Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems Cofund

Call Announcement of the

CORE Organic Cofund - Call 2016

with cofunds from the EU

Closing date for pre-proposal submission:
1 March 2017 at 10.00 am Central European Time

First update 20 February 2017*
(First published 6 December 2016)

**This update reflects the inclusion of BNSF, Bulgaria, who officially became a partner in the CORE Organic Cofund on 17 February 2017, and the respective addition of BNSF in the Indicative Call Budget (Appendix B). There is no other new information in this document than already announced in the version of 6 December.*

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727495. CORE Organic Cofund

Content

A Guideline for Applicants will be complementing this Call Announcement in step 2 by giving further information about the submission of full proposals.

1 Background

Background to this call

CORE Organic Cofund is launching an EU cofunded transnational joint call for research project proposals based on funds from participating countries and funding from the European Union. The CORE Organic Cofund consortium for the cofounded call consists of 26 partners from 19 countries and committed 13 million € of national funds "in cash" for transnational research.
The CORE Organic Cofund ERA-Net will benefit from cofunding from the European Union under Horizon2020 research and innovation programme.

What is CORE Organic?

CORE Organic is the acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming Systems". The aim of CORE Organic is to improve the knowledge basis and innovation capacity necessary for supporting further development of organic food and farming as a way to respond to significant societal challenges in Europe's agriculture and food systems.

The overall objective for the CORE Organic Cofund Call 2016 is that the proposed research projects support sustainable growth of the organic sector in Europe and beyond. The expected impacts are more sustainable organic food systems including farming practices, processing and innovative value chains, aiming at fulfilment of the growing demand for organic products, support to Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and organic farming regulations and subsequently supporting health, trade and job creation. Furthermore, the funded projects should contribute to the improvement of the general competitiveness of the European agriculture and present new and innovative solutions to environmentally friendly agriculture.

The CORE Organic Cofund ERA-Net is the continuation of the ERA-Nets CORE Organic I, II and Plus.

2 Which thematic areas can be applied for?

The CORE Organic Cofund Call 2016 will provide funds for four topics:

Topic 1: Ecological support in specialised and intensive plant production systems
Topic 2: Eco-efficient production and use of animal feed at local level
Topic 3: Appropriate and robust livestock systems: cattle, pigs, poultry
Topic 4: Organic food processing concepts and technologies for ensuring food quality, sustainability and consumer confidence

For a detailed description of the topics see the call text in Annex A.

Applicants should avoid redundancy with H2020, CORE Organic and national projects.

Please note that the ERA-NET SUSFOOD 2 (https://www.susfood-era.net/susfood2) will launch a call in January 2017, with a pre-announcement in December 2016. CORE Organic Cofund and SUSFOOD will collaborate closely during the selection process to avoid overlap and double funding. For further questions, please discuss with the respective call secretariats.

3 Who can apply?

Institutions (legal entities) that are involved in research / innovation and operate in accordance with national rules, including companies, are invited to apply. CORE Organic Cofund is aiming at a high degree of stakeholder participation by a multi-actor approach throughout the whole project. Cooperation with farmers and companies is encouraged and attention will be paid to dissemination of research results into practice.

Research consortia must comprise of a minimum of five independent legal entities from a minimum of five different CORE Organic Cofund partner countries participating with funding in the specific topic. A list with the CORE Organic Cofund partners including the available funds per country and topics can be found in Annex B.

Research consortia are encouraged to consider good geographical coverage with regard to their main research question.

Applicants who are not eligible for funding by their national funding body or applicants from countries not participating in the call are welcome in research consortia, but will have to provide in-kind funding and will not receive EU top-up funding. They will not be included in the required minimum number of partners in the consortium and they cannot be the coordinator of the project. Such partners should state in advance the source of funding for their part in the project. In the full proposal phase, a letter of commitment must be included in the proposal confirming the source of funding.

The maximum budget requested from CORE Organic Cofund funds is 1.5 million euro per research proposal including the coordination costs, but in-kind contributions may be added on top of this amount. Applicants cannot request more funds than allocated for each country and topic (Annex B). National rules and priorities might set further limits. Applicants cannot request more funds than allocated for each country and topic (Annex B). National rules and priorities might set further limits.

A complete list of the CORE Organic Cofund eligibility criteria can be found in the chapter “CORE Organic Cofund eligibility check of pre-proposals” further down in this Call Announcement.

Please note that applicants must be eligible for funding by CORE Organic Cofund **and** the national funding bodies. Eligibility criteria may vary even between national funding bodies. Therefore, **it is mandatory for each applicant to also consider the national rules and priorities of their funding body**, for example whether eligible costs or sub-contracting are in line with the national rules and priorities. The national funding rules and priorities will be published at www.coreorganic.org shortly after the call is launched.

For questions regarding the CORE Organic Cofund eligibility criteria, please contact the CORE Organic Cofund Call Secretariat; for questions regarding national rules and priorities please contact the CORE Organic Cofund National Contact Points listed in Annex C.

Projects should start between 1 March and 1 May 2018 and be of maximum 36 months.

4 Coordinator of the research consortium

Each project consortium needs to appoint a project coordinator. The project coordinator has the following role and responsibilities:

» Lead the consortium throughout the application procedure and will be responsible for the correct submission of the pre-proposal and full proposal. The coordinator should be the one who creates an account for the proposal in the online submission tool.

