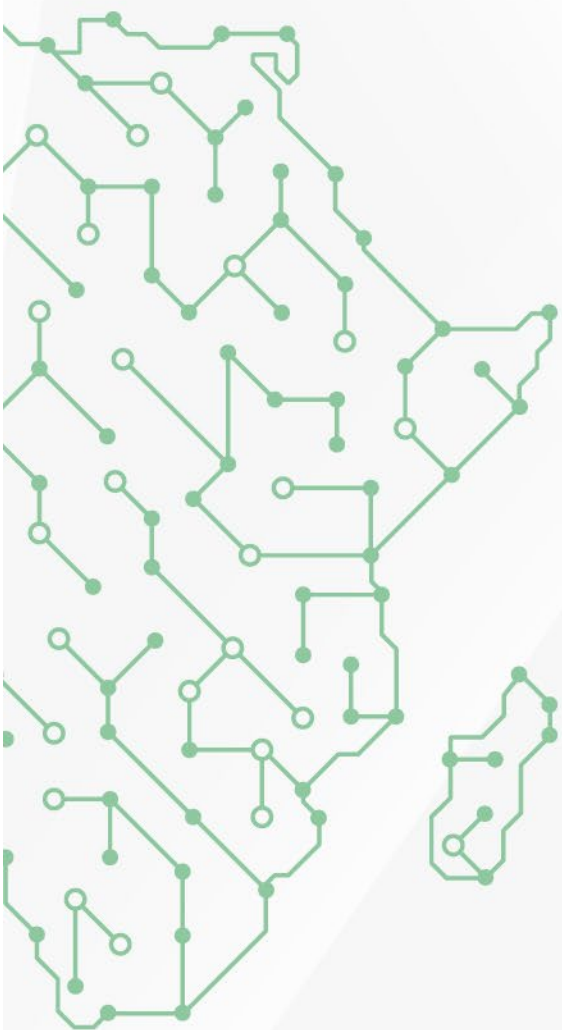




**Open Call 2 text**  
**11/12/2025**



[incitis-food.eu](http://incitis-food.eu)



Funded by  
the European Union

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Additionally, the associate partner ZHAW has received funding from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).



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the European Union

Title: INtegrated and Circular Technologies for Sustainable city region FOOD systems in Africa

Type of action: HORIZON Research and Innovation Actions

Topic: HORIZON-CL6-2022-FARM2FORK-01-14

Start date of project: 01 January 2023 • Duration: 48 months

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
1.1. About INCiTiS-FOOD Project .....	2
1.2. INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs (LLs) .....	3
2. INCiTiS-FOOD Open Call for Independent Innovators (II) .....	5
2.1. General Information .....	5
2.2. Targeted topics .....	5
2.3. Eligibility criteria.....	6
2.4. Submission procedure .....	6
2.5. Origin of the funds .....	7
3. Additional Information.....	7
3.1. Open Call 2 kit .....	7
3.2. Contacts .....	8

## List of figures

Figure 1 INCiTiS-FOOD at a glance .....	2
Figure 2 Locations of INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs.....	3

## List of tables

Table 1 Applicability areas of INCiTiS-FOOD .....	3
Table 2 INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs – short descriptions .....	5

## 1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information regarding the INCiTiS-FOOD Open Call 2, including the eligibility and evaluation criteria. The document in its entirety and all associated Annexes must be read carefully for the submission of an application.

### 1.1. About INCiTiS-FOOD Project



With current African cities experiencing a growth in population with an increase in consumption of protein-rich food, the INTeGrated and Circular Technologies for Sustainable city region FOOD systems in Africa (INCiTiS-FOOD) project hopes to create a system with novel practices to ensure a stable food future for Africa. Additionally, African urbanization is at 50%, with many net food buyers increasing their consumption of animal sourced food, fruits and veggies. Yet undernourishment and malnutrition persist due to lack of protein, micronutrients, and vitamin A. Fish account for up to 50% of protein intake in some countries but is still below global levels and insects are already common in African diets. The African food system needs to change at its core. INCiTiS-FOOD focuses on sustainable agri-food practices and addresses the pressing challenges of food and nutritional security, environmental pressures of food production and environmental justice in the African region.

