

Biosolutions for net-zero technologies for the agrifood and energy intensive industry ecosystems

D3.1 Grant package for SME's



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D3.1 – GRANT PACKAGE FOR SMES

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SUMMARY

- **Title of the call:** The BIONetZero Acceleration Programme
- **Publication date:** April 09, 2026
- **Date of deadline for submission:**
 - For cohort 1: June 09, 2026, 17:00 Central European Time
 - For cohort 2: March 2027 (precise date and time to be announced)
- **Budget:** up to maximum €60,000 grant amount per SME
- **Requirement for co-financing:** 25%
- **Expected duration of the projects:** June 09, 2026 to July 31, 2028

CHARACTERISATION OF THE APPLICATION SCHEME AND GUIDELINES

The following text is formulated with the main target group in mind, namely SME's. It is intended to serve as instructive guidelines that answer the questions they have about BIONetZero, how to apply for its funding scheme, and what happens if they are accepted into the programme.



1 BRIEFLY ABOUT THE BIONETZERO PROJECT

1.1 WHAT IS BIONETZERO

The BIONetZero project is co-funded by the European Union under the SMP-COSME-2024-CLUSTER call, under Grant Agreement number 101236412. The project supports innovation and the adoption of new processes and advanced technologies within biosolutions for the agrifood and energy-intensive industries. It simultaneously builds capacity and reinforces and accelerates the transformation towards a greener, more digital, and resilient economy.

The project aims to reduce the dependency of companies in Europe on critical inputs and critical technologies, enabling them to establish net-zero production, and retain as much as possible critical raw materials through the development of novel biosolutions, substitutes, innovative products, or services.

Throughout the project's duration, the consortium will provide opportunities for over 100 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the agrifood and energy-intensive sectors. It will offer networking opportunities and facilitate contacts with experts, technology providers, and investor groups interested in engaging with innovative SMEs and startups in the sector. These interactions may provide opportunities for companies to present their solutions and explore potential investment interest.

Direct financial support for SMEs is the heart of this project. Throughout the project's duration, SMEs will be able to apply for different types and a cascade of grants:

- A grant for idea generation (mandatory travel, kick-off and networking); up to EUR 3500 per SME
- A grant for testing and validation; up to EUR 15,000 per SME
- A grant for further development and to suit market needs in the commercialisation phase; up to EUR 40,000 per SME, and
- A grant dedicated to internationalisation up to EUR 5,000 per SME

Coordinator and responsible for grant payments: Food & Bio Cluster Denmark (FBCD). The maximum total grant amount is EUR 60,000 per SME.

1.2 WHO IS BEHIND BIONETZERO

The project is managed by a strong consortium of four cluster partners across Europe:

- [Food & Bio Cluster Denmark](#) (Coordinator)
- [Cluster Industrielle Biotechnologie in Germany](#)
- [Bioeconomy Cluster in Slovakia](#)
- [Lithuanian Food Export Association/Smart Food Cluster](#)



Questions about the programme can be directed to these four organisations.
The primary contact for the call is: Sophie Agergaard, sag@foodbiocluster.dk

Factsheet

Project Acronym	BIONetZero
Project Title	Biosolutions for net-zero technologies for the agrifood and energy intensive industry ecosystems
Project Reference	SMP-COSME-2024-CLUSTER-01
Project Duration	36 months
Overall Budget to support SMEs	€ 1,970,000.00 € will directly benefit SMEs in the form of grants
Website	https://profile.clustercollaboration.eu/profile/cluster-partnership-initiative/5c8b874d-2fe3-4ea8-8d1f-fbe034735076
Budget Distribution between the two calls and cohorts	<p>The total budget available for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) under BIONetZero amounts to €1,970,000, as specified in the Grant Agreement and internal programme documents. This amount covers all grants issued across Stages 1–4, including travel grants, development grants, implementation grants, and internationalisation boosters.</p> <p>To ensure an appropriate balance between early programme outcomes, capacity-building needs, and the staged selection logic, the budget will initially be distributed across the two planned Stage-1 cohorts as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort 1 (April 2026 call): 55% of total FSTP budget = €1,083,500 • Cohort 2 (January 2027 call): 45% of total FSTP budget = €886,500 <p>This distribution reflects the higher resource needs and expected applicant volume of the first cohort, and it ensures that sufficient funding is available for progression into Stages 2, 3, and 4 already within 2026</p>



THE BIONETZERO ACCELERATION PROGRAMME

1.3 WHAT CAN YOU GET FUNDING FOR IN THE BIONETZERO PROJECT

The transition towards a climate-neutral and resource-efficient economy requires new bio-based solutions that can reduce dependency on fossil-based inputs and improve sustainability across European industries. Through the BIONetZero acceleration programme, SMEs can receive support to develop, validate and prepare such biosolutions for implementation in the agrifood sector and energy-intensive industries.

The programme aims to:

- Accelerate the development and validation of innovative biosolutions
- Strengthen the innovation capacity and competitiveness of European SMEs
- Support the market readiness and internationalisation of bio-based technologies

The BIONetZero project can support development of biosolutions for implementation in agriculture, food and energy-intensive industries. While the companies that apply may already be commercial, the biosolutions they seek to develop or integrate in their production must be pre-commercial (typically within Technology Readiness Levels 4–8). Activities within the scope of the BIONetZero programme include the following eligible and non-eligible activities:

Eligible and non-eligible activities

The following activities describe what BIONetZero can and cannot fund under the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) scheme. These rules follow the Single Market Programme (SMP) Grant Agreement and the requirements applied by EISMEA for cascade funding.

Eligible activities

BIONetZero can fund activities that **directly support the development, testing, validation, or market readiness of your biosolution**. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

• **Technical development, testing and validation**

Prototype development, optimisation, laboratory or pilot-scale testing, feasibility studies, data collection, validation activities and access to testbeds, pilot facilities, analytical services or compliance assessments.

