



AGROECOLOGY 1st Co-funded Call

“Fostering agroecology at farm and landscape levels”

Q & A

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Submission website: <https://agroecology.ptj.de/>

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1 Introduction

This document provides an overview on the questions asked by the participants during the webinar, which took place on 5th March 2024, for the 1st Co-funded Call of AGROECOLOGY.

2 Questions and Answers

2.1 Partnering

Is there any platform to search for suitable project partners?

Yes, there is the so-called “partnering tool” which is available on the submission platform of the 1st Co-funded call of AGROECOLOGY and helps you to find cooperation possibilities. There, you can search for partners and offer your expertise: <https://agroecology.ptj.de/partnering>

2.2 Eligibility

Is there a ratio of supports to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)?

No, within the general eligibility criteria there is no ratio defined. However, if applicable, this might be defined in the national/regional Funder Party regulations (see Annex IX).

Could one organization (1 PIC number) participate in more than one proposals?

Yes, it is possible and actually very likely to happen.

Are African countries eligible as tierce countries?

African countries are considered non-eligible partners requesting for funding because there are no funding organisations from Africa participating on the 1st co-funded call of AGROECOLOGY. However, non-eligible partners may participate at their own expense or if they have their own separate source of funding.

In the case of having several funders from the same country, how do we know which one we depend on?

This will be either decided by the funders or you can indicate the funding organisation in the submission platform. Please check the national/regional Funding Party regulations (Annex IX) for more details.

There are no UK funders in the list, does it mean that potential UK partners must find their own funding outside of the call/panel of funders to be eligible?

Correct, as there are no funding organisations from UK participating on the 1st co-funded call of AGROECOLOGY, potential UK partners may participate at their own costs. Please check section 4.2 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

Is it possible to have several partners from same country?

Yes, however please check the national/regional Funding Party regulations (Annex IX) for more details.

Is there a list of official organisation eligible to receive funds? Or is this eligibility simply this list of organisations in "Partner"? (universities, public research institutions, etc)

In the Guidelines for Applicants (section 4.1), type of organisations are listed that can apply for funding subject to the national/regional regulations of each participating Funding Party. Please check the national/regional Funding Party regulations (Annex IX) for more details.

Does the rule of direct eligibility for funding as a low and middle-income third country apply to this call?

This call is not a Horizon Europe call. Therefore, funding comes from national/regional funders that are able to fund (in most cases) only entities from their countries.

Do Coordinators have to be part of an organisation eligible for funding?

Yes, they do. The Coordinator must be eligible to receive funding and has to request funding. Please see section 4.2 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

What happens when one of the partners cannot be funded because other projects were prioritised in that country only while all other partners were selected? Is then the entire consortium rejected due to this one partner?

Selection of projects will be decided on the ranking list and availability of funds. Please see section 7 of the Guidelines for Applicants for further details. Regarding the eligibility of each partner, if one partner is not eligible, the entire proposal will be rejected.

Is an eligible participant required to have a letter from its national funder?

No.

Is it mandatory to have three countries in the consortium?

Yes, it is mandatory. Consortium must include at least three eligible partners requesting funding from at least three different countries and from three different Funding Parties who contribute with funds to the co-funded call. Please see section 4.2 of the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

Is it possible to have one consortium with 6 countries?

Yes, it is. There is no maximum number of involved countries and partners. Moreover, there is also no upper limit to the number of partners from the same country, unless stated otherwise in the national/regional Funding Party regulations. Please check Annex IX for specific funders' regulations.

Who can be the project Coordinator? Can their position be funded by the proposal or is there a preference for Coordinators with permanent positions (or funded through the lifetime of the project) at the coordinating institution?

There are no preferences stated on the general eligibility criteria. However, the Coordinator (organisation) itself has to request funds. Please check Annex IX for more details specific funders' regulations.

Annex IX mentions restrictions on institutions receiving basic funding. What are they? Or do they differ between the various national and regional funders?

Please contact directly the respective national/regional contact point (see Annex IX) to clarify what is exactly meant by "restrictions on institutions receiving basic funding".

Can Thailand participate if it comes with its own contribution?

