



eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

# EU funding opportunities related to innovation in agriculture, food and forestry

Submitting your innovative project: what, how and where.



funded by



European  
Commission

# table of contents



IMPLEMENTING YOUR PLANS	3
Developing your ideas first	3
Join the EIP-AGRI network	3
Compare your idea to EUROPE 2020	4
EU policies at a glance	5
EU FUNDING AVAILABLE AT NATIONAL OR REGIONAL LEVELS	6
Does your idea fit in your region's smart specialisation strategy?	6
European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)	7
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	8
Cooperating between regions through INTERREG	8
European Social Fund (ESF)	9
EU FUNDING AVAILABLE AT EU LEVEL	10
Horizon 2020	10
EUROSTARS	11
COSME	12
Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) - Erasmus+	13
European Investment Fund	14
LIFE+ Programme	15
Infographic	16



This is a publication from the EIP-AGRI Service Point  
fact sheet EIP-AGRI funding opportunities, august 2014  
pictures: EIP-AGRI Service Point, Shutterstock  
more information: [www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu)





## Implementing your plans

- Are you a farmer or researcher willing to test an idea or an innovative approach?
- Are you an Operational Group manager or member who seeks funding for innovative ideas?
- Are you interested in supporting innovative processes rather than leading projects?

European Union (EU) funds may well help support you in implementing your plans.



### Develop your ideas first

What challenges are driving you to take action? Do you enjoy working in collaborative and interactive projects with different players? What results can you expect?

The development of your project can better be driven by your ideas than by the funding sources that happen to be available. The more clearly you define your needs, the easier it is to identify the right funding.



Register on the EIP-AGRI website:  
[www.eip-agri.eu](http://www.eip-agri.eu)

Subscribe to the [EIP-AGRI monthly newsletter](#)



### Join the EIP-AGRI network

In your search for funding, the European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' (EIP-AGRI) can help you. Through the EIP-AGRI network, people can share information on available funding sources, similar project ideas and contacts. Registering on the EIP-AGRI website will automatically give you access to the entire network and facilitate your search for partners.

This fact sheet contains information on the funding sources that are already available today from the European Union. We also give you hints on what will be available at national and regional levels from the end of this year, and ideas on where to find information for your region. Through the EIP-AGRI website and newsletter, we will update members of the network on new funding opportunities.



## Compare your idea to EUROPE 2020

All EU funds are geared towards the European Union's growth strategy 'EU 2020'. Within this strategy, the EU has set five objectives to be reached by 2020 which will help to build a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy:

- Employ 75% of 20-64 year-olds.
- Invest 3% of the EU's economic growth in Research & Development.
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions to 20%, generate 20% of energy from renewables and increase energy efficiency by 20%.
- Reduce the rates of early school leaving to below 10% and get at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds to complete third level education.
- Reduce by at least 20 million the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.



If you answer 'yes' to one of the following questions, your request for EU funding will have more chance of being approved. Highlighting these criteria in your application (or those applicable to the grant to which you apply) might improve your chances of being successful.

- Will my project create jobs?
- Will my project create knowledge?
- Will my project increase people's income?
- Will my project lower my energy consumption?
- Will my project increase skills?



## EU policies at a glance

A wide range of programmes and funding provide financial support to hundreds of thousands of people and organisations such as farmers, students, scientists, NGOs, businesses, towns, regions and many others. EU funding is available on local, regional, national, interregional and EU level.

The complete list of EU funding schemes through which European policies will be implemented during the period 2014-2020 and the amounts allocated to each of them can be found on the [European Commission website](#).

These schemes are grouped into 45 different categories, 9 of which are directly linked to innovation in agriculture, food and forestry. This is what this fact sheet is focusing on.



