

Call for partners

Chemicals, Materials & Water

Public-Private-Partnerships with Wageningen Food & Biobased Research (WFBR) for project ideas to start in 2026.

Each year, Wageningen Food and Biobased Research (WFBR) partners with Industry, research institutes, NGOs, and other stakeholders in Topsector Agri & Food consortium projects. In this document, the WFBR programmes in the biobased domain present their Public-Private-Partnership project ideas to start in 2026.



Chemicals, Materials & Water

Project ideas for:

- Nature Based Materials and Plastics
- Circular Water Technology
- Safe and Circular Biobased Products

The project ideas are still in their early stages, which has the advantage that they can be adjusted to the research needs of partners who would like to join the consortium. If you would like more information or if you want to express your interest in joining any of the project consortia, please contact the relevant Programme Manager before the end of May 2025.

The submission deadline for the project proposals to the funding agency is 1 September 2025. The main general terms, conditions, and timeline for consortium projects can be found at the end of this document.

Chemicals, Materials & Water

WFBR not only has Public-Private-Partnerships for Chemicals, Materials & Water, but also for Healthy & Sustainable Foods:

- Food Chains
- Food Product and Process
- Consumer and Health

A full overview of all WFBR project ideas are available at www.wur.eu/call-for-partners.

Wageningen Food and Biobased Research

Together with our clients and partners, WFBR creates economically viable and sustainable solutions to contribute to supplying a rapidly growing world population with healthy, delicious, sustainably produced food and high-quality materials, chemicals, and fuels made from biomass. As a contract research organization, WFBR conducts applied and pre-competitive research for NGOs, governments and industrial partners. This work is conducted within bilateral projects and scientific grants, as well as Public-Private-Partnerships such as Topsector Agri & Food consortia.

Nature Based Materials and Plastics

Project ideas:

1. Creating understanding of biodegradation and safety aspects
2. Sustainable biobased additives
3. Reactive biobased chain extenders
4. New circular products based on thermoplastic elastomers
5. Expanding the processing opportunities of PHA plastics
6. Safe biodegradable products for outdoor applications
7. RELEASY: Non-accumulating slow-release delivery systems that are safe for nature
8. Biodegradable foam from waste and side streams
9. EDPACKNEXT (Edible Packaging, Next Steps)
10. Binder, done that
11. Stronger biocomposites
12. Biowaste to building materials
13. Flame retardants for biobased building
14. Biobased and water-tight coating for flax panels
15. Decision support for future-proof products with sustainable material strategies
16. Safe and sustainable by design biobased chemicals and materials in NL
17. Legislation and the impact on industries
18. Balancing carbon to soil and biobased applications

Please find below the project ideas for 2026.

Nature Based Materials and Plastics is working on the development of products from renewable raw materials, which are easy to recycle and do not accumulate in the environment.

Programme Manager:

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Creating understanding of biodegradation and safety aspects



Idea #1

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

The societal acceptance of biodegradable products is notably affected by growing concerns on the amounts of microplastics found in the environment, their accumulation and their impact on ecosystems or human health. Biodegradable plastics typically fragment during use or at end-of-life, to be subsequently further metabolized and taken up in the biological carbon cycle.

This project will develop methods that provide insight into the environmental fate of disintegrated (intermediate) degradation products when we can no longer see them. Material producers, product developers and brand owners can use these methods to show whether their products potentially contribute to environmental safety aspects.

Sustainable biobased additives



Idea #2

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

In this project, we will develop biobased additives that can modify toughness and improve impact resistance. Biobased plastics, made of for example starch or PLA, are often complemented by additives from fossil origin.

The newly to be developed additives are derived from natural sources, such as functionalized cork, vegetable oils, custom-made cellulose fibers, cardanol or lignin. These biobased additives will increase processing and product properties to be able to compete with fossil-based counterparts and reduce environmental impact.

Reactive biobased chain extenders



Idea #3

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

In this project, we will develop reactive biobased alternatives to replace fossil-based additives, such as chain-extendors. These reactive chain-extendors are helping to improve conversion of polymers (e.g. PLA) into films or foams and improving their mechanical properties. Chain-extendors contain 2 or more reactive groups and can include the entire range from phenols via tannins to lignins.

The aim is to develop biobased reactive additives for 100% biobased plastic products that are safe and will not accumulate in nature.

New circular products based on thermoplastic elastomers



Idea #4

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Currently, most elastomers are derived from fossil feedstocks and very hard to recycle. They end up in the environment as microplastics due to their crosslinked nature. There is a specific need for new biobased, biodegradable thermoplastic elastomers (TPEs). By carefully tuning the polymer microstructure and architecture, such as the length of soft and hard blocks and hydrophilic / hydrophobic segments, specific properties can be targeted such as resilience, toughness and scratch resistance. The proposed TPEs, could be (re)processed using common melt processing techniques. Products that could benefit from these TPEs are used in the automotive industry, consumer goods or leisure products.

Expanding the processing opportunities of PHA plastics



Idea #5

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

Looking at biobased plastics that do not accumulate in nature, PHA polymers remain the only polymers that 'tick' both boxes by default. However, their processing behavior hampers their application window, which makes that they are not a suitable option for many applications. The challenge of this project would be to expand the processing opportunities of PHA, thereby making these materials suitable for a wider range of applications.

Topics that will be covered in this project are:

- i) improved process stability at higher temperatures;
- ii) enhanced flow behavior for injection molding applications;
- iii) improving PHA melt strength for film blowing applications.

Safe biodegradable products for outdoor applications



Idea #6

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

This project will develop new strategies to program the biodegradation rate of plastic products that are being used in outdoor environments such as forestry, agriculture, lakes and oceans. These plastic products are often difficult to collect and recycle and even when they are, a high risk of leaving plastic residues in the environment remains.

This calls for new plastic materials that maintain their functionality during use while biodegrading as fast as possible during their end-of-life. Hence the project will develop new polymer formulations and processing routes towards products that maintain their intended performance while significantly reducing their pollution potential.

