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ANNEX 2 Open Call Text (Fiche)

Open Call for Financial Support to Third parties as a mechanism to test, promote, validate, replicate PRIMARY business model blueprints and develop new value chains

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
DoH	Declaration of Honour. A self-declaration for organizations applying for or receiving EU funding, confirming they meet eligibility criteria, have capacity, and aren't excluded due to fraud, bankruptcy, or other serious issues, ensuring compliance with EU rules before grants are finalized.
EC	European Commission. The executive branch of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, and overseeing EU programs.
EU	European Union. A political and economic union of 27 European countries.
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions. A set of common questions and answers about the OC to support applicants.
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties. A mechanism used by the PRIMARY project to provide funding through its Open Call to beneficiaries.
HE	Horizon Europe. The EU's main research and innovation funding programme.
IA	Innovation Action. A type of Horizon Europe action primarily aimed at bridging the gap between research and market. They build upon earlier research results and move these results toward tangible products, processes, or services that can be rapidly introduced to the market or implemented by public authorities and stakeholders.

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation.
OC	Open Call. An invitation for proposals through which external beneficiaries can apply for funding to carry out specific activities that support the project's objectives.
SME	Small-Medium Enterprise.

1. The PRIMARY project

PRIMARY (**New business for farmers and cooperatives in rural areas by local upcycling solutions using underutilized agricultural feedstocks**) is a Horizon Europe Innovation Action (IA) funded by the European Union (Project number: 101180167). The project supports the development, validation, and transfer of bioeconomy solutions that enable the sustainable use of underutilised agricultural residues in rural European regions.

The project focuses on feedstock streams that are widely available but often insufficiently valorised, namely grass, greenhouse residues, cotton by-products, and olive tree prunings. While these resources hold significant potential for producing food and feed ingredients, bio-based materials, bio-energy and bio-fuels, as well as soil-related products, their uptake remains constrained by limited local processing capacity and by the need to further adapt existing technical solutions to specific agricultural feedstocks and demonstrate their feasibility under real rural conditions, together with local actors and value chains.

PRIMARY addresses these challenges by developing and testing value-chain approaches that combine feedstock mobilisation, innovative processing technologies, and viable business model structures. The project works with six (6) main process solutions, including:

- (a) Grass biorefinery for fractionation of grass into protein- and fibre-rich streams for food, feed, and material applications;
- (b) Submerged fermentation of agricultural feedstocks to produce protein-rich food and feed ingredients;
- (c) Solid-state fermentation of greenhouse by-products to produce protein-rich feed ingredients;
- (d) Fibre-forming technologies for production of packaging and construction materials;
- (e) Pelletizing cotton and olive tree residues into biofuels for energy production;
- (f) Pyrolysis/gasification of cotton and olive tree originating residues into biochar.

These processes are developed with a strong emphasis on adaptability and transferability to different regional and operational settings.

An important output of PRIMARY is the development of four (4) preliminary business model blueprints, each associated with one of the targeted feedstock streams. These blueprints provide structured guidance on possible value-chain configurations, roles of actors, governance and cooperation models, indicative cost and revenue structure, operational requirements, and key environmental and social considerations. They are intended as reference frameworks rather than fixed solutions and require validation, adaptation, and refinement through practical implementation.

To support this validation process and extend the project's impact beyond the consortium regions, PRIMARY implements an Open Call providing Financial Support to Third Parties. Through the Open Call, selected consortia of local stakeholders, such as primary producers, SMEs, cooperatives, technology providers, and public or research organisations, will test and adapt PRIMARY processes and business model blueprints in new European regions. The Open Call projects are expected to generate practical evidence on technical feasibility, economic viability, and replicability under real-world conditions.

The insights, data, and lessons generated through the Open Call activities will feed back into the refinement of the PRIMARY business model blueprints and process concepts, contributing to the development of transferable knowledge, best practices, and guidance that can support wider deployment of sustainable bioeconomy solutions across Europe.

2. PRIMARY Open Call

The main objective of the PRIMARY Open Call (OC) is to validate the replicability and promote the adaptation of PRIMARY solutions in Europe.