EU 2020 STRATEGY



EU POLICIES WITH EU FUNDING



45 categories of EU funding programmes



9 categories of EU funding programmes of greater interest to innovation in agriculture, food and forestry



3 implemented at national/regional level



6 implemented at EU level

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

Horizon 2020

European Regional Development Fund

Eurostars

European Social Fund

COSME

Erasmus

European Investment Fund

LIFE+





Regions which highlighted agriculture as key research area in their smart specialisation strategy.

## Does your idea fit in with your region's smart specialisation strategy?

Member States and regions are required to set up a Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation. This is a pre-condition for receiving European funding for research and innovation, and for development of the digital economy.

Smart specialisation is a new innovation policy concept designed to target the use of public investment in research and innovation. Its goal is to boost regional innovation in order to achieve economic growth and prosperity, by enabling regions to focus on their strengths.

According to the smart specialisation platform which was set up by the European Commission to assist the development of smart specialisation strategies, a significant number of regions have selected agro-food as a key research area (in green on the map above).

Check [the smart specialisation platform website](#) to find out whether your region selected agriculture, forestry and fisheries as a key research and innovation priority. If this is the case your innovative project might have an even better chance of receiving funding.



## EU funding available at national or regional levels

Over 76% of the European Union's total budget is spent on five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF):

- [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)
- [European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#)
- [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#)
- [Cohesion Fund \(CF\)](#)
- [European Maritime & Fisheries Fund \(EMFF\)](#)

There are 11 common objectives set as priorities at EU level and each fund concentrates on one or more of these priorities. The main priority is strengthening research and innovation. These ESIF funds are implemented mainly through national or regional programmes managed by Member States or Regions, which designate a managing authority for each programme.

At the end of 2013 a European framework with objectives, rules and budget was approved for each one of these funds. Since then, managing authorities have been working on how they will use their allocated funds in their own programmes. Once the European Commission has approved these programmes (at the end of 2014 at the earliest), countries or regions will make a public announcement on the funding available (known as a call for proposals) and then provide support to potential projects. Anyone who is interested will then be able to apply for funding. The managing authority will inform potential applicants, select projects and monitor their implementation. More information can be obtained from your managing authority.

Guidance on ESIF can be found on the [website of the European Commission](#)





## European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

**BUDGET:** €95 billion

**AIMS:** Improve competitiveness for farming and forestry, protect the environment and the countryside, improve the quality of life and diversification of the rural economy, and support locally based approaches to rural development.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING?** Grants and subsidies for projects and contractual commitments provided by regions or countries implementing their rural development programmes.

**WHO FOR?** Farmers, foresters, rural businesses, groups, organisations...

The Rural Development Programmes implemented by the Member States or regions may use up to 18 different measures to support rural development. When it comes to innovation in particular, they may provide funding to set up and run 'Operational Groups' (see below) working on pilot projects to develop new products, to cooperate among small operators, to promote products etc. These programmes can also support knowledge transfer, advisory services, investments in physical assets and the establishment of networks or innovation support services. Operational Groups and innovation support services are new approaches to innovation in the rural development policy 2014-2020.

Learn more about the new rural development policy from the [ENRD website](#)



### EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

Operational Groups are groups assembling different people such as farmers, researchers, advisors, businesses and NGOs, set up to work on finding an innovative solution to a shared problem or issue. Size and composition of an Operational Group depend on the project itself. Therefore, one Operational Group can look completely different from another. The results and knowledge developed by an Operational Group must be shared via the EIP-AGRI Network so it can benefit other farmers, foresters and industries in Europe.

If you have an innovative idea that you would like to develop through such a group, it is worthwhile to have a look at how your region or country's Rural Development Programme can offer support and when calls for proposals will be published.

Learn more from our [Fact Sheet on Operational Groups](#) (includes the list of managing authorities)

### Innovation Support Services

Sometimes it is not enough to offer stand-alone funding for groups cooperating on innovation projects. Innovation Support Services and brokering will play a crucial role in getting many worthwhile projects off the ground. Innovation Support Services can take the lead developing initiatives that connect actors with an interest in, and ideas on finding an innovative solution to a shared problem. These activities can be supported by Rural Development Programmes.