Yes, and in this case, a letter of financial commitment is obligatory. Please see section 4.2 and Annex VIII of the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

Why does this call not cover all EU countries and only 22 listed as eligible to receive funds? E.g. Greece is not listed.

This call is not a Horizon Europe call. AGROECOLOGY is a Horizon Europe project, more precisely a co-funded Partnership under Horizon Europe. The co-funded call currently open is a so-called "cascade funding" call. The co-funding provided by the EU is actually a partial reimbursement to the funding organisation of the grants paid by them to transnational projects selected in this call. Partners in these projects will enter into direct and bilateral contract with "their" own funding organisation (i.e. from which they request funding, from their country/region). Therefore, these partners will not have a contractual relationship with the EC, but only with their funding organisation. This is why, in addition to rules described in the Guidelines for Applicants, each research partner in a consortium must also respect the rules of its funding organisation: Horizon Europe rules such as "eligibility of low- and middle-income countries" do not apply. This is also, why in principle only entities located in the countries and regions listed in the Guidelines for Applicants (meaning there is a funder participating in the call in that country/region) are eligible.

2.3 Content of proposals and procedures (both pre and full proposals)

What is the definition of partner? Is it a person?

By partner, we refer to an organisation acting as a consortium partner in one proposal. One of the partners of the consortium will act as Coordinator. From each partner(organisation) of one consortium one person will get the role as contact point and Principal Investigator (PI). The PI of this partner(organisation) has to provide a CV in order to justify its expertise in the field. It is possible to add up to 5 team members to each partner beside the PI. Expertise of the team members can be described in the partner profile. However, no CV from the team members can be uploaded.

Who is requested to upload a CV in the submission platform?

The CV upload is mandatory for each partner from the consortium.

Can the partnerships be modified after the pre-proposal submission?

No change of project Coordinator (person and organisation in charge) will be allowed, except in case of force majeure. Changes to the consortium composition may be allowed in exceptional cases. Please see section 5.2.1. in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

What criteria the pre-proposal should satisfy to be considered a suitable pre-proposal?

The objective of a pre-proposal is to present the project idea and the consortium without providing much details on the work plan. The detailed template for the pre-proposal with explanations is provided in Annex II and an example is also available within the document section of the submission platform. Following submission, pre-proposals will be checked against the general and applicable national/regional eligibility criteria as defined in the respective Funder Regulations (see Annex IX). Pre-proposals that do not pass the general eligibility check will be rejected. In addition, evaluation criteria are described in section 6.2 in the Guidelines for Applicants.

The evaluation criteria mention balancing of risks, but I haven't seen any section on describing risks and risk mitigation. Did I miss it?

Risks and mitigation can be for instance indicated in detail in the Workplan (see Annex V) and respective description of the work packages. It can be also described in overview in section "Excellence" of the project description. Please see section 6.2 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

How many project management seminars are foreseen?

We plan a Kick-off meeting, one mid-term meeting and one end term meeting. There will be in total three meetings in three years.

I see there is only one organisation listed from my country. Does the Coordinator must be part of the organisation? Does this organisation must be included in the call as partner?

No to both questions. Annex X lists all of the beneficiaries of the AGROECOLOGY partnership who might apply for funding under this co-funded call. Please be aware that inclusion of any partner of the AGROECOLOGY partnership in a consortium will not have any influence on the evaluation procedure or the scores awarded to proposals. The objective of this list is transparency.

Should I register as Coordinator before designing the project with partners?

You can elaborate your project independently of your registration. It is highly recommended to register as Coordinator as early as possible to get access to the submission platform and get acquainted with it.

Which countries can submit the proposal?

Entities from countries with national/regional funders participating on the 1st Co-funded Call of AGROECOLOGY are eligible to request funding. The list of funders is available in national/regional Funding Party regulations (Annex IX).

Does the Coordinator need to be holding a research fixed position, or a PhD position? It looks like certain amount of previous published research is needed, correct?

The Coordinator is an entity. Usually as a "Principal Investigator", the consortium tends to choose e.g. a "senior scientist", with additional team members (e.g. "junior scientists"). Please section 4.3 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

What is the difference between "description of work" and "workplan"?

