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Programe to develop Innovation and technology transfer

Participation rules

V4. 22/10/20234

Eatex Food Innovation Hub

Financiado por la Unión Europea NextGenerationEU
Plan de Recuperación, Transformación y Resiliencia
Gobierno de España · Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación
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1. INTRODUCTION

Eatex Food Innovation Hub (henceforth Eatex) is the collaborative innovation hub to promote technology transfer and implementation in the agrifood industry.

The activities, programmes and services developed through Eatex are managed and performed by CNTA (www.cnta.es), which is supported by the Government of Navarre and the Ministry of Science and Innovation, within the Complementary Agrifood Plan - Agroalnext (Ruling 407E/2022, of 30 November, from the General Innovation Board, awarding the National Centre for Food Technology and Safety (CNTA) a grant of 12,160,529 euro to run the project entitled "MRR Agrifood Plan Complementary to the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan"). The Agroalnext Complementary Agrifood Plan is run within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU. Eatex does not have its own legal structure, as it has been set up within CNTA.

Eatex's main goal is to **improve and accelerate the technological transfer of solutions with added value from the R+D centres to the agrifood sector**. It intends to encourage digital and sustainable transformation for the agrifood sector, focussing on intensifying the impact of R+D+i activities and their transfer to the sector. The technologies and solutions must be designed developed, made accessible and applied with a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach among stakeholders, close to the production processes and the market, that maximise their transfer and implementation potential.

This involves implementing said **Programme to develop innovation and technology transfer** that promotes and finances collaborative R+D+i projects to develop the R+D centres' scientific-technical knowledge, innovative solutions and technology and transfer all this to obtain new and/or better products, processes, and services for the agrifood sector.

The Programme targets the following areas:

- Boost agriculture & farming of the future
- Search for new ingredients and production models
- New food and beverages for a healthy diet
- Implementation of industry 4.0 and hyperconnected processes
- Innovation applied to food packaging and preservation systems.
- Circularity and assessment of the use of waste and sub-products

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2. WHO IS THE PROGRAMME INTENDED FOR?

To maximise the transfer and applicability of innovative technology and solutions in the business world, it is important that these solutions are developed within a framework of collaboration and co-creation, focussing on the end user.

Consequently, Eatex uses this programme to support consortium-based R+D+i projects carried out among companies and R+D centres where **the participating companies promote and define the challenge** with the aim to implement the results and **the R+D centres run the R+D+i activities** to achieve results that can potentially be exploited and transferred to the companies according to the agreement between the consortium members.

The applicant consortium must comprise at least one legally established company and a Research Centre, University or Technology Centre accredited by the Navarre R+D System (SINAI): https://www.aditechcorp.com/conoce-el-sinai/). More participants could join the project, both corporations or R&D centers. In this case, a lead organisation should be identified for each type of them.

- Companies will be able to apply for a project to be granted irrespective of the branch of activity, its size, and its location. Consequently, applications will be accepted from companies in Spain and abroad.

3. WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS CAN BE FUNDED BY THIS PROGRAMME?

Collaborative projects promoted by **companies**, that address issues and opportunities in the agrifood sector, with **innovative technological solutions** developed by one or more R&D centers from SINAI, providing new or better products, processes and/or viable commercial services to be implemented by the promoting companies.

The target research areas for the projects are listed below. This includes a description and examples of some potential projects.