Learn more from our [Fact Sheet on Innovation Support Services](#)



## European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

**BUDGET:** Approximately €200 billion

**AIMS:** Strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions.

**FOCUS:** Research and innovation; digital agenda; SME competitiveness; low-carbon economy.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING?** Grants and other types of financial support provided by regions implementing their Operational Programmes.

**WHO FOR?** SMEs, research centres, universities, local and regional authorities, training centres, non-profit organisations...

The ERDF will strengthen research and innovation in the EU Member States through a variety of actions:

- Supporting people who are directly engaged in developing innovative solutions and in the economic exploitation of new ideas through: advisory and support services, direct investments, and financial instruments that help access private sources of funding.
- Investing in infrastructure, equipment, pilot product lines, and advanced manufacturing necessary for applied research and innovation activities, including technologies that create capabilities for further innovation in a range of other sectors.
- Facilitating cooperation, networking activities and partnerships among different innovation actors working in the same field – universities, research and technological centres, SMEs and large firms – to achieve synergies and technology transfers.

To learn more about what type of support will be made available in your region through ERDF, contact your managing authority.

## INTERREG: Cooperating between regions

ERDF also provides funding for several European territorial cooperation activities including the Interregional cooperation programmes known as 'INTERREG'. There are three types of INTERREG programmes: interregional cooperation between cross-border regions, between states in a given part of Europe, and between regions throughout the whole of Europe. The interregional cooperation programme for 2014-2020 'INTERREG EUROPE' is open to all regions and supports mainly the exchange of practices at regional policy level. Cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes may support investments more widely, including in the agri-food chain. The cooperation programmes are currently being defined by managing authorities. First calls for proposals are expected in 2015.

### More information:

[European Territorial Cooperation](#)

[Cross-border programmes](#)

[Interreg transnational cooperation programmes](#)

[Interreg Europe](#)

[Interregional cooperation projects](#)



## European Social Fund (ESF)

**BUDGET:** Minimum €80 billion

**AIMS:** Investing in human capital to improve job opportunities for all EU citizens.

**FOCUS:** Improving skills and jobs, favouring employment, mobility and social inclusion, fighting poverty.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING:** Grants and other forms of support provided by regions and Member States.

**WHO FOR?** Businesses, public bodies, schools and training centres, universities and non-profit organisations.

The ESF helps entrepreneurs set up and boost their own companies and businesses by improving their skills and the skills of their workers. For example, the ESF supports actions focusing on:

- Better skills to adapt to changes such as increased global competition, or tackle opportunities such as development of the low-carbon economy, be more competitive, and adopt new and innovative ways of working.
- Improving export performance, which can open new markets and create new jobs.
- Helping entrepreneurs and the self-employed with training in basic management, legal, and financial skills for setting up a business. Some projects use business mentors to help entrepreneurs through the critical first years. Other projects promote networks of entrepreneurs to exchange experiences and offer support.
- Micro-finance to help small businesses set up their business in situations which banks would find too risky.



In the field of agriculture, food and forestry, the ESF could support innovation by promoting lifelong learning and increased investment in human resources, dissemination of information and communication technologies, e-learning, eco-friendly technologies, as well as helping to fund business start-ups.

More information on the [ESF and ESF projects website](#).

Find out about what is available in your region in the '[Support in your country](#)' section.





## EU funding available at EU level



### Horizon 2020

**BUDGET:** €80 billion including €4 billion for sustainable agriculture, forestry, food, bioeconomy and marine resources

**FOCUS:** Research and innovation (excellent science, industrial leadership, societal challenges).

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING:** Calls for projects and actions addressing specific topics are laid out in 2-year work programmes. The majority of projects receive grants, but other types of support are also available (access to finance, innovation prizes, public procurement...).

**WHO FOR?** Small and medium sized enterprises, industry, universities, research institutes, but also other types of actors such as farming organisations or farm advisory services.

