

Food Processing Policy Implementation Network

HDHL is pleased to pre-announce the launch of the new joint funding activity: the Knowledge Hub call on 'Establishing the link between food processing and sustainable food systems' expected the beginning of January 2026.

Background

Food processing plays a crucial role in shaping the health and sustainability of our food systems. However, the environmental, economic, and health-related impacts of different types and levels of processing remain insufficiently understood. With increasing attention on ultra-processed foods (UPFs), circular food production, and resilience of food chains, deeper and more systemic understanding of how processing fits into food system transformation is urgently needed.

Aim of the call

The aim of the call is to establish a transnational, multidisciplinary network to provide recommendations for policy and practice on the link between food processing and sustainable food systems. This Knowledge Hub will bring together leading researchers from different disciplines – including food science, nutrition, public health, behavioural science, environmental science, and economics – to develop a shared knowledge base and provide guidance for policy, research, and innovation. Furthermore, this topic reflects a shared priority across HDHL participating countries and aligns with emerging EU policy frameworks including the EC vision on Agriculture and Food, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the European Green Deal.

The Knowledge Hub may explore the following areas:

- Typologies and classifications of food processing (e.g. including, but not limited to, NOVA classification);
- Environmental and health impacts of processing practices;
- Nutritional consequences of processing and reformulation;
- Role of food processing in future-proof, equitable and sustainable diets;
- Consumer understanding and perception of processed foods;
- Policy and market levers influencing food processing pathways;
- Data harmonisation needs and methodological gaps.

The Knowledge Hub is not expected to conduct primary research, but rather to synthesise existing knowledge, coordinate and integrate expertise, and provide actionable outputs.

General conditions for application

Interested researchers or research groups from academia and other research institutes from the participating countries can submit an **Expression of Interest (Eoi)** letter to join the network until the 5th of February 2026. The Eoi focuses mainly on the expertise, the motivation to participate in the network, and the researcher or the research group's contribution towards the network. Researchers from countries not funding this call can apply to participate in the Food Processing Policy Implementation Network at their own expense.

The suggested members of the network will be selected by an external international Scientific Evaluation Committee. The successful researchers and research groups will be invited to a Network Meeting on the 1st of April 2026 to start the development of one joint network proposal. The network proposal needs to be submitted by May 2026 and will then be evaluated by the Scientific Evaluation Committee to reach a final funding decision.

Participating countries

The following organisations intend to participate in this Knowledge Hub call.

Country	Funding party	Acronym
Belgium	Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	ILVO
Germany	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity represented by the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food	BMLEH represented by BLE
Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	DAFM
Romania	National Qualifications Authority	ANC

Please note that this list is only preliminary

* Final decision will be confirmed

Tentative timeline

What	When
Launch call and Eoi submission open	Beginning of January 2026
Closing of submission Expression of Interest	5 February 2026 (14.00 CET)
Communicate outcome Expression of Interest	17 March 2026
Networking & co-creation meeting	1 April 2026
Opening submission full proposal	1 April 2026
Deadline full proposal submission	21 May 2026

Communication of results	Beginning of July 2026
Start of activities	4 months after decision

Disclaimer

The content of the call described in this pre-announcement may be subject to changes and is not legally binding to the funding organisations. Interested researchers are encouraged to initiate scientific contacts with potential project consortium partners for applications.

More information on the call or the Knowledge Hub procedure will be published soon. Keep an eye out on our website.