» Be fully responsible for the overall project coordination and act as the central contact point for the CORE Organic Cofund consortium during the full lifespan of the research project

» Inform the CORE Organic Cofund Call Secretariat about any event that might affect the implementation of the project

» Ensure that all work is carried to a high standard and meets contractually bound milestones presented in the full proposal and approved by the funding bodies

» Be responsible for sharing all information with consortium partners

» Be responsible for monitoring data and timely delivery of project reports

» Ensure that the project fulfills its obligations described in chapter 9 Obligations for funded projects / Project monitoring and reporting

The project coordinator will not be responsible for the financial management of CORE Organic Cofund project funding, which will be handled directly between the consortium members and their corresponding national funding bodies.

The coordination costs of a research project have to be specified in the proposal and will be funded by CORE Organic Cofund. The rules for funding of the coordination costs are specified in section 6.1, “Part C”. For further information, please contact the Call Secretariat.

5 Time schedule, 2-step-procedure

The call will follow a 2-step procedure with pre-proposals (step1) and full proposals (step2). There will be a competitive selection at both steps. An independent expert observer will follow the evaluation and selection procedure.

A time schedule is given in table 1.

Table 1: Time schedule

Action	Scheduled
Step 1	
Launch of the call	6 Dec 2016
Closing date for submission of pre-proposals	1 Mar 2017, 10.00 am CET
Pre-proposal selection meeting	5 & 6 Apr 2017
Notification letters sent to applicants	27 Apr 2017
Step 2	
Closing date for submission of full proposals	03 Jul 2017, 10.00 am CEST
Full proposal selection meeting	Oct 2017
Notification letters sent to applicants	End Oct 2017
Contract negotiations	From 1 Nov onwards
Start of projects	1 Mar – 1 May 2018
End of projects	28 Feb - 30 Apr 2021

6 First step: Pre-proposal phase

6.1 Pre-proposal submission

The closing date for submission of pre-proposals is 1 March 2017 – 10.00 am CET.

The entire application procedure will be carried out online, using the CORE Organic Cofund online tool, templates and online forms (www.eracall.eu), which will be available shortly after the publication of the call. Only application submissions via this online tool will be accepted.

Pre-proposals, which do not include all the compulsory information or do not meet the formal requirements listed or mentioned in this call announcement will not be considered for funding.

After the closing date for submission the information given in the pre-proposal, including each partner's budget, is binding. Amendments after the closing date need to be justified and require the approval of the funding bodies involved in the call (contact via the Call Secretariat). Any amendments from pre-proposal to full proposal have to be declared as such in the full proposal.

It is possible to update and resubmit the pre-proposal as many times as wanted until the closing date (deadline): Part A, B, C and D (see below) can be saved at all steps and revisions can be re-submitted until the deadline.

The latest version will be shown at the following log-in.

It is highly recommended to submit the final version of the pre-proposal well in advance of the deadline to avoid failure due to last minute technical problems.

The pre-proposal must be written in English and consists of four parts:

Parts A to C are web-based and have to be filled in directly on the call submission website. Part D is a project description form and has to be uploaded to the call submission website. It is mandatory to submit Part D as an unprotected Adobe PDF file.

Part A: Project information (filled in by the coordinator)

1. Title of Project (max. 200 characters)
2. Project Acronym (max. 20 characters)
3. Duration of the proposed research project (max 36 months)
4. Topic: 1, 2, 3 or 4
5. Keywords (max 5 words and alltogether 100 characters)
6. Publishable project summary (max 2000 characters)
7. References of ten selected publications by the partners (i.e. per consortium) and relevant to the proposal including links to the articles or abstracts.

Part B: Partner information (Nr. 1 and 2 filled in by each partner)

A "partner" principally is an institution (see chpt. 3, Who can apply).

<u>All partners:</u>

1. Partner name (Contact details, including contact person)
2. Description of project partner, (max 0.5 pages per partner):
    - The role of the project partner in the project
    - A short description of the partner (organization)

<u>Coordinator and work package leaders:</u>

3. A short description of ongoing projects related to the present topic indicating project name, funding source and amounts, and potential overlap or link with the current proposal (max 0.5 pages)
4. A brief CV (max 1 page)

<u>Partner responsible for dissemination:</u>

5. Links to examples of previous dissemination activities relevant to the proposal (max 0.5 pages)

Part C: Partner budget (filled in by each partner)

	Total project budget	Requested funds
Person months (Months)		
Person cost (1000 €)		
Travel & subsistence (1000 €)		
Consumables (1000 €)		
Equipment (1000 €)		
Subcontracting (1000 €)		
Other costs (1000 €)		
Indirect costs (1000 €)		
Sum (1000 €)		

As a part of Part C, together with the submission of the pre-proposal, the coordinator can request additional funding from CORE Organic Cofund for the following tasks:

1. Travels for participation to 3 CORE Organic Cofund research seminars and travels to partners for problem solving (travels for project meetings are to be requested from the national funds, see table above)
2. Person months to cover the coordination work and reporting to CORE Organic Cofund, also for permanent staff
3. Overhead (fixed at 25% of the total coordination costs)
4. Catering in connection to project meetings
5. Other costs (must be specified)

The coordination budget should reflect the complexity of the project and the geographical distance between the partners. The coordination budget must be within the limits for total requested funds per project (max. 1.5 million euro).