RELEASY: Non-accumulating slow-release delivery systems that are safe for nature



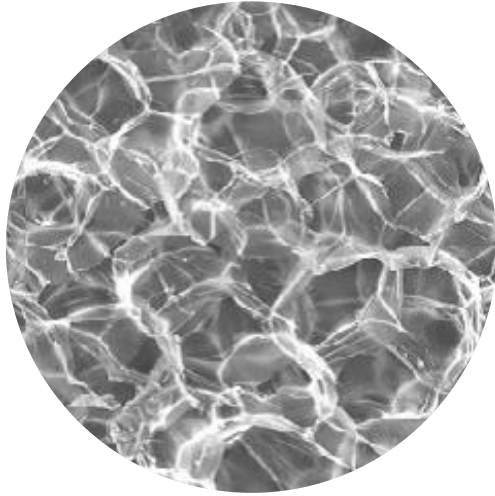
Idea #7

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

Biodegradable materials are indispensable for use in products which are intentionally placed into the environment (mulch films, fertilizers) and difficult to retrieve after use. Regulatory pressure to combat microplastics pollution leads to an increasing demand for sustainable alternatives.

RELEASY aims to use biodegradation as a tool for programmed / tuneable release of nutrients and bio stimulants in various plant growth support products. Using the polymer molecular architecture to direct the release rate allows the production of materials with novel tuneable and/or triggered (by pH or temperature) release profiles. This helps the industry to meet upcoming regulations and improve the efficiency of products.

Biodegradable foam from waste and side streams



Idea #8

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Most polymeric foams are made from fossil-based polymers that are persistent when they end up in the environment. Often chemical blowing agents are used that contribute to global warming. It is known that natural polymers like starch can be foamed using water as a blowing agent. Biobased micro- and nano-additives can be used to improve foam properties. This project aims to develop biodegradable foams based on natural polymers like starches and other polysaccharides and eventually proteins retrieved from waste and side streams. Specific focus will be on extrusion foaming and applications where biodegradability is an advantage (e.g. agriculture, packaging).

EDPACKNEXT (Edible Packaging, Next Steps)



Idea #9

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

EDPACKNEXT (Edible Packaging, Next Steps) is a multidisciplinary initiative with significant potential to advance sustainable and secure food supply chains while minimizing food waste and the need for secondary packaging. This project focuses on enhancing and innovating edible packaging solutions, with emphasis on casings, coatings, and films. Derived from biobased sources, edible packaging is food-grade and readily biodegradable. While the development of edible films and coatings has growth in recent years, it remains a small fraction of the overall food packaging industry. Here we will study the use of biodegradable biopolymers, barrier properties and consumer acceptance for edible packaging.

Binder, done that



Thermoset resins are currently produced from extensive amounts of fossil-based, environmentally unfriendly and toxic binder chemicals. Lignocellulose can offer all the functionalities needed to produce fully biobased thermoset resin alternatives.

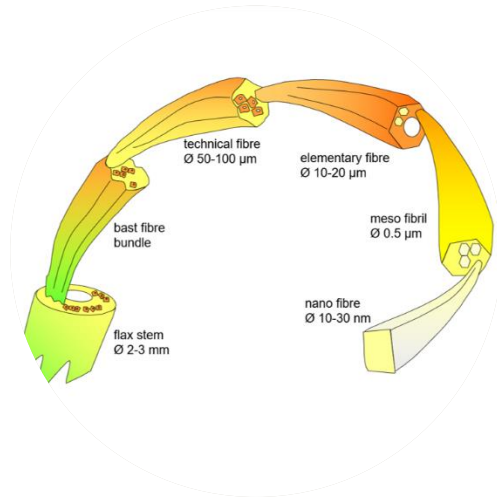
The 'Binder, done that' project will harness these functionalities, paying specific attention to the role of biobased aldehydes. New value-chains for lignocellulosic side streams will be explored, novel biobased resins will be developed and product properties will be tailored through synergistically combining biobased constituents.

Idea #10

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Stronger biocomposites



Idea #11

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

This project aims to develop stronger natural fiber reinforced biocomposites and make them more competitive against glass fiber reinforced composites. Typically, the low strength of biocomposites is due to a very short fiber length that remains after the required harsh compounding conditions needed during production.

In this project methods will be developed to weaken the binding layer between plant cell fibers. This allows the use of a mild extrusion process to produce biocomposites, with an increased fiber length and up to 30% higher composite strength.

Biowaste to building Materials



Idea #12

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

Biobased materials, specially building materials are currently mainly promoted and developed from agricultural (side-) streams. The use of residues and/or waste streams for this purpose opens interesting opportunities. For once They are already readily available, in large volumes. Optimizing separation technologies and improving processing will open this large resource group. Impurities and components outside the normal lignocellulosic matrix may even be used to provide additional properties, e.g. bonding, water resistance or fire retardancy.

This project will add “bio-waste” to the list of raw materials used for building.

Flame retardants for biobased building



Idea #13

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Biobased insulation materials, like insulation mats based on hemp or grass fiber, are gaining traction. However, very often these products still contain fossil or mineral components. Particularly the binder (often a fossil-based plastic like PET) which binds the fibers and the addition of flame retardants (often of mineral origin).

This project aims to develop a biobased binder and/or biobased flame retardants for biobased insulation mats and potentially other biobased building materials. The project builds on WFBR's experience in biobased plastics and on earlier project on biobased flame retardants.

Biobased and water-tight coating for flax panels



In pre-fab building processes, nature-based materials have an increasing market share. Panels for walls, ceilings, and facades made from cement have a large CO2 footprint. Flax is a biobased material that is well suited to be the core of such panels. An important downside is the vulnerability of flax-cored panels for rain. With a temporary, biobased and water-tight coating, the potential to apply flax-cored panels could be increased to sectors where exposure to the outside environment is expected.

Idea #14

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

In this project we will evaluate which materials could protect the panels and application methods.

Decision support for future-proof products with sustainable material strategies



Idea #15

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Producers in material development and product design face significant challenges when making decisions about which materials to apply for specific products, especially in terms of sustainability. The current systems are ill-prepared to accommodate novel polymers and sustainable innovations. As a result, many companies and entire sectors are resorting to sub-optimal choices, prioritizing short-term system compatibility over long-term sustainability.

This project will leverage a suite of innovative tools to address the challenges of sustainable material selection. By doing so, companies and sectors will be supported in making sustainable material choices for their current products and in developing an action plan for future product innovations.

Safe and sustainable by design biobased chemicals and materials in NL



Idea #16

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

The 'safe and sustainable by design' (SSbD framework) of the European Commission is a voluntary approach to guide the innovation process for chemicals and materials. With the increasing emphasis towards transition to circular biobased economy, this framework can facilitate the shift to happen in a sustainable and safe manner. While this framework offers many opportunities and benefits, how can it be effectively applied by companies?

