression of Interest for External Evaluators has been concluded, which will run in parallel with the Farmtopia Open Call. To the extent of information available, the Open Call Manager will ensure that there is no Conflict of Interest between the applicants and the evaluators. The experts will follow strict ethical principles, including of non-discrimination policy,

In case potential evaluators are already registered on the Open Call Hub platform, they will not need to apply again, and will be taken into consideration for selection as a Farmtopia evaluator, providing their expertise profile fits the Farmtopia Open Call needs. The evaluators will perform their assessments from mid-January by the end of February 2025.

The eligible proposals will be assessed based on the Evaluation criteria presented in the table below.

Criterion	Description
Excellence and Relevance	<p>Alignment with Farmtopia objectives and expected results – alignment with the overarching goals and expected outcomes of the Farmtopia initiative.</p> <p>Alignment with regional growth objectives/priorities</p> <p>Agricultural sector and crop addressed – deploying solutions in sectors (i.e. livestock) not already covered by Farmtopia internal SIPs will be considered as an advantage.</p> <p>Farm-level challenges/problems addressed through ADS application – relevance of the challenge that the ADS application addresses.</p> <p>Integration of Farmtopia services - Integration of more Farmtopia services will be considered an advantage.</p> <p>Weighting factor 40%</p>



<p>Impact</p>	<p>Measurement – presentation of measurable and quantifiable metrics that will be used to and assess the development of the ADS. Significance – wider long-term effects of the region where the solution will be implemented, including economic, societal, and environmental impact. Value proposition and range of application – who are the stakeholders who will benefit from the solution and how will they benefit? Other agricultural sectors where their solution could potentially be applied should also be addressed. Economic viability and business model maturity – strategy for ensuring the long-term availability of the proposed solution once the contractual obligation with Farmtopia has been completed, including plans for reaching the end-users.</p> <p>Weighting factor 30%</p>
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>Methodology – soundness of the proposed co-creation methodology. Work plan and resource efficiency– key activities and tentative timeline for the development and implementation of the proposed solution. The tentative budget of the proposal is also to be considered under this criterion. Team composition – technical and business expertise of the team members. Risk management – identification of risks that might hinder the subproject implementation and means for their mitigation. Compliance with ethics requirements – alignment with Farmtopia project’s ethics requirements</p> <p>Weighting factor 30%</p>

Figure 4 Farmtopia Open Call evaluation criteria

Each criterion will have a mark between 1 and 5. Half point scores are not given. For each criterion under examination, score values will indicate the following assessments:

<p>1 – Fail</p>	<p>The proposal fails to address the issue under examination or provides insufficient information.</p>
<p>2 – Poor</p>	<p>The issue is addressed in an unsatisfactory manner.</p>
<p>3 – Average</p>	<p>The proposal addresses the issue, but there are significant weaknesses.</p>
<p>4 – Good</p>	<p>The proposal addresses the issue well, but there is clear room for improvement.</p>
<p>5 – Excellent</p>	<p>The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the issue in question and if there are any shortcomings, they are minor.</p>

Figure 5 Farmtopia Open Call - Explanation of evaluation marks

The threshold for all of these criteria will be three (3). If even a single criterion is given the average mark below the selection threshold, the proposal will not be selected. The sum of these averaged scores results in the total evaluation score for each proposal (maximum score = 5).

Extra points scheme:

Once the total evaluation score for each proposal is calculated, an applicant may obtain up to 1 extra point:

- Deploying the solution in a sector not covered by Farmtopia internal SIPs (0.5 points).
- Deploying the solution in a country not covered by Farmtopia internal SIPs (0.5 points).

To apply the extra points, the proposal must be above the threshold.



Each evaluator will record their individual opinion of each proposal on an Individual Evaluation Report and the partner managing the Open Call, Foodscale Hub, will inform the applicants of the outcome of their proposals, via the Evaluation Summary Report.

Step 3: Consensus meetings between External Evaluators

In case the discrepancy in the marks given to a criterion (or more) by the two evaluators is at 3 or 4, a **Consensus meeting** will be organized between the two evaluators and will be moderated by the Farmtopia partner managing the Open Call (Foodscale Hub). Please note that the goal of these Consensus meetings is not necessarily to align the marks given by the two evaluators, but rather to give them the opportunity to present their finding and exchange opinions.