• **Activities improving market and investment readiness**

Technical adaptation for scale-up, market and customer validation, regulatory alignment, development of commercialisation strategies, business model refinement, and investor-readiness activities.



• **Internationalisation activities (Stage 4)**

Participation in international matchmaking events, conferences, delegation visits, and meetings with potential partners, distributors, or investors in targeted third-country high-growth markets.

• **Stage 1 travel activities**

Travel and accommodation for participation in the mandatory BIONetZero kick-off and networking event.

• **Eligible cost conditions (applies to all grants)**

Costs must:

- Be actual costs incurred and paid by the SME
- Fall within the approved project period
- Be directly linked to the activities in the approved activity plan
- Be documented with invoices, payslips, timesheets and proof of payment
- Exclude refundable VAT

Non-eligible activities

The following activities **cannot** be supported through BIONetZero FSTP funding:

• **Activities not directly related to the biosolution**

Any activity that does not support the development, validation or market preparation of the solution described in your application.

• **Double funding**

Costs or activities already supported under another EU, national or Euroclusters project are not eligible.

• **In-kind contributions**

Unpaid staff time, volunteer work, or undocumented hours cannot count as co-financing.

• **Costs outside the project period**

Expenses incurred before the project start date or after the end date specified in your project contract.

• **Costs not incurred by the SME itself**

Costs must be paid by the beneficiary SME and cannot be paid by a parent company, affiliate or external third party.

• **Refundable VAT and excluded financial costs**

Refundable VAT, fines, penalties, interest charges and exchange losses are not eligible.



- **Subcontracting of core activities**

Core technical or development activities cannot be outsourced unless explicitly justified and approved in advance. Only limited outsourcing of non-core tasks is allowed.

- **Activities that violate EU ethical, legal or conflict-of-interest rules**

All funded activities must comply with applicable EU standards, therefore beneficiaries must accept the obligations outlined in the Grant Agreement in regard to conflict-of-interest rules, confidentiality and security, ethics, visibility, specific rules for carrying out action, information and record-keeping. Definition of 'biosolutions':

2.2 Definition of biosolutions

'Biosolutions can be defined as solutions that combine biology and technology to accelerate the green transition. In other words, biotechnological solutions and products that utilize biological systems, e.g. enzymes, microorganisms and bio-based raw materials, to address challenges across different industries and contribute to lowering the carbon footprint and strengthening resilience and self-sufficiency in Europe'.

2.3 Structure of the programme

The BIONetZero programme is structured as a four-stage acceleration pathway through which European SMEs can receive financial support and tailored services to develop and scale their biosolutions.

The programme consists of the following stages:

- **Stage 1: Ideation Stage (Travel Grant)**
Networking, knowledge exchange and participation in the BIONetZero kick-off programme. Two cohorts of SMEs will participate in kick-off events in 2026 and 2027.
- **Stage 2: Tech Grant (testing and validation activities)**
Selected SMEs may apply for funding to carry out prototype development, testing and validation activities. Applications and activities are expected to take place during 2026–2027.
- **Stage 3: Implementation Grant (scale-up and market readiness activities)**
Funding for further development, technical adaptation and preparation for market entry. Activities are expected to take place during 2026–2028.
- **Stage 4: Internationalisation Booster**
Additional support for selected Implementation Grant beneficiaries to explore international market opportunities in third countries. Activities are expected during the later phase of the programme (2027–2028).

Participation in Stage 1 is mandatory in order to access funding opportunities in the later stages. Progression to subsequent stages is not automatic but subject to further evaluation and selection based on the development stage of the biosolution and the company's performance in the programme.



Interaction with BIONetZero partners, mentors and other SMEs during programme activities forms part of the evaluation process and contributes to identifying companies that may proceed to the following stages.

Throughout the programme SMEs benefit from personalised support from a Key Account Manager (KAM) from one of the four BIONetZero cluster organisations.

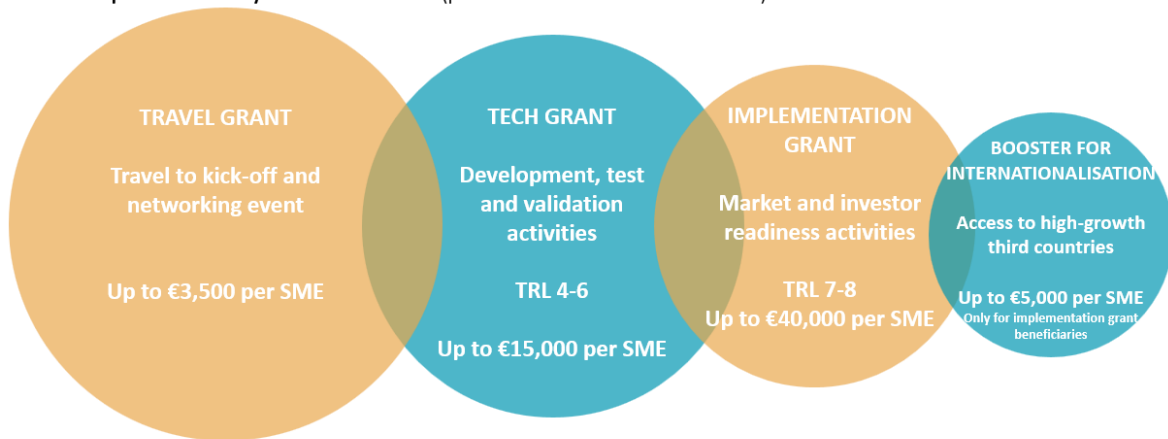
2.3.1 Description of the grants

Grants and overall timeline



Call 1 open from April 09 to June 09, 2026, with cohort kick-off 09 to 11 September 2026
Call 2 open from January 2027 to March 2027 (precise dates will be announced later)

End of project: Summer 2028



Important notes:

- A maximum limit of € 60,000 per SME is in place
- A requirement for co-financing of 25% is in place

BIONetZero Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) – Grants

Ideation Stage - Travel Grant

The BIONetZero journey begins with Stage 1, the ideation stage, where 100 SMEs will be selected across two cohorts of 50. This stage focuses on networking, knowledge exchange, and shaping your concept into a clear roadmap with your BIONetZero key account manager (KAM). Each SME receives a grant of up to €3,500 for actual cost for travel, accommodation and participation in one of two BIONetZero kick-off and networking events to boost their knowledge and network. Acceptance at this stage is necessary to apply for funding for the following stages, but not all ideation stage beneficiaries will receive funding in the following stages. In total, 100 travel grants will be awarded. The ideation phase will take place during a 2 month period. For the first cohort the deadline for application is June 09, 2026, 17:00 pm Central European Time and with kick-off taking place on 07 to 09 of September 2026 in Copenhagen and Odense, Denmark. For the second cohort, the deadline for application will



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be 01 March 2027 and the dates and more details for kick-off will be announced at the same time of before.

