



CASE STUDY:

EIT FOOD

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

January 2022





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INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES OF THE CASE STUDY

This case study presents the EIT Food Learning Services and EIT Food Assessment certification system, an innovative non-degree educational effort aimed to provide a key resource for the food sector by creating an integrated approach to develop a skilled and innovative workforce, and to certify the training received.

The case study notes the programme's objectives and implementation methods. The initiative's exceptional flexibility to varied local and thematic contexts, and its networking and entrepreneurial potential.

METHODOLOGY

The study involved conducting one-on-one in-depth interviews with significant persons in charge of the planning and execution of the EIT Food programme, as well as with its recipients:

- Director of Education at EIT Food.
- Head of Personnel Certification Authority.
- Industry partners.
- Research institution partners.
- Academic partners.
- Beneficiaries of training programmes.

Additionally, policy documents regarding the implementation of programmes were examined, with special focus on its quality assurance system:

- EIT Food, Certification Quality Management Handbook, 2022.
- EIT Food, Course Accreditation Quality Management Handbook, 2022.
- EIT Food Learning Services Responsibilities & Terms of Reference, 2022.
- EIT Food, EIT Label – EIT Quality System for non-degree education and Competency Certification model: self-evaluation.
- EIT Food Deliverable Reports - Professional Development Framework activity reports, 2018-2020.
- Certificate template.
- Education Map of registrations and accepted applicants 2018-2022.
- Education Style Guide.



- EIT Food Learning Services Course Catalogue 2022.
- Example of partnership agreement.
- Marketing Services Processes.
- EIT Food, Gender Mainstreaming Policy, 2021.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY

The mission of EIT Food Learning Services and Food Assessment is to offer a range of education programmes and assessment systems designed to help individuals and organizations in the food industry improve their knowledge and skills. The goal of these programmes is to establish EIT Food as a globally recognised label of excellence in the food industry, and to help drive innovation and growth in the sector.

The accreditation system makes the award of the EIT quality label conditional on the programme/course meeting the condition of aspects such as teaching entrepreneurship, problem solving, and leadership. The accredited initiatives create innovators who can drive practical impact, thereby equipping talents from all over Europe and beyond with the skills and knowledge the food system needs to create a sustainable food system, with affordable food for all that is produced in fair and equitable ways.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Programme websites: <https://www.assessment.eitfood.eu> & <https://learning.eitfood.eu/>

INFORMATION ABOUT ACTIVITY

RATIONALE OF THE ACTIVITY: VALUE ADDED AND BENCHMARKING THE ACTIVITY WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES

The programme started in January 2018 as an answer to market and individual needs. It was developed in anticipation of the food industry needs in long-term perspective. It was created in creative process involving EIT Food counterparts, from both industry and research institutions. The focal point of the original idea was to have professionals go through non-degree programme that will respond to well-recognized and analysed industry demands.

The particular challenges facing the current food system that the programme hopes to directly respond to are:

- To facilitate positive change, the food system needs innovation across all sectors.
- The 40 million European food industry workforce is not suitably equipped to deal with the challenges ahead.



- The majority of employees work in SMEs where the industry may struggle to adapt to new skill sets due to a lack of financial resources for innovation development.
- There is not a traditional education culture, as learning happens organically on the job without recognised evidence of gained skills.
- Skills availability is fragmented in the siloed nature of the food system.
- These skills shortages occur in all parts of food system, there is a traction in the market to take upskilling and reskilling seriously¹

The key beneficiaries of the programme are employees, who by taking part in training and certification provided, can become innovators. This corresponds to companies demand for innovation, their need for right tools and expertise to understand and implement it. The programme offers this in an organised, well-established way, by introducing a whole robust framework to achieve this goal, and professionalise employee-industry relations².

The professional training and certification programme is designed to make a significant impact on the food system. Its objectives include promoting positive social change aligned with European Union strategies, driving economic development through the fostering of a highly skilled workforce, and promoting higher paying employment opportunities throughout the food industry.

The expected impacts of the programme include: professionalisation of innovation practices; improving employability and mobility of food industry workers to facilitate clear progression pathways in innovation; enhance HR practices within the industry, enhance recognition of EIT Label (including explicit recognition of innovation & entrepreneurship skills along with deep tech skills); enhance quality assurance in teaching and learning; and creating a pan-European market for training in direct response to European Skills Agenda and Pact for Skills³.

In practical terms, the expected outcomes of the programme encompass four areas:

- Developing a universal and accessible language, so it becomes possible to discuss professionals' innovation skills in a language understandable for the industry.
- Quality assurance mechanism. Courses can be offered as a neutral endorsement of entity, but within a quality assurance framework.

¹ EIT Food, *EIT Label – EIT Quality System for non-degree education and Competency Certification model – self evaluation*. Internal material.

² Interview conducted with a representative of EIT Food, December 2022

³ Ibid.



- Certification allows for recognition skills acquired in formal and informal ways, so these skills can be transformed into recognisable certificate.
- Through collaboration being a part of programme's design, participants and partners can build on each other's experiences⁴.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The EIT Food Learning Services and Food Assessment are committed to providing quality education and certification system. The programme's framework is built on two key structures:

- EIT Food Learning Services, providing quality assurance and accreditation system of education delivery for any training provided at European Qualifications Framework levels 4-8, along with market analysis. It addresses the lack of a pan-EU accreditation programme for the delivery of professional education and training with a high level of quality assurance to encourage and promote a quick exchange of knowledge based on regional best practices.
- EIT Food Assessment providing independent certification of learner achievement. It offers a unique certification programme that recognizes mastery of essential innovation skills. The programme allows for the independent evaluation of learning outcomes from formal, informal, and non-formal paths and is based on ISO 17024 standards.⁵

In practice the EIT Food Learning Services offers a system for the accreditation of training and education providers, both for EIT Food partners and third-party trainers, to become EIT Food Accredited Course Providers. They provide training courses for participants. EIT Food Assessment provides certificates to learners through appointed independent certification agencies, overseen by quality management, and structured through established certification processes (see Figure 1), The offer of EIT Food Learning Services and Assessment therefore includes the courses provided by accredited trainers, and an independent certification system allows one to provide proof of acquired or possessed skills.