The Open Call invites proposals from **consortia of local and regional actors, including technical partners and public (e.g., public body, university) or private organisations (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs)**, that are active in the sustainable valorisation of agricultural residues. Selected consortia will receive funding to pilot, adapt, and validate processing solutions and business model blueprints within the PRIMARY framework, focusing on underutilised feedstocks and innovative bioeconomy processes. The supported projects are expected to demonstrate technical feasibility, economic viability, and replicability of integrated value-chain solutions under real rural conditions, contributing to the wider deployment of PRIMARY solutions across Europe.

Sub-projects must contribute to the following Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Validate, adapt, and further improve the four (4) PRIMARY business model blueprints for the feedstock streams of grass, greenhouse residues, cotton by-products, and olive tree prunings. **Each proposal must address at least one (≥1) feedstock**, which may be selected from the PRIMARY feedstock streams or from similar agricultural residues, provided that their characteristics, availability, and valorisation pathways are comparable to the PRIMARY feedstocks and align with the project's objectives on sustainable biomass utilisation. Applicants are expected to structure their business model by specifically addressing the building blocks included in the *PRIMARY Open Call Business Model Template* (Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide). The template, based on a circular business model canvas approach, supports Applicants in describing, testing, and refining their proposed value chain, covering the full scope from feedstock sourcing to market uptake. It further guides Applicants in addressing all key elements in a consistent manner and in validating them through practical implementation in the proposed regional context, thereby generating practical evidence on economic viability, operational feasibility, and value-chain governance arrangements.
- **Objective 2:** Demonstrate the replicability and scalability of PRIMARY processes and technologies by enabling third-party consortia to **pilot and adapt at least one (≥1) of the six (6) PRIMARY processing concepts**, namely biorefinery process, submerged fermentation, solid-state fermentation, fibre-forming technology, pelletizing or pyrolysis/gasification of agricultural residues, in European regions where similar pilot or demonstration infrastructure is limited or absent. Indicative examples included in the *PRIMARY Open Call Business Model Template* (Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide), such as the Cotton Residues Use Case from Karditsa, Greece, illustrate how these processes can be implemented and adapted in practice. The selected sub-

projects will generate practical evidence on technical performance, operational feasibility, and adaptability to local conditions, supporting wider replication across rural European regions.

- **Objective 3:** Enhance stakeholders’ opportunities for knowledge transfer on bioeconomy-oriented production by actively engaging local and regional actors in pilot implementation and validation activities. Through this engagement, the Open Call will support mutual learning, capacity building, and the exchange of practical experience across regions, thereby extending the impact of PRIMARY solutions beyond the consortium countries.

PRIMARY will provide Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) to validate the four (4) PRIMARY business model blueprints on feedstock-specific value chains, as well as to promote and test the processes’ and technologies’ replicability and scalability potential to other regions beyond the ones participating to the project (Finland: Ostrobothnia, Häme, Savo; Greece: Karditsa, Heraklion, Lykovrysi/Regional Unit of North Athens). To this end, it will fund 6-9 sub-projects (consortia of 2-3 parties) with the maximum grant budget to be €150,000 per sub-project for consortia of three (3) parties and €100,000 per sub-project for consortia of two (2) parties. The total amount of the Open Call will reach at maximum €900,000.00.

Total amount	No. of projects	Partners per sub-project	Maximum budget per sub-project
€900,000	6-9	2	€100,000
		3	€150,000

Important notice:

The submission timeline of the Open Call for the proposals is from the 9th of March 2026 to the 8th of June 2026.

3. Open Call as a mechanism to test, promote, validate, replicate PRIMARY business model blueprints and develop new value chains

3.1 General Information

The PRIMARY Open Call is designed to enable local and regional actors across Europe, including technical partners and public (e.g., public body, university) or private organisations (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs), that are active in the sustainable valorisation of agricultural residues to pilot, adapt, and validate processing solutions and business model blueprints within the PRIMARY framework, focusing on underutilised feedstocks and innovative bioeconomy processes.

Through this Open Call, PRIMARY aims to foster a thriving ecosystem for valorising agricultural biomass and demonstrate the replicability of the PRIMARY solutions. Selected

sub-projects will have the opportunity to demonstrate technical feasibility, economic viability, and replicability of integrated value-chain solutions under real rural conditions, contributing to the wider deployment of PRIMARY solutions across Europe.