Tech Grant (TRL 4-6)

Eligible SMEs that have participated in the kick-off/networking events in the ideation stage and demonstrated strong potential can apply and potentially be awarded a Tech Grant for testing and validation of their technology if their TRL level is between 4-6.

In total, 40 SMEs will receive up to €15,000 to help fund development prototypes, small technical feasibility studies or other technology validation activities. This funding can be spent on activities such as pilot testing, technical assessments, and engaging with experts and mentors with the intention of proving that the technology in question works and has market potential. The testing and validation should take place during a 6 to 8 month window following the previous stage and in accordance with a plan made for each SME aligned with the allocated Key Account Manager.

Implementation Grant (TRL 7-8)

Eligible SMEs at TRL level 7-8 can apply for an Implementation Grant for scale-up and development activities. The 25 most promising SMEs will receive up to €40,000. This funding can support activities like advanced product development, technical adaptation, and market entry strategies. The selected SMEs will also receive business coaching and investor readiness support, helping them prepare for commercialisation and attract private investment. Costs covered can also include scaling production, regulatory compliance, and preparing for international expansion. The scale-up and development activities should take place during a 6 to 8 month window following the previous stage and in accordance with a plan made by each SME aligned with the allocated Key Account Manager.

Internationalisation Booster

BIONetZero beneficiaries of the Implementation Grant who are ready for or interested in internationalisation in high-growth markets outside of the EU can apply for the Internationalisation Booster of up to €5,000. This grant can be used for international networking, market entry strategies, participation in investor matchmaking events, or similar activities. The goal is to help SMEs position their solutions globally and secure partnerships in third countries. The internationalization booster stage follows the previous stage and is expected to be completed during a 2 to 8 month window within the overall timeframe of the BioNetZero program ending Q3 2028 and according to a plan by each SME aligned with the allocated Key Account Manager.



2.4 TIMELINE

Year	Stages
2026	<p>The first call will open for Stage 1 on April 09, 2026, with deadline for application on June 09, 2026.</p> <p>Out 100 applicants or more, 50 SMEs will be selected for the first cohort which is to meet in Denmark on September 7 to 10, 2026 (travel costs paid by Stage 1 grant).</p> <p>Following Stage 1, selected SMEs will be invited to apply for Stage 2 (Tech Grant) and Stage 3 (Implementation Grant).</p>
2027	<p>The second call for Stage 1 will open in January (planned week 1) with deadline for application on mid to ultimo March 2027, and 50 SMEs will be selected for the second cohort (meeting time and place TBD, planned to be hosted by CLIB in Germany).</p> <p>Selection and application for Stages 2, 3 and 4.</p>
2028	All activities must be concluded and reported by end of July.

2.5 WHO CAN APPLY

2.5.1 Small and medium sized companies (SMEs)

The target group for BIONetZero is European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating and/or developing biosolutions within the agrifood sector and energy-intensive industries across Europe.

If you are unsure if your company qualifies as a Small and Medium Sized Enterprise you can do a self-evaluation using the European Commission’s self-assessment tool, the [SME Wizard](#).

IMPORTANT: Some things that can influence your SME status:

- **An investor** may affect your SME status if their ownership stake gives them significant control or influence. Investors holding more than 25% can classify your company as a partner enterprise, and those with controlling influence can classify it as a linked enterprise—both of which require consolidation of their data with yours.



- You may not qualify as an SME if you belong to a **larger corporate group**. SME eligibility requires including data from parent companies, subsidiaries, and other linked or partner enterprises, not just your own entity's figures.
- Exceeding either the turnover or the balance-sheet threshold disqualifies you.
- Your employee count must include all staff converted into annual work units (AWUs)—this means part-time, seasonal, and temporary workers must be included.
- SME status usually requires meeting thresholds over two consecutive accounting periods, unless a simplified rule applies. Relying only on last year's numbers may lead to an incorrect conclusion.

2.5.2 Pre-commercial or not

The BIONetZero programme is both for startups with no revenue yet and more established SMEs with commercial activities. When evaluating the applications we look at the biosolutions in question. We can only support development, validation and scaling of pre-commercial biosolutions, but the SME that applies may have other commercial products or activities. This does not disqualify, but having a revenue stream is not a requirement either.

2.5.3 Eligible countries

Eligible countries for financial support under BIONetZero include all EU Member States and countries participating in the Single Market Programme (SMP).

The list of [eligible countries](#) includes the EU member states, EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) and associated countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Kosovo).

2.6 REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING FUNDING

The following terms apply for receiving funding in BIONetZero – **please read carefully**:

- Beneficiaries are required to participate in the kick-off and networking activities to receive payment in Stage 1 and be eligible for the following stages. **Please reserve the dates September from 07 to 10, 2026 to visit Denmark in case you are accepted into the programme.**
- Companies may receive a maximum of €60,000 in total financial support through the BIONetZero programme. BIONetZero is designed as a four-stage funding pathway, and progression from one stage to the next is subject to further selection. The total amount awarded to any SME across all stages may not exceed €60,000.
- **Cofinancing of 25% is required.** More specifically, the Beneficiaries must contribute **25% co-financing** to their project.
- **Monitoring of co-financing**



To comply with EU requirements, the beneficiary and the BIONetZero coordination team will **follow up on co-financing throughout the project**. Co-financing levels will be checked during financial reporting and must be fully documented before final payment can be made.