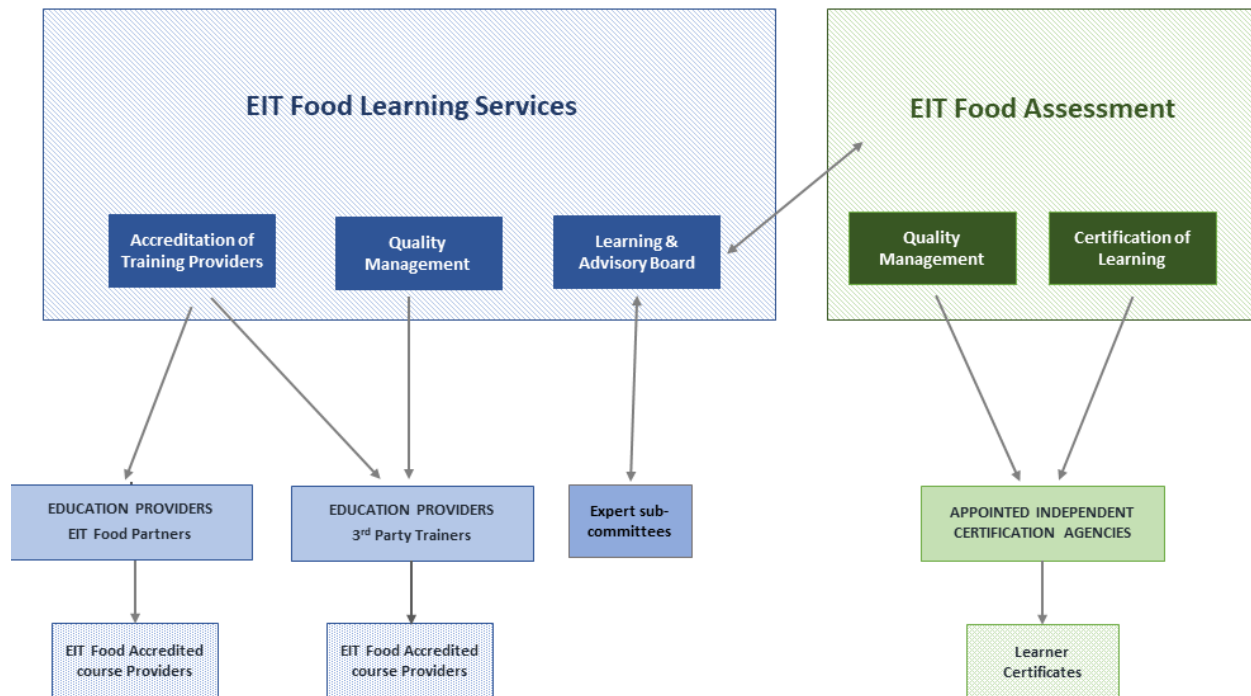
Most notably, the transparency, independence and quality management of the accreditation and learner certification processes is guaranteed through a Learning & Assessment Advisory Board (see Figure 1), drawn from across the sector, representing industry experts, educators, SMEs, research institutes, alumni and current learners.

⁴ Interview conducted with a representative of EIT Food, December 2022

⁵ EIT Food, *EIT Label – EIT Quality System for non-degree education and Competency Certification model – self evaluation*. Internal material.



Figure 1. EIT Food Learning Services & Assessment organisational and governance structure.



Source: EIT Food

The programme's vision and philosophy are trifold:

- By enabling employers, employees, job seekers, and training providers a solid framework to build and recognise competency acquisition, the EIT Food Learning Services and EIT Food Assessment aim to provide a vital infrastructure for professionalising learning throughout the food industry.
- The goal is to provide a methodology for course accreditation and learner certification that is pertinent to all types of learning environments, including formal, informal, and non-formal ones. This is especially necessary in the food system because there is not a formal culture of continuing professional development.
- Through innovation and entrepreneurship, the Framework clearly recognises a set of capabilities needed to alter the food system. The context of the learner as it relates to innovation and/or entrepreneurial practices will determine the learner's context-dependent attainment levels for each of the relevant competencies⁶.

⁶ EIT Food, *EIT Label – EIT Quality System for non-degree education and Competency Certification model – self evaluation*. Internal material.



In practice, an individual might start by participating in a workshop or online course offered by EIT Food to learn about a specific topic in the food industry. After completing the course, the individual could then take an exam to become certified in that topic, and once passed, will receive a certificate of proficiency. The individual could then use that certification to demonstrate to potential employers or clients that they have a certain level of knowledge and expertise in that area. Additionally, it is possible for people who have the knowledge and ability, but have not necessarily completed formal education in the field, to obtain certification through EIT Food Assessment system.

It was the first programme like that, that I ever attended, specifically focused on mentor work. That was great, and I attended many programmes. This was a unique opportunity because it focused on a very specific model, you are not going to get it anywhere else. (...) It was interesting to hear about various aspects: the commercialization aspect, anything from the market proposition, it's huge. It's interesting to learn about them. (...) I feel I'm much more equipped and knowledgeable.

Trainee, EIT Food Learning Services⁷

DATES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING ALLOCATED (INCLUDING THE EIT FUNDING)

The history of the idea behind the establishment of the programme is longer than its formal existence. According to the EIT Food representative, the idea of fostering skills was present in the minds of stakeholders many years ago, and the first formal organisational activities took place in January 2018. Whereas at that time mainly academic partners were attracted, 2019 was a year of actively seeking industrial partners.

The programme's budget is part of a larger group of educational expenditures. Importantly, the effects of the various educational activities undertaken by EIT Food reinforce each other (e.g., by increasing brand awareness among potential trainees). Therefore, it may be important to realize the scale of the overall EIT Food budget in this regard. This is a valid approach, as we demonstrate later in the text to what extent brand recognition determines future financial sustainability.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of EIT Food expenditures on educational initiatives.

⁷ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022



Table 1. EIT Food expenditures on educational initiatives

Initiatives/ EUR	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total:	4,982,154	6,592,420	6,778,717	4,641,614
Operational Support	485,306	406,638		
Master Programmes	1,406,185	1,368,154	1,614,304	1,606,788
PhD Programmes	626,298	639,628	508,168	462,619
Professional Education	466,328	1,655,387	1,141,129	765,473
MOOCs	335,481	292,017	NA	NA
Multi-Level Programmes	1,662,556	NA	NA	NA
Short and extracurricular programmes	NA	1,324,868	NA	NA
Grand Challenges	NA	905,728	960,431	NA
Studio programmes	NA	NA	1,673,899	NA
Grow workshops	NA	NA	169,499	209,458
Engage programmes	NA	NA	711,287	122,372
Activity line: Inspire	NA	NA	NA	604,384
Activity line: Food Solutions	NA	NA	NA	870,520

Source: EIT Food Annual Reports

INFORMATION ABOUT PLANNED KPIS AND OUTPUTS

The indicators describing progress in the implementation of the described programme can be divided into key indicators (which directly demonstrate the effectiveness of implementation) and secondary indicators (which, in particular, illustrate intersectionality and interconnectedness between the various activities undertaken by EIT Food). In the document prepared by EIT Food, it is possible to find a logical attribution of the selected indicators to the programme's stated objectives. Their mapping is shown in Table 2. Importantly, this attribution takes into account the KPIs described in the EIT Food Strategic Agenda 2021-2027 and some additional, self-developed measures of a qualitative nature.