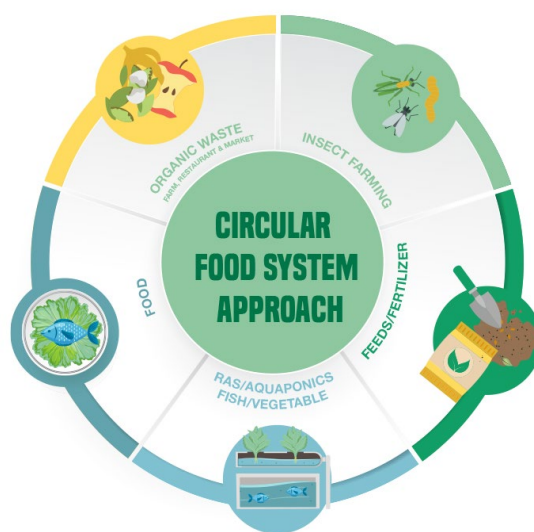





Figure 1 INCiTiS-FOOD at a glance

INCiTiS-FOOD aims at revolutionizing African city region food systems by enhance food and nutrition security (FNS) across four core dimensions – availability, access, utilization, and stability through solutions centered around soilless crop farming, recirculating aquaculture systems, and insect farming. These circular agri-food technologies have been considered suitable for the context of African cities because they do not require great access to land, water, or other resources allowing Africa to thrive.

Through co-creation of cutting-edge circular agri-food technologies, practices, and business models, INCiTiS-FOOD is creating an inclusive food system that is both sustainable and accessible. With 8 living labs across 6 countries and a user-centric approach, INCiTiS-FOOD is applying a Lean Start-up Methodology to launch innovative technologies, services, practices, and products – empowering stakeholders to shape the future of food in Africa.

INCiTiS-FOOD strives to positively impact food and nutritional security trough EU-AU partnerships in Africa by utilizing **hydroponics, recirculating aquaculture, aquaponics and insect farming** and

fostering collaboration among all relevant stakeholders along the supply and value chain, including women and young adults, start-ups, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

<b>Hydroponics</b> 	A technique for soil independent cultivation of plants, utilizing a nutrient-rich water solution to provide essential elements for plant growth. This method can be implemented horizontally or vertically and in various set-ups, such as nutrient film technique (NFT) and deep water culture (DWC). The benefits of this approach include efficient water usage, accelerated growth rates, increased yields, and the ability to cultivate plants in areas with limited space, water resources, or poor soil quality.
<b>Aquaponics</b> 	A farming technique that integrates aquaculture (fish farming) and hydroponics, creating a closed-loop system where plants and fish mutually benefit each other. In this system, fish waste provides nutrients for the plants, and, in turn, the plants purify the water for the fish. Aquaponics stands out for its minimal water usage, minimizing the need for mineral or synthetic fertilizers or pesticides. Aquaponics enable the sustainable and efficient production of both fish and fresh vegetables.
<b>Insect farming</b> 	Also known as insect rearing or insect husbandry, it is the controlled cultivation of insects and is increasingly recognized as a sustainable and alternative form of protein production. In controlled environments, insect farms breed and raise insects such as mealworms, crickets, and black soldier flies. Insects are rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals, making them suitable for human consumption or as feed for livestock and aquaculture. Insect farming has a significantly smaller environmental footprint than livestock farming, requiring less land, water, and feed resources. Insects can efficiently convert organic waste into valuable nutrients, making them beneficial for waste management practices.

**Table 1 Applicability areas of INCiTiS-FOOD**

## 1.2. INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs (LLs)

INCiTiS-FOOD is working in six African countries: Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Kenya (Figure 2). In the following, these countries are addressed as INCiTiS-FOOD countries. While Kenya and Nigeria host two living labs (LLs), the other four countries host one each, together representing 8 city region food systems.



**Figure 2 Locations of INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs**

In table below you may find a short description of each INCiTiS-FOOD Living Lab.

INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs (LLs)	
<b>1. AGLOBE Development Center (ADC)</b>	ADC is headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria is a Non-Profit/Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) dedicated to research. It focuses on: Agriculture, Technology, Urban and Rural Development and Empowerment. To facilitate initial testing and experimentation for MVPs, the center has a compact station and screen spanning