3.2 Specific requirements for the sub-projects

Consortia of local stakeholders, such as primary producers, SMEs, cooperatives, technology providers, and public or research organisations, will receive funding to test and adapt PRIMARY processes and business model blueprints in new European regions.

Proposals must consist of original work by the applicants, and their anticipated developments do not infringe upon any third-party rights. Any disputes or legal challenges stemming from third-party claims resulting from the sub-granted projects are the sole responsibility of the Applicant. The PRIMARY consortium holds no responsibility for verifying IP ownership of complementary technologies or methods introduced by the sub-granted projects.

This requirement applies specifically to the content of the proposal document, not necessarily to the activities within the project. Applicants may incorporate existing third-party technologies (e.g., detection equipment, software, or analytical tools) in their activities, provided they have the proper rights, permissions, or licenses to use them. However, Applicants must not falsely claim ownership of intellectual property they do not develop.

Proposals are expected to demonstrate a practical and context-specific implementation of the proposed solution(s), from consortia (2-3 parties) of local and regional actors, including technical partners and public (e.g., public body, university) or private organisations (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs). While a full multi-actor innovation process is not required, appropriate stakeholder engagement is encouraged where it supports effective testing, validation, or future adoption of the solution(s).

The proposals, deliverables and all official communication related to the sub-projects must be submitted in English.

PRIMARY Open Call and Call for Evaluators will be launched in March 2026. Before assigning external evaluators, each proposal will be verified by the PRIMARY OC Monitoring Committee and the OC Manager, for eligibility according to the predefined criteria of the OC. The proposal eligibility check, evaluation and sub-grant agreement preparation will take place between June 2026 and October 2026. Selected projects will be launched in November 2026 having an implementation timeframe of 18 months (until April 2028). The 18-month implementation period will be divided into three (3) phases:

- **Phase 1** - Design [(November 2026) - (February 2027); Duration: 4 months]: Payment of 20% of the total grant [Deliverable: Activity plan];
- **Phase 2** - Development [(March 2027 - January 2028); Duration: 11 months]: Payment of 50% of the total grant [Deliverable: Report on implemented activities in accordance with the OC requirements]
- **Phase 3** - Impact and validation [(February 2028) - (April 2028); Duration: 3 months]: Payment of the final 30% of the total grant [Deliverable: Report on evaluation of impact and replicability of the tested processes and technologies]

An initial timeline for PRIMARY Open Call is depicted in the following figure. The dates may change due to unforeseen events and situations. Therefore, these are an indication of what is initially expected; the dates are to be confirmed by the PRIMARY Open Call team along the process and in agreement with the EC. These dates are not legally binding. Any updates on the dates will be published on the opencalls.fund platform.



Figure 1. PRIMARY Open Call timeline

4. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible stakeholders to participate in the call for third party funding include consortia (2-3 parties) of local and regional stakeholders with at least one (≥ 1) technical partner from the public (e.g., public body, university) or the private sector (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs). Detailed eligibility criteria are described in the Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide, in Section 2.2 Eligibility Criteria.

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- Legal entity established in countries eligible for funding through Horizon Europe.
- Uniqueness of the proposal (one (1) proposal per consortium). Each third party can participate in only one (1) proposal. If any applicant is found to participate in multiple applications, all such project applications will be rejected. In particular for Universities and Research Institutions, the rule applies to each Department. Different departments of the same university or research organisation may participate in different proposals, provided that no single department participates in more than one application.
- In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded.
- Parties must establish a consortium of 2-3 partners as described in the Consortium Declaration.
- Proposal includes at least one (≥ 1) technical partner (process operator, partner testing/applying/validating the technology/process) and at least one (≥ 1) partner from the public (e.g., public body, university) or the private sector (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs), acting as an end user responsible for

implementing, using, or validating the proposed process and business model under real-life conditions.