Table 2. Linking the expected impact of the programme to selected indicators

Expected impacts	Indicators describing expected impact
Professionalisation of innovation practices aimed at food systems transformation in response to Farm to Fork and Bioeconomy Strategies	EITHE01 #Designed/Tested Innovations EITHE02 #Marketed Innovations EITHE04 #Start-ups created of/for innovation
Employability, including mobility, clear progression pathways in innovation	EITHE07 #Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes EITHE08 #Participants in (non-degree) education and training
Enhanced HR practice	Retention of talent in the food system Better jobs in the food system
Enhanced recognition of the EIT Label, including explicit recognition of Innovation & Entrepreneurship skills along with Deep Tech skills	EITHE07 #Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes EITHE08 #Participants in (non-degree) education and training Enhanced brand recognition through its adoption by training providers and statements from the sector
Enhanced Quality Assurance in Teaching & Learning	Professionalisation of training provision More robust offerings Long term impact of a culture shift towards professional education throughout the system
Pan-European market for training in response to European Skills Agenda and Pact for Skills	EITHE07 #Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes EITHE08 #Participants in (non-degree) education and training Financial sustainability metrics

Source: EIT Food, EIT Label – EIT Quality System for non-degree education and Competency Certification model: self-evaluation.

It should be noted that the recently introduced EIT Impact Framework 2022 - 2027 somewhat problematises the issue of indicators in the programme. One of the 2021 targets set for EIT Food directly applied to the professional education & certification system programme was⁸ EITHE08 #Participants in (non-degree) education and training, with a target value set at 52,944. EIT Food aimed to have 285,000 participants overall in educational programmes over seven years⁹. Moreover, it was initially assumed that the programme could also be illustrated by the number of graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes (EITHE07). From 2022 onwards, it is relevant to speak of Graduates from EIT-labelled programmes and Participants in non-labelled education and training. Whereas previously the key distinctive feature was the form of education (MSc/PhD programmes vs. non-degree education and training) since last year the more important distinction is between EIT-labelled and non-labelled education and training.

⁸ EIT Food, (2021), EIT Food Strategic Agenda 2021-2027

⁹ <https://eit.europa.eu/our-communities/eit-food>



Importantly, it was also anticipated initially that the impact of the programme on participation in MSc/PhD programmes would be rather indirect (stimulating the desire to increase knowledge among trainees). Other KPIs for the programme are tested and marketed innovations (EITHE01 and EITHE02). For the next indicator - the number of start-ups created (EITHE04) - the introduced EIT Impact Framework 2022 - 2027 also introduced a modification. Once it is implemented, it will be important to distinguish between Start-ups created and Start-ups created by students enrolled and graduates from EIT-labelled programmes. The programme also measures other indicators, many of which are qualitative and relate to the level of educational provision. Those are mainly informational in nature, providing EIT Food with knowledge for better programme management.

PRESENTATION OF PARTNERS. KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE APPROACH

The aim of EIT Food is to build inclusive systems innovation in a strong food system with central role of collaboration. The same principles guide Learning Services and Assessment programme, which connects professionals, experts and workers with industry and research partners, to bring innovation and resilience to entire food value chain.

Two levels of such partnerships can be distinguished. However, they all combine to realise the knowledge triangle approach. The first group includes partners working directly with programme management: EIT Food representatives and research/ higher education institutions.

Table 3. Partners working directly with programme's management

Country	Partner	Role and responsibilities
Belgium	EIT Food ivzw	EIT Food ivzw is responsible for EIT Food Learning Services, including strategy, alignment with the Pact for Skills in Agrifood, marketing, operations and financial sustainability
Germany	Fraunhofer Gesellschaft e.V.	Fraunhofer Gesellschaft developed the infrastructure for EIT Food Assessment and is responsible for independent personal certification of learning
United Kingdom	University of Reading	University of Reading developed the infrastructure for EIT Food Assessment and its operations and is responsible for accreditation of course providers
Italy	University of Turin	University of Turin oversees programme design and implementation, and the sector specificities of EIT Food Learning Services as they pertain to RIS requirements

Source: EIT Food Annual Reports

The second group includes partners who provide courses for learners. The 2022 course catalogue has a list of non-degree programmes and online courses, which offered displays a wide range of training provided by representatives of scientific and educational institutions, and industrial entities (Table 4. HEI, industry, RTO,



Start-up, training providers, EIT Food, cluster organisation, NGO, professional services), indicating the translation of the idea of the knowledge triangle approach into practice¹⁰.

Table 4. Examples of training provider partners

Category	Names
HEI	University of Cambridge, Technion, University of Helsinki, University of Bologna, University of Warsaw, Aarhus University, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Global Systems Institute, Lund University, University Hohenheim
Industry	Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, PepsiCo, Danone Nutricia Research, Danone Research, Campden BRI, SystemIQ, Puratos, Syntegon Technology, Grupo AN, Maspex, Döhler, Basque Culinary Center Innovation, Too good to go, John Deere, Koppert
RTO	Matís, AZTI Food Research Division, CSIC, INL, Institute of Animal Reproduction and Food Research, VTT, DIL, Deutsche Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt, Agence Recherche, Swiss Food Research, IMDEA Food Institute, SAMS, Asomi College of Sciences
Training provider	Leaderscope, Cartezia
NGO	Food4Sustainability, EUFICT, EAT, IFMSA, E-Seniors
Start-up/ Start-up ecosystem	Rising Food Stars, BGI, Agriculus, Tellspec, Analytics Engines, Mimica Startup, Rethink Resource, SatAgro

Source: EIT Food Annual Reports

PRESENTATION OF BENEFICIARIES

The key beneficiaries of the programme are the food industry workers, but courses are designed more broadly for students, consumers, professionals, and organisations. From 2018 to 2022, 9,176 learners registered for courses, 1,294 out of the cohort being from outside Europe (India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Brazil, Egypt). During the same period the programme accepted 1,852 participants (with 158 from non-European nationalities). In both cases most of the participants came from Italy, Turkey, Spain, and Greece¹¹.

¹⁰ EIT Food, *EIT Food Learning Services Course Catalogue 2022*, Internal material.

¹¹ EIT Food, *Education Map of registrations and accepted applicants 2018-2022*. Internal material.