- Grant periods: Tech Grant and Internationalisation Booster activity periods may last up to 6 months. Implementation Grant activity periods may last up to 9 months.
- The entity that applies **must be a small and medium sized enterprise** with biosolutions technologies that are between TRL levels 4-8 at the time of application. If the beneficiary is subsequently determined not to fulfil the SME eligibility requirements, the coordinator (Food & Bio Cluster Denmark) can demand reimbursement of the financial support provided.
- Signing of a project contract by the authorized signatory after receiving the grant letter is a requirement for receiving funding.
- To receive funding after completion of project activities you are required to fill in an evaluation [questionnaire](#) to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) about the services that you have received in the BIONetZero programme.
- SMEs may receive funding from multiple Euroclusters projects at a time but must make sure to avoid double funding the support must not be allocated to the same technology or specific solution.
- Beneficiaries receiving financial support must comply with the relevant obligations of the Grant Agreement, including rules on conflict of interest, confidentiality, ethics, visibility of EU funding, reporting, and record-keeping.

3 HOW TO APPLY

3.1 APPLICATION PLATFORM

Applications can be submitted via BIONetZero's application platform¹:

[LINK](#) to the BIONetZero application platform

The linked version serves as an example of the intended application process and functionality and is subject to further refinement.

Filling in the application should take approximately 30 minutes. It requires answering a few questions – some check boxes – and uploading a pitch deck (PowerPoint/PDF) for your

¹ See Appendix 39



company and biosolutions(s). You can upload an existing pitch deck or download the template from the platform and fill it in. **Applications must be submitted in English.**

If you choose to upload an existing pitch deck, please make sure the following information is included:

- **Purpose** – Describe the fundamental reason your company exists and the long-term change you aim to create in the world.
- **Problem** – Explain the specific pain point or unmet need your target customers face, and why it is significant.
- **Solution incl. source of moat** – Present your product or service and clarify what makes it defensible (technology, data, partnerships, IP, network effects, etc.).
- **Why now?** – Show the key trends, market shifts, or technological enablers that make this the right moment for your solution to succeed.
- **Business Model** – Outline how you make money, including pricing, revenue streams, and customer lifetime value assumptions.
- **Market Size** – Quantify the opportunity by describing:
 - The Total Addressable Market (TAM) - The entire demand for your product or service if you had 100% market share.
 - The Serviceable Addressable Market (SAM) - The portion of the TAM you can realistically serve with your business model, technology, geography, certifications, etc.
 - The Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM) - The segment of the SAM that you can capture in the short-to-medium term, given competition, capacity, and go-to-market strategy.
- **Competition** – Identify existing alternatives and competitors and clearly show how you differ or outperform them.
- **Go to market strategy** – Explain how you acquire, onboard, and retain customers, including channels, partnerships, and sales strategy.
- **Team** – Highlight the core team members, their relevant experience, and why they are uniquely suited to win in this market.
- **Traction** – Present your measurable progress so far (customers, revenue, pilots, product milestones, partnerships).
- **Plan for the coming 12–24 months** – Give a clear roadmap of upcoming milestones, priorities, and what success looks like over the next 1–2 years.
- **The Ask (if you are in the process of fundraising)** – Specify how much capital you are raising and what it will be used for (runway, hires, product development, market expansion).



3.2 OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING APPLICATION

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the information provided in the electronic application system is correct, that the necessary attachments are included, that the content is accurate, and that the application is submitted before the deadline.

BIONetZero will generally not obtain additional information for the processing of the application. Likewise, supplementary material and other documentation submitted together with the application, beyond the specified application material, will generally not be included in the application assessment.

The applicant is obligated to inform BIONetZero immediately if significant changes occur to the submitted information, including if funding for the project or parts of the project has been awarded from another funding programme.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that they comply with the [EU small and medium sized company definition](#) which is a fundamental requirement for being eligible for funding in BIONetZero.

3.3 WHEN CAN WE EXPECT A RESPONSE TO OUR APPLICATION

You can expect a response to your application 1-2 months after the deadline for submission of applications. The response will be sent to the e-mail address of the contact person listed in the application.

4 WHAT HAPPENS IF WE ARE ACCEPTED INTO THE BIONETZERO PROGRAMME

After you receive the grant letter the following steps will happen:

- You will receive a project contract which must be signed by the authorized signatory of the company and returned to Food & Bio Cluster Denmark within 3 weeks.
- You book your travels to Denmark for the designated dates for the BIONetZero kick-off and networking events September 7-10. The travel costs will be covered by the up to €3,500 travel grant – payments will be made after the activities are completed and costs are reported to Food & Bio Cluster Denmark in the proper reporting format.
- You will receive a travel guide with a programme, hotel recommendations and other relevant information along with your grant letter.
- Minimum one representative of the beneficiary company attends the kick-off and networking activities in Denmark.



4.1 ARE WE GUARANTEED FURTHER FUNDING IF WE GET ACCEPTED

All applicants that are accepted into the BIONetZero programme will receive up to €3,500 travel grant to travel to the networking and kick-off event. Further funding is not guaranteed for everyone.

Attending the kick-off event is mandatory because BIONetZero is not just a funding programme, it is an acceleration programme where funding is accompanied by other support services from the BIONetZero partners and external mentors, and where the networking with BIONetZero partners and other beneficiaries from across Europe is part of the value.

You will be assigned a BIONetZero Key Account Manager (KAM) and the interactions during that week will be part of the evaluation process and partly form the basis for who will proceed to the next stages and receive further funding.

Apart from the personal impression of the team behind the application, there will be a formal application procedure within the programme when you determine together with the KAM which of BIONetZero's grants is most suitable for your needs and development stage.