Therefore, the aim of this project is to support the uptake and utilization of the SSbD Framework in the Netherlands and facilitate its implementation.

Legislation and the impact on industries



Idea #17

Nature Based Materials
and Plastics

New European regulations and directives have an increased impact on European industries. Examples are the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), SUP directive and fertilizer regulation. Although these policies aim to create a more sustainable future, they may result in various challenges, like for example: difficult implementation and monitoring, increased costs, blocking of innovations and regrettable substitutions.

The aim of this project is to provide clear insights from an industry perspective that can be used to improve the implementation of new legal frameworks and shape future adjustments to make them more effective.

Balancing carbon to soil and biobased applications



The biobased economy needs sustainable biomass for production of chemicals, SAF, and other material or energy uses. Residues or wastes are generally the most sustainable feedstock choice. A potential conflict emerges with soil quality maintenance which also requires biomass input.

Still, optimization strategies are possible and need to be tested and evaluated. As soils vary considerably in the need for inputs and the timing of the input the topic is complex, and case specific solutions are required.

Idea #18

Nature Based Materials

and Plastics

Circular Water Technology

Project ideas:

- 19. SepticTankUpgrade
- 20. Integrated approaches for agri-food brine valorization- Salt recovery and de-watering
- 21. A comprehensive approach for sustainable nitrogen recovery and valorization
- 22. Magnetic adsorption-desorption of phosphorus from residual streams

Please find below the project ideas for 2026.



Circular Water Technology focuses on new water treatment solutions that are affordable and efficient. We develop technological onsite solutions for water purification, nutrient recovery, micro-biological safe water, as well as biobased, biodegradable and safe water treatment products.

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SepticTankUpgrade



Idea #19

Circular Water Technology

Septic tanks are known to be suboptimal for the removal of excreted medicines, hormones and other pharmaceutical compounds. Yet, even in the EU a large fraction of sewage in rural areas is treated in on-site septic tanks. Within the SepticTankUpgrade project our aim is to develop bacterial cultures specifically to enhance removal of pharmaceutical residues from sewage. For this we will 1.) identify and characterize the bacterial species that can degrade these compounds efficiently, 2.) investigate if they can proliferate in current conventional septic tank systems and 3.) produce spray-dried culture that could be part of septic tank formulation.

Agri-Food Brine Valorization: Integrated Approaches for Salt Recovery and Dewatering



Food and Biobased industries produce large quantities of brine waste. Currently, companies dilute and discharge these streams, resulting in resource loss and environmental concerns.

Our project proposes innovative technologies to recover valuable resources from these brines—including salt, acids, bases, and purified water. This integrated approach enhances sustainability, reduces environmental impact, and promotes circular economy practices in the agri-food sector.

Idea #20

Circular Water Technology

A comprehensive approach for sustainable nitrogen recovery and valorization



This forward-thinking initiative goes beyond basic nitrogen recovery, aiming to develop solutions that produce high-value nitrogen-based products. Specifically, we will focus on advanced methods to separate nitrogen (N) and potassium (K) effectively, enabling the production of valuable fertilizers such as ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3), or ammonia as product. The outcome will deliver practical and profitable solutions supporting sustainable agriculture, closing nutrient cycles, and reducing dependency on conventional chemical fertilizers.

Idea #21

Circular Water Technology

Recovery of valuable products, Phosphorus with Magnetic Adsorption-Desorption



Idea #22

Circular Water Technology

Effective recovery of phosphorus from wastewater streams is essential for environmental sustainability and circular economy goals. Our innovative Magnetic Adsorption-Desorption (MAD) technology selectively captures phosphorus using magnetizable particles (magnetite). These particles are separated magnetically and regenerated, allowing phosphorus to be valorized into high-quality fertilizers. The MAD process significantly reduces chemical usage and sludge production, providing a sustainable and economically attractive solution for phosphorus recovery from both influent and effluent wastewater streams. In addition, the technology will be evaluated for selective recovery of other valuable products by chemical modification of the magnetite particles.

Safe and Circular Biobased Products

Project ideas:

23. ScCO₂ as alternative to hexane in oil extraction
24. Lactomax; delactosed permeate valorization
25. Probiotics for Animal Well-being and Sustainability (PAWS)
26. Alternative host identification
27. Glucose; sugar based resins
28. Thermoset Resins: Innovatively Designed for Degradation on Demand - TRID3
29. Valorization of di- and tetracarboxylates formed via cathodic hydrocoupling
30. Role of metal ions in NIAS formation
31. Methodologies for microplastic detection in food and feed
32. Waterdispersable Polysaccharides
33. bioCHAMP (biodegradable and circular hybrid aqueous multifunctional polymers)
34. Enzymatic remodeling of polysaccharides
35. Leuckard-Enhanced Amino Functionalized polysaccharides (LEAF)
36. ECODIME: Electrocatalytic conversion of CO₂ to dimethyl carbonate

Please find below the project ideas for 2025.

Safe and Circular Biobased Products is focused on helping industry with safe and circular biobased solutions to develop a more sustainable, safe and circular economy.

Programme Manager:

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ScCO₂ as alternative to hexane in oil extraction



Idea #23

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

The project will focus on the potential of benign solvents such as supercritical CO₂ as a hexane-free alternative for oilseed processing. While hexane is widely used for oil extraction, its toxicity raises environmental and health concerns. Supercritical CO₂ has already been successfully applied in other industries and offers advantages like improved protein quality without severe heat treatment. This method enhances protein functionality, making it suitable for food applications. The project aims to validate the technology, assess its sustainability and economic feasibility, and test its applications.

The initiative seeks partners from the oil, food, and supercritical CO₂ extraction industries to drive innovation forward.

Lactomax; delactosed permeate valorization



Idea #24

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

Delactosed permeate (DLP) is a side stream of dairy processing, currently applied in animal feed with little added value. WFBR developed a cost-effective partial demineralization technique for DLP and combined this with a fermentation, to produce microbial biomass. This biomass can be used as ingredient for pet-food or feed, with similar properties compared to yeast extract.

The next step in research will investigate if and how DLP can be of added value for the feed and petfood industry. For this, we will start a PPP project called LactoMax to bring the TRL closer to the market.

Probiotics for Animal Well-being and Sustainability (PAWS)



Idea #25

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

Probiotics for animal well-being and sustainability (PAWS) aims at (partly) substitution of soy and maize with agricultural side streams such as Brewers Spent Grain. They will be processed by e.g. fermentation and/or the addition of probiotics to make it suitable feed for pigs and poultry, which are both consumed in large amounts globally. Changes in these sectors by using more sustainable feed with health-beneficial components, will have a big positive impact in the agricultural sector.