Table 5. Number of registrations and accepted applicants per country 2018-2022

Number of registration 2018-2022 per country				Number of accepted applicants 2018-2022 per country			
Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
IT	1,656	UA	224	IT	364	HU	41
TR	1,148	HU	210	ES	185	UA	40
ES	1,142	PK	204	GR	184	SI	30
PT	1,081	SI	188	TR	159	FR	24
GR	1,023	DE	175	GB	157	HR	22
PL	604	CZ	169	PT	127	LT	21
IN	490	BR	154	PL	106	IE	21
GB	416	SK	141	EG	64	US	20
RS	383	EG	136	DE	58	EE	18
NG	310	LT	132	IN	57	BR	17
RO	273	BG	123	RS	50	LV	16
HR	235	LV	117	RO	41	BE	15
		FR	98			SK	15

Source: EIT Food

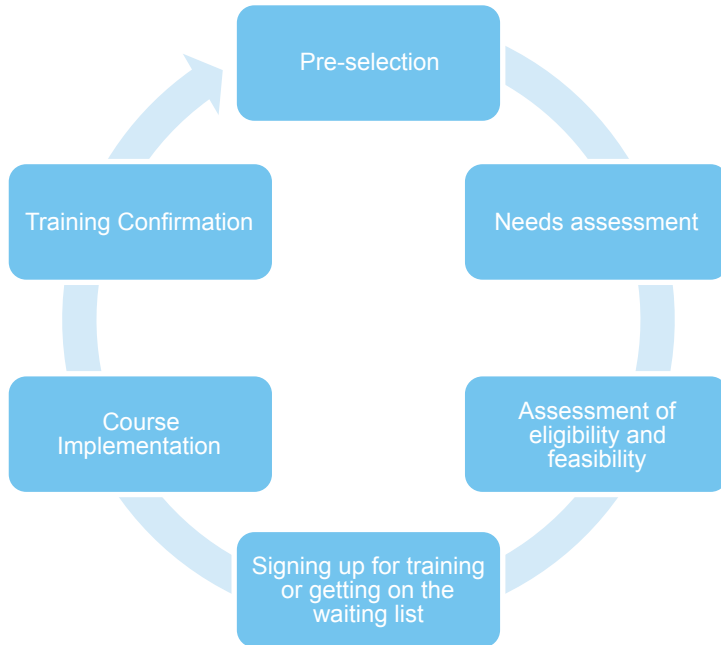
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITY

PRESENTATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The diversity of courses offered by EIT Food makes it difficult to standardise the description of the implementation process. This is because specific training opportunities differ in several important factors, making them better suited to the target group's needs but more challenging to implement schemes. The overall training cycle is presented on Figure 2.



Figure 2. The training cycle



Source: EIT Food

Pre-selection: selecting an interesting training course can begin by determining the audience assigned to it (four groups have been distinguished: students, consumers, professionals and organisations) and the focus area it fits (six focus areas have been identified: protein diversification, circular food systems, digital traceability, sustainable agriculture, sustainable aquaculture, targeted nutrition). Browsing the entire EIT Food training offer is possible without defining initial filters.

Needs assessment: for each training course in the database, a potential participant can learn about its essential characteristics to decide whether to participate. First - to verify the substantive fit between the training and the needs - one should understand the description of four sections: Objectives (indicating what the training is for; sometimes, this section also provides additional information about the programme and scope of the training to assess its suitability for the individual better), Advantages (indicating the expected results of the training), Duration and Dates (indicating the duration of the training and the date(s) on which it takes place), and Structure and Modules (a section that supplements/details the information shown in "Objectives" and details the training programme).

Assessment of eligibility and feasibility: assuming a potential participants' initial interest in a particular training, at a later stage, future trainees verify the last six pieces of information that will allow them to ascertain whether EIT Food allows them to participate in a particular training (eligibility verification) and whether they have the financial, competence and time capacity to implement it (feasibility verification). These six pieces of information are: Audience and eligibility, as well as Level, Price, Language, Registration open and seats, and Location.

Signing up for training or getting on the waiting list: If the interested person meets the conditions for participation in the training, they can sign up for it (in the case of open registration) or enrol on the waiting list (if the information was about the training just planned). Enrolment is simple - it only requires basic information about the person and



payment if the training is paid. In the evaluators' experience (for the study, we experimentally enrolled in a selected course), the process took about 1-2 minutes and is very intuitive.

Course Implementation: receiving training can be done in different ways, most strongly conditioned by its form (online or stationary) and duration (short, one-time sessions or multi-week work on a training project).

Training Confirmation: successful completion of the training ends with obtaining an EIT Food certificate. Ultimately, after the described model has passed the EIT Label evaluation, it will also be possible to receive the EIT Label certificate. Both documents will make it possible to credibly, objectively and widely recognized to certify the skills acquired in the educational process.

ACHIEVED OUTPUTS AND KPIS

According to the 2021 reporting information¹², the following were achieved:

Table 6. EIT Food Learning Services and Food Assessment achieved outputs as of 2021.

	Number	Target value
Learners (non-degree education and training)	37,222	70.3%
Graduates from EIT Food postgraduate programmes	150	13.3%
Start-ups supported	361	43.5%
Innovations (designed and tested)	193	25.9%
Innovations launched on the market	15	3.5%

Source: EIT Food¹³

At the time of preparing this report there was no knowledge of the numerical contribution of the evaluated programme to the achievement of most of these indicators. However, according to an interview with an EIT Food representative, the results achieved are satisfactory both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Without doubt, the input of the described programme to the first indicator is easily quantifiable. By 2022, 9,176 learners registered for the courses and the programme accepted 1,852 participants.

The programme stimulates the realisation of the other four indicators. Among other things, participants in the interviews emphasised that completing several courses can be a tool to verify whether the agri-food field is a person's target career path. In case of a positive assessment, such a person will be more motivated

¹² https://reporting.eitfood.eu/annual-reporting-data-2021?_gl=1*tjryz0*_ga*MTg1NTcyMTA5Ni4xNjcxNjA3MzAy*_ga_8KJTBRyGN9*MTY3MTYxMjI0Mi4yLjEuMTY3MTYxMjMxMC42MC4wLjA.

¹³ https://reporting.eitfood.eu/annual-reporting-data-2021?_gl=1*tjryz0*_ga*MTg1NTcyMTA5Ni4xNjcxNjA3MzAy*_ga_8KJTBRyGN9*MTY3MTYxMjI0Mi4yLjEuMTY3MTYxMjMxMC42MC4wLjA.



to participate in EIT Food postgraduate programmes. In addition, broadening intellectual horizons is always a good ground for developing innovation¹⁴.