Part D: Description of Work (uploaded by the coordinator, max 5 pages)

1. Proposal identification number (will be shown when you log-in)
2. Project title.
3. Project acronym.
4. Project objectives and main hypotheses.
5. Description of:
    - Relevance of the proposal compared with the call text.
    - Expected results for the sector and how they will overcome barriers and support development opportunities for the organic sector.

- Relation of the consortium to the main target groups and end-users and how these will be involved and/or targeted in the project.
- European added value of the project being carried out transnationally.

6. Description of the scientific methods and work plan (may be divided into work packages).
7. Statement of any potential ethical issues that may arise from the research project, based on the consortium's self-assessment according to chapter 10 of this Call Announcement.

Eligibility criterium: The maximum amount of characters or pages indicated for parts A to D above must not be exceeded and the following format must be used: Arial, 10 pt, single space, 2.5 cm left/right margins, 3.5 cm top margin, 2 cm bottom margin.

6.2 CORE Organic Cofund eligibility check of pre-proposals

After the closing date for submission all pre-proposals will be checked against the following mandatory call eligibility criteria:

» Research consortia must comprise of a minimum of five independent legal entities from a minimum of five different CORE Organic Cofund partner countries participating with funding in the topic. A list with the CORE Organic Cofund partners including the available funds per country and topics can be found in Annex B.

» The maximum budget requested from CORE Organic Cofund funds is 1.5 million euro per research proposal including the coordination costs, but in-kind contributions may be added on top of this amount.

» Applicants cannot request more funds than allocated for each country and topic (Annex B). National rules and priorities (at www.coreorganic.org) might set further limits.

» A maximum project duration of 36 months, ending no later than 30 April 2021.

» The proposal must be written in English, including an abstract that can be easily understood by non-experts.

» The complete proposal must be submitted before the deadline via the CORE Organic Cofund online submission tool. No other application format is accepted and proposals must follow the guideline for content and format.

» The core data must be complete according to the pre-proposal template.

6.3 National / regional eligibility check and prioritization of pre-proposals

The funding bodies will check the pre-proposals against national / regional eligibility criteria as described in the national / regional rules and priorities (at www.coreorganic.org). The national / regional eligibility check will include an ethics check to ensure that the proposals comply with applicable national rules and regulations.

If a funding body has national priorities within a topic, this will be explained in English under the national / regional rules and priorities.

If a proposal is not in line with national priorities within a topic it will affect the eligibility, and the partner from this country might not be funded, and if the partner has a major role it might jeopardise the entire proposal. In case of uncertainties regarding the national research priorities, please contact your National Contact Point.

In addition to possible priorities within topics, the funding bodies will, in order to establish and document their priorities among eligible pre-proposals, assess the pre-proposals they are involved in against the following five criteria:

1. Relevance of the proposal compared to the call text and current state of knowledge.
2. Soundness of concept, necessary multidisciplinarity, methodology and work plan in relation to the project's capacity to overcome barriers or support development opportunities for the organic sector from a transnational perspective.
3. The degree to which the project will overcome/support important barriers/development opportunities for the organic sector: Contribution at the European/international level and possibilities for general application of results.
4. Quality of consortium considering European added value, complementarities and degree of multi-actor approach: clear description of the transnational collaboration in the work plan and the European added value of the project being carried out transnationally. A preliminary assessment of the quality of the consortium including non-research partners and geographical coverage of the partnerships with regard to the main research question.
5. Appropriate budget with regard to the work plan.

Funding bodies will use the following scores for each criterium:

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0 for fails:The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information;

1 for poor: The criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses;

2 for fair: While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses;

3 for good: The proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary;

4 for very good: The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although certain improvements are still possible;

5 for excellent: The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

The funding bodies will be able to comment their scores. In case scores are 0, 1 or 2, comments are compulsory.

6.4 Expert evaluation of pre-proposals

Each pre-proposal is assessed by at least three independent sector experts against just one main criterium:

Relevance of the proposal and potential impact for the organic sector in a Trans European perspective with regard to the scope of the call as laid out in the topic descriptions ("call text")
The questions hereunder will be considered by the experts:

- Does the proposal answer to sector specific needs described in the call topic rationale and scope?
- Is the proposal innovative and adding new insights to the knowledge pool?
- Would the research proposal overcome barriers or support development opportunities for the organic sector?
- Would the proposed results be able to impact the specific sector addressed at transnational level?
- Could the research outputs be exploitable for the end-users?
- Is the proposal addressed through a cross-sectorial and multi-stakeholder approach when relevant?
- Is the research approach sufficiently multidisciplinary for the problem in focus?

Using the same scoring scale as given in the chapter above (0 – 5), the experts will rank the proposals into 2 categories:
Category 1: "green" (score 2, 3, 4 or 5)
Category 2: "red" (score 0 or 1)

Pre-proposals scored "red" will be rejected i.e. not invited to submit a full proposal.

The experts will provide a written overall comment of strengths and weaknesses of each proposal, based on their assessment of the relevance and potential impact. This comment will be communicated to the applicants.

6.5 Pre-proposal selection

Based on a) the sector experts' evaluation , b) the funding bodies' national / regional priorities and c) the available funding, the funding bodies will decide which pre-proposal consortia will be invited to submit a full proposal. Invitations to submit a full proposal will be sent to a number of consortia corresponding to max. three times the total available funds.