The part of Horizon 2020 which is the most relevant to agriculture, food and forestry innovation is the societal challenge 2 "Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bioeconomy". Themes tackled include the sustainable increase of productivity, fostering delivery of ecosystem services, empowering rural people and developing sustainable forestry practices. In most cases you can apply for funding for research and innovation projects with at least three partners in three different member states. Horizon 2020 calls include in particular several opportunities to support multinational innovation projects in agriculture, through thematic networks and through multi-actor projects involving different types of actors such as farmers, advisors, researchers, agribusiness.

There are also some possibilities for mono-participant projects, such as those financed by the 'SME instrument' which helps high-potential SMEs to develop innovative ideas for products, services or processes that are ready to face global market competition.

Other parts of Horizon 2020 are also of potential interest:

Fast Track to Innovation (FTI) will operate in 2015 - 2016 on the basis of a continuously open call. It has a yearly budget of €100 million. The FTI supports innovative projects in any type of technological area, including agri-food, carried out by groups of three to five legal entities in three Member States who wish to promote promising, innovative ideas on the market.

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions support the career development and training of researchers with a focus on innovation skills. It provides grants at all stages of researchers' careers, from PhD candidates to highly experienced researchers, and encourages transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility.

#### More information

- [EIP-AGRI Fact Sheet Horizon 2020](#)
- [Horizon 2020 Participant Portal Website](#)
- [The Network of National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#) provides guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon 2020.
- [Horizon 2020 participants online manual](#)



## EUROSTARS

**BUDGET:** €1.14 billion

**FOCUS:** Innovation in all sectors.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING?** Grants for development of new products, services or processes provided on a country-by-country basis.

**WHO FOR?** Consortia must include at least one research and development performing small or medium sized enterprise (SME). Other participants can be of any kind (industries, universities and research institutes).

Eurostars is a joint programme supported by 33 countries involved in the EUREKA network and the EU. It supports research-performing small and medium sized enterprises which develop innovative products, processes, and services to gain competitive advantage. Eurostars does this by providing funding for transnational innovation projects, the products of which are then rapidly commercialised. It applies across all market fields, including agriculture, food and forestry.

Eurostars supports three types of projects for example:

- Individual projects: market-oriented R&D projects led by SMEs.
- Clusters: long-term industrial initiatives that aim to develop generic technologies of key importance for European competitiveness (such as Information Technology, Energy, Communication, and Water which are the four supported so far).
- Umbrella projects: thematic networks promoting EUREKA projects in their own business area (such as manufacturing, materials, tourism, and agrifood, the four supported so far).

### More information

- [EUROSTARS website](#)
- [EUROSTARS in your country](#)
- [EUROSTARS project examples](#)
- [R&D performing SMEs](#)
- [EUREKA network website](#)





## COSME

**BUDGET:** €2.3 billion

**FOCUS:** Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING:** Several types of instruments depending on calls.

**WHO FOR?** Entrepreneurs, in particular SMEs as well as persons wishing to set up a business.

The Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (COSME) programme will support SMEs in four different areas, three of which may be of direct interest:

- Access to finance: COSME will finance guarantees provided by financial intermediaries, sharing the risk and encouraging them to support SMEs. It will also support equity funds providing businesses with venture capital and mezzanine funding.
- Access to markets: COSME supports the Enterprise Europe Network, which all businesses can freely approach via the local partner in their region. They offer advice on EU funding opportunities, assistance to find business partners abroad or expand abroad, advice on EU access to finance, support for innovation, and technology transfer.
- Supporting entrepreneurs: support for education, development of entrepreneurship, mentoring, and exchange activities for young entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs (see EYE page 13).

In addition, COSME works with administrations to promote more favourable conditions for business creation and growth.

COSME publishes calls on a regular basis that support these objectives. If you are an SME manager it might be worthwhile to visit the COSME website regularly to check whether a call is launched that matches your innovative idea. You should also make contact with the Enterprise Europe Network.