Since 2018, the EIT Food has seen a cumulative total of 33 start-ups created and over 30 innovations prototyped, with three innovations having been launched on the market. Of these 33 startups, six have been developed as a result of direct funding from the Learning Services and Food Assessment Programme, accounting for 18% of all start-ups created within the EIT Food ecosystem over the past four years:

- Humanitea, providing vegan blended teas.¹⁵
- SugaROx, providing single-molecule crop biostimulant.
- Curtis Analytics, providing analysis services for acrylamide testing in food.¹⁶
- Nomoonshot, providing targeted nutrition services.
- Cool Beans Foods.
- Flying Spark Foods, providing non-animal protein powders.¹⁷

As the above figures indicate that the programme plays a significant role within the network of EIT Food, as it spearheads the creation of innovative solutions and fosters the creation of new businesses.

IDENTIFIED VALUE ADDED

The added value of the EIT Food educational offer is at two levels: macro (international - at least EU - level of public education policy making) and micro (individual participant level).

Firstly, the added value is the creation of formal and linguistic frameworks for skills in the agri-food sector. This framework is, and will continue to be, standardised, written down and understandable to every person reaching for it. This will facilitate a systematic, productive dialogue on skills gaps, identified competence deficits in the labour market and the needs of employers and employees in this regard. EIT Food will also increase the effectiveness of such discussions, which will not have to start from scratch each time but will be able to build on the findings developed.

It's not just a leadership programme, it's not just a mentorship programme, it's not just a start-up programme. It really is focused on a specific area, which is unique in the sense that then you meet all those people, you are surrounded by like-minded people, you are surrounded with a variety of people from different sectors, from research, retail, marketing. That is unique - it brings [people] together.

¹⁴ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022

¹⁵ Launched on market in 2021/2022

¹⁶ Launched on market in 2021

¹⁷ Launched on market in 2020



Trainee, EIT Food Learning Services¹⁸

The second significant added value of the programme is that it increases the interest of the public sector in different countries in the subject of industry skills. The level of advancement and commitment of officials to the issue of identifying, measuring and developing skills varies. EIT Food has the formal authority of the EU behind it and the respect that comes from the knowledge and experience of the experts they employ. This makes them a credible partner in discussions with the public sector, whose opinion is worth relying on and whose suggestions should be implemented wherever possible.

The third category of added value manifests at the individual level. The broad cafeteria of EIT Food courses indirectly teaches trainees how to choose educational opportunities, how to learn and how to seek synergies between acquired knowledge and practice - e.g., by participating in other EIT Food programmes. Trainees leave the training not only with new skills but often with increased self-esteem in the professional area. Completing a training course provides a sense of empowerment and can give the motivation for further activities.

The creation of 6 start-ups as a result of the aid received also proved to be an important impact. This not only establishes the existence of a new company, but also means awakening in the trainee a fully-fledged entrepreneur. Regardless of the fate of any enterprise, the entrepreneurial mindset and associated skills will stay with the individual for life. Similarly, although it is not possible to assess conclusively to what extent the prototypes and innovations launched on the market as a result of EIT Food support from several different programmes are strictly conditioned by the support obtained through the EIT Food Learning Services and EIT Food Assessment certification system - the very fact that they are facilitated, supported and stimulated is noteworthy.

HOW THE ACTIVITY HAS APPLIED KICS FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

What distinguishes this case from the others analysed in this report is that when EIT Food considers financial sustainability, it looks more to ensuring revenue streams tied to specific activities, rather than the nominal amounts of value that must regularly and in the same amount feed the institution. Based on self-estimates and an analysis of the data found, averaged revenue values were estimated for EIT Food in combination with the training and certification that would be provided. In other words, the break-even point has been recalibrated by the number of trainings and certifications that the EIT Food will deliver: the more services the institution wants to provide, the nominally higher revenues it needs to generate to ensure its financial viability.

At the same time, for simplicity of calculation and to make the process easier to understand for trainees and organisations providing training, the amount of revenue expected by EIT Food is a constant linear function of several variables described below. This approach is characterised by a very entrepreneurial nature as it implies that with different numbers of trainings and certifications (and therefore different amounts of revenue), the programme will be able to ensure its financial sustainability. Thus, its sustainability is less at

¹⁸ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022



risk in the long term, and any changes in demand should translate at most into changes in the scale of the initiative.

According to programme documents and information gathered during the study, the full achievement of financial sustainability is scheduled for 2028. At present no significant issues are threatening the achievement of this goal.

The sourcing structure is two-pillar, aligning with the programme's overall objectives, implementing knowledge and skills transfer and certification. Regarding Learning Services, four key revenue streams are envisioned:

Accreditation fee:

- Training providers will pay a one-off accreditation fee for any course they want to have accredited within the EIT Food Learning Services Framework. The fee covers all costs incurred in the accreditation process, plus 25% overheads.

Such an arrangement is typical for accredited training. At the same time, the fee is competitive in market terms, with the caveat that benchmarking covers a broad set of training courses, as it is challenging to find initiatives of analogous scope. The payment of an accreditation fee by training providers can be seen as an investment in the visibility and recognition of their educational offerings. It can be anticipated that as the programme is implemented, the willingness to accredit training will increase. For this to happen, however, work is needed to raise the visibility of the programme and EIT Food. Even if EIT Food-accredited training courses are of the highest quality, they may not generate the expected willingness to pay if key stakeholders are unaware of the participation benefits.

Top slice of each seat sold:

- EIT Food will charge training providers a top slice of each seat sold. This relates to the market price and demand for training and, therefore will provide a variable level of income.
- This source of revenue demonstrates EIT Food's ambitious and pro-development approach to its financial sustainability. As noted, the willingness of learners to attend EIT Food-accredited courses is a result of the informational and promotional activities of at least two stakeholders: the training organisers and EIT Food itself. The partial dependence of revenues on the number of participants in accredited courses forces EIT Food to be constantly active in networking and promotion. Thus, this indirectly stimulates an entrepreneurial attitude among the programme staff. Meanwhile, the business acumen of EIT Food staff may raise the institution's credibility among representatives of the business world, which sometimes distrusts purely official initiatives.

Consultancy services:

- EIT Food Learning Services will provide consultancy services to the industry to perform training needs assessments and to develop learning strategies for departments and business units.



- The proposed revenue stream leverages skills and competencies developed over the years in the organisation, where EIT Food can have a competitive advantage over other providers of similar services. The multitude of independently conducted processes of this kind (experience gained), as well as access to a broad knowledge base and network of contacts involved in identifying educational needs and preparing training plans specifically in the agrifood sector (strong resources of theoretical knowledge), are the strengths of this EIT Food offers.
- In addition, many of the educational needs in the agrifood sector are driven by dynamically changing conditions at the EU level (e.g., Farm to Fork strategy, Bioeconomy Strategy, Circular Economy Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy). The EIT Food embeddedness in EU structures makes them well-positioned to be seen as an institution with a model recognition of the needs arising from ongoing regulatory changes, which can be an incentive to use their services.