In some instances, the funding bodies might formulate conditions for project consortia (mandatory) to revise certain aspects of their application, such as budget, work division between project partners or other parts of the project. The funding bodies might further give recommendations, if they identify potentials for improvements (optional). The funding bodies might also recommend to include one or more additional partners from specified countries to the project consortium, based on availability of national funds.

The Call Secretariat will notify the project coordinator and provide information and guidelines for the submission of full-proposals as well as any specifics related to a project consortium.

7 Second step: Full proposal phase

7.1 Full proposal submission

Only research consortia which have successfully passed the first step will be invited to submit a full proposal. Together with the invitation letter, access to the online submission tool and a guideline for submission of full proposals will be provided.
The core information provided in the pre-proposal will automatically be imported into the full proposal.

7.2 Expert evaluation of full proposals

Full proposals will be evaluated by a minimum of three independent experts per full proposal against the following criteria:

1) Excellence
2) Impact
3) Quality and efficiency of the implementation

The three criteria will be scored independently, using the same scoring scheme as for the pre-proposals, and with one score given per criterium. A threshold of 3/5 will be applied for each criterium, i.e. full proposals with a score < 3 in any main criterium will not be recommended for funding. The expert panel will provide a single ranking list based on the scores.
The ranking list will include all four thematic research areas and will comprise all full proposals recommended for funding.

The experts will provide a written evaluation report on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. The evaluations will be communicated to the applicants after the full proposals have been selected by the funding bodies.

7.3 Selection of full proposals for funding

The ranking list of full proposals provided by the expert panel has to be followed by the funding bodies when selecting projects for funding. If there are not enough funds to select all proposals with the same rank, the consortium will apply the following additional selection criteria, listed in order of priority:

1) Ensure participation of all countries in funded projects
2) Cover topics otherwise not addressed
3) Balance the distribution of EU cofunds as much as possible

These three additional criteria will only be used within the context described above (i.e. among proposals with the same rank).
The outcome of the selection procedure will be communicated by the Call Secretariat to the project coordinators, who will be asked to inform their partners.

8 Confidentiality & Conflict of Interest

In order to avoid any conflict of interest no evaluator will be involved in the evaluation procedure, without signing a Conflict of Interest and Impartiality Agreement. The online evaluation tool will include a feature which will prevent access to the proposal in case a conflict of interest is declared by the expert.

The proposals will be handled confidentially by the Call Secretariat, by the national / regional funding bodies and the mandated experts responsible for the evaluation of the proposal.

9 Obligations for funded projects

Terms of participation

The national / regional funding of this call is provided under the coordination of the ERA-NET CORE Organic Cofund. The partners of the research consortia are required to recognize the coordinating role of CORE Organic Cofund throughout the duration of the funded research projects until the publication of the final project report, after acceptance of the report by CORE Organic Cofund.

Each project consortium will be asked to give feedback on the administrative processes of this call.

Intellectual property rights, use and access to results

Results and new Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) resulting from projects funded through the CORE Organic Cofund Call will be owned by the Project Partners according to the conditions stated in their Consortium Agreement and shall not be in conflict with the respective national regulation.

Researchers are encouraged to actively exploit the results of the research project and make them available for use, whether for commercial gain or not, in order for public benefit to be obtained from the knowledge created.

Consortium agreement

The consortia selected for funding must enter into a Consortium Agreement, in order to manage the project activities, finances, intellectual property rights (IPR) and to avoid disputes which might be detrimental to the completion of the project.

It will be the responsibility of the project coordinator to draw up a Consortium Agreement suitable to their own group. The Consortium Agreement will normally be under the law and legal system of the country of the project coordinator. The purpose of this document is:

- to underpin the project partners' collaboration and provide the project partners with mutual assurance on project management structures and procedures, and their rights and obligations towards one another.
- to assure that the funding bodies are involved so that the project consortium has a satisfactory decision making capacity and is able to work together in a synergistic and positive manner.

The Consortium Agreement should be finalized and signed by all partners of the project consortium before the official start of the project.

The CORE Organic Cofund Call Secretariat will provide the applicants with an example of a Consortium Agreement after the selection process.

Start date of projects

Projects are expected to have started by 1 May 2018. All national contracts and the consortium agreement are expected to be signed when the project starts.

Published information

A list of the funded projects will be published at the end of the co-funded call. Therefore applicants should be aware that the following information from the proposals may be published by CORE Organic Cofund and by the European Commission:

» project title and project acronym

» duration of the project

» total funding of the project

» name of the project coordinator (including contact information as email and telephone number)

» country and organisation name of each partner

» the publishable summary of the project from the application.

Information on each funded project, including data on each participant and overview on the results will be sent to the European Commission after the end of the project period.

National / regional contracts

CORE Organic Cofund is a collaboration between national funding bodies with the aim of establishing transnational research collaboration. However, the contracts with project participants and funding procedures and regulations remain the full responsibility of the national funding bodies.

Because of the fragmented nature of the funding, care will be taken to ensure that the individual contracts are synchronized both in time and content, so that each project consortium can deliver transnational outputs as described in the project proposal. The national funding bodies should ensure that common CORE Organic Cofund conditions are met (e.g. common start time of a given project, reporting requirements etc.).

Formal funding decisions are made by the participating funding bodies. Each funding body will fund national / regional applicant(s) within the research project. Funding will be provided by the relevant funding bodies according to applicable national / regional funding rules.