More information on [Enterprise Europe Network website](#).

More information on [COSME initiatives](#).



More information on [access to finance](#).  
More information on [going international](#).  
More information on [young entrepreneurs](#).  
More information on [women entrepreneurs](#).





## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE) is an EU programme which provides an opportunity for new entrepreneurs (which includes farmers) to spend up to 6 months working in an enterprise in another EU country. The exchange helps the new entrepreneur acquire the skills needed to run a small firm. The host benefits from fresh perspectives on his/her business and gets the opportunities to cooperate with partners from other countries and learn about new markets.

If you are a new farmer, it might be interesting to find out more, or even start your own network to launch future innovative projects.

More information on the [EYE website](#).  
Local support through [local contact points](#).



## Erasmus+

**BUDGET:** €14.77 billion

**FOCUS:** Education, training, youth and sport.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING:** Scholarships, grants for small projects, loan guarantees for students...

**WHO FOR?** Educational institutions, training centres, universities, different sorts of organisations.

Erasmus+ aims to increase knowledge and professional aptitudes and to support the modernisation of teaching and training systems through:

- Opportunities for 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience, and volunteer abroad: if you are a researcher, a teacher, a farm advisor or a young farmer and if you wish to move abroad to improve your skills or send students abroad this is the right programme. Joint Master degrees can also be set up to foster exchange of knowledge.
- Supporting transnational partnerships among education, training, and youth institutions.
- Supporting national efforts to modernise education, training, and youth systems.

The area of greatest interest is the key action 'cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices', which offers the possibility to build 'strategic partnerships' to cooperate around innovation practices, to create 'knowledge alliances' assembling higher education and businesses to develop innovative approaches, or 'sector skill alliances' to tackle the skills gap in a specific sector. Depending on the type of partnership, you must join with at least 3 to 9 organisations from 2 to 3 countries.

More information on [Erasmus+ website](#).  
[Contact your national agency](#) for local support.



## European Investment Fund

The European Investment Fund supports Europe's micro, Small and Medium Sized businesses (SMEs) by improving their access to funding (it does not lend money directly). The EIF can support agricultural, food and forestry SMEs through banks and other financial intermediaries such as microfinance institutions, private equity, and venture capital funds.

If you have an innovative idea that could actually lead to a new company, the financial intermediaries of the European Investment Fund may give you the push you need.

More information:

- [EIF website](#)
- Financial intermediaries: [Finance for SME](#)
- Example of funding scheme supported by the EIF: [JEREMIE - Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises](#)





LIFE+

**BUDGET:** €3.4 billion

**FOCUS:** Environment and climate action.

**WHAT TYPE OF FUNDING:** Grants for environmental projects provided through yearly calls for proposals.

**WHO FOR?** Private companies, NGOs, public bodies.

LIFE+ helps coordinate various sources of funding for environment and climate action, and fills gaps in environmental support by addressing environmental issues that are not dealt with by other EU Funds. It also helps find solutions to environmental and climate challenges faced by all sectors of society, including agriculture and forestry and provides a platform to discuss easy and cost-efficient ways of implementing EU environmental and climate legislation.

LIFE+ will co-finance innovative projects in EU countries in the fields of:

- Environment, in particular biodiversity projects and exchange of experience and best practices to foster greater awareness and better compliance with environmental rules.
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation: projects to reduce carbon emissions, improve resilience and raise awareness.

Different categories of projects can be submitted, such as traditional projects (best-practice, demonstration, pilot or information, awareness and dissemination projects), or integrated projects for large-scale deployment of environmental related strategies (for example in the field of agriculture, forest, or water management).



More information on the [LIFE+ website](#).

All projects have to be submitted to the [national contact points](#).

Projects examples: [Life+ projects database](#).



## 1 START PROJECT



## 2 FIND FUNDING



## 3 MANAGE PROJECT