The Consensus meetings will not be held in case the proposal in question has scored below the Selection threshold on a criterion where this discrepancy is not present, even if it is present in another criterion. The external evaluators will be in the position to change the mark they have given **only for the criterion that triggered the Consensus meeting**.

Step 4: Online Interviews

In case of two or more proposals have identical scores (and this affects the decision whether they will be funded or not), an Online Interview session will be carried out between the applicants in question and the external evaluators, moderated by FSH as the Open Call Manager. The Online Interview session will last for 60 minutes and the structure of this interview will be communicated to the applicants in question timely, at least one week before the interview takes place. Following the Online Interview session, the external evaluators and FSH will have a Consensus Meeting where they will decide which applicant will receive funding.

At the end of the process, the final ranking list will be produced and Farmtopia will select nine SIPs to take part in the Open Call Programme and up to three SIPs will be placed on the Reserves list. In order to ensure ethical compliance, the proposals from nine SIPs set to be selected for funding will be assessed by the Farmtopia external Ethics Advisor, who will be in the position to determine whether proposals contain aspects that need to be further addressed from an ethical standpoint, or even if the ethical aspects of the proposed solution would make it unwise to fund the subproject. The three SIPs set to be placed on the Reserves list will be assessed in the same manner.

All applicants will be informed about their scores and evaluator comments. Farmtopia will record the stage that each proposal achieved and the information if the proposal is selected/ non-selected. The call documents will be published 3 months prior to the open call deadline and will include the eligibility and evaluation criteria to ensure a trustworthy process and fair competition. The external evaluators will receive the evaluation guidelines and templates and will be duly informed about the timing for an agile process. Also, all evaluators will sign a declaration of impartiality and no conflicts of interest. To the extent of information available, the Open Call Manager will ensure that there is no Conflict of Interest between the applicants and the evaluators participating in the Online interviews.

Step 5: Redress procedure

Within **three working days** of the delivery of a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the proposal below the selection borderline, the applicants might submit a request for redress to the Farmtopia Consortium if they believe there has been a procedural shortcoming in the way their proposal has been evaluated or if they believe that the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect. The request for redress must be submitted in English language to the following mail address: farmtopia@opencallhub.eu.



The redress may address the eligibility check and/or evaluation procedural activity of the proposal. The request for redress must clearly explain the redress points and elaborate on every stated point.

Request must be:

- Related to the evaluation procedural process or eligibility checks, for example errors like an SME (with a registered VAT number) being discarded as ineligible by accident,
- Clearly describing the complaint,
- Received within the time limit (three working days) from the reception of a rejection letter considering the proposal as non-eligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the proposal below the selection for the Online interview borderline,
- Sent by the SME/ small farm legal representative, or the SME/ farm representative that has submitted the proposal.

In this case, **the Redress committee** (NP as the Project Coordinator and partner managing the Open Call, Foodscale Hub) will examine the request for redress within two working days and decide whether the proposal in question will be re-evaluated or the request for redress will be rejected. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual decision to select an applicant as a winning beneficiary of the Open Call, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated. The committee's role is to ensure a coherent interpretation of such requests and equal treatment of applicants.

Please note:

- This procedure is concerned only with the evaluation procedural activities and/or eligibility checking process. The committee will not call into question the business or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts, nor the mark given to any specific criterion.
- Any redress request that calls into question the technical/business judgement of appropriately qualified experts will automatically be rejected.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to select the applicant as a winning beneficiary or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if an proposal has failed on other criteria as well.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.

Only one request for redress per proposal will be considered by the Committee. If more requests for redress are submitted, only the first request sent will be taken into consideration. In case a proposal under the redress procedure is re-evaluated and the new evaluation score is higher, it will be included in the final overall ranking. In case the proposal under the redress procedure ranks higher than the last proposal on the initial list set to receive funding, then the proposal under the redress procedure will be determined the winner.