- Existing members of the PRIMARY project and their affiliated entities¹ are not eligible for the PRIMARY Open Call. In addition, Applicants (including all parties of the consortium) must not be involved in the implementation of the PRIMARY project and must not have a confirmed, paid relationship with any PRIMARY consortium partner for the provision of services or activities under PRIMARY, including through pilot or demonstration plants. Any such relationship constitutes a conflict of interest that may compromise the impartial and objective implementation of the sub-project; therefore, the Applicant is not eligible under this Open Call.
- The proposal addresses all the Open Call Objectives as described in Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide, in Section 1.3.
- The proposal is not pre-selected in the other projects' open calls funded under the same topic (HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-6-two-stage), e.g., EMBEDDED, HARWASTING.
- The proposal should incorporate at least one (≥ 1) of the defined PRIMARY processing concepts, which include methods such as biorefinery, submerged fermentation, solid-state fermentation, fibre-forming technology, pelletizing or pyrolysis of agricultural residues (see Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide, Appendix 1).
- The proposals should use at least one (≥ 1) underutilised agricultural residue either one of the PRIMARY feedstocks or similar ones, including crop residues (cotton stalks, cereal straw), pruning biomass (olive, vineyard), greenhouse by-products (stems/leaves), or grass/silage (see Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide, Appendix 1).
- The proposal must include the development and validation of a business model (farm-centric, cooperative-based or SME-based) in accordance with the Circular Business Model Canvas Framework provided in the PRIMARY Open Call Business Model Template (see Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide, Appendix 1).
- Activities should be implemented in rural European regions that are not already involved in the project. A region can refer to a geographical area at sub-national level, a subdivision of a country at different possible levels². Here a region refers to level 3 of the Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS)³. The regions that are not eligible include:
 - Finland: Ostrobothnia, Häme, Savo
 - Greece: Karditsa, Heraklion, Lykovrysi/Regional Unit of North Athens
- The proposals should be delivered before the defined deadline (8 June 2026, 17:00 CEST), applying the requested submission procedure, and will take place entirely through the opencalls.fund platform.
- All Applicants (consortia) must use the official proposal, budget and Declaration of Honour templates provided. If an Applicant does not use the PRIMARY Open Call templates, the submitted proposal will be disqualified.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for the part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not

¹ Affiliated entities (formerly called 'linked third parties') are entities with a (usually legal or capital) link to a beneficiary and which implement parts of the action and are allowed to charge costs directly to the grant.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Region>.

³ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature_of_territorial_units_for_statistics_\(NUTS\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Nomenclature_of_territorial_units_for_statistics_(NUTS)).

exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the Applicants.

- All Applicants must have a valid VAT number and must be active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided during the contracting phase.

Only the proposals that comply with these criteria are eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

The PRIMARY Open Call team reserves the right to ask for additional explanations from the Applicants during the eligibility check.

The Monitoring Committee will be formed to run the eligibility check of the submitted proposals and validate the selection of the external experts who will evaluate the proposals.

5. Submission Procedure

PRIMARY Open Call for proposals will be published and submitted digitally through the opencalls.fund platform developed by reframe.food. Interested Applicants should visit the PRIMARY website (<https://primary-project.eu>) for any updates and the FAQ section available in the opencalls.fund platform as well as on the project website.

Submissions received through any other channel will not be considered and will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels (e.g., via email or via the opencalls.fund), which will be indicated by the PRIMARY consortium in the contracting phase.

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded.

Throughout the entire process, the confidentiality of Applicants' identities and the contents of their proposals will be strictly maintained. Information related to the selected PRIMARY solution(s) and their planned implementation will be treated with the outmost discretion.

By applying to PRIMARY Open Call, Applicants (consortia) automatically accept the terms and conditions of the Open Call as described in the Open Call Kit.

6. Origin of the funds

All Sub-grantees will sign a dedicated Sub-grant Agreement with the PRIMARY Open Call Treasurer/Manager (RFF). The funds provided to the Sub-grant Agreement originate from the funds of the European Project PRIMARY which is funded by the European Commission under

Grant Agreement Number 101180167, and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners of PRIMARY. This relation between the Sub-grantees and the European Commission through the PRIMARY project carries a set of obligations to the Sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the Sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the PRIMARY consortium partners to inform them on these.

7. Points of contact

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by e-mail to primary@opencalls.fund. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 17:00 CEST on 5 June 2026. Until the start of the project implementation phase, all communication surrounding the Open Call will be made exclusively through the Open Call Manager via this e-mail address.

We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

END OF DOCUMENT



primary

New business for farmers and cooperatives in rural areas by local upcycling solutions using underutilized agricultural feedstocks

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