Workplan will be with Work Packages, tasks, etc. Description of work is a narrative, see also Annex IV.

The Project objectives has to be ONE per consortium, and not differ within countries, correct?

Narrative on objectives: yes; each partner has however a text box to describe how its work fits to the national/regional funding programme if this is of relevance for the funding organisation.

Do the figures have to be uploaded separately? The "Pre Proposal Example" file show figures incorporated in the proposal text.

Yes, figures have to be uploaded separately, but there is a tool in the submission platform to include the figures exactly where you would like to have them in text fields.

Do we receive all the comments from the evaluators or only a summary?

You will receive a consolidated summary not the individual evaluator's comments.

Do we need to have mirrored pilot activities in each country?

No, you do not need to have mirrored pilot activities in each country.

What proportion of pre-proposals and full proposals is accepted?

This depends on the number of submitted pre-proposals and requested budgets. In total, a budget of approx. 30 M€ is available. The selection of pre-proposals depends on the ranking list and availability of funds. Please see sections 5.1.3 and 5.2.4 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

How many pages should the full proposal document be?

Please see Annex IV for full details.

2.4 Budget

Is it allowed to compensate stakeholders for participation in the project e.g. co-creation activities (compensation/-remuneration for their time)? In order to compensate for some of the costs of a non-eligible partner, can I cover some of their costs in our budget as subcontracting?

This might be possible; however, you should definitely confirm this budget issue beforehand with your funding organisation. The national/regional contact points are in charge of providing specific regulations on eligible costs, possibility of subcontracting or reimbursement of efforts. Please see Annex IX for more details.

Does subcontracting count as "include industrial sector in the consortia"?

We understand under subcontracting to subcontract any organisation to fulfil parts of your project. This organisation is in this regard not a partner of the consortium. Subcontracting is a cost category and who can be considered a subcontractor should be clarified with your funder. Please see Annex IX for restrictions/possibilities of your funder in this regard.

How many projects will be selected for funding?

The total number of projects to be selected is not defined. The number of funded projects depends on the size of the individual projects selected, the ranking list and the budget availability of the funders.

Is there any additional funding available from the EU?

AGROECOLOGY is a co-funded partnership and as such receives co-fund from the EU. However, this co-fund is provided to each funder as co-fund to their Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). FSTP means in this regard the funds a funder is providing for each call of this partnership. The respected co-fund will be managed by each Funder individually to fund the selected projects.

Is there a maximum budget per project?

No, there is no maximum budget defined per project. However, each funding organisation has defined a maximum limit for funding for each project and/or each partner in each project. Please see Annex IX for more details regarding the maximum limit for funding of each funder.

Is there a restriction on the amount of own funds in the total budget of the proposal?

From the general eligibility criteria, there is no restriction on the amount of own funds in the total budget of the proposal. However, please check the applicable national/regional regulations in Annex IX. In addition, the minimum requirement says that a consortium must consist of 3 partners from 3 different countries and requesting funds from 3 different funders.

How many person months shall be expected for the role and tasks of the Coordinator and are these costs eligible?

The estimation of effort regarding the management of the transnational project has to be defined by the consortium. The estimated time to coordinate the project may also depend on the number of partners. A description of the Coordinator's tasks is described in section 4.3 in the Guidelines for Applicants. Besides, the Coordinator has to attend three status seminars organised by AGROECOLOGY to represent the project and also to submit a mid and end term report of the project. The eligibility of the person months spent on coordination of the project needs to be checked in the national/regional Funding Party regulations. Please check Annex IX for more details.

Our consortium will have research institutes as well as private companies and other two countries involved (commercial agroecological farms). In our case, we can request funding from two funder organisations from our country. Does the separation of eligible partners by funder/country mean that the funding for the research institutes would come from Funder 1 (following their own norms for those partners) and the funding for the private companies (i.e. agroecological farms) would come from Funder 2 (with their own norms for those too)? Or does it mean that a consortium that puts together research institutes and private companies is not eligible?