Subscriptions:

- For individual learners, EIT Food will offer a subscription service through which they can access a range of services and learning modules in alignment with the EIT Food Competency Framework.
- The rise in popularity of services in various areas (e.g., entertainment, medicine, IT) based on subscription models, and the spread of distance education, are two critical trends in the consumption of training services. On-demand learning can particularly meet the needs of the Agri sector representatives, who have periodic surges of work on the farm, and whose representatives find it difficult to attend training courses during the harvest season. Thus, the expectation of demand for such services seems reasonable and may represent a rather low but relatively stable revenue stream for EIT Food (e.g., fixed monthly fees). Their introduction is essential from the point of view of diversifying financial risks and securing the continuity of organisational activities.

Regarding EIT Food Assessment, one key revenue stream is envisioned:

Certification fee:

- Each certificate will be sold on a cost plus 25% overheads basis. This covers the total cost of the assessment process for an individual learner for a specific level of attainment.
- To make people want to pay for certification, it is necessary to spread awareness of the benefits of formal confirmation of learning outcomes. For many learners, especially in the short term, the most important thing is the knowledge and skills they can gain from training. For certification to become widespread, it is necessary to educate about the recognition, comparability, and acknowledgement of qualifications. It must be emphasised that learners may want to change jobs/country of residence in the long term, and objective confirmation of their knowledge can facilitate further career development. Therefore, to generate revenue from this source, EIT Food will emphasise building awareness of the value of certification in its information and promotion activities.



The Financial Sustainability solutions provided by EIT Food are multi-dimensional, considering both training providers and attendees. The strengths of the adopted model are risk diversification and a long-term approach. The challenge for EIT Food may be that it will be responsible for finding a market for its own consulting services and share responsibility for creating demand for products certified by EIT Food. Importantly, EIT Food is aware of the lack of culture of continuing professional development in the sector and has ambitions to co-create it. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the steps they are taking will be apt and effective in generating interest in their training and certification offerings.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME AND ITS ACHIEVED IMPACT

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTIVITY

It is challenging to make a synthetic assessment of the programme because of its diverse nature, covering numerous heterogeneous educational activities. At the time of the study, the programme's training portfolio included 38 non-degree programmes and 24 massive online open courses. Services were provided by actors from all three links of the innovation helix (i.e., science, business, and governance - understood here broadly and including the third sector). The main target groups for training (sometimes overlapping) are students, consumers, professionals, and organisations. It is sometimes difficult to find a common denominator for such diverse activities, although they all ultimately contribute to the mission and vision of EIT Food.

This challenging diversity is the initiative's fundamental, most important strength. A precondition for progress in the agrifood sector is a properly educated workforce, which does not necessarily mean university graduates, but people trained in certain specialised areas. Therefore, a broad and diverse training portfolio, including professional and social skills, is a success for the programme, although it also causes several questions for its implementation.

I can join the discussions on the topic now, now I know how it works, I know the different stages of the start-up development, I know what they do and what they have to deal with (...) it's very important for me to understand what it involves. (...) having this broader perspective and broad awareness is definitely what I feel in general. It's making me feel more knowledgeable, more experienced as well.

Trainee, EIT Food Learning Services¹⁹

The next challenge is that competence measurement has only been taking place in the programme for 2 years. In the case of previous participants, they were satisfied with the training²⁰. Still, there are no

¹⁹ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022

²⁰ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022; Interview conducted with a representative of EIT Food, December 2022



measurable, comparable measures of the educational progress made by them. However, the study noted that in the initial period - with the lower visibility of EIT Food certification - the motivation to participate in training courses must have been primarily internal, related to the desire to acquire new, valuable skills. In this case, self-assessment of satisfaction with the training is a good measure of its effects. Objective measures become more important when there are potentially more participants with an extrinsic motivation to receive training (e.g., training as a condition for a job change, career promotion or reallocation criteria).

Table 7 presents an analysis of EIT Food programme strengths (internal and external), weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs).



Table 7. SWOT analysis of the EIT Food Learning Services and EIT Food Assessment certification system

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement of representatives of all actors of the innovation helix in educational processes (business, science, public administration) ▪ High recognition of the EIT Food as a guarantor of the quality of all the programmes it implements ▪ Implementation formula including learning activities at different levels, implemented in different ways (online and on-site) and aimed at various professional groups ▪ High level of education in line not only with the latest theoretical knowledge but also with current practice ▪ Motivation of participants (participation in training is not compulsory, so courses are mainly attended by people who want it) <p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A highly motivated, competent and proactive programme management team ▪ Relatively easy upscaling and replication of the programme allowing for significant impact with decreasing marginal costs (especially for online courses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty in engaging new businesses and maintaining the interest of companies already involved in the programme ▪ Lack of assessment of the educational progress of trainees (applies to the beginning of the implementation period; this weakness is currently being addressed) ▪ Uniqueness of the EIT Food educational offer results in a lack of additional educational material to deepen the training content (e.g., course books)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General development of a culture of lifelong learning, which will stimulate interest in learning activities such as the case programme. ▪ Collaborating with external experts who, thanks to EIT Food, will be able to gain a platform to promote their business / ideas to the trainees, while sharing their knowledge and experience with them. ▪ Improvement of methodology and didactics in the process of programme implementation ▪ Re-enforcement: greater recognition of the courses translates into greater attractiveness and greater participation, which - in the long run - increases the visibility of EIT Food's educational offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competition from other educational programmes ▪ Demographic low and decline in the number of potential learners ▪ Lack of positive evaluation by the EIT Label, which would undermine the recognition and comparability of the educational outcomes of the trainees

Source: Ecorys.

ACHIEVED IMPACT

The programme is a comprehensive initiative achieving a positive impact on the agrifood sector on many levels. As noted earlier, between 2018 and 2022, 9,176 learners registered for the courses, including 1,294



from outside Europe. During the same period, the programme accepted 1,852 participants (see: Table 5). Unlike the other activities discussed in the report, this programme is not characterised by typical editions. At the time of preparing this report, the programme's training portfolio comprised 38 non-degree programmes and 24 massive open online courses. Some of these are available on fixed dates, others are available on an ongoing basis. The support received through the programme resulted, among other things, in the creation of six start-ups.

While a full, quantified assessment in this regard is yet to be possible, it is feasible to distinguish primary clusters of impact.