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BOOST AGRICULTURE & FARMING OF THE FUTURE	**Description:** Optimising or generating new agricultural raw materials and production systems that ensure or improve the productivity and profitability of crops and livestock herds and/or reduce their environmental impact.
	Examples: New varieties, more efficient irrigation systems, new fertilizers and agrochemicals, disease control, soil health, vertical farming, new materials, etc.
SEARCH FOR NEW INGREDIENTS AND PRODUCTION MODELS	**Description:** Identification or generation of new raw materials or alternative ingredients and systems to obtain them.
	Examples: Alternative proteins, plant proteins, cellular farming, biomass and precision fermentation, seaweed, wild mushrooms, etc.
NEW FOOD AND BEVERAGES FOR A HEALTHY DIET	**Description:** Optimisation and generation of new food and beverages items, with improved nutrition and functions, where the innovation boosts health.
	Examples: Solutions to reduce fat, salt, sugar, new functional ingredients, plant-based products, special nutrition needs .
IMPLEMENTATION OF INDUSTRY 4.0 AND HYPERCONNECTED PROCESSES.	**Description:** Development and improvement of the processes by adapting new digital technologies to the agrifood sector.
	Examples: Sensor data capturing, modelling and decision-making systems, artificial intelligence, precision farming, robotics to automate processes, traceability throughout the value chain.
INNOVATION APPLIED TO FOOD PACKAGING AND PRESERVATION SYSTEMS.	**Description:** Optimising and generating new strategies to preserve and package food, throughout the entire value chain, from the food source, through production, packaging, distribution, etc. that make it possible to lengthen useful life safely, avoiding delays and losses.
	Examples: Alternative preservatives, bio-control, non-thermal preservation treatments, new or improved packaging materials.
CIRCULARITY AND ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF WASTE AND SUB-PRODUCTS	**Description:** Application of circularity solutions when processing agrifood waste and sub-products to be repurposed and/or to reduce their environmental impact.
	Examples: *Upcycling,* value added ingredients and materials, solutions to manage farming waste.

Projects develop solutions ready to be industrialised and marketed. Projects could address complex problems with high level of uncertainty with timeline up to 2 years. In any case, all projects must be accomplished by the 30th of September 2025.

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4. WHAT WE OFFER

Eatex works with **agile and advanced research dynamics and models**, acting on how the research is performed, and results transferred, with the aim of **boosting success rates and reducing associated risks**.

The methodology is based on the following key aspects:

- The starting point is the **challenge or market opportunity**. This could be a business opportunity giving the company a way of implementing it and reaching the market, but not the developed or validated technology or solution; or a challenge featured in its strategic management plan, which is reflected as technology or a solution that is developed and implemented, to impact the company.
- Fostering **cross-collaboration** to help solve the challenge: R+D centres, start-ups, etc. Open innovation environments are set up with the collaboration, to mitigate the risk associated with the innovative activity.
- Focus on **impact and profitability** when selecting projects.
- **Agile** ways of working during project execution as a way to ensure project successful delivery
- Technology **transfer** aspect is present from the outset. It will be a critical aspect when selecting projects and throughout the technical execution process. Only projects with participating entities committed to the transfer will receive funding.

According to this approach, Eatex is thereby involved throughout the entire process, helping to shape, run and boost project success. The final end is to obtain exploitable results and effectively transferring these results as follows:

Consortium project set up and solution development

When needed, Eatex will help building the consortium to carry out the project, identify R+D centres in the SINAI network which can help with the challenge. Also to identify external collaborators, start-ups and other companies, with shared or complementary interests.

Eatex will lead and coordinate this phase of the project, requiring to the different parts the critical information for the formal application. Eatex will also make a proposal with the conditions for solution transfer.

Eatex assumes the risk inherent to research

Eatex assumes the expenses of the non-economic activities run by R&D centers for project execution. Therefore, if the result does not reach the selected success criteria, solution transfer will not occur and no payment is expected to be done for the executed R&D work. Doing so R&D project cost will be covered by Eatex Food Innovation Hub. The formula for this contribution will involve Eatex **subcontracting** the R+D centres.

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This subcontracting will meet the provisions of article 26 of Chartered Law 11/2005 of 9 November, on subsidies, and the rules regulating the concession agreement.

Eligible costs which the centres might incur, and that can be included in this subcontracting, are:

- Labour costs (researchers and technical staff) working directly on the project, in proportion to and during the period they are working on it.
- Equipment costs: limited to the depreciation of the equipment to the extent and during the period in which it is used for the project.
- Other costs: limited to non-recurring costs and strictly related to running the projects, that do not correspond to personnel and equipment costs including, among others, fungible costs and subcontracting up to the limit allowed by the General Subsidy Law. The subcontracting must meet the requirements of the Chartered Law on Subsidies.
- Indirect costs can be attributed as up to fifteen percent (15 %) of the sum of the direct costs.
- The following costs cannot be subsidised, even though they are related to the project activities:
    - Acquisition of computer or equipment licences
    - Personnel training costs
    - Costs related to project documentation
    - Costs for administration and office material
- Neither financial costs nor indirect taxes such as VAT can be attributed.
- Ordinary and recurring budgetary costs will not be financed. All costs must be indubitably incurred by the project selected for funding.
- If the grant beneficiary is subject to public sector contract legislation, it must be subject to its provisions.