4.2 WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE REQUIRED IN APPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER FUNDING

To proceed in the programme and be awarded further funding grants on top of the travel grant you will need to apply and a budget and activity plan specifying activities, the timeline, milestones to be achieved and the allocated budget for each activity.

Depending on which type of grant is relevant for you the additional information below will be required:

4.2.1 Stage 2 – Tech Grant (development, test and validation activities)

- What prototype or technical feasibility activities do you plan to implement with the grant, and what are your targeted TRL advancements?
- Describe the core hypotheses you aim to validate (technical performance, stability, scalability, etc.).
- Which external experts, validation sites, or testing facilities (if any) will you involve, and why are they relevant?
- What are the expected measurable outputs/milestones (data, test results, benchmarks) that will demonstrate feasibility?
- How will the results of the validation activities feed into your plan for scaleup and market readiness?
- What external skills, experience and input do you need to succeed and how can BIONetZero help?
- Additional comments or information



4.2.2 Stage 3 – Implementation Grant (market and investor readiness activities)

- What is the problem or question you want to address with this grant? E.g. scale up, compliance, investments, product-market fit, validation of go-to-market plan, etc.
- What are the measurable results (milestones) you want to achieve?
- What are the activities you plan to do to achieve these results and bring your biosolution closer towards the market?
- Which partnerships or value chain actors are you planning to involve (e.g. manufacturers, potential customers, etc.)?
- What external skills, experience and/or input do you need to succeed and how can BIONetZero help?
- Additional comments or information

4.2.3 Stage 4 – Internationalisation Booster

- Which third country high-growth market (outside EU) do you want to target and why have you chosen it?
- Which potential partners, investors, distributors, or networks have you already identified? Or do you plan to use this grant to identify potential partners?
- Which activities do you plan to do with this grant and when? E.g. exhibitions, conferences, delegation trips, matchmaking events, personal meetings, etc.
- What are your expected outcomes (e.g., pilot deployments, partnerships, distribution agreements) from the activities in the internationalisation booster?
- Additional comments or information?

The submitted applications will be evaluated by the BIONetZero evaluation committee and the project's external evaluators. Grants will be awarded based on the evaluation scores combined with the key account managers' impressions of the teams from the personal interaction during and after the kick-off/networking activities.

4.3 CAN WE APPLY FOR SEVERAL OR ALL THE GRANTS

When applying for the Tech and Implementation Grants the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the biosolution in question determines which one you can apply for. It is possible to apply for consecutive grants in the following cases:

- If you apply for and are awarded a Tech Grant (TRL 4-6) and advance to TRL 7 during the project period, you can potentially apply for an Implementation Grant following completion of activities in the Tech Grant activity plan.
- If you apply for and are awarded an Implementation Grant you can apply for the Internationalisation Booster as well which is only for Implementation Grant beneficiaries.



5 REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR BENEFICIARIES

5.1 TECHNICAL REPORTING

The following rules apply for technical reporting in BIONetZero:

Travel Grants:

No requirement of technical a technical report, but participation in the activities is a requirement for obtaining the BIONetZero funding awarded.

Tech Grants, Implementation Grants and Internationalisation Booster:

To obtain the funding technical reports documenting the progress of the activities and the achievement of the milestones specified in the in the Budget and Activity Plan must be submitted at the requested deadlines. This will be done in a simple Word template.

Reporting no 1: A midway report halfway through the project period specified in the budget and activity plan and report on the progress and milestone achievement.

Reporting no. 2: A final report within one month of concluding the activities defined in the budget and activity plan.

5.2 FINANCIAL REPORTING

To obtain funding, the beneficiary must document their costs and co-financing by submitting financial reports.

Travel grant:

After participation in the networking events, the actual costs must be reported in the designated template for financial reporting². After the financial report is approved the money will be paid to the beneficiary.

Tech grant, Implementation grant and Internationalisation Booster:

The beneficiaries must send financial reports quarterly to Food & Bio Cluster Denmark to obtain their funding. The following terms for reporting eligible costs:

- All costs must be reported as actual costs

² See Appendix 3



- Other costs must be documented with invoices and proof of payment
- All costs must be incurred by the beneficiary
- All costs must be incurred in the period set out in the project contract
- All costs must be related to the project activities
- OBS: Refundable VAT is not an eligible cost

Information and templates for technical and financial reporting will be available online via the following link: [Project documents](#)

How will the funding be paid:

- All BIONetZero grants: The money is paid after completion of project activities, submission and approval of the final report and documentation for co-funding.
- Travel Grants: Paid after participation in the kick-off and networking event for the relevant cohort and reporting of the actual costs of the trip to Food & Bio Cluster Denmark in the proper reporting format.
- Payment conditions for Tech Grant, Implementation Grant and Internationalisation Booster: Payments are linked to the agreed milestones and deliverables. If these are not met payment reductions may occur.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

All stage 1 applications submitted to BIONetZero are evaluated – and later re-evaluated – by the BIONetZero Evaluation Committee together with external experts using a transparent scoring framework. Each application is assessed across six core criteria that collectively reflect the maturity, feasibility, impact potential, and scalability of both the innovation and the SME.

Each criterion is scored on a scale from 1 to 5 using whole numbers only, where 1 indicates insufficient and 5 indicates excellent. Weighted scoring determines the applicant's overall ranking, while qualitative input from evaluators ensures that each applicant receives constructive and meaningful feedback grounded in expert assessment.