INCiTiS-FOOD Living Labs (LLs)	
	an area of approximately 48 square meters situated in the Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria.
<b>2. Bamenda University of Science and Technology (BUST)</b>	Situated in Bamenda in northwestern Cameroon, BUST stands as a private university. Within its premises, the Living Lab finds its home in the Department of Animal Science and the Department of Agronomy and Soil Sciences. In addition to constructing a Living Lab for the INCiTiS-FOOD project, the region where this lab resides benefits from two distinct climates—a rainy season and a dry season—which provide ideal conditions for testing and gathering valuable data.
<b>3. Egerton University (EGE)</b>	Situated in Njoro, Nakuru County, Kenya, Egerton University is the oldest institution of higher learning in the country. The Living Lab at EGE focuses on establishing sustainable and circular food production systems, and includes prototypes of Aquaponics, Hydroponics, Bioponics and insect rearing housed within a greenhouse.
<b>4. Kenyatta University (KU)</b>	The living lab is situated on the border of Nairobi County and Kiambu County, within the Nairobi Metropolitan zone. This area is characterized by middle-class residential estates and a significant population of low-income earners. Nearby towns host several local vegetable and food markets, which primarily rely on supplies from distant farming regions. The living lab will focus on implementing hydroponics and soil-less cultivation techniques within a greenhouse.
<b>5. Njala University (NU)</b>	Njala University, located in the Moyamba district of Sierra Leone, is the top university in the country. The Living Lab is housed within the Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries Management in the School of Natural Resources Management. Apart from constructing a secure lab for the INCiTiS project, the department possesses advanced facilities such as a modern RAS (Recirculating Aquaculture System), a fish feed mill, and sets of concrete tanks for fish breeding and production. The department has established an integrated fish farm village that encompasses fish, vegetables, poultry, piggery, and insect production, serving both training and commercial purposes.
<b>6. University for Development Studies (UDS)</b>	Established in 1992 by the Ghanaian government, UDS in Tamale was envisioned as a catalyst for the rapid progress of the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions of Ghana. UDS was established as a multi-campus institution. The Living Lab of UDS is situated on the Nyankpala Campus. This enclosed area boasts abundant shade trees and other ecosystem services, making it an ideal environment for integrated fish-vegetable farms. The site encompasses vast stretches of land, enclosed by corrugated wire mesh fencing. Additionally, a pavilion measuring 20 × 45 feet has been constructed to house an office and a storeroom. To ensure year-round production, aquaponic and hydroponic systems is located in a shade house, creating a serene and favourable atmosphere.
<b>7. Université des Sciences et Techniques de Masuku (USTM)</b>	Franceville, also known as Masuku, is a town situated in Gabon. Within this vibrant setting, the USTM living lab operates with a team of dynamic and dedicated individuals. The site itself engages in the cultivation of diverse crops and fish farming. It serves as both a production and demonstration site, welcoming, training, and providing support to individuals interested in establishing agricultural activities. One of the main activities is testing feed, aquaponics, different substrates, etc.
<b>8. The University of Ibadan (UI)</b>	UI is a renowned public research university situated in Ibadan, Nigeria. It was established in 1948 as University College Ibadan, affiliated with the University of London. The UI Living Lab is within the Department of Aquaculture and Fisheries Management focuses on the development of Aquaponics, Aquaculture, Hydroponics, Agronomy, and Insect Culture. These areas of study and experimentation aim to advance innovative techniques and practices in sustainable agriculture and aquaculture systems.



Table 2 INCiTIS-FOOD Living Labs – short descriptions

## 2. INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call for Independent Innovators (II)

### 2.1. General Information

In the Open Call for Independent Innovators (IIs), INCiTIS-FOOD will provide total funding of 60,000€ to 24 Independent Innovators. Independent Innovators (IIs), who can only be start-up entrepreneurs and SMEs residing in one of the eight cities and towns within the six INCiTIS-FOOD countries hosting a LL, are eligible to apply. Each location will have 3 selected winners.

Independent Innovators who do not have an established sole proprietorship (i.e. VAT number) will have to establish one, in accordance with respective national regulations, prior to signing their subgrantee agreement. During the application period, they will submit a letter of commitment to establishing a sole proprietorship, should they be declared the winner of the Open Call. Start-ups qualify under the SME definition (see: EUR-Lex - 32003H0361 - EN; Art. 2) and are therefore eligible to apply individually.

Winners cannot be located outside of the cities and towns where INCiTIS-FOOD Living Labs are located. Winners are expected to conduct their activities during the 4-month period, with the aim of proposing solutions to the challenges identified.