Only R&D expenses executed within the agreed timeline of the project could be claimed and accepted.

Participating companies can incur project running costs, but they will not by funded by this programme, which does not prohibit financing through other calls or lines.

Monitoring project execution

Eatex will monitor the projects using an *Agile* mindset This means accelerating generation or obtaining of results, greater flexibility and a continuous assessment process on project progress according to the selected success criteria, implementing improvements while the research is on-going.

Support for transfer

The ultimate goal of the Programme is to transfer the project results from the R+D centres to the companies.

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Consequently, Eatex proposes a work model which focuses on transferring the research results to the agri-food business from the R&D centers. Transfer conditions are agreed between R&D centers and industry according to the project outcome.

Use of the Eatex facilities while running the projects[1]

The entities participating in the selected projects will (on prior request) be able to use Eatex facilities free of charge for certain activities related to these projects: office work in co-working, meetings, lab & kitchen samples preparation and presentation, demonstration activities. Eatex offers a 200 m^2 space which includes 9 workstations, a fully fitted kitchen and a meeting room.

5. RESULTS AND TRANSFER POLICY

A result is considered to be any tangible or intangible result (data, knowledge or information) that is generated during the project, regardless of its form or nature, whether it can be protected or not, and any right attached to it, including intellectual property rights.[2] Owners will be able to protect their results appropriately if protection is possible and desirable.

Regarding ownership of the results, the general rule will be that **the results are the property of the entity performing the research activity and that generates them**. The R+D centre or centres are the main parties running the R+D+i activity for the projects and therefore, they own the obtained results Joint ownership of the results can be explored, following prior analysis and agreement with the company. Ownership of the results will be specified in the project's consortium agreement, to be signed between the participants and Eatex.

Exploitation of the results refers to using them in activities other that the project where they were generated, including commercial exploitation, development, creation, manufacturing and marketing of a product or process, the creation and provision of a service.[3] **If the project is successful**, assessed according to the criteria defined previously by the parties, **the result will be transferred to be exploited by the company,** by means of a licence, sale or any other formula agreed between the parties.

As a consequence of its contribution to the project, and the results which are obtained (explained in Section 4), **Eatex will participate in the exploitation rights bound to the transfer**, along with the R+D centres running the project, accessing part of this payment due to transfer, which will be used to reinvest in the hub, making it financially sustainable over time, consequently contributing to this goal included in the Agroalnext Complementary Plan. As this is a non-profit organisation, dedicated

[1] From March 2023
[2] Taking the definition included in "EIT Food IP Policy" as a reference.
[3] Taking the "Model Grant Agreement" definition by Horizon Europe as a reference.

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to research work, all payments will be directly reinvested in Eatex's future R+D+i activities, beyond the actions financed by Agroalnext.

The form and the quantity of the payment by the company due to the transfer will be proposed for each project. Specific terms and conditions will be agreed and laid down in the transfer agreement to be signed between the parties. In any case, as a rule, the following is proposed:

- An initial payment corresponding up to 20% of the financed budget for Eatex.
- The rest of the payment will be divided between the R+D centre developing the project and Eatex, at a variable % to be agreed between the parties.

Transfer conditions will be agreed for each individual project and will be consolidated in a Term Sheet and Transfer Agreement document to be signed by both parties.

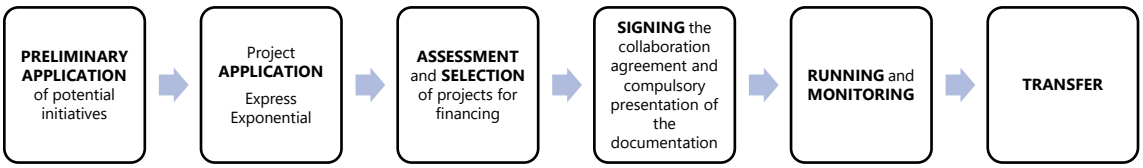
The participating companies promise to make all real and provable efforts to effectively transfer the research results. The transfer might not take place if the project results are not satisfactory and/or it is decided to stop the project beforehand for the appropriate cause.