Topics covered: fermentation, pre-treatment and down-stream processing, feed uptake and digestion, (probiotic) effects on animal health and gut-microbiota, and studies on sustainability and economic feasibility.

Alternative host identification



Idea #26

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

To improve production of biobased chemicals and polymers from less refined feedstocks through fermentation, robust microbial production hosts are required. These microbial platforms should be able to convert the feedstock, as well as withstand the required (harsh) environmental conditions in industrial processes and any inhibitors that may be present in the feedstock. This project will focus on screening a wide range of both well-known and less conventional microorganisms for performance on various feedstocks that are pre-processed to different degrees. This will result in a mix-and-match database to find suitable microorganisms for valorization of specific waste streams, as well as expert advice on expected product spectra and potential for further metabolic engineering.

Glucose; sugar based resins



Idea #27

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

Wood panels are currently manufactured using fossil-based thermoset resins that rely on harmful formaldehyde or isocyanates. In this project, fully biobased and safe resins for wood-panels will be developed from carbohydrate-rich agricultural and food side-streams. More specifically, the production of furanics as biobased building block will be targeted. Hemicellulose-rich side-streams could offer a great opportunity as pool of saccharides for conversion to furanics.

The Glucose project will establish new value-chains for hemicellulosic feedstocks, will improve sustainable production of furanics and will develop sugar-based thermoset resins.

Thermoset Resins: Innovatively Designed for Degradation on Demand - TRID3



Idea #28

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

Epoxy thermosets have outstanding thermal and mechanical properties, but nearly 90% of them are formulated using the bisphenol A (BPA) building block. Because of its Endocrine Disrupting effects, the use of BPA will be restricted or phased out in many applications.

As an answer to this need, TRID3 aims to develop circular and sustainable thermoset materials with performance comparable to benchmarks. To address the issue of recyclability of epoxy resins, besides health, the thermosets will be designed with linkages that allow degradation of the polymer network on demand too. Permitting the reuse of monomers in virgin thermosets or in other applications.

Valorization of di- and tetracarboxylates formed via cathodic hydrocoupling



To reduce GHG emissions several transitions are required including electrification, utilizing renewable electrical energy, and the use renewable feedstocks. Unsaturated biobased carboxylates are an interesting source for electro-organic synthesis to yield hydrodimers, di- and tetracarboxylates. This project will build on previous work at WFBR, in which a proof-of-principle was established. The produced hydrocoupling product will be used as building block in e.g. biobased coatings, adhesives, sealants, elastomers, complexing agents, soil release agent, finishing agent and fragrance.

Idea #29

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

Role of metal ions in NIAS formation



Idea #30

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

During recycling of plastics, even in case the process results in colourless materials with good mechanical properties, the formation of NIAS (non-intentionally added substances), might occur during re-extrusion. These NIAS may include “substances of very high concern”. In case they exceed certain thresholds, the product will be rejected. The origin of the NIAS is still largely elusive as various contaminants are suggested to catalyse their formation. A better understanding of this formation process and especially the role of transition metal ions will help society and industries to create less-polluted recycled plastics.

Methodologies for microplastic detection in food and feed



Idea #31

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

With microplastics accumulating in human and animal tissue, it is only a matter of time before legal limits may be established. Exposure may occur through food and drinks, while health risks are still unclear. Detection of microplastics was already a subject of attention for the European Commission (Decision 2024/1441), but for food and feed matrices, method development and standardization is necessary. Increased insight in microplastic incidence in food and feed products can help companies to better address this issue of major public concern. Besides analytical quantification and qualification, a 'root-cause analysis' approach could identify possible origin sources and enabling risk mitigation strategies.

Waterdispersable Polysaccharides



Idea #32

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

Home and Personal Care (HPC) products need to become readily biodegradable in the near future. The use of renewable feedstocks, such as polysaccharides, offers many advantages for developing such products. However, in many cases the performance and storage stability requirements of these products are conflicting with the biodegradability at End-of-Life requirements.

This project aims to develop new types of biobased functional linkers for the modification of polysaccharides to HPC products. The proposed linker technology will allow for flexibility in modification, thus enabling to tune the material properties to specific requirements, while at the same time having a molecular structure that ensures biodegradability.

bioCHAMP (biodegradable and circular hybrid aqueous multifunctional polymers)



Ingredients for Home Care (HC) products such as laundry detergents and dishwasher tablets need to become readily biodegradable in the near future. Many of these products contain ingredients such as polyacrylates and polyamines, that are very effective in the cleaning process but are not (sufficiently) biodegradable. The objective of this project is to develop new, bio-renewable, water borne multi-functional polymers for HC products that meet both performance and biodegradability requirements.

Idea #33

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

The bioCHAMP concept is based on combining water soluble and biodegradable biobased polymers with reversibly linked functional groups that will allow for flexibility in design and hence in tuning the specific properties.

Enzymatic remodeling of polysaccharides



Idea #34

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

The demand for sustainable, high-performance polysaccharides is rising in the food sector as well as other industrial application areas like the home and personal care industry. Enzymatic modification offers a precise solution to tailor polysaccharide functionality with minimal environmental impact and maintaining biodegradability. Already, enzymes are widely leveraged for modifying starch to enhance properties such as viscosity, gelling, and stability. Pectin and guar gum hold potential to be enhanced enzymatically as well, with applications ranging from clean-label thickeners and stabilizers, to customized industrial uses complying with green chemistry regulations. To unlock this potential, we at WFBR combine knowledge of currently unused enzymes, process development expertise, and polysaccharide testing capacity.

Leuckart-Enhanced Amino Functionalized polysaccharides (LEAF)



Idea #35

Safe and Circular Biobased
Products

Cationic polymers play an important role in many Home & Personal Care products (e.g. fabric softeners). Cationic polymers are also used in various other (industrial) applications like paper sizing or used in water technology as flocculants to clean (waste) water.

Currently, most cationic polymers are fully fossil based and/or have difficulty in biodegradation. LEAF aims to develop a novel technique to modify natural polysaccharides in such a way that an amino functionality is introduced onto polysaccharides (which will result in cationic polymers under neutral to acidic conditions). The two-step conversion will be a combination of a catalytic oxidation and a green chemical conversion step.

