

to participation and impact.

- ✳ Align governance by introducing a common governance framework with guidelines on how to build, manage, and evaluate a partnership.

Other funding instruments and approaches

- ✳ Include high-risk, high-reward funding for projects addressing societal challenges that require transformative approaches.
- ✳ Establish flexible, adaptive funding schemes that enable projects with open outcomes and that focus on process rather than prescriptive results that may not reflect real-world needs.
- ✳ Ensure excellent proposals have a realistic chance of funding; reserve budgets for high-quality but unfunded proposals.
- ✳ Include small(er) and flexible instruments for addressing sub-topics and/or network activities to avoid fragmentation, either new or proven

existing ones, e.g., co-fund or Coordination and Support Actions (CSA).

- ✳ Fund professional project and network coordination, not only research tasks.
- ✳ Provide 5–10 year funding to enable portfolio development and align with innovation cycles (with regular checkpoints)⁹.

Integrate health, food, and sustainability research across sectors and disciplines and involve all levels of governance¹⁰

- ✳ Leverage established networks that link national funders, researchers, and policymakers (e.g., (former) JPIs such as FACCE and HDHL, ERA-NETs, KICs, BIOEAST, FOOD2030 and ETPs) .
- ✳ Strengthen EU-national policy alignment and provide continuity and coordination beyond single Horizon Europe calls.

2. Integrate health, food, and sustainability research across sectors and disciplines and involve all levels of governance.¹¹

- ✳ Connect partnerships and clusters to bridge health, food, and sustainability research.
- ✳ Ensure research calls and projects take a food systems approach and integrate health and food domains.
- ✳ Align research and innovation efforts with local societal needs by involving cities, civil society, and other local stakeholders as key partners.¹²

How?

- ✳ Include evaluation criteria that reward inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

- ✳ Establish cross-sector integration instruments to overcome siloed portfolios and enable joint projects (e.g., FOOD2030 network¹³ ; shared calls between health and food clusters).
- ✳ Encourage and facilitate combining proposals in a preparatory trajectory or enable expressions of interest to reduce duplication and increase diversity of participation.
- ✳ Facilitate structured exchanges between projects (e.g., project leader meetings, thematic clusters) and co-creation spaces such as policy and living labs (e.g., CLEVERFOOD and

⁹ FOODPathS (2025). Tool 3 – Call & Funding Recommendations: How to develop funding calls for supporting sustainable food systems?. [Tool 3 – Call & Funding Recommendations - FOODPathS](#)

¹⁰ JPIs = Joint Programming Initiatives; ERA-NETs = European Research Area Networks; KICs = Knowledge and Innovation Communities; BIOEAST = Central and Eastern European Network for Knowledge-Based Bioeconomy.

¹¹ FAO (2025). Transforming food and agriculture through a systems approach. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd6071en>

¹² EURO CITIES (2024). EU Framework Programme 10 Cities as key partners for impact in research and innovation. [The-next-EU-Framework-Programme_ Eurocities_November-2024.pdf](#)

¹³ <https://food2030.eu/>

FOODPathS hubs).

- Structure calls in streams with a primary objective (e.g., health or sustainability) while requiring projects to integrate complementary domains such as economics, social sciences,

food and/or agriculture, ensuring cross-domain impact.

- Prioritise living labs, policy labs, and demonstration sites as tools for innovation and bottom-up transformation.

3. Strengthen pathways for research outputs to reach policy, practice, and innovation.

- Strengthen structured mechanisms to mobilise research outputs
- Align research with European Union (EU), national and local policy needs.

How?

- Integrate Pillar 2 projects into JRC and policy pipelines for systematic use of research outputs (e.g., through evidence syntheses, joint events, and thematic reviews).
- Connect civil servants to projects through short-term secondments or assign policy liaisons to advisory committees of projects or groups of projects.

- Use networks such as FOOD2030 to organise joint events and publish policy briefs.
- Integrate sufficient dissemination and implementation into project design and evaluate implementation potential with reviewers experienced in policy uptake and implementation in practice.
- Co-create call texts with experts from food systems, health, sustainability as well as representatives from different governance levels
- Require cross-portfolio collaboration to overcome silos and enhance synergies between projects.

4. Prioritise integrated research agendas that address social, commercial, and systemic determinants of health and food systems, moving away from individualistic narratives (e.g. personal responsibility, individual health literacy, etc).¹⁴

How?

Health and food equity

- Study equity in health and food systems using a food systems and/or overall systemic approach, considering social, education, housing, food, and labour policies.

- Promote participatory action research to involve specific (underserved and underrepresented) groups in co-creating solutions.

Commercial determinants and enablers of health

- Explore the systems, practices, and pathways through which certain commercial actors

¹⁴ CLEVERFOOD (2025). Strengthening the food systems approach in EU research and innovation – [Policy Brief: CLEVER_Policy brief_Strengthening the food system](#)

impact health and equity outcomes (i.e. via products, marketing (including influencer and AI-driven), labour practices, and political lobbying).

- ✱ Investigate systemic power imbalances and their role in shaping public health and nutrition.
- ✱ Examine the upscaling of SME front-runners, stewardship companies and other private sector stakeholders in supporting a healthy and just transition (f.e. through peer-to-peer learning and action research).

Food production, processing and health outcomes

- ✱ Assess (large) industrial food systems' effects on nutrition, environmental sustainability, cost, and social equity.
- ✱ Prioritise research on health implications of and regulatory approaches for unhealthily and unsustainably processed food; nutritional quality of food processing; health and environmental impacts of alternative proteins; agro-ecology and regenerative agriculture.

Conclusion: Setting the conditions for transformation in the next Horizon Europe Framework Programme

The EU's future competitiveness and wellbeing depend on the ability to transform food, health, and social systems together. This requires three principles:

1. **Integration, not fragmentation:** Break silos across disciplines, sectors, and domains to enable systemic solutions while respecting sustainable context-specific food system situations.
2. **Research process at the core:** Maintain scientific excellence while further strengthening the way research is done (co-creative and bottom-up) rather than pre-determining the outcomes.
3. **Functional framework:** Align governance, streamline funding instruments, and ensure coherence across partnerships to maximise tangible impact.

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