First, at the macro level, EIT Food activities support identifying and developing key skills for the agri-food sector. A series of needs assessments preceded the launch of individual training courses to ensure the relevance of the prepared educational offer. Participants' feedback allows for gathering knowledge about dynamically changing conditions, which can be modified even during one training cycle. The programme supports the implementation of the Pact for Skills in Agrifood and, more broadly, stimulates the building of a lifelong learning (LLL) culture. At the same time, programme staff can provide up-to-date, in-depth knowledge of the competency gaps reported in the sector labour market.

The programme also has the effect of building awareness of the importance of certification. Particularly in the agricultural sector, much information was exchanged informally for many years (e.g., parents were teachers for their children, and older farmers coached younger farmers). Increasing globalization and professional mobility make it necessary to have tools to standardise the measurement and assessment of knowledge. This is a prerequisite for the smooth movement of the workforce between countries and for evidence-based career planning.

Although least measurable, the impact at the individual level is the most noteworthy. The data collected shows that many trainees had more strongly developed one of the two areas of competence before participating in the programme: substantive ("technical") competence or social ("underpinning") competence. Such a disproportion is a barrier to the development of individual careers. It can also negatively affect the entire organization in which such a person works (for example, when a good professional has deficits in team management, which translates into poor business results).

Addressing skill gaps in deficit areas helps holistically improve the quality of human capital, removing barriers to individual and team success. In addition, an increase in self-esteem in the professional area was observed among the trainees as a result of a developed sense of empowerment related to applying for the programme, completing the training, and passing the exam.

LESSONS LEARNT AND GOOD PRACTICES

PRESENTATION OF LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION

Although the complex structure and ambitious aims of the programme posed a challenge to its implementation, it can ultimately be said to have been a success in this respect. EIT Food has met all its



objectives, supporting the broader concept of lifelong learning and certification. Nevertheless, several areas can be identified where intensifying and scaling up activities already initiated should translate into greater participation in the programme and improved learning achievements for trainees.

Lessons learnt 1: Need to continuously increase and develop communication activities aimed at different target groups

Increased awareness of the importance of measuring, acquiring and certifying skills is a prerequisite for programme implementation

A meta-activity essential for developing the idea behind the evaluated programme is promoting the broader concept of lifelong learning. It is necessary in the current labour market to make people aware of why the skills they acquire should be defined, verified and certified and how they can be a competitive advantage in the labour market. EIT Food could engage in the process of raising awareness of this, both by educating people and by putting pressure on other institutions to make efforts to promote a modern approach to learning and certification.

Reaching out to programme stakeholders is a key success factor for implementation and development of the programme

All EIT Food stakeholders participating in the study highlighted the importance of information and promotion activities for the effectiveness of programme implementation. However, it was pointed out that resource constraints sometimes make it difficult to undertake such activities satisfactorily. This means that the programme may not reach all potential addressees and/or its benefits are not disseminated to the extent that would maximise interest in it. Ultimately, there is a need to intensify information and promotion activities that benefit two-way.

EIT Food will gain a wider audience for the training courses offered, which will improve the programme's financial sustainability. Thanks to the dissemination of existing good practices from the programme, the public will have a chance to benefit from so-called positive externalities, implementing effective and efficient solutions previously tested by others.

Lessons learnt 2: Increasing cooperation with governmental administrations, science and business

Cooperation with government institutions allows achieving synergies and minimises the risk of duplication of effort

EIT Food's educational activities are carried out in parallel to the activities undertaken by national ministries dealing with issues within the scope of the programme (e.g., ministries of education and science, ministries of agriculture, ministries of economy). Increased cooperation with the public sector would significantly contribute to expanding the programme's impact. In addition, it would be an opportunity for a bilateral exchange of knowledge and experience and mutual learning, which could ultimately translate into developing an educational offer of even higher quality.



Collaboration with business and science must be understood as a process requiring continuous development, rather than a state once achieved

EIT Food has demonstrated strong leadership competencies and a developed entrepreneurial approach. The institution has succeeded in involving leading scientific institutions from the EU and many companies that are leaders in their industries. However, it is essential to emphasise that this is not a finite process. EIT Food's challenge is continuously working on maintaining existing relationships and building new partnerships. By constantly developing these, it will be possible to offer training that aligns with the latest industry knowledge and addresses key market challenges.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR SHARING, INCLUDING KEY IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Good practice 1: A unique combination of 'technical' and 'underpinning' capabilities

Why: the possibility to simultaneously develop 'technical' and 'underpinning' capabilities allows trainees a comprehensive, multi-faceted professional growth

According to research on career trajectories, their development usually requires the simultaneous development of two groups of skills: technical (in this case strictly related to the agri-food sector) or underpinning (related to psychological and social competencies). This phenomenon was also identified by stakeholders participating in the study. Respondents to the interviews emphasised that professionals need to be both expert in their field and have the psychological and social competences to help them navigate themselves in the work environment.

In this context, the EIT Food programme portfolio, which includes educational initiatives from both areas at different levels, is extremely valuable. Through such a support structure, participants can strengthen their deficit areas, which could most inhibit their professional development, while simultaneously developing their strengths, which constitute their comparative advantage over other workforce members. This holistic approach should be a real driver for the careers of trainees, equipping them with the toolkit they need to cope at work. The realised interviews confirm that, regarding previous trainees, such effects have occurred.

The complex structure can be a challenge for programme managers. In the case in discussion, the following were particular success factors:

- The programme offers solutions to efficiently overview, compare and select courses of interest

It was helpful for participants to offer an online tool for pre-selection training courses. The tool allows users to see basic information about a training and how it relates to other courses on offer. It allows to analyse whether the training under consideration needs to be preceded by another course and/or whether it would be valuable to follow it up with another training to extend the skills acquired.



- The programme structure allows participants to select training courses like the missing building blocks in their skills development

It was helpful to group training courses into training paths, where successive training courses build on previously acquired knowledge and/or complement it with practical knowledge from related fields. A broad training portfolio is valuable if people know how to use it. The idea was not to deliver as much training as possible but to select the activity that allows people to make as much professional progress as possible: either by eliminating existing weaknesses or by enhancing strengths.

Good practice 2: Heterogeneous groups of participants

Why: diverse groups of participants allow for an intensified exchange of knowledge and experience between trainees who might not have the opportunity to meet in their day-to-day lives. This promotes better learning outcomes and, in addition, develops social competences.

In most cases, courses are addressed to groups of listeners with a diverse sociodemographic and nationality structure. In this way, EIT Food not only enables the transfer of knowledge from the trainer to the trainees, but also between the trainees, who probably would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet. Firstly, this supports exchanging experiences and learning from others' mistakes. Secondly, non-intentional training in intercultural sensitivity is acquired through contact with other trainees.