In case of a tie (ex aequo) between two or more proposals with the same final score, priority will be given to proposals according to the following:

Tie-Breaking Procedure (Ex Aequo Cases)

If two or more applications have the **same final weighted score**, the BIONetZero Evaluation Committee will use the following tie-breaking procedure to ensure fairness and transparency:



- a. **Higher score in “Problem & Market Need”**
Priority is given to the application with the higher score in the “Problem & Market Need” criterion, as this reflects clarity of need and market relevance.
- b. **Higher score in “Innovation Quality & Technical Feasibility”**
If the tie persists, the application demonstrating stronger innovation maturity, feasibility and development potential receives priority.
- c. **Contribution to portfolio diversity (market, technology, geography)**
If two proposals remain tied, the Evaluation Committee may prioritise the application that contributes to **overall programme diversity**, considering factors such as:
 - o technology domain or biosolution type
 - o target market segment or industry
 - o geographical spread across the EU and SMP-eligible countries
This ensures that the selected cohort reflects a broad and balanced representation of Europe’s biosolutions landscape, while fully respecting equal treatment principles.
- d. **Evaluator consensus based on qualitative justification**
If a tie persists, the Evaluation Committee will reach a decision based on a short, documented consensus justification grounded in the qualitative comments of external evaluators. This ensures that decisions remain transparent, proportionate, and traceable.
- e. **Random selection (last resort only)**
If none of the above criteria resolves the tie, a random selection procedure will be applied. This complies with common EU funding practice and ensures neutrality when proposals are otherwise indistinguishable.

Applicants may request a review of the evaluation procedure if they believe a procedural error has occurred. Requests must be submitted within 30 calendar days after notification of the results to sag@foodbiocluster.dk. The review will address procedural aspects only and will not involve a re-evaluation of the proposal.

1. Problem & Market Need (20%)

Assesses how clearly the applicant defines the problem and whether the market need is well-substantiated. Strong applications demonstrate a solid understanding of the pain point, its industry relevance, and why it matters now. A clear plan or roadmap for addressing the need through product development and market entry strengthens the score.

2. Solution & Technology (20%)



Evaluates the novelty, technical foundation, and maturity of the biosolution in question. High-scoring applications show strong scientific or technological grounding, clear differentiation from alternatives, and credible potential to advance the green transition. Early validation and technological defensibility further improve the rating.

3. Development Stage & Plan (10%)

Considers the current TRL level and the realism of the development plan. Although weighted lower, the plan must still demonstrate that proposed activities are achievable within BIONetZero and that programme support will meaningfully advance the solution. Applicants should clarify how funding will enable progress.

4. Team, Plan & Execution Capacity (25%)

Assesses the team's ability to execute, including technical and commercial competencies, relevant experience, and role clarity. Strong submissions present coherent work plans, credible execution strategies, and a team capable of delivering milestones. Engagement during programme activities and collaboration potential are also considered. The programme supports the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities in the supported activities.

5. Impact Aligned with EU Goals (10%)

Evaluates the biosolution's alignment with EU priorities such as the Green Deal, Circular Economy Action Plan, and the Net-Zero Industry Act. Priority is given to solutions with clear potential for CO₂ reduction, resource efficiency, circularity, reduced dependency on critical raw materials, and European sustainability goals.

6. Market Opportunity & Scalability (15%)

Assesses commercial potential, including market size, competitiveness, scalability, and go-to-market readiness. Strong applications demonstrate understanding of TAM/SAM/SOM³, competitive positioning, and realistic scaling pathways.

Overall Recommendation

After scoring all criteria, evaluators issue an overall recommendation:

Yes / Yes with reservations / Uncertain / No.

6.2 WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE LARGER GRANTS (STAGES 2-4)

³ Total Addressable Market/Serviceable Addressable Market/The Serviceable Obtainable Market



Only the 2 × 50 SMEs that have received Stage 1 funding and participated in the kick-off activities are considered for these grants. It is not possible to apply without having been accepted to Stage 1.

To identify BIONetZero SMEs best suited for the larger grants in stages 2-4, a structured and hands-on evaluation process is applied during and after the obligatory kick-off and networking events September 7-10 in Denmark. During the workshops, all startups are re-evaluated onsite by external experts and internal mentors using the same criteria as in the original application, ensuring consistency and fairness. This involves revisiting each company's submitted materials while observing their progress, clarity of strategy, and engagement.

To ensure sector relevance, the SMEs are divided into small thematic groups ("mini-camps") of 5–8 companies, organised by technology and development stage, market maturity, and industry segment.

Each group is matched with internal key account managers and external experts/mentors with relevant sector knowledge.

After the workshop, these mentors meet in a joint Evaluation Committee session to revisit ratings, validate development plans, compare performance, and nominate the companies best positioned to apply for the Tech and Implementation grants respectively.

6.3 FORMAL APPLICATION PROCESS FOR THE LARGER GRANTS

The following information and documents will be required for BIONetZero participants moving on to apply for the larger grants:

Stage 2 – Tech Grant (development, test and validation activities)

- What prototype or technical feasibility activities do you plan to implement with the grant, and what are your targeted TRL advancements?
- Describe the core hypotheses you aim to validate (technical performance, stability, scalability, etc.).
- Which external experts, validation sites, or testing facilities will you involve, and why are they relevant?
- What are the expected measurable outputs/milestones (data, test results, benchmarks) that will demonstrate feasibility?
- How will the results of the validation activities feed into your plan for scaleup and market readiness?
- What external skills, experience and input do you need to succeed and how can BIONetZero help?
- Additional comments or information relevant for the application?



- Budget and Activity plan⁴ must be included.

Stage 3 – Implementation Grant (market and investor readiness activities)

- What is the problem or question you want to address with this grant? E.g. scale up, compliance, investments, product-market fit, validation of go-to-market plan, etc.
- What are the measurable results (milestones) you want to achieve?
- What are the activities you plan to do to achieve these results and bring your biosolution towards market readiness?
- Which partnerships or valuechain actors are you planning to involve (e.g. manufacturers, potential customers, etc.)?
- What external skills, experience and input do you need to succeed and how can BIONetZero help?
- Additional comments or information relevant for the application?
- Budget and Activity plan must be included.

Stage 4 – Internationalisation Booster (only for Stage 3 beneficiaries)

- Which third country market (outside EU) do you want to target and why have you chosen it?
- Which potential partners, investors, distributors, or networks have you already identified? Or do you plan to use this grant to identify potential partners?
- Which activities do you plan to do with this grant and when? E.g. exhibitions, conferences, delegation trips, matchmaking events, personal meetings.
- What are your expected outcomes (e.g., pilot deployments, partnerships, distribution agreements) from the activities in the internationalisation booster?
- Additional comments or information relevant for the application?
- Budget and Activity plan must be included.