Step 6: Notification

Upon concluding all of the post-evaluation activities (planned for the end of March, 2025), the final ranking list will be created and the Evaluation Summary Reports will be distributed to all the applicants who have applied for the Farmtopia Open Call, containing the marks and comments for each evaluation criterion and comments regarding the proposal as a whole.



Step 7: Contract Preparation

After all of the post-evaluation activities have been concluded and the Farmtopia Open Call winners have been selected, the Farmtopia Open Call Manager and Treasurer (Foodscale Hub) will start the contract preparation in collaboration with the winning proposals' representatives. Contract preparation will go via administrative and financial checking. A phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification on a case-by-case approach.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the Farmtopia consortium and every winner of the Open Call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the **legal status** of the applicant, the following documents will be required:
 - **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).
 - Legal proof that the applicant's organization is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.
 - Farm equivalent document: Non-SME members of the consortium must provide a farm equivalent document to confirm their registration and verify their eligibility.

- **Bank Account Information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of the beneficiary. The bank account information must be submitted for both members of the winning consortium. The financial information should not be older than three months.

The winning SIP assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provide through Annex 7. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the Farmtopia team proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume 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 Farmtopia team 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 Farmtopia consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The subproject contract negotiations are intended to be carried out between 1st of April and 31st of May 2025. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the proposal could be rejected with the next proposal in the Reserve list to be invited.

The signed agreement will follow the rules set in the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement Art 9.2 "Third parties giving in-kind contributions to the action"¹⁰

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf



Step 8: Contract signature

At the end of the negotiation phase, the Subgrantee agreement will be signed between the Farmtopia consortium, represented by the Open Call Manager and Treasurer (Foodscale Hub) and the winning consortia.



6. Subproject Execution Summary

6.1 Support provided to Subgrantees

The innovations will be supported by cross cutting WPs dedicated to digital solutions, business and governance models, management and communication and dissemination.

During the implementation of their subprojects, the SIPs will be required to submit three deliverables as conditions of receiving financial support from Farmtopia. The template for these deliverables will be developed by the Farmtopia partners and distributed to the awarded SIPs, at least three months prior to the deadline for their submission.

Phase - deliverable	Submission deadline	Percentage of subgrant released
DEVELOP - D1	M3 (30.09.2025)	30%
DEPLOY - D2	M10 (30.04.2026)	40%
SCALE - D3	M12 (30.06.2026)	30%

Figure 6 Farmtopia Open Call subprojects - tentative implementation timeline

The payments of the subgrant installments are envisaged in the month following the submission of the deliverable. In case these deliverables have not been evaluated positively, the Farmtopia consortium will ask the Subgrantees for additional clarifications. This could have an effect on the timing of payments, as the positive review of the deliverable is the trigger for releasing the respective payment.

In case the Subgrantee does not comply with the additional request by the Farmtopia consortium or if the deliverables are not accepted upon receiving additional clarifications, the Farmtopia consortium reserves the right to terminate the contract automatically. In such case, all financial transactions made by Farmtopia towards the sub-grantee (if any at a designated time) have to be reimbursed within 10 calendar days upon receipt of an official contract termination.

7. Responsibilities of the Subgrantees

Through funding from the Farmtopia Open Call, the Subgrantees are recipients of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under HE specific requirements as described in Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027).

The obligations that are applicable to the recipients include:

7.1 Conflict of interest

The Subgrantee representative must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the subproject is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). At the same time, applicants cannot be affiliated with Farmtopia consortium partners, nor



can they be employees of the Farmtopia consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully¹¹.

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

If the Subgrantee representative breaches any of its obligations, the Subgrantee agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Subgrantee agreement is terminated due to a breach made by the Subgrantee, the Farmtopia consortium reserves the right to claim the refunds of payments made to the Subgrantee and suspend all further payments of the subgrant.

7.2 Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

During the implementation of the subproject and for five years after the end of the subproject, the parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time ('confidential information').

If a Subgrantee representative requests, the Commission and the Farmtopia consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five years. This will be explicitly stated in the Subgrantee Agreement. If information has been identified as confidential during the subproject execution or only orally, it will be considered confidential only if this is accepted by the Farmtopia Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of the oral disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may use confidential information only to implement the Agreement.