The network of people that I met there, mentors and the participants of the programme, is valuable because even if I can't particularly help someone, I at least know whom I can refer them to. That is extremely valuable. That's probably more valuable than anything else.

Trainee, EIT Food Learning Services²¹

In order to deliver training to diverse groups of participants, the following aspect proved critical:

- The training plans were designed to promote mutual openness among participants, a willingness to exchange experiences and to discuss while respecting individuality and differences

Although the inclusive potential of training is significant, certain conditions must be met for it to occur. At the beginning of a course, the trainer should emphasise the equality of all trainees. Furthermore, already in the course of work, it is necessary to verify that everyone has an equal right to speak and that socially established authorities do not determine the shape of the dialogue. Learning together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and curiosity about other trainees can be vital to integrating people from different social groups and countries. Although the courses in the programme have different scopes and forms, most of them fulfil these postulates to a very high degree.

Good practice 3: Practical nature of training

²¹ Interview conducted with programme's beneficiary, December 2022



Why: learning practical things that can be applied in everyday activities increases the ability to remember and the effectiveness of the learning process

A strength of the EIT Food offer is its practical character, and by considering the needs of the industrial sector. Business practitioners are involved in the various stages of planning, preparation and implementation of most courses (even those with a more scientific profile). As a result, the knowledge transferred is not only cognitively interesting, but also has an implementation value.

- Ability to engage partners from different sectors despite the challenges involved

It can be a long-term challenge to involve industrial partners in such activities. For market-leading companies, engagement in EIT Food actions is sometimes seen as an element of CSR, as a field to realise the ambitions of socially minded employees. Given the size of these companies' budgets, financial incentives alone are too weak to motivate market leaders to commit to the programme. It is necessary to maintain existing and develop new incentives. They should refer to social and environmental benefits and highlight the non-financial added value EIT Food can offer to companies.

In summary, although the EIT Food has been successful in this respect, it cannot be seen as a given once and for all, but as a process that requires continuous work. A similar, high level of commitment would be required of any programme manager seeking broad stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the initiative they are leading.

REPLICATION AND SCALING-UP

An essential advantage of the evaluated programme is that it can be scaled up in two dimensions: increasing the scale of implementation in the existing variant of the programme and being adaptable to other business sectors.

Firstly, there is the possibility of providing broad access to courses to an increasingly wide audience. This is particularly true for online classes, where the marginal cost of adding more participants reduces. At the same time, the remote form of course delivery and the often-available option to take courses at a self-imposed pace (within set cut-off dates), allow a wide range of people to participate. In particular, the programme is inclusive for people with limited mobility and those who are educationally and/or professionally active and who would find it challenging to attend a training course with a fixed time limit.

Key conditions for successful scaling-up of the programme:

- The critical importance of effective information and promotion campaigns to encourage stakeholders to participate in the programme.
- Delivery of courses in more language variants (translations of existing materials prepared by programme partners) to attract more participants.
- The learning outcomes should be presented in an understandable way, with an indication of the possible benefits to the trainee from participation in the educational process. It is important to



show the possibility of materializing the acquired skills in order to increase the willingness to pay for participation in the training (and thus ensure the sustainability of the programme).

- Efforts should be made to ensure that EIT Food training is a form of skills development recognized when applying for funding from, for example, CAP funds.

Secondly, some of the training courses may also be of interest - in their current form or with slight modifications - to representatives of sectors other than Agrifood. This is especially true for training in broadly defined underpinning skills, such as management or communication skills. For this reason, the highest-rated training courses can ultimately be promoted and addressed to a wide audience, regardless of the sector represented.

Key conditions for successful replication to other KICs or institutions:

- Organisation of joint courses by several KICs on underpinning capabilities, which would consume best practices from individual KICs.
- Measurement and presentation of learning outcomes in six areas of Competency Framework that are universally applicable across sectors: entrepreneurship, problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, communication, technology management and data management. This should encourage participation in training for those outside the industry and at the same time demonstrate the value of training to a wide range of end users.
- Further dissemination of EIT Label brand awareness that will attract stakeholders (from both the demand and supply side) to the programme(s) originating from the described programme.

CONCLUSIONS

The EIT Food Learning Services and EIT Food Assessment certification system is a programme that provides education and training in the food sector. The programme is designed to be a resource for individuals and organizations in the industry, and it offers a range of courses and assessments that are focused on improving knowledge and skills in areas such as food safety, innovation, and sustainability.

Started in 2018, it was developed through a collaborative process with EIT Food partners from the industry and academic/research institutions. The programme is centred on having professionals complete non-degree programmes that would address well-recognised and researched market demands, and to provide practical, applied learning opportunities in the food sector.

The programme is defined by its diverse nature: at the time of this study training services were provided by the representatives of business, science and government (including voluntary) sectors, targeted to students, consumers, professionals and organisations, encapsulated in 38 non-degree programmes and 24 online open courses. 9,176 learners registered for courses between 2018 and 2022.



The programme's added value manifests at macro (international) and micro (individual) levels, namely: the creation of formal frameworks for skills in the agri-sector, that will facilitate systemic dialogue on skills gaps, increasing interest of the public sector in different countries in the subject of industry skills, making EIT Food a credible partner in discussions with the public sector, and lastly by teaching learners how to seek synergies between acquired knowledge and practice.

Due to the programme's diversity and wide range of educational activities, it is difficult to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of it, as it is sometimes challenging to find a common denominator.

While a complete, quantitative assessment on programme's impact is not yet achievable, it is possible to identify the main impact clusters. Firstly, EIT Food educational activities support identifying and developing key skills for agri-food sector, by assessing the relevance of the offer, providing up-to-date knowledge of competency gaps, and supporting the implementation of the Pact for Skills in Agrifood and stimulating LLL culture; secondly, it builds awareness of the importance of certification and standardisation of the knowledge measurement tools; thirdly, it impacts the learners on individual level, by removing barriers to success, and increasing self-esteem in the professional area.

Good practices used in the programme are evident in the diversity of programme's offer. EIT Food Learning Services and Assessment's unique combination of technical and underpinning capabilities in the training portfolio, its inclusive potential and practicality of courses promotes the development of toolkit for workforce members, increasing their success in the labour market.

At the same time, areas have been identified, where there is room for progress, that could translate into greater participation and improved learning outcomes, namely increased promotion and cooperation with third sector, raising awareness on the value of measuring, acquiring, and certifying skills, and maintaining and developing new relationships and partnerships with science and business.

Despite complexity and having ambitious objectives, the programme's implementation has been successful, and EIT food has successfully achieved each of its goals, promoting the larger idea of certification and lifelong learning.