ECODIME: Electrocatalytic conversion of CO(2) to dimethyl carbonate



Idea #36

Safe and Circular Biobased

Products

Electrochemical CO₂ valorization allows mitigation of the greenhouse effect, while generating organic compounds in a carbon-neutral manner. A possible target is dimethyl carbonate (DMC), a versatile carbonate ester for various applications. Electrochemical CO₂ reduction to DMC is currently limited to small-scale, proof-of-concept systems are characterized by low electrical current densities and yield.

With this project, WFBR aims to address the bottlenecks by scaling up electrocatalytic CO₂ conversion to DMC in an electrochemical flow reactor under industrially-relevant conditions. The resulting DMC will be isolated, purified and utilized for various applications.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Subsidy conditions

- The above-described projects are being developed for application to the TKI subsidy, a Dutch governmental program sponsoring applied research. Each project requires at least one Dutch company partner, but additional partners from abroad are welcome to join.
- Granted projects receive 50% subsidy funding. The other 50% is contributed by industry partners, of which up to half (25% of total) may be in-kind.
- TKI projects typically have a running time between 2 and 4 years.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Expected contribution

- Total project budgets are typically between 0.8 and 2.0 M€.
- Participation costs per partner range from 20-50 k€ cash per year, with exceptions for small and medium enterprises (SME).
- Partners also contribute in-kind through participation in project meetings, contribution of materials, and/or performance of own experimental work.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Timelines

- 1 April 2025 the TKI call was published. The full call text is available [online](#).
- Partners are kindly requested to express their interest in joining proposals prior to 1 June 2025, at which time a selection will be made of proposals with sufficient support to continue.
- The deadline for full proposal submissions is 1 September 2025. At this time partner commitment must be firm.
- Early November 2025, consortia are notified if they have received the subsidy grant. Upon notification, the contracting phase starts.
- Projects kick-off as soon as contracting is completed (deadline: 1 April 2026).

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Contracting terms

The IP terms for a PPS consortium are governed by European state aid regulation. As specified on the TKI site, the consortium agreement template is mandatory and IP terms will not be modified. Parties engaging are advised to check the terms well in advance. For your convenience, the main concepts are summarized below:

- Foreground developed in the project accrues to the inventing party, most frequently the executing knowledge institute(s).
- Industry partners co-financing the consortium receive the right to apply non-protected Foreground directly and the first right to license any resulting protected Foreground (IP) for their field of use.
- Projects receiving subsidy are obliged to publish part of the results. A project steering committee with one representative per partner governs publication of project results.

We look forward to collaborating!

For more information on any of these initiatives,
please contact the relevant Programme Manager

or have a look at our website:

www.wur.eu/call-for-partners

For general questions,

please contact Business Development Support:

wfbr.bd-support@wur.nl

Call for partners

Healthy & Sustainable Foods

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Healthy & Sustainable Foods

Project ideas for:

- Food Chains
- Food Product and Process
- Consumer and Health

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Healthy & Sustainable Foods

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Wageningen Food and Biobased Research

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Sustainable Food Chains

Project ideas:

1. Postharvest food loss prevention in a pesticide-free world
2. Advancing Food Safety and Sustainability through AI-Enhanced Agri-Food Certifications
3. PackItAll: Robotics for multi food product handling and packaging
4. PerfectScout: Mobile robots for quality in greenhouses and factories
5. IQ4DT: Initial Quality for Digital Twins
6. Food refrigeration in the future energy system
7. RECOMMENDS: pRedicting thE impaCt foOd iMproveMEnts oN household waStE

Please find below the project ideas for 2026.

Sustainable Food Chains is focused on supplying the world's increasing population with sustainable, safe and nutritious food that meets global dietary needs with limited energy use.

Programme Manager:

Sanne Stroosnijder

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Sustainable treatments for a pesticide-free world



Idea #1

Sustainable Food Chains

Conventional production of fresh fruits & vegetables relies heavily on the use of synthetic pesticides. Growing concerns about health and environment will drive towards reduction and bans. Unless sustainable alternatives are developed and tested, the agrifood sector will face increased losses.

This project aims postharvest food loss by evaluating and enhancing sustainable treatments, boosting their readiness to tackle current and future pest challenges, creating effective, eco-friendly management, including viable postharvest treatments.

Advancing agri-food supply chains through AI-supported certification



Idea #2

Sustainable Food Chains

Food production is under strict certification schemes, not only for food safety but increasingly for sustainability. Companies struggle to comply, especially given the ever-increasing reporting demands they must fulfil simultaneously. Current audits are costly, time-consuming and often ineffective.

This project aims to harness AI-driven solutions to integrate predictive analytics, computer vision and automated compliance monitoring to improve accuracy, reduce manual audits and enhance transparency. It will contribute to safer and more sustainable supply chains while lowering certification costs.

PackItAll: Robotics for multi food product handling and packaging



Idea #3

Sustainable Food Chains

(Online) retail packaging of mixed products is very difficult to automate, while at the same time there is a significant lack of labour for such tasks.

Multiple companies are looking for the potential of robotics to provide solutions, but currently none exist in the market specialized for food materials.

This project aims to combine WFBR expertise in AI, Robotics and Food with market challenges is a multi-disciplinary setup, aimed at developing and prototyping PackItAll solutions.

PerfectScout: Mobile robots for quality in greenhouses and factories



Idea #4

Sustainable Food Chains

Autonomous mobile robots will become more and more common in food factories and greenhouse automation. Currently they are used mainly for logistics.

However, as a mobile platform they offer a great opportunity to also deploy sensors to measure the quality of products being transported.

This project aims to combine WFBR knowledge with industry practice and state of art to leverage robots for this purpose as PerfectScouts to measure quality.

IQ4DT: Initial Quality for Digital Twins



Idea #5

Sustainable Food Chains

Food losses in intercontinental fruit supply chains are estimated at around 35%. Most of these losses are preventable by a tighter grip on initial quality. Initial keeping quality can be viewed as harvest quality, quality-after-washing, and quality-after-precooling.

The project will develop new sensor technology and explore datamining technologies to extract information from available data. The aim is to provide accurate information on initial fruit quality as input for newly developed digital twins of postharvest fruit quality.

Food refrigeration in the future energy system



Idea #6

Sustainable Food Chains

Refrigeration plants use electricity, extract heat from cooled rooms/products, and generate residual heat. In most cases, that residual heat is not put to good use. The design of refrigeration plants is often customized, which makes plants unique, and therefore the optimal control is unique for every situation.