6.4 FOLLOW-UP PROCESS FOR TECH AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANT BENEFICIARIES

SMEs receiving a Tech Grant or Implementation Grant are monitored continuously. Each company collaborates with its Key Account Manager (KAM) and reports progress, milestones, activities, and results as defined in its grant activity plan.

Using the same evaluation criteria, BIONetZero identifies the companies that show the strongest development and internationalisation potential. High-performing SMEs may be





⁴ See Appendix 1- the same template is used for all grants



invited to apply for the Internationalisation Booster (€5,000), provided they have not exceeded the total programme cap of €60,000.

High-performing SMEs will be invited to apply for the Internationalisation Booster (€5,000), provided they have not exceeded the total programme cap of €60,000.

7 MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Partners	Short name
 Food & Bio Cluster Denmark	Food & Bio Cluster Denmark FBCD
	LITMEA Smart Food Cluster LITMEA/SFC
	Cluster Industrial Biotechnology CLIB
	Bioeconomy Cluster BEC

CONTACT US:  [BIONETZero project](#)

8 APPENDICES



8.1 APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLE OF BUDGET AND ACTIVITY PLAN

Budget and Activity Form BIONetZero

Grant applied for	<i>Tech Grant (€15,000), Implementation Grant (€40,000), or Internationalisation Booster (€5,000) (Delete those not relevant for this application)</i>			
Company				
PIC (if any)				
VAT number				
Activities	Timeline	Description	Milestones	Budget
No.	<i>Please specify the when the activity will take place (date - date)</i>	<i>Please describe the activities you plan to do with the grant</i>	<i>What milestones do you plan to achieve</i>	<i>Budget allocated to the activity in €</i>
1	<i>E.g. 01.02.27 - 01.04.27</i>	<i>Material selection and initial compatibility testing</i>	<i>POC demonstration that bio-pigment can be formulated into plastic</i>	<i>5.300,00</i>
2	<i>E.g. 01.04.27 - 01.10.27</i>	<i>Formulation development and optimisation</i>	<i>Application of bio-pigment in plastics</i>	<i>6.700,00</i>
3	<i>01.10.27 - 01.02.28</i>	<i>Product prototyping</i>	<i>Product prototypes demonstrate that the bio-pigment works in plastics</i>	<i>6.700,00</i>
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Etc.				
Total budget incl. 25% co-financing				18.700,00
Funding from BIONetZero				14.960,00




BIONetZero

Co-funded by the European Union





8.2 APPENDIX 2: FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION FORM FOR BENEFICIARIES



FINANCIAL IDENTIFICATION

PRIVACY STATEMENT https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/privacy_statement_en.pdf
 By submitting this form, you acknowledge that you have been informed about the processing of your personal data by the European Commission for accounting and contractual purposes.

Please use CAPITAL LETTERS and LATIN CHARACTERS when filling in the form.

BANKING DETAILS ①

ACCOUNT NAME ②

IBAN/ACCOUNT NUMBER ③

CURRENCY

BIC/SWIFT CODE BRANCH CODE ④

BANK NAME

ADDRESS OF BANK BRANCH

STREET & NUMBER

TOWN/CITY POSTCODE

COUNTRY

ACCOUNT HOLDER'S DATA
AS DECLARED TO THE BANK

ACCOUNT HOLDER

STREET & NUMBER

TOWN/CITY POSTCODE

COUNTRY

REMARK

BANK STAMP + SIGNATURE OF BANK REPRESENTATIVE ⑤	DATE (Obligatory)
	SIGNATURE OF ACCOUNT HOLDER (Obligatory)

① Enter the final bank data and not the data of the intermediary bank.
 ② This does not refer to the type of account. The account name is usually the one of the account holder. However, the account holder may have chosen to give a different name to its bank account.
 ③ Fill in the IBAN Code (International Bank Account Number) if it exists in the country where your bank is established
 ④ Only applicable for US (ABA code), for AU/NZ (BSB code) and for CA (Transit code). Does not apply for other countries.
 ⑤ It is preferable to attach a copy of RECENT bank statement. Please note that the bank statement has to confirm all the information listed above under 'ACCOUNT NAME', 'ACCOUNT NUMBER/IBAN' and 'BANK NAME'. With an attached statement, the stamp of the bank and the date are ALWAYS mandatory.



8.3 APPENDIX 3: BIONETZERO APPLICATION PLATFORM (STAGE 1)

The information below will be coded into the online application platform before the first call opens. We will request the following information:

1. Basic Information

- Company name
- Year of establishment
- Country
- Website
- Contact person (name + role)
- Email
- Phone

How did you hear about BioNetZero? (Drop down menu)

(X) Please confirm that the company you represent is a Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) according to European Commission definition ([link](#))

(X) Please confirm that you can join the mandatory kick off on September 07 to 10, 2026 in Copenhagen and Odense in Denmark.

2. One-liner:

The problem you are solving (max 5 lines):

Your solution you are building (max 5 lines):

(X): The innovation you bring into BioNetzero is our core business area and industry (Yes/No)

3. Targeted industry/industries (feel free to tick more than one box)

(X) Agriculture

(X) Food industry

(X) Energy intensive industries

(X) Other: Write text...