The project coordinator is responsible for informing project partners about the selection result and for synchronising the project start with his/her partners. After the project has been selected , the project partners must contact their national / regional contact points in order to start the grant negotiation and accomplish the remaining steps until the research project can start.

Financial issues and changes to the work plan or consortium

Any financial issue is under the responsibility of each national funding body involved in the approved project.

If a change to the project consortium occurs which poses a risk to the project, the issue has to be solved by the consortium (in line with the Consortium Agreement). The CORE Organic Cofund must be kept informed of such events.

Changes in the work plan will need to be authorised by the funding bodies affected.

Project monitoring and reporting

A mid-term and a final scientific report including deliverables have to be sent to the CORE Organic Cofund Consortium by the project coordinator. Project reports and the progress will be assessed against the expected output and timeline as described in the final project description (milestones and deliverables). Action may be taken by funding bodies in case of shortcomings or non-compliance. In addition, brief project updates suitable for immediate publication have to be provided to the CORE Organic Cofund consortium annually, and a minimum of 3 stakeholder-oriented articles.

Project reports and articles must be written in English, whereas the projects are expected also to publish end-user directed publications in all their national languages.

If required by national obligations, each project partner has to report progress of their activity to the national funding bodies. This also applies to financial reports.

Detailed information on the reporting and monitoring procedures as well as templates will be provided to the coordinators of the funded projects in due course.

Dissemination and communication

A dissemination plan must be included in the full proposal and specify the planned activities. Applicants have to allocate sufficient resources in their budget for dissemination. Projects are obliged to:

» present their work at up to three seminars to the CORE Organic Cofund partners, stakeholders and other interested parties: at the start, around mid-term and at the end of the project.

» prepare (popular science) summaries of the project goals, planning and results for CORE Organic Cofund activities and publications (e.g. for brochures, newsletters, website etc.).

The travel expenses of the coordinator or a proxy for taking part in these seminars will have to be covered by the project budget. Participation of other project partners is optional at their own expenses.

All publications, which originate from the CORE Organic Cofund projects, have to be published via the electronic archive, Organic Eprints www.coreorganic.org.

Further, the Project Partners have to acknowledge the transnational funding of the CORE Organic Cofund ERA-NET and the individual national funding bodies in any document that is published (in written, oral or electronic form) within the research project.

10 Ethics assessment

Work involving the use of animals or humans should be carried out under the appropriate authorization taking into account local ethical requirements. Any proposal, which seems to contravene fundamental ethical principles, shall not be selected, and may be excluded from the evaluation and selection procedure. Judgement of the significance of ethical issues will be made by using the criteria published by the Commission in its guidelines for the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf.

11 Definitions

Legal entity: Any natural person or any legal person created and recognised as such under national law, Union law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations.

Partner:

a) A funding body that signed grant agreement no 727495 with the EU and that contributes "in cash" to this cofunded call

b) A member of a transnational research project consortium that applies within this cofunded call.

12 Further information and contact

1. All information necessary for the preparation and submission of a pre-proposal will be available at **www.coreorganic.org**. Here you can also find the link to a partnering tool, the Guideline for Applicants (only full proposal phase), and an FAQ section.
The call will also be promoted at national / regional level, via usual channels of communication.

2. For questions regarding national funding regulations please contact your **National Contact Point** (Annex C)

3. For questions regarding this Call Announcement or the Guideline for Applicants please contact the **CORE Organic Cofund Call Secretariat** at the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food, Bonn, Germany: Arnd Bassler arnd.bassler@ble.de Tel. +49-(0)228-6845 3506.

Annex A: Call text (topic description)

Interested project consortia should apply to one of the four topics. The call is open to all proposals which address the call topics and do not overlap with those previously funded by CORE Organic (http://www.coreorganic.org/ http://orgprints.org/view/projects/eu.html) or others.

TOPIC 1: ECOLOGICAL SUPPORT IN SPECIALISED AND INTENSIVE PLANT PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Rationale

The management of specialised and sometimes monoculture cropping systems of fruit tree orchards, vineyards, small fruits, vegetables and greenhouses requires more intensive use of energy, water and other inputs including processed organic fertilisers and inputs for pest and disease control than arable farming. The potential benefits of functional biodiversity are not always utilised. There is a need for improvement in use of natural resources and for reduction of dependency on external inputs, while still increasing economical sustainability of these systems. The challenge is to find practical ways to develop more resilient agro-ecosystems for perennial and annual, intensive and protected crops that meet the high standards of environmental sustainability and good-tasting and nutritious products, and thus, are in closer alignment with the organic principles.

Innovative cropping and production systems should improve nutrient cycling by using new crop combinations *(intercropping, mixtures with different rooting depths, ecological services providing crops, etc.)* and recycling of other substances including organic matter, waste and waste water. They should improve the quality and stability of production at low nutrient levels, and lead to lower production costs. Relevant research should result in diversified, stress-tolerant, multi-functional and resilient cropping systems and farming practices with lower environmental and climate impact. Reduction of GHG emissions including options for carbon sequestration and improving energy efficiency at soil, field and farm levels should be considered.