From the general eligibility criteria, a consortium that puts together research institutes and private companies would be in principle eligible. However, it is strongly recommended to get in touch with the National Contact Points from your country/region to be aware of the specific costs regulations. Please check Annex IX for more details.

2.5 Scope

Please address statement on p. 8 (below) about what is meant by shared problems and challenges. Can very different countries form a consortium over broad issues, or does this mean narrow common issues (like water scarcity)? Proposals must provide a European perspective by considering problems and challenges that are shared in at least three countries participating in the AGROECOLOGY partnership, and provide and test innovations related to those issues.

It can be both, but please remember that you have to address at least three subthemes of the farm or landscape themes. Proposals should also need to follow the Living Labs (LL) methodology. Please check sections 1.2 and 3.1 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

How are policy issues to be addressed (incentive mechanisms) for countries that operate on national level only, not landscape or internal territorial levels?

If a proposal addresses this issue, a good option would be then to involve the relevant national stakeholders in the related activities. You may also decide to involve national stakeholders when the proposed activities at the landscape level require it.

Should each proposal address all issues, or focus on several?

The proposed project must relate to one of the two themes and address at least three of the corresponding subthemes. Please see section 3.1 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

How to decide Farm vs Landscape level when there is need for integrated landscape approach but still actions on soil, water, resilience, diversification, pests, ecosystem services, etc.?

Regarding the decision on Farm vs Landscape level, the first approach would be to decide on the scale to analyse whether the proposal considers the interactions between farms in the territory or the proposed activities are just verified at isolated farms. A second level of decision will be the consideration of the scale of impacts. Of course, the proposed activities must always follow the agroecology principles. Please see section 3.1 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

Does the production of ornamental plants is also considered under farm level?

Ornamental plants are considered a farming activity. It can be part of a project under Theme 1 or Theme 2 depending on the approach chosen. Please see section 3.1.1 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

What is meant by and how to assess the farm's "immediate surrounding"? Other farms, natural habitats, urban areas, groundwater, air...?

Immediate surroundings: anything that can interact with farm practices but from the farm point of view, whereas landscape level means that you are interested on the impact of practices at a scale beyond the boundaries of the farm. The "farm level" refers to practices and solutions that concern farms, their immediate surroundings and related entities, such as small processing and/or distribution enterprises and local consumers, but without taking into consideration the spatial interaction among the farming practices of the different farms. Enhance ecosystem services, biodiversity and beneficial biological interactions among different components in the farming system and the surrounding environment.

Can a living lab be an actual company, or group of companies, already existing?

This is not excluded, living labs have been implemented in many economic sectors and can have different "legal" forms.

Could you give more information on the connection/synergy to soil living labs (LL) and mission soil?

Linkages to soil LL and mission soil are welcome but not mandatory. Synergies with mission soil will certainly be further explored not only in the calls but also for the entire partnership.

There are two sub-themes in the call (farm + landscape), but there are 4 core themes in the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). Can you explain how these 4 core themes must be addressed in the response to 1 of the subthemes (farm or landscape)? Is it expected that proposals address all 4 core themes of the SRIA?

No, proposals must address one of the two themes and at least three of the subthemes mentioned under the chosen theme. Please see section 3.1 in the Guidelines for Applicants for more details.

Theme 2 Landscape level: Do the scales chosen have to be equivalent for each participating country, or can it be e.g. catchment in one country, a county or district in another one, a bioregion in a third one?

The extension of the landscape scales may be different in the participating countries, but then you should check for the coherence of the problems to be addressed and the approaches followed in the proposal. To promote the adoption in practice of agroecology at landscape or territorial level, research and innovation projects should address at least three of the necessary development stages (subthemes) which enable an integrated system approach. For some landscapes/territories selection and development activities are most important, while for others, the implementation phase is more relevant.

The project should not cover topics that have been addressed by previous projects. As this is the 1st AGROECOLOGY call, what is meant with this?

This means that double funding is not possible. It is not allowed to have an existing project with overlaps completely with the one you are planning to submit to the 1st Co-funded Call of AGROECOLOGY.

Does this call for proposals also covers aquacultures?

No, aquacultures are not included in the scope of the 1st Co-funded Call of AGROECOLOGY.