EIT Food

EIT Food is a Knowledge and Innovation Community established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in 2016. The EIT is Europe's largest innovation ecosystem offering education, innovation and business creation services to solve global challenges.

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Accelerating food innovation for a future-fit food system

EIT Food was launched with the mission to build a future-fit food system that produces healthy and sustainable food for all. Through tailored **business creation and acceleration programmes**, EIT Food creates and scales agrifood startups to bring new technologies and products to market. It equips entrepreneurs, agrifood professionals and future change-makers with the skills to transform the food system through its **entrepreneurial education** programmes including international master's degrees and shorter courses. Additionally, EIT Food commercialises innovative ideas by supporting **innovation-driven research**.

The power of EIT Food's network

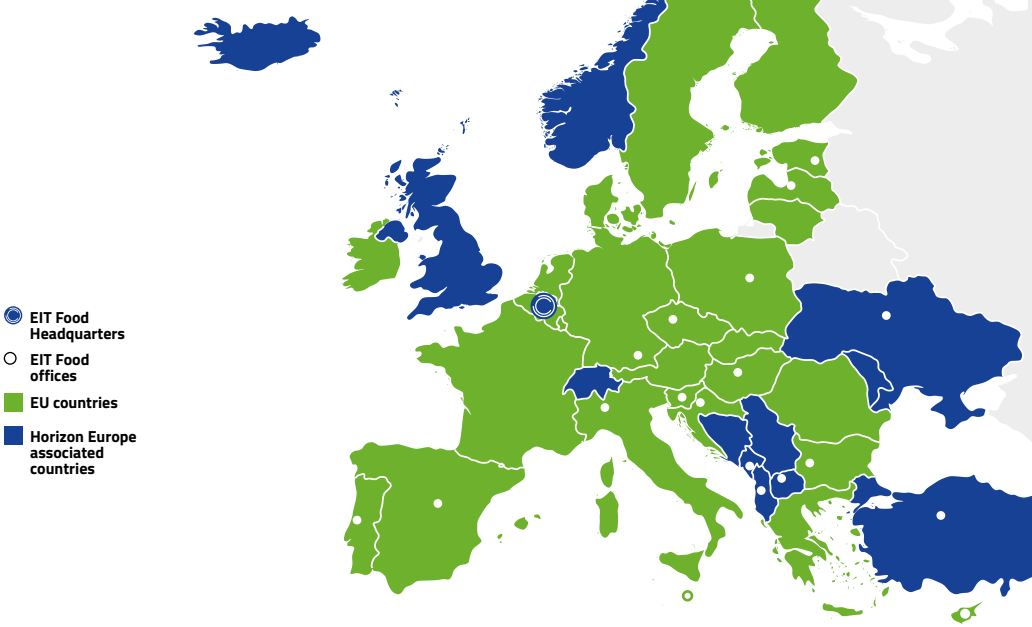
The EIT Food network comprised 329 partners and had 21 offices established across Europe at the end of 2024. Partners include research centres like the German Institute of Food Technologies, universities like Queen's University Belfast, and companies such as PepsiCo or Roquette, a global leader in plant-based ingredients.

A proven engine of food innovation in Europe

EIT Food powers impactful agrifood startups and innovators at every stage of their journey—from training and education to business propositions, market and tech validation and commercial scaling.

Partnering with EIT Food allows us to leverage our cutting-edge research in sustainable agriculture and food security to tackle real-world challenges. This collaboration is essential for driving innovation and fostering a more sustainable food system.

Representative of Cambridge University



Since 2018, its innovation, business creation and acceleration programmes have created or supported **almost 1600 startups**. Entrepreneurs and ventures backed by EIT Food have brought a total of **174 new innovations** to market. Additionally, **3073 students** have graduated from its EIT-labelled degree programmes and more than 32 180 learners have participated in its courses.

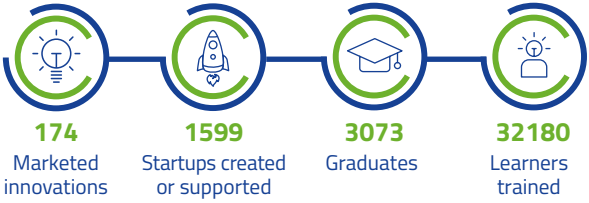


Figure 1. EIT Food key achievements in numbers (2018-2023)

AWARDS

#89 Europe's leading startup hub by Financial Times (2024)

Management included in **Top 10 Women in Agrifood**, INTEC Foundation (2024)

Impact story: Entrepreneurial education

FoodEducators is an EIT Food programme that provides teachers with fun and creative activities to engage young people, mainly schoolchildren. Launched in 2022, the programme provides materials about healthy and sustainable food choices. Today, FoodEducators offers lesson plans in 10 languages in an improved format on a new website. **In 2023, roughly 1 500 teachers used the plans, reaching 36 000 students across 8 countries**.

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We at Mimica have gotten so many benefits from being part of the RisingFoodStars at EIT Food. And this ranges from getting really good exposure across the European food industry and getting access to corporate partners (...) to getting funded interns in at PhD levels.