Scope

A. Concepts for sustainable, resource-efficient and resilient intensive vegetable, fruit, olive and viticulture production

Organic vegetable fields, fruit orchards, olive groves and vineyards still depend on inputs for pest and disease control, as well as for fertilization, and the agro-environmental services they produce are limited. Vegetables, fruits and wine are important products for the European organic market. Consumers expect high quality in terms of taste and nutritional content as well as high environmental production standards. This includes agro-environmental and wider eco-system services. There is a knowledge need of how to design and manage vegetable fields, orchards and vineyards in order to reduce dependency on external inputs for pest and disease control, as well as for fertilization, and on how to improve synergy with ecosystems services. One of the challenges is how growers can make best

use of the diversity within and between crops, and of the natural biodiversity at field, farm and landscape levels in fruit orchards, vineyards and vegetable production.

Projects may include new forms of partly closed covering systems to protect crops in open field (such as rain caps, nets or plastic shelters).

Projects should combine knowledge in cross disciplinary work in order to design innovative and productive systems that meet these requirements. They should include further development, testing and on-farm validation of the innovative systems in different regions of Europe.

B. Concepts for sustainable soil-bound greenhouse systems

There is a wide variety in organic production in greenhouses such as (semi)-permanent, closed, walk in glasshouses, plastic-covered houses or poly-tunnels. Available knowledge on organic greenhouse production has been gathered in the COST Action "Biogreenhouse". From that it became clear that more research is needed to increase the ecological and economical sustainability of these systems. Problems which commonly arise all around Europe include: low input efficiency, the need for adequate supplies of water or of nutrients under the provisions of the Nitrates Directive, the use of broad spectrum plant protection products and copper-based fungicides, which hamper natural crop protection and heating with fossil fuels. A general constraint on all organic greenhouse systems is the difficulty of practicing crop rotation. Maintaining soil health and resilience in such a protected growing system is a challenge. There is a knowledge need to combine the high intensity of greenhouses systems with the management of soil health and fertility. Projects should direct the understanding, assessment and development of new concepts and management of more climate-neutral and sustainable, yet economically sound and resilient soil-bound greenhouse systems for various climatic conditions, and suited to different farming systems. This may include soil-bound urban farming systems. Technological and agro-ecological solutions should be developed to reduce the use of inputs like plant protection products and fossil fuels, that have a high environmental impact and to prevent nutrient losses and improve water use efficiency. The solutions that will be developed must fit within the European organic regulation.

New strategies and concepts should be developed using a system approach and combining knowledge of different disciplines such as soil science, agro-ecology, entomology, plant pathology, weed science, economics, among others.

The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of various relevant stakeholders (e.g. *growers, researchers, advisory services, manufacturers, retailers, consumers and citizens).* Activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

Expected impact

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Improved competitiveness of organic vegetable, fruit, olive, grape and greenhouse production;

- Models for more resilient and sustainable organic vegetable, fruit, olive and grape production systems in the open field and under cover;
- Concepts for more sustainable and climate-neutral organic soil-bound greenhouse production systems suitable for different climates, conditions and agro-ecosystems;
- Closed nutrient cycles and improved efficiency in the use of water and inputs.

TOPIC 2: ECO-EFFICIENT PRODUCTION AND USE OF ANIMAL FEED AT LOCAL LEVEL

Rationale

Currently, recycling of nutrients on farms or at a regional level is still difficult to achieve in large parts of the EU, mainly for economic reasons but also due to the over-simplification of farming systems. To a large extent, feed and livestock production are concentrated in different regions, and animal feed, especially proteins, has to be imported from regions far away from where the animals are raised. In different regions of Europe, a variety of surplus green biomass from crops or residuals as well as blue biomass could be made available for feed production, and at the same time, providing new options for nutrient recycling between farms and between farming and other parts of the food system. The EC policy on Circular Economy in particular points to the need for recycling food waste in the form of animal feed. Different sources of proteins are important, e.g. soybean (*Glycine max*), horse bean (*Vicia faba*), peas (*Pisum sativum*), Beach pea (*Lathyrus sp*), Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa)*, while recycling of residues should be considered as well.

Organic animal production systems, particularly for monogastric animals, have an increasingly smaller ecological base, thus threatening their capacity of resilience and also the sustainability of specialised organic animal production therefore putting consumer confidence at risk. Moreover, it is expected that changes in EU legislation on re-use of feed will affect these sectors significantly and lead to high demand for suitable concentrate protein feeds. New forms of bio-refinery and other techniques are emerging which may provide high quality livestock feed, but their commercial and practical success depends on further joint technical and market development including animal feed experiments.

In order to contribute to the improvement of the above-mentioned issues we need high quality relevant research in this topic, but with a capacity to interlink skills, knowledge and disciplines, which rarely work together. A value chain approach, involving upstream and downstream partners, is needed in order to deliver useful and implementable results with the necessary degree of innovation.

Scope

Feed crops and other protein rich feed sources e.g. based on insects or algae or mussels for all livestock species should be considered, including monogastrics and dairy farming. Special attention should be paid to the availability of concentrate feed of plant, marine or by-product origin and of a quality suitable for organic poultry and piglets/pork production, including protein feed with essential amino acid composition.

Enhanced efforts are needed to increase the local production of feed crops and the availability of proteins in order to support the development of more sustainable livestock systems related to local cultivated lands in order to improve self-sufficiency and overall sustainability (*including economic sustainability)* of organic value chains.

The projects should develop innovative cropping systems and methods for the production and small scale processing of local feed. These would include growing new crops and more suitable varieties and re-designing crop rotations and intercropping in a way such as to develop a more self-sufficient, integrated and closed-loop livestock and vegetal production system, using an agro-ecological and ethological approach with the final objective to achieve an eco-functional intensification of sustainable livestock production. High quality protein feeds from bio-refinery or other processes based on regional crops, crop residues and food waste as well as blue biomass such as algae and mussels may be included.