It will be compulsory to sign the **consortium agreement** to start the project, which will include the sections mentioned in Section 6.4.

Subsequently, when enough information is available, throughout the project and always within 2 months of finishing the project, the **transfer agreement** will be signed featuring the terms and conditions agreed between the parties.

6. HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

The programme consists of the following main phases:



6.1. Preliminary application

The company or companies interested in taking part in the Programme should complete a preliminary application with basic information on the challenge and/or the solution that they wish to undertake. They will also indicate whether they are already working with an R+D centre of SINAI or if they wish to find one with help from EATEX:

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To do this, corporates should fill out the **Preliminary application form** completely and send it as a pdf using the dedicated space on the website. The form template can also be downloaded on the Eatex website and filled in.

(https://www.eatexfoodinnovationhub.com/programa-desarrollo-innovacion-y-transferencia-tecnologica)

After receiving the preliminary application, Eatex will assess whether the proposal matches the Programme's aims and general conditions and will send a mail within an estimated 2 weeks (if all the requested information has been provided) with the result of this assessment. If necessary, Eatex will suggest the most suitable R+D centres to carry out the project and recommending the project modality to be followed. Nevertheless, the consortium might be asked for further information, or to come for an interview, if this is necessary to complete the assessment.

Within 2 weeks after preliminary application reception (if all the critical info is available) Eatex will contact by email about the acceptance or not of the preliminary application. In case of positive answer, Eatex will make a proposal of consortium together with the necessary information and documentation to complete the application.

The preliminary applications can be presented from December 2022 continuously until December 2024. Eatex reserves the right to modify this deadline according to the Programme roll-out.

6.2. Preparation of proposals and Application

Eatex will lead the application phase with the required input from all the parties involved. Therefore, Eatex will provide instructions, templates and working set up ensuring information exchange-

Company will provide information about the scope of the challenge, problem or opportunity, key success criteria for solution acceptance, impact of the solution on business, plan and resources for solution implementation and marketing.

R&D center or centers will make a solution proposal, the selected approach to overcome the given challenge, work planning, required resources and detailed budget. Project execution could be extended till September 2025.

Eatex will coordinate the intellectual protection strategy and solution transfer conditions.

All the info will be consolidated by Eatex in an application form to be signed by all the parties. The signature of such a document will make effective application and ready to progress to the evaluation phase.

6.3. Assessment and selection

The projects will be assessed by an internal committee at Eatex, assisted by independent expert external staff specialised in innovation processes and in market and business development. If necessary, and depending on the type of project, additional support may be provided by independent technical professionals.

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During the assessment stage, Eatex might ask the consortium for further information, or to come for an interview, if necessary to complete the assessment.

The assessment will follow various criteria (technological, business-related, consortium-related) in terms of:

- **Feasibility** (25% of the score):
  - The proposed solution has potential to solve the challenge.
  - The R&D centre can make progress on the solution.
  - The project represents significant progress on the solution.
  - There is potential for success in terms of the solution being developed according to the company's requirements (cost, time for market, technical requirements, etc.).
  - There is potential for success in terms of the solution being scaled.
  - There is potential for success in terms of the solution being implemented.
- **Viability** (30% of the score):
  - There is an evident growth estimation in the proposed solution
  - The return expectations are short term and/or relevant.
- **Desirability** (30% of the score):
  - There is proven demand for this added value proposal in the market, which has considered the different needs and interests of women and men on the target population.
  - The project clearly stands out from other solutions available on the market.

The **commitment and quality of the consortium and the project** will also be assessed (15% of the score):

- The budget is appropriate for the scope of the tasks and the expected results.
- The company has the resources (economic and human) required to guarantee the project is a success.
- The company has the resources (economic and human) required to guarantee implementation of the solution.