4. Development Stage – Indicated your stage (drop down menu)

TRL – Technology Readiness Level

- TRL 1: Basic Principles Observed



- TRL 2: Technology Concept Formulated
- TRL 3: Experimental Proof of Concept
- TRL 4: Technology Validated in Lab
- TRL 5: Technology Validated in Relevant Environment
- TRL 6: Technology Demonstrated in Relevant Environment
- TRL 7: System Prototype Demonstrated in Operational Environment
- TRL 8 System Completed and Qualified
- TRL 9: Actual System Proven in Operational Environment (commercial)

MRL – Market Readiness Level

- MRL 1: Basic Market Research
- MRL 2: Market Opportunity Defined
- MRL 3: Market Analysis Completed
- MRL 4: Initial Business Model Developed
- MRL 5: Business Model Validated (first potential clients/users involved)
- MRL 6: Go-to-Market Strategy Defined
- MRL 7: Market Entry Prepared
- MRL 8: Market Entry Executed (first sales)
- MRL 9: Market Expansion (scaling to broader markets)

Main traction points/milestones achieved: (Freedom to elaborate on the models above)

	Insert text
<p>Market: First paying customers or pilots. LOIs or strong customer pipeline. Clear willingness-to-pay validated. Partnerships with distributors, processors, utilities, or cooperatives.</p>	
<p>Solution/Technology/IP? Proven pilot results (yield, efficiency, CO₂ impact). Patents filed/granted or proprietary strains/processes. MVP working in operational environment. Certifications or regulatory approvals underway.</p>	
<p>Team Founders with sector experience (agri, food, energy).</p>	



Strong advisory board with industry experts. Key hires for tech or commercial roles. Founders with prior exits or scale-up experience.	
Funding Grants secured (e.g., EU, IFD, GUDP). Soft commitments/interest from VCs. Completed pre-seed/seed round. Co-funding or in-kind support for pilots.	

5. BIONetZero grants

If you are awarded funding after stage 1, what do you want to spend the Tech Grant and/or Implementation Grant for?

Remember to include examples:

Tick off box of which types of Grants you are interested in:

(X) Tech Grant (TRL 4-6)

(X) Implementation Grant (TRL 7-8)

(X) Internationalisation Booster (must be combined with Implementation Grant)

TEXT

(X) "I confirm that I have not previously received, nor am I currently receiving, any other EU funding for my proposed project/activities (no double financing).

6. Team

- Number of employees
- Number of founders and/or core team members with relevant technology experience
- Number of founders and/or core team members with relevant commercial experience
- LinkedIn 1
- LinkedIn 2
- LinkedIn 3

7. Financial Status & Traction

Revenue today? Yes/No

Funding raised until now:

- Soft funding



- Private capital
- None

Please outline your anticipated funding timeline (e.g., pre-seed, seed, Series A) and the key milestones associated with each stage. Additionally, indicate how funding from BioNetZero would specifically support your progress.

TEXT

8. Impact

Please indicate impact you expect to achieve with one or more of the following in mind:

1. Contribution to the Green Transition & European Strategic Goals:
 - (X) Europe's transition to a sustainable, resource-efficient, bio-based economy
 - (X) Reduced reliance on fossil-based inputs
 - (X) Climate neutrality and alignment with the European Green Deal, EU Bioeconomy Strategy, and relevant SDGs (particularly SDGs 2, 3, 9, 12, 13)
 - (X) Sustainable production and consumption patterns

TEXT

2. Strengthening SME Competitiveness, Growth & Market Readiness - Please demonstrate participating in BIONetZero will:
 - (X) Strengthen your company's innovation and development capabilities
 - (X) Increase your readiness for investment (business case, scalability, market potential)
 - (X) Support access to new European or international markets

TEXT

3. Societal & Environmental Impact - Describe measurable positive impacts in areas such as:
 - (X) Sustainable agriculture and food security
 - (X) Improved health and consumer safety
 - (X) Reduced environmental impact and contribution to circularity and/or biodiversity

TEXT

9. Risks

Top 3 risks (e.g. commercial, regulatory, financial, technological):



- ...
- ...
- ...

TEXT

10. Upload pitch deck (download template or submit an existing pitch deck)

It should include the following information:

- **Purpose** – Describe the fundamental reason your company exists and the long-term change you aim to create in the world.
- **Problem** – Explain the specific pain point or unmet need your target customers face, and why it is significant.
- **Solution incl. source of moat** – Present your product or service and clarify what makes it defensible (technology, data, partnerships, IP, network effects, etc.).
- **Why now?** – Show the key trends, market shifts, or technological enablers that make this the right moment for your solution to succeed.
- **Business Model** – Outline how you make money, including pricing, revenue streams, and customer lifetime value assumptions.
- **Market Size** – Quantify the opportunity by describing TAM/SAM/SOM and demonstrating that this is a large and growing market.
- **Competition** – Identify existing alternatives and competitors, and clearly show how you differ or outperform them.
- **Go to market strategy** – Explain how you acquire, onboard, and retain customers, including channels, partnerships, and sales strategy.
- **Team** – Highlight the core team members, their relevant experience, and why they are uniquely suited to win in this market.
- **Traction** – Present your measurable progress so far (customers, revenue, pilots, product milestones, partnerships).
- **Plan for the coming 12–24 months** – Give a clear roadmap of upcoming milestones, priorities, and what success looks like over the next 1–2 years.
- **The Ask** (if you are in the process of fundraising) – Specify how much capital you are raising and what it will be used for (runway, hires, product development, market expansion).

11. Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

BioNetZero follows Food & Bio Cluster Denmark's data policy to ensure responsible handling of all personal data. [Link](#) to how Food & Bio Cluster Denmark handles your data.

(X) I confirm that I have read and agree with Food & Bio Cluster Denmark data policy.



BioNetZero – Evaluation sheet during application phase

1. Problem & Market Need (1-5) – counts 20%

Comments:

2. Solution & Technology (1-5) – counts 20%

Comments:

3. Development Stage & Plan (1-5) – counts 10%

Comments:

4. Team, Plan & Execution (1-5) – counts 25%

Comments:

5. Impact aligned with EU goals... (1-5) –counts 10%

Comments:

6. Market Opportunity & Scalability (1-5) counts 15%

Comments:

Overall recommendation: Yes / Yes w. reservations / Uncertain / No

Total score /30

Evaluation sheet to be used for assessment in accordance with the items and criteria above is planned to be made and ready in September 2026.