The aim of the project is to make refrigeration plants more sustainable by optimally integrating refrigeration into the energy system of the future, always looking for the optimal balance between temperature, energy efficiency, and availability/price of electricity. We will explore solutions both in the domain of plant design and process control.

RECOMMENDS: pRedicting thE impaCt foOd iMproveMEnts oN household waSte



Idea #7

Food Chains

Consumer household waste is substantial, both in terms of volume as well as environmental impact. Although consumer behaviour is complex, influencing it in a positive way, will have a significant impact. Quality preservation methods for food play a vital role in the reduction of food waste, but their impact on food waste reduction is hard to predict since quality perception is both subjective and dynamic.

Project RECOMMENDS aims to predict the impact of product quality preservation methods on subjective quality perception and household waste. Consumer perceptions of product quality, purchase/discard probabilities and the product journey from retail to household will be unraveled. By applying modeling techniques, household waste in different preservation scenarios will be studied

Food Product and Process

Project ideas:

8. SMART: SMARter Reformulation with Ai Techniques
9. ProBlend: Optimizing Protein Blends for Food Quality
10. PlantInS: Plant-based Ingredients from Sustainable sources
11. STAR: Sustainable healthy and functional sTARch
12. FermFinder: Accelerating fermentation Innovations
13. UNLOCKED: Unlocking potential of microbial biomass
14. Green-Cocoa: Sustainable cocoa alternatives via tailored fermentation
15. ROBioTS: Raman and Optical sensors for BioTechnological Screening
16. FRES°CO: FRozen Expertise for Sustainable COld processing
17. EFFORT: Efficient Food Processing for Optimal Resource and Technology
18. RHEOLINK: Rheology Measurements in Real-time
19. D-Risk: Data-Driven Food Safety Risk Management
20. FermGuard: Enhancing Food Safety in Fermented Products
21. SYNHANCE: Synergistic Preservation Strategies for Enhanced Shelf Life
22. SAFE-FROST: Solutions to improve safety of frozen ingredients
23. ContamiClean: Reducing Process Contaminants for Safer Food Products

Please find below the project ideas for 2026.

Food Product and Process is working towards net zero supply chains in which food resources are used optimally without losses and waste. It supports the transition towards sustainable food systems in NL, in Europe, and globally.

Programme Manager:

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SMART: SMARter Reformulation with AI Techniques



Idea #8

Food Product and Process

The demand for healthier (lower salt, sugar, and fat) and more sustainable (plant-based and sustainable ingredients) products, provides food manufacturers the challenge to develop healthy, sustainable, and cost-effective products while maintaining taste, texture, and consumer appeal.

Project SMART creates data-driven strategies by integrating food physics, flavour science, and sensory data to enable prediction of how ingredient and process changes will affect the final product. This approach allows SMART's partners to uncover hidden relationships between formulation choices and key control parameters and will enable faster, cost-effective reformulation with fewer trial-and-error iterations. The result: healthier, sustainable, great-tasting products.

ProBlend: Optimizing Protein Blends for Food Quality



Idea #9

Food Product and Process

Protein mixtures are essential in food applications, from meat analogues to dairy alternatives, impacting texture, taste, and functional properties. Traditionally, selecting these mixtures relies on trial and error.

ProBlend focuses on studying the interactions between combinations of proteins, examining how they work together or against each other in terms of their functional properties. By understanding these interactions, the project will create a toolbox for designing efficient protein blends that enhance food quality and consistency. This approach will enable the food industry to optimize protein blends, improving product performance, consistency, and overall quality.

PlantInS: Plant-based Ingredients from Sustainable sources



Idea #10

Food Product and Process

Plant-based side-streams represent an underutilized reservoir of protein- and fibre-rich functional ingredients. Concomitantly, plant-protein concentrates often lack the techno-functional properties of their animal counterparts.

This project explores targeted enzymatic modifications—guided by structure-function relationships—to enhance the functionality of these side-streams and concentrates. AI-driven approaches will optimize enzyme selection and treatment conditions. Advanced downstream processing will be employed to mitigate off-flavours and improve sensory quality.

The outcome will be a robust technological platform for developing next-generation plant-based ingredients with superior functionality and application potential.

STAR: Sustainable healthy and functional sTARch



Idea #11

Food Product and Process

Starch is a key ingredient in many food products, enhancing texture and mouthfeel. However, conventional starches often have a high glycemic index and low fibre content, while existing dietary starches offer limited functionality and are produced through energy-intensive processes that generate unwanted by-products.

The STAR project aims to explore enzymatic modification as a sustainable solution to enhance the functionality of dietary starches for food applications. We are seeking partners with starch-rich side streams interested in increasing their value, as well as companies looking for sustainable alternative sources of functional and dietary starch for their products.

FermFinder: Accelerating fermentation Innovations



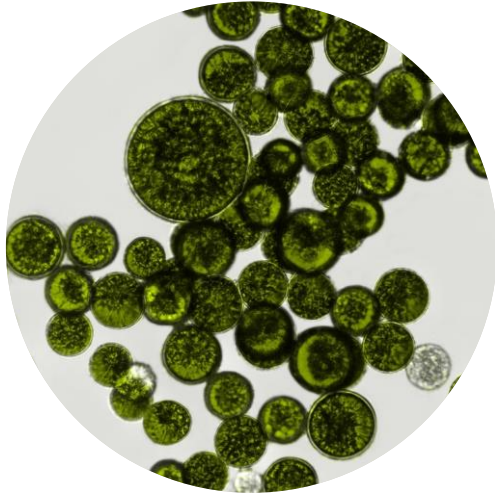
Idea #12

Food Product and Process

Fermentation enhances taste, nutrition, and health benefits, making it vital for the food industry. It enables cleaner-label products by producing desirable flavors, essential nutrients, and bioactive compounds without additives. The challenge is identifying food-grade microorganisms that reliably drive these improvements.

FermFinder will develop an **in-silico screening platform** to identify promising microbes for fermentation based on genetic data. High-throughput cultivations will validate their ability to produce target compounds. The tool will assess which microbes can produce the desired compound, under which conditions, and their food applications and regulations, speeding up discovery and optimization of fermentation processes.

UNLOCKED: Unlocking potential of microbial biomass for nutritious food products



Idea #13

Food Product and Process

Microbial biomass is a promising sustainable protein source rich in macro and micronutrients. The key challenge is understanding its techno-functional properties for food applications. This project aims to identify factors that affect product quality and digestibility in formulations with microbial biomass.