The Subgrantee representative(s) may disclose confidential information to the Farmtopia consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bounded 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.

The responsibility for meeting ethics and data protection requirements rests solely with the applicants in their proposals and eventual implementation of their projects (if selected). The selected SIPs could be subject to additional ethical check-ups, performed by the Farmtopia external ethical advisor, during application, evaluation and/ or implementation stage.

7.3 Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Subgrantees must promote the subproject, the Farmtopia project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the Farmtopia Consortium and highlight the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the Farmtopia coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, any communication activity related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.), any publicity, including at a conference or seminar or any type of information or promotional material (brochure, leaflet, poster, presentation etc.), and any infrastructure, equipment and major results funded by the grant must:

¹¹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/conflict-interest_en



- (a) display the EU emblem;
- (b) display the Farmtopia logo and
- (c) include the following text:

For communication activities: "This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under project Farmtopia (grant agreement No 101083541)".

For infrastructure, equipment and major results: "This [infrastructure][equipment][insert type of result] is part of a sub-project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under project Farmtopia (grant agreement No 101083541)"

When displayed in association with a logo, the European emblem should be given appropriate prominence. 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 Subgrantee 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 Europa web page.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee in respect of 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 Farmtopia Consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

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

- the name of the Subgrantee SME and farm;
- contact address of the Subgrantee SME and farm;
- the general purpose of the subproject;
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the subproject; 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 of patent (applications) relating to foreground;
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications relating to foreground and, if funded within the subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication;
- the publishable reports submitted to Farmtopia;
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and Farmtopia in the framework of the subproject.

The Subgrantee representative shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and Farmtopia does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the Farmtopia 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.



7.4 Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that Farmtopia beneficiaries and the Subgrantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties such as set out in Financial support to third parties (FSTP) Annex of the Farmtopia Grant Agreement and may take any action foreseen by the Grant Agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

The Farmtopia project will follow the lump-sum approach, where payments are released with the acceptance of deliverables, however, all Subgrantees are strongly advised to keep detailed financial records for at least 5 years after the completion of Farmtopia project, in case of audits by competent EC authorities.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the Farmtopia project and up to 5 (five) years after the end of the Farmtopia project, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The audit procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC. 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 Subgrantee representative 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 Subgrantee shall keep all subproject deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the subproject contract for up to five years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC where requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee representative 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 subproject 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 subproject. They shall ensure that the information is readily available on the spot at the moment of the audit and, if so requested, that data be handed over in an appropriate form.

On the basis of the findings made during the financial audit, a provisional report shall be drawn up. It shall be sent by the EC or its authorised representative to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within one month of receiving it. The Commission may decide not to take into account observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

On the basis of 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.

7.5 Subproject Communication of important changes

The Subgrantee representative should:

- Provide any notice be in writing to the Farmtopia consortium;

Notify immediately any change of persons or contact details to the Open Call Manager (Foodscale Hub). The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.

7.6 Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that proposals submitted are based on original works by the applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. Farmtopia 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 a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

7.7 IPR Ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Subgrantee that generates results owns the attached Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) generated during the development process and will own results that are not IPRs. Each subgrantee is responsible for the management and protection of its IPRs and bears the costs associated with this.

The Subgrantees funded within the Farmtopia 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 Farmtopia dissemination purposes.

7.8 Liability

Farmtopia 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 Subgrantee. The Farmtopia 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 Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the Farmtopia Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee.

Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third party rights.

7.9 Do Not Significant Harm (DNSH)

Subgrantees must always respect the 'Do Not Significant Harm Principle'. The Commission Communication on the European Green Deal introduced the green oath to 'do no harm'. The 'Do not Significant Harm' (DNSH) principle has been further specified in the EU Regulation on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investments (**Regulation (EU) 2019/2088**), commonly defined as the 'EU Taxonomy Regulation'. Six environmental objectives are listed in Article



Annex 2: Guidelines for Applicants

23 of the EU Taxonomy and 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.