The above criteria will be assessed on a scale of 0 to 100 on a score chart. The total score will be calculated by considering the weight (as a %) of each group of criteria. According to what is indicated in each one.

Eatex values diversity and equal opportunities as fundamental pillars for the design and development of R&D projects. Therefore, the expert committee will carry out an evaluation of the gender perspective, ensuring that gender-relevant projects integrate the gender perspective and are duly recognized and valued, granting up to 9 additional points to add to the score obtained, evaluating:

- That the projects present clear policies and concrete actions aimed at promoting gender equality and avoiding any type of discrimination, in objectives, methodology and actions.

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- The use of gender indicators.
- The balanced presence of women in the team and/or in leadership roles.
- The non-sexist use of language

In the case of projects not relevant to gender, up to 3 additional points may be awarded, positively evaluating:

- The non-sexist use of language.
- The diversity of the composition of the work teams, encouraging the integration of women in the different stages of the project.
- Projects that have women in leadership roles.

The proposals are not selected by pitting projects against each other, but according to the **total score obtained**, that should be at least 60 points. Any proposals that exceed this score will be selected for financing, up to the availability of the funds planned for each work area.

In any case, Eatex reserves the right to promote project selection in a specific area, adding factors that support project diversification, to comply with Agroalnext goals.

The funding decision will be issued within an estimated 4 weeks, following the project application, if the documentation sent is as required. All applications will receive an email with the results of the assessment, including a report summarising the assessment.

6.4. Presentation of documentation to kick off the project.

Alongside the selection notification, instructions will be given on presenting **compulsory** project documentation within one month, counting from the notification that the project has been selected for funding.

The **Consortium Agreement** must be presented for the project, signed between the participating entities and Eatex, that will include the following aspects:

- Estimated project timeline.
- Obligations that govern project implementation.
- Property / Ownership of the results, that will include the partners' rights to the research and knowledge generated, rights to access previous work, etc.
- Success criteria (initial)
- Transfer and exploitation conditions
- Penalty terms in the event of no transfer.
- Processing and circulating information.
- Noncompliance.

Eatex proposes a basic model that will be completed with contributions from the participating entities.

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Additionally, the subcontracted R+D centres will present the following **documentation, bound to the requirements** of the call for Complementary Plans and the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan and from other applicable frameworks[4] (cascading compliance with responsibility):

- Declaration of respecting the principle that no significant damage will be caused to the environment (DNSH principle).
- Declaration that there is no conflict of interest (DACI).
- Declaration of compliance regarding tax contributions and Social Security payments.
- Responsible declaration that no additional financing has been received to develop the project.
- Report on the gender perspective: document that will include the approach of how to tackle the gender perspective while running the project and monitoring indicators.
- Copy of the application to the agent's Research Ethics Committee report, if appropriate. If there is no Research Ethics Committee, the assessment will be performed by the Autonomous Community of Navarre Medicine Research Ethics Committee. In any case, the unique authorisation for each project must be presented as soon as it is available.

6.5. Project execution and tracking

Eatex will monitor the project to **guarantee its progress** according to the Consortium Agreement, and to activate payments as the milestones and deliverables are achieved, as indicated in this Agreement.

6.5.1. Project tracking and modifications

Agile methodologies will be used for this. The process will be as follows:

- An agile kick-off meeting, supported by EATEX. The project team, in other words the company and R+D centre, will agree on the work dynamic sprint duration or results delivery cycles.
- During the sprint, the research team will act autonomously, reporting on request to Eatex that will act as a facilitator, covering all eventualities.
- Periodically (monthly or as often as decided), a meeting will be held between the work team and Eatex to consolidate project progress and explain the needs and difficulties for the following phases of the project.
- Periodically, (quarterly or as often as decided), Eatex will assess the situation with the work team and recommend whether to **persevere, pivot or cancel** the research.

As a result of the monitoring, the work plan may be modified and/or the project budget reorganised, with the chance to rework, reduce or withdraw the financing according to the results that are being obtained and how well they fit the defined success criteria.

[4] Chartered Law 11/2005, of 9 November on Subsidies and the General Law on Subsidies

The technical and/or economic modifications might represent a modification to the consortium agreement. In this case, Eatex will prepare the new version, using contributions from the participating entities.