UNLOCKED will explore how fermentation conditions and food matrix interactions influence digestibility in products containing fungal, bacterial, microalgal, and yeast biomasses. By collaborating across the entire value chain from biomass selection to fermentation, post-processing, and human consumption, this research will advance next-generation protein solutions, creating sustainable and nutritious food products for the future.

Green-Cocoa: Sustainable cocoa alternatives via tailored fermentation



Idea #14

Food Product and Process

Interest in sustainable cocoa alternatives has been rising due to high cocoa prices and growing concerns over health and social issues. Traditionally, carob pods have been used as a direct substitute in chocolate alternatives, but the Green-Cocoa project aims to go beyond this. By leveraging tailored fermentation powered by our FLAVOUR-AI platform, we aim to bring the flavor of carob closer to that of cocoa.

Green-Cocoa also include a techno-economic evaluation to ensure cost-effectiveness, while developing a chocolate prototype that meets both taste and health standards. The ultimate goal of Green Cocoa is to create a healthy, sustainable, and affordable chocolate alternative.

ROBioTS: Raman and Optical sensors for BioTechnological Screening



Idea #15

Food Product and Process

Raman spectroscopy has significant potential for real-time monitoring and control of bioreactor-scale fermentations. While projects like FEVIS demonstrate its benefits, current high-throughput analysis still relies on labor-intensive offline methods like HPLC, GC-MS, and enzymatic assays to quantify sugars, acids, and proteins.

ROBioTS aims to miniaturize Raman technology for high-throughput screening, improving fermentation optimization. Successful deployment of Raman-based technologies will improve process development, cost-efficiency, and a first-time-right approach. Integrating Raman spectroscopy into accessible tools will enhance efficiency, scalability, and innovation in industrial, microbial, and precision fermentation.

FRES°CO: FRozen Expertise for Sustainable COld processing



Idea #16

Food Product and Process

The potato and vegetables sector in Europe produces over 300 Mtonnes of fresh frozen products yearly. Freezing strongly enhances product shelf-life but can compromise the product quality and consumes large amounts of energy.

FRES°CO aims to better understand the relationship between the freezing process settings and product properties to improve the quality of frozen vegetables and potatoes. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to reduce energy consumption during freezing. An integrated approach from raw material to frozen product will be taken, using emerging sensor technologies to build microstructure quality models for frozen products. This enables potato and vegetable processors to have better control over the quality of their frozen products.

EFFORT: Efficient Food Processing for Optimal Resource and Technology



Idea #17

Food Product and Process

Efficient energy and water use are crucial for sustainable food production. With growing resource challenges, companies need insights into balancing product quality, processing costs, and resource efficiency. As water and energy needs are often interconnected, innovative technologies such as heat pumps for optimized heating and cooling offer significant opportunities to reduce costs and enhance profitability.

EFFORT identifies and develops solutions for reducing energy and water consumption, supported by a decision tool that evaluates savings potential while maintaining product quality, safety, and shelf life. The tool offers industry insights, and selected technologies will be assessed for real-world impact.

RHEOLINK: Rheology Measurements in Real-time



Idea #18

Food Product and Process

Current food rheology measurements are performed offline with traditional oscillatory rheometers, which are time-consuming and unsuitable for real-time process control, leading to food waste and batch rejection.

The RHEOLINK project aims to develop an optical probe to measure the visco-elastic properties of foods in real-time. The project will explore the relationship between optical scattering intensity and rheological properties, leveraging AI and data science to predict these properties from speckle patterns.

RHEOLINK will improve process control, reduce waste, and boost food production efficiency with real-time measurements.

D-Risk: Data-Driven Food Safety Risk Management



Idea #19

Food Product and Process

Food manufacturers must have a food safety plan to protect consumer health, requiring knowledge of potential hazards and effective control measures.

The D-Risk project enhances WUR's web-based decision tool for assessing food safety hazards. The upgraded version will be tailored to partners' process chains and enable more quantitative hazard assessments, incorporating contamination levels from microbial and chemical hazards. It will also suggest minimal safety conditions and consider the impact of geographical origin.

This improved tool will help food producers evaluate and manage food safety risks more precisely and effectively, using data-driven insights.

FermGuard: Enhancing Food Safety in Fermented Products



Idea #20

Food Product and Process

The rise of fermented (plant-based) products presents new food safety challenges. These processes involve less standardized ingredients, higher microbial contaminants, and varying acidification patterns, complicating safety control.

FermGuard brings together food safety and fermentation experts with high-throughput data generation techniques. The project focuses on developing predictive growth models to assess fermentation performance, inhibit foodborne pathogens, and analyze microbial interactions. By providing science-based guidelines, FermGuard will help the (plant-based) food industry optimize fermentation conditions while minimizing food safety risks, ensuring safe, high-quality products for consumers.

SYNHANCE: Synergistic Preservation Strategies for Enhanced Shelf Life



Idea #21

Food Product and Process

The new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the drive to reduce preservatives challenge food shelf life. SYNHANCE leverages synergies between natural food ingredients and packaging solutions to optimize preservation.

Using Scientific Machine Learning (SciML), SYNHANCE develops predictive tools that assess storage conditions, packaging properties, off-flavor development, and physico-chemical degradation. These insights help food producers extend shelf life naturally while meeting regulatory and consumer demands.

SYNHANCE offers partners cutting-edge technology to create cleaner-label products with improved stability and quality.

SAFE-FROST: Technological solutions to improve safety of frozen ingredients



Idea #22

Food Product and Process

Freezing is an effective method to prevent microbial growth and extend the shelf life of commonly used ingredients such as fruits, vegetables, and herbs. However, microbial contaminants like bacteria, viruses, and parasites can be introduced prior to freezing and may survive frozen storage. Once thawed and consumed, these contaminants pose safety risks to food products.

The SAFE-FROST project aims to develop validated strategies for efficiently reducing microbial contaminants and viruses in frozen ingredients without compromising product quality. The project will focus on identifying the optimal process conditions by combining existing technologies and exploring novel solutions to ensure food safety in frozen products.

ContamiClean: Reducing Process Contaminants for Safer Food Products



Idea #23

Food Product and Process

The formation of harmful process contaminants, such as acrylamide, during food processing poses significant health risks, particularly in products like vegetable snacks. As regulations around these contaminants expand, reducing their levels has become a critical challenge.