Solveiga Pakštaitė, Founder, Mimica

Impact story: Business creation

Dutch startup **Orbisk** uses AI and computer vision to tackle food waste in the food service sector. Its smart camera system reduces waste by up to 50%, and has saved 780,000 kg of food, equivalent to 3,510 Mt of CO2 and EUR 5.5 million in value since its launch in 2018. Orbisk participated in **EIT Food's Entrepreneurship programme, RisingFoodStars** in 2020 and 2022. Currently it employs 30–40 staff and has raised EUR 1.49 million in investment.

Copyright: Orbisk

Impact story: Innovation-driven research

UK startup **Mimica** tackles food waste with its 'Touch Flat Label,' which changes texture as food spoils, reducing reliance on expiry dates. Initially targeting meat, milk, and juice, it helps reduce food waste and CO2 emissions in Europe. Founded by Solveiga Pakštaitė, Mimica has received nearly EUR 1 million from EIT Food through investment via the **Rising Food Stars** programme and expects revenues of over EUR 22.5 million by 2029, offering cost savings to retailers while addressing global food waste.

Copyright: EIT Food

Contribution to EU priorities and policy areas

EIT Food significantly contributes to EU policy through its evidence-based insights and active engagement. Its **Protein Diversification Think Tank** offers neutral guidance on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing food system sustainability. EIT Food's annual **Future of Food** conference, now merged with the EIT Food Next Bite event, brings together stakeholders to address critical issues like alternative protein regulations and investment gaps.

On the path of financial sustainability: Key financial data

According to the EIT model, EIT KICs start off with limited funding which increases gradually, then after a peak period it decreases, as KICs are expected to generate their own revenue to become financially sustainable within 15 years. EIT Food belongs to the third wave of KICs, and has 2031 as the final year of operations under its Partnership Agreement signed with the EIT.

EIT KICs have been very **successful in attracting external investments**. As confirmed by the Biannual Monitoring Report on European Partnerships (EP), on average, **EIT KICs have a high leverage effect of 5.6.** This is compared to the EP average of 2.83, meaning that for each euro invested, EIT KICs raised an additional 5.6 euros from external funding.

Figure 2 (distribution of costs per area of activity for the partnership) shows that EIT Food's **budget is spent efficiently**. Almost 90% of its budget between 2021–22 was spent on operational activities to support innovation, entrepreneurial education and business creation, with a share of 11% administrative costs.

Examining these areas more closely, 34% of the budget was allocated to innovation activities and a total of 17% to the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme and the EIT Community Initiatives, which include innovation activities jointly implemented with other KICs. A further 13% contributed to education and another 13% to ecosystem development (operating the pan-European network supporting place-based innovation across EU Member States), while 12% was spent on business creation.

Achieving financial sustainability is a unique feature of the EIT innovation model to be implemented by the KIC legal entity managing the partnership.

Looking at EIT Food's own income, the KIC is on track with diversifying the composition of its own revenue sources, including income from consulting and membership fees, as well as attracting 'alternative funding' (e.g. grants provided by national, other EU or international organisations, private sector funding, etc). Furthermore, it has built up a portfolio of equity investments in 26 startups with a current value of ca. EUR 12 million and commercial agreements (e.g. success fees, revenue sharing in case of successful innovation) with almost 50 companies, and its activities have already started to generate returns. Future revenues in ROI & equity will follow depending on strategic decisions and market conditions.

In sum, EIT Food has created a solid basis to achieve financial sustainability beyond the 15 years of EIT funding.

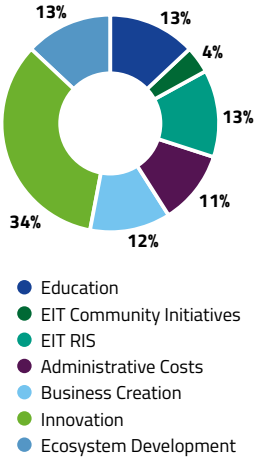

Figure 2. EIT Food Costs 2021-2022*

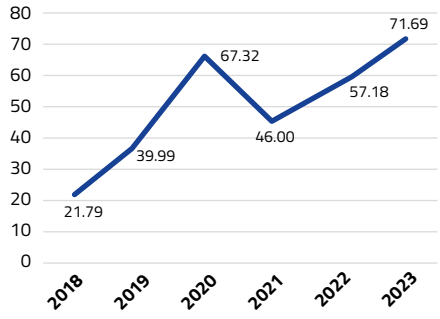

Figure 3. EIT Grant 2018-2023 (mEUR)

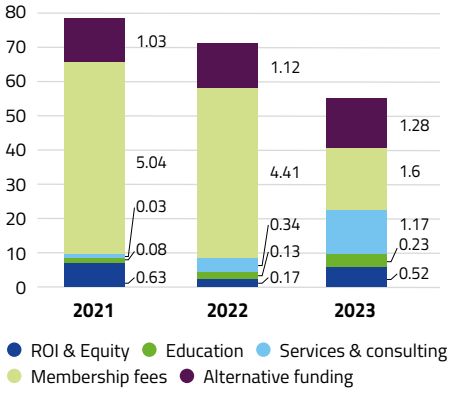

Figure 4. EIT Food Revenues 2021-2023 (mEUR)**

* Final costs for business plan 2023-2024 are not yet available.
** Revenues are reported on an annual basis.

Find out more!

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