6.5.2. Subcontracting tracking

As mentioned previously, the formula used in the Programme to finance the R+D centres will be Eatex **subcontracting** them.

Consequently, the work carried out by the R+D centres when running the selected projects will be funded by Eatex through a **direct payment against an invoice** for the budgeted and eligible costs (indicated in Section 3). The costs incurred by the beneficiary entities between the project start and end date will be financed, as indicated in the consortium agreement.

To do so, the R+D centre must present a technical-economic justification report every 6 months or at the end of the project, including:

- Description of the work carried out and deliverables at that period
- Implementation of the gender perspective approach and related indicators.
- Cost and expenses at that period (according to section 3)

The justification report will be accompanied by the corresponding invoice for the amount of the costs incurred Eatex will pay the invoice within one month.

The subcontracted R+D centre will be **responsible for compliance with the corresponding requirements and should keep the justifying documents** that accredit the incurred costs (all documents that uphold the concepts of the invoice.

~~R~~ights and obligations in this respect will be included in the consortium agreement.

6.7. Transfer

A **transfer agreement** will be drawn up between the participating entities, companies, R+D centres and Eatex which specifies the conditions and terms of the transfer and exploitation of the project results. This agreement could be made from the beginning of the project, up to 2 months of finishing the project.

Furthermore, Eatex will **monitor the projects after completion**, to find out about the state of the transfer and marketing by the companies and to guarantee that the planned progress and corresponding payments are made. The company commits to providing the necessary information in this respect.

6.8. Support

If in any doubt throughout the whole process, you can contact us at eatex@eatexfoodinnovationhub.com or use the Eatex website contact form (https://www.eatexfoodinnovationhub.com/).

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7. Programme Schedule

Project application will remain open till end of march 2025. Eatex reserves the right to modify it as necessary. Any modification will be reported on the Eatex website, social media and information mails.

8. NOTIFICATIONS

All relevant communications will be sent via the email address: eatex@eatexfoodinnovationhub.com. Entities participating in the Programme should provide at least one valid email address per entity for communications and reply to any communications as required.

9. COMMUNICATION AND CIRCULATION

The information provided during the preliminary application, application, monitoring and justification of the projects will be treated **confidentially**.

However, the applicant consortium should allow the following actions, to be carried out via the Eatex website and other associated channels, to **disseminate the projects** that have been financed, during the Programme and when it finishes.

- **Reference** to the participants and the project title.
- Circulation of a brief **summary** of the project, prior to confirmation of the content with the participating consortium.

Furthermore, they will be open to working with Eatex to disseminate and promote the Programme by participating in events and appearing in the media and at events.

If any of the participating entities issue a publication or mention the project in public, they must state that it falls within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU. This will include:

- the European Union emblem and the text "Funded by the European Union-NextGenerationEU" will be included alongside the EU emblem.

- the logo for the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, available on the link https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/identidad-visual
- the logo for the Ministry of Science and Innovation.
- the logo for the Government of Navarre – 2030 Agenda.

Additionally, Eatex will be able to use information relating to the approved projects for the activity report to the competent Authorities: Government of Navarre and Ministry of Science and Innovation.

Eatex will be able to ask the beneficiary entities to fill in a satisfaction and results survey. Only aggregated results will be published from this survey.

10. CONSENT

Taking part in the Programme implies accepting these rules.

11. DATA PROTECTION

All the data provided during the process will be processed according to the Eatex privacy policy (https://www.eatexfoodinnovationhub.com/politica-privacidad/).

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APPENDIX. PREVIOUS VERSIONS

- V1. Dated 21st December 2022
- V2. Dated 22nd December 2022
    - Section 4: an error was detected in eligible personnel spending, as there was no limit to the type of personnel that could be financed. Consequently, this error has been corrected in the latest version.
- V3. Dated 28th September 2022. Modifications in all the sections of the rules with the objective to clarify the rules and to speed up the process of project request and approval.
- V4. Dated 22th October 2024.
    - Section 6: Evaluation criteria related to the gender perspective and the promotion of equality.
    - Deadline for submitting applications has been updated.

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