	Activity	Date
Application and selection	Launch of the Open Call	December 11th, 2025
	Deadline for submitting the proposals	February, 9th 2026
	Eligibility check	February 2026
	Evaluation and selection	February-March 2026
	Evaluation results and contracting	March 2026

Table 2 Application and selection tentative timeline

	Activity	Date
Implementation	Phase 1: Plan	April 2026
	Phase 2: Implement	May-July 2026

Table 3 Implementation timeline

### 2.2. Targeted topics

Within INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call for II, the following types of applications/solutions are expected to be funded, and it is applicable for all 8 LLs. Applicant is expected to select **one topic** of the following:

- High cost and limited availability of critical inputs for urban farming (e.g., feed, nutrients, water, energy, materials).
- High market prices for fish and indigenous vegetables, making it difficult to access affordable and nutritious food.
- Inadequate technical capacity and support for operating and maintaining agri-aquaculture systems.
- Environmental stresses and climate variability are affecting consistent production and food system stability.
- Low awareness and adoption of circular food production technologies, resulting, e.g., in overuse of scarce water and effluents.
- Limited financial resources and institutional support to sustain and scale Living Lab activities.

## 2.3. Eligibility criteria

INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call for II is aimed at individuals residing in one of the 8 cities or towns hosting INCiTIS-FOOD LLs.

- Applicants need to be a **individuals**, start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- The applicants must be **legally established in order to be able to sign the sub-grantee agreement, in case they are selected for funding**. Having a valid VAT number is mandatory, however, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided.
- **Existing consortium members** of INCiTIS-FOOD project and their affiliated entities are **not eligible** for the INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call.
- The proposal is **delivered before the defined deadline**, applying the requested submission procedure.
- Proposals shall **only ask for funding for that part of the work that is not yet accomplished** and will be carried out after having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- Each applicant may submit **only one proposal to the INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call 2**. In case an applicant submits more than one application in Open Call, only the last one received (timestamp of the system) will be considered, and the remaining applications will automatically be excluded from the evaluation process. If the last submitted application is declared as non-eligible or below the evaluation threshold upon evaluation, the other submitted applications 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 Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on Financial Regulation. In the case of applications 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 INCiTIS-FOOD may assign all applications to the same set of evaluators and, should any doubt remain, exclude all applications. 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 applications from consortia where this entity is present will automatically be discarded as ineligible.

## 2.4. Submission procedure

The entry point for submitting all proposals for INCiTIS-FOOD Open Call 2 is the INCiTIS-FOOD website <https://incitis-food.eu/>, where the direct link to the application form will be provided.

Submissions received through any other channel will be automatically discarded. Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels, which will be indicated by the INCiTIS-FOOD consortium in the contracting phase.

An application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on February 9th, 2026. The submission deadline is absolute. The eligibility of the submission time will be determined solely by the system timestamp recorded in the application database upon receipt. Please be aware that any application with a recorded timestamp of 17:01 CET or later will be automatically declared non-eligible and will be discarded. This rule applies even if the online form remained technically accessible to the applicant after the deadline. Applicants are strongly advised to submit their proposals well in advance.

## 2.5. Origin of the funds

All sub-grantees will sign a dedicated Sub-grant Agreement with the INCiTiS-FOOD consortium. The funds provided to the Sub-grant Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project INCiTiS-FOOD funded itself by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101083790, and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in INCiTiS-FOOD. This relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through the INCiTiS-FOOD project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the INCiTiS-FOOD consortium partners to inform them of these.

More details on obligations of sub-grantees can be found in the Open Call 2 Applicants' guide.

## 3. Additional Information

### 3.1. Open Call 2 kit

1. **Open Call 2 text**, this document.
2. **Open Call 2 Applicants' Guide**, that set out the guidelines for participation in the INCiTiS-FOOD Open Call 2 for respective applicants. It also includes the eligibility and evaluation criteria.
3. **Proposal template**, ppt presentation to be submitted in the application phase.
4. **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, which declares that all conditions of the Open Call 2 are accepted by legal representatives of all consortium members.
5. **Declaration of conducting business**, which shows the business activities of the applicants; also, in case of SME, it shows that the applicant is an SME according to EC standards. In case of natural persons, a Letter of commitment should be submitted\*.
6. **Bank account information**, which collects information on the applicant's bank account where the INCiTiS-FOOD payments will be transferred to (only for winners of the Open Call).
7. **Indicative Model sub-grant agreement\*\***, for information purposes only.

\* In case the applicant is still not with registered legal entity during the application period, Declaration of conducting business is not applicable. However, they must submit a letter of commitment to establish a sole proprietorship, should they be declared the winner of the Open Call. Otherwise, they acknowledge they will be treated as ineligible and the next ranked application will be invited to sign the Sub-grantee agreement.

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



Note: INCiTiS-FOOD consortium reserves the right to ask for additional explanations from the applicants during the eligibility check.

### 3.2. Contacts

The INCiTiS-FOOD consortium will provide information to the applicants via the INCiTiS-FOOD website, so that the information will be visible to all participants.

More info at: <https://incitis-food.eu/>