The projects should develop organic animal productions taking into consideration the whole value chain and related economic aspects that impact local livestock farming systems and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of innovative systems of feed production including bio-refinery processes and provide suggestions on how to develop these strategies for more sustainable feed and animal systems.

The conventional livestock production sector could also benefit from greater knowledge about local production of protein crops and feeds and their efficient and sustainable deployment in livestock production.

The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of all relevant stakeholders and activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

Applicants should take into account pertinent EU-legislation, especially EU legislation relating to the use of food waste and other residues, insects, insect protein and other insect components as animal feed as well as pertinent EU-legislation relating to the production of insects, insect protein and other components from insects. Thus, project proposals must justify to what extent they will provide knowledge applicable under current regulation or may provide knowledge relevant for policy development and science based improvement of regulation.

Expected impact

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Improve the sustainability of organic animal husbandry by reducing the dependency on “imported” protein feed;
- Re-designed and developed cropping and feeding systems that introduce an innovative use of crops, grassland, forage, by-products and other potential protein sources including methods and techniques for processing;
- Support for organic animal productions by taking all the value chain and related economic aspects into consideration that strongly condition local livestock farming systems;

- Support for sustainable local farming systems and economies driven by organic animal production.

TOPIC 3: APPROPRIATE AND ROBUST LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS: CATTLE, PIGS, POULTRY

Rationale

Many organic livestock systems have become increasingly specialised. From the initial economic advantage of specialisation, they have developed a too small economic and ecological base. The challenge lies in converting these systems into robust farming systems that rely on smart ecological intensification. In those systems the use of antibiotics can be further reduced following societal expectations. Economic performance can be maintained and even improved – both per hectare and per labour unit.

Scope

A. Forage-based dairy systems – sustainable strategies to increase the health and welfare of dairy livestock

As regards ruminants, we focus on grazing systems and young stock. Innovative grazing systems for different agro-ecological and economic conditions are required that improve land productivity, increase the production of protein, while optimizing roughage intake and reducing the use of anthelmintics. Effective new practices are required for reduction of antibiotics and anthelmintics use, while maintaining udder health, preventing mastitis, preventing hoof problems, preventing and treating parasites, and improving fertility.

In improving the rearing of young stock, the challenges are: to find innovative methods for keeping dairy calves that allow mother-infant contact without negative productivity effects, to find and apply additional indicators in addition to common production parameters to assess the welfare and performance of calves and dams under different rearing conditions, and to sustain the long-term benefits of alternatively reared calves and their long term production and reproduction performance.

B. Organic poultry systems – environmentally and animal friendly

As regards poultry we focus on the performance of breeds in organic systems and on the free-range areas. Poultry breeds should be monitored with regard to their performance, health and welfare in several organic production systems. Appropriate breeding strategies or programmes for improving animal welfare should be considered and developed. As regards laying hens, the aim should be to reduce the number of broken keel bones, feather pecking, red mites and foot pad problems. Dual-purpose breeds are promising with respect to animal welfare aspects and should be tested under differing conditions, including in view of breeding improved breeds. Other poultry systems are gaining importance, including turkey and duck, and should be improved with regard to husbandry systems as well as identification of suitable breeds. Free-range areas, especially in fixed stables for flocks of thousands of animals, have a high nutrient load. Solutions should be developed to reduce this environmental problem and waste of nutrients by developing outdoor areas that stimulate the birds to

make optimal use of the range area, while at the same time maintaining the level of welfare that free-range systems provide.

C. Pig husbandry: Combining animal welfare, efficient production and low ecological footprint

Organic pig production requires access to outdoor areas for animal welfare which however creates challenges in terms of parasite control, nutrient recycling, climate impact and productivity. There is a need for further development of housing systems and management of outdoor areas in order to reduce piglet mortality, nutrient losses and emissions of ammonia and nitrous oxide while improving economic competitiveness. Recent research has produced health management manuals for organic pig farmers, yet further improvement is needed in the overall management in light of the multiple objectives and challenges of organic production systems. Projects should focus on one or more factors for improving productivity, efficiency in resource use, animal health and welfare while keeping a holistic perspective on the performance of the system in light also of climatic and environmental impact.

D. Mixed livestock systems for improved farming and food system resilience

As regards mixed systems, we focus on the identification, exploration and assessment of different paths to more robust and resilient livestock systems. Mixed livestock systems are farming systems in which two or more farm animal species are kept simultaneously and most likely are integrated with crop production or agroforestry. In that way, potential ecological synergies can be exploited in all aspects of the farm. Mixed livestock systems can offer solutions to the negative phenomena that occur at highly specialized livestock farms, such as high nutrient loads and the risk of reduced health and animal welfare. There is a need for improving existing mixed livestock systems and developing innovative forms of producing livestock integrated with crops or feed, biomass or human consumption.

We encourage the design of new forms of livestock systems or improvement of existing systems. Existing mixed livestock systems, as well as new concepts should be assessed in different regions across the EU. This assessment should address production (including economy), environmental impact, feeding, management, parasite and disease management and animal welfare. Socio-economic impacts and ecosystem services also need to be taken into account.

The projects should follow a multi-actor approach with an active involvement of all relevant stakeholders particularly enterprises of the organic sector and activities should cover different geographical and climatic conditions.