ContamiClean addresses this issue by building a deeper understanding of contaminant formation and developing strategies to monitor, prevent, and remove them. Key strategies include optimizing recipes, adjusting processing conditions, reducing precursors, and implementing fast measurement techniques to detect high contaminant levels. This project aims to ensure safer, healthier food products while meeting increasingly strict regulatory requirements.

Consumer and Health

Project ideas:

- 24. PLANT4DINNER: towards effective strategies to drive sustainable dietary habits of consumers
- 25. G-FORCE: GLP-1 and Food-Origin Regulators and Appetite Control Effects
- 26. EMULSIFY: Impact of emulsifiers on gut health, microbiome & cardiometabolic health
- 27. REFORM: A new perspective on the processed food debate
- 28. NutriBite: The health-supporting potential of personalized food technology

Please find below the project ideas for 2026.

Consumer and Health is focused on improving nutrition in every life stage to promote optimal health and prevent nutrition-related diseases for a healthy and sustainable society.

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PLANT4DINNER: towards effective strategies to drive sustainable dietary habits of consumers



Idea #24

Consumer and Health

To foster healthy people and a healthy planet, a transition is needed towards more sustainable consumer diets. Replacing animal protein with plant protein is impactful, but a challenge for consumers as it impacts the familiar flavour and texture profiles they are accustomed to. How can consumers get used to these changes and become more inclined to consistently re-purchase sustainable plant-based products in their transition to a plant-base diet?

The project PLANT4DINNER will focus on the interplay between sensory experiences, long-term liking and habit formation. By developing innovative, effective strategies, this project aims to facilitate consumers' transition towards healthy plant-forward diets.

G-FORCE: GLP-1 and Food-Origin Regulators and Appetite Control Effects



Idea #25

Consumer and Health

The rise of pharmacological GLP-1 agonists (like Ozempic) is transforming obesity treatment, but what does this mean for the food industry?

Our project explores natural dietary strategies to enhance GLP-1 release, identifying bioactive ingredients (e.g. fibers, stevia) and their mechanisms. In G-FORCE we investigate whether GLP-1 activation alters the desire to eat of specific food groups and quantify the GLP-1 potential of foods to develop plant-based dietary solutions to support metabolic health.

By combining expertise in nutrition and metabolism, we help shape the future of food formulations, offering innovative, science-based alternatives for metabolic health beyond pharmaceuticals.

EMULSIFY: Impact of emulsifiers on gut health, microbiome & cardiometabolic health



Idea #26

Consumer and Health

Emulsifiers enhance texture, stability, and shelf life in food. Recent studies, however, suggest potential health risks, including associations with cardiometabolic disease, possibly mediated by gut microbiota changes. While regulatory bodies deem emulsifiers as safe, concerns persist, particularly in the ultra-processed foods debate. The precise implications remain unclear, highlighting the need to unravel this in more detail.

Project EMULSIFY investigates the health effects of emulsifiers in a realistic dietary setting and optimizes their use for health, consumer acceptance, product quality, taste, and functionality. With Wageningen's unique expertise, we take a comprehensive approach to uncovering the potential impact of emulsifiers, which are used in food industry, on health.

REFORM: A new perspective on the processed food debate



Idea #27

Consumer and Health

The debate around processed foods lacks adequate scientific substantiation. Project REFORM takes a comprehensive, data-driven approach to understand the (metabolic) health impact of including reformulated processed foods in the modern Dutch diet.

The project will 1) perform a controlled 'whole diet RCT' that will compare the impact of replacing conventional commonly consumed foods, with commercially available reformulated (healthier) versions of the same foods (i.e. lower in kcals, salt, sugar, and fat), 2) re-analyze the quality of the dietary epidemiological evidence diet to assess associations between UPF's and health effects more accurately, 3) explore consumer perceptions and attitudes towards reformulated processed foods to inform better decision making in the future.

NutriBite: The health-supporting potential of personalised technology & food



Idea #28

Consumer and Health

With the earlier developed and tested flexible food manufacturing platform (smart mini food factory) it is possible to produce fully personalised food products, based on personalised nutrition advises. Macronutrients, micronutrients, fibres, product size, texture and flavours can be tuned to meet personal needs and preferences. This technology and infrastructure allow us to perform intervention studies to study the health-supporting potential of Personalised Foods for specific consumers or patients.

The NutriBite intervention study will combine the [Fiber-UP](#) and the Protein [Alpha Tool](#) with smart personalised food manufacturing to provide micronutrient-, protein- and fibre-optimized (plant-based) specialized nutrition for e.g. elderly consumers and athletes to support health.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Subsidy conditions

- The above-described projects are being developed for application to the TKI subsidy, a Dutch governmental program sponsoring applied research. Each project requires at least one Dutch company partner, but additional partners from abroad are welcome to join.
- Granted projects receive 50% subsidy funding. The other 50% is contributed by industry partners, of which up to half (25% of total) may be in-kind.
- TKI projects typically have a running time between 2 and 4 years.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Expected contribution

- Total project budgets are typically between 0.8 and 2.0 M€.
- Participation costs per partner range from 20-50 k€ cash per year, with exceptions for small and medium enterprises (SME).
- Partners also contribute in-kind through participation in project meetings, contribution of materials, and/or performance of own experimental work.

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Timelines

- 1 April 2025 the TKI call was published. The full call text is available [online](#).
- Partners are kindly requested to express their interest in joining proposals prior to 1 June 2025, at which time a selection will be made of proposals with sufficient support to continue.
- The deadline for full proposal submissions is 1 September 2025. At this time partner commitment must be firm.
- Early November 2025, consortia are notified if they have received the subsidy grant. Upon notification, the contracting phase starts.
- Projects kick-off as soon as contracting is completed (deadline: 1 April 2026).

Public-Private-Partnerships in general

Contracting terms

The IP terms for a PPS consortium are governed by European state aid regulation. As specified on the TKI site, the consortium agreement template is mandatory and IP terms will not be modified. Parties engaging are advised to check the terms well in advance. For your convenience, the main concepts are summarized below:

- Foreground developed in the project accrues to the inventing party, most frequently the executing knowledge institute(s).
- Industry partners co-financing the consortium receive the right to apply non-protected Foreground directly and the first right to license any resulting protected Foreground (IP) for their field of use.
- Projects receiving subsidy are obliged to publish part of the results. A project steering committee with one representative per partner governs publication of project results.

We look forward to collaborating!

For more information on any of these initiatives,
please contact the relevant Programme Manager
or have a look at our website:

www.wur.eu/call-for-partners

For general questions,
please contact Business Development Support:

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