Expected impact

All:

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Assessment of alternatives to contentious inputs in organic livestock systems.

Dairy systems:

- Increased knowledge and application of dairy systems with improved productivity, reduced environmental impact, enhanced animal health and reduced antibiotic and anthelmintic use;
- Increased knowledge and use of more natural calf- rearing systems.

Poultry:

- Improved health and welfare of organic poultry, including improved breeds;
- Identification of the possibilities and limitations of existing and improved breeds, both for specialised and dual purpose production;
- Implementation of new poultry husbandry systems which maintain a high level of animal welfare and health, high environmental standards, and robust economic performance.
- Improved health and welfare of turkey and duck in organic husbandry systems, including better suited breeds;
- Development and start of implementation of breeding strategies and concepts of poultry, including dual-purpose breeds

Pigs:

Housing systems and management practices that enable organic farmers to improve productivity, efficiency in resource use, animal health and welfare while achieving a low ecological footprint.

Mixed livestock systems:

- Increased and well-documented knowledge of mixed livestock systems, including mutual benefits for animal health, the environment and socio-economic aspects;
- Improved guidelines for managing complex agricultural systems, and for health management in mixed livestock systems.

TOPIC 4: ORGANIC FOOD PROCESSING CONCEPTS AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR ENSURING FOOD QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Rationale

A significant proportion of the organic food we consume is processed. Organic consumers expect that processing techniques and technologies handle the primary products in a gentle way preserving the high quality of the organic primary food ingredients, use low levels of additives and have a low environmental impact. However, until now, only a few specific processing technologies have been developed for organic food products, and there is no clear guidance on how to select the most appropriate technologies. Mandatory standards for the processing of organic food are lacking and research on the assessment of the environmental impact of organic processing is limited. There is a demand for assessing the actual need for contentious substances or techniques/technologies as well as alternatives to them in organic food processing. Packaging may have a high environmental impact. As far as still needed packaging which preserves quality and reduces food waste should be improved. Organic food processors have, therefore, expressed the need for a Code of Practice on how to

implement the rules and principles of organic processed food of high quality and with a low environmental impact. This should go hand in hand with the definition and development of sustainable, minimal and gentle processing techniques in line with the organic principles.

Scope

The call focuses on the development, assessment and evaluation of gentle organic food processing methods and chains which maintain high food quality and low levels of additives and have, at the same time, low environmental impact and a high degree of consumer acceptance. In this regard, research should support the development of a Code of Practice which indicates how to implement the rules and principles in processing of organic food while keeping the environmental impact low and maintaining high food quality.

Recommendations for the phasing out of contentious substances or techniques/technologies without compromising the competitiveness of organic sector should be formulated. The definition of criteria for the acceptability of contentious substances and alternatives to them in organic food processing in order to complying with the organic principles should ensure consumer confidence. As far as still needed evaluation systems for and improvement of food packaging materials should be further developed. This includes new general developments in intelligent packaging for organic products, and identification of packaging materials which do not pollute the organic products with synthetic chemicals, heavy metals or other undesirable substances, suitable for different types of food products.

New technologies, techniques, assessment and evaluation tools and indicators should be generally recognized in the organic sector. A multi-actor approach with active involvement of various relevant stakeholders (end-users such as farmers/farmers' groups, advisors, enterprises, consumers etc.) all along the projects is in this perspective indispensable.

Applicants should consider the current EU legislation on organic food processing and the recommendations in the EGTOP final report on food.

Expected impact

- Results to reach end-users and be used transnationally; suitable and smart outputs and deliverables for dissemination are expected.
- Development and promotion of a Code of Practice or other set of criteria for selecting appropriate food processing methods for organic food at regional/national/European level;
- Testing/application of new gentle food processing methods suitable to preserve high quality of primary products in processed food and to decrease environmental impact;
- Testing/application of alternatives to contentious substances as well as new natural origin additives (i.e. antioxidants, preservatives etc.) in food processing enterprises;
- As far as still needed application of best practices for packaging of organic food along processing chains as well as in stores and supermarkets taking into account resource use and packaging material as well as food quality, shelf life and food waste.

Annex B: Indicative call budget

National budgets (in 1000 euros) including pre-allocated EU funds amounting to 10% of national funds (except for Switzerland)

Country	Partner	Total funds	Plant production	Feed, local	Livestock	Food Processing
Austria	BMLFUW	330		187	143	
Belgium	DLV	198	99		99	
Belgium	CRAW	330		165	165	
Bulgaria	BNSF	110	55	55		
Denmark	DAFA	1650	413	413	413	413
Estonia	MEM	218			109	109
Finland	MMM	330	165		165	
France	MAAF/INRA	825	289	124	206	206
Germany	BML	1320	220		550	550
Italy	MIPAAF	880		440		440
Italy	MIUR	550	275		275	
Latvia	IARE	110	40	70		
Netherlands	MinEZ/NWO	1045	348		348	348
Norway	RCN	1045	348	348		348
Poland	NCBR	660	220		220	220
Romania	UEFISCDI	550	275			275
Switzerland	FOAG	1600	400	400	400	400
Slovenia	MKGP	110	110			
Spain	MINECO	220	220			
Sweden	FORMAS	1650	413	413	413	413
Turkey	GDAR	1084	434	271	163	217
Total funds		**14.815**	**4.324**	**3.431**	**3.690**	**3.370**

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