



**Deliverable 3.3 | Recommendations for policy-makers involved in acceleration and business growth**



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<b>Abstract</b>
The purpose of this document is to provide recommendations for policy-making based on the conclusions of previous Food-scalEU project activities such as co-creation and pilot improved business acceleration services and dissemination, aiming to suggest policy and strategic improvements to better support business acceleration and growth.



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Objectives

This document provides policy makers involved in acceleration and business growth with insights and recommendations that can help to create agrifood digital innovation ecosystems where innovative businesses can operate in a favourable environment that can secure their ability to grow and scale up.

The goal is to inform and guide the development of **policies that support digital innovation ecosystems in the agri-food sector** with high quality business acceleration services, particularly in emerging and moderate innovator European regions<sup>1</sup>. This report serves as a strategic document to enhance policy frameworks, ensuring they are conducive to fostering innovation, collaboration, business growth, job creation and sustainable development within the agri-food digital sector.

Recommendations are based on the findings from the implementation of the Food-scalEU project and the experience of the project partners in providing business acceleration services and managing acceleration programmes

## 1.2 Project overview

Food-scalEU is a collaborative project involving 10 organisations from 11 regions in 5 European countries, targeting both emerging and leading innovator regions. Participating organisations include: ASOCIACION CLUSTER ALIMENTARIO DE GALICIA (**CLUSAGA**) and CENTRO EUROPEO DE EMPRESAS E INNOVACION DE NAVARRA SL (**CEIN**) in Spain; KOZEP-DUNANTULI REGIONALIS INNOVACIOS UGYNOKSEG NONPROFIT KFT (**CTRIA**) in Hungary; FOOD-PROCESSING INITIATIVE (**FPI**) in Germany; **FOODVALLEY** and AGRIFOOD CAPITAL BV (**AFC**) in the Netherlands; POLE EUROPEEN INNOVATION ALIMENTATION BIEN-ETRE NATURALITE (**Innov'Alliance**), **VALORIAL**, TECHNOPOLE QUIMPER CORNOUAILLE (**TQC**), and **NORMANDIE INCUBATION** in France.

The vision of the Food-scalEU project is to strengthen European regional agri-food digital innovation ecosystems, particularly in emerging and moderate innovator regions, making them more connected, effective, impactful, resilient, and internationally recognized.

More specifically, the mission of Food-scalEU project is to:

- develop higher quality business acceleration services in agri-food digital innovation ecosystems of emerging and moderate innovator regions;

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<sup>1</sup>According to the regional innovation scoreboard published by the EC [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/statistics/performance-indicators/regional-innovation-scoreboard\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/statistics/performance-indicators/regional-innovation-scoreboard_en)



- expand the connections, knowledge, exchange, collaboration at regional, European and international level, between key people representing the different actors of the agri-food digital innovation ecosystems involved in the project; and
- balance the scaling-up of startups and SMEs and the creation of local high-value added jobs in the European regions involved in the project, by balancing the capacity of agri-food digital innovation and acceleration ecosystems in those regions.

During project implementation, partners successfully **co-designed and piloted 5 new or improved business acceleration services**. By implementing these improved services (as pilot experience) in emerging and moderate innovator regions, each in collaboration with at least one leader/strong innovator region, the project tested service adaptation and joint implementation. In addition, a further pilot was organised and run by strong innovator regions on building living lab connections.

A Food-Tech Living Lab Development Webinar Series was launched in response to the Food-scalEU project's discussions on the need for real-life testing environments for food-tech start-ups. Organized by AgriFood Capital, the series connected regional innovation actors across the EU, sharing lessons learned and promoting new technologies. It aimed to inform, inspire, and facilitate discussions among Food-scalEU partners, regional innovation actors, and accelerator service providers interested in Living Labs.

The webinars established a common foundation for discussion, fostering understanding and learning by addressing key topics such as infrastructure, stakeholder engagement, funding, and sustainability. Key takeaways emphasized stakeholder inclusion, trust, governance, and adapting Living Lab methodologies to local contexts. The series successfully built valuable partnerships within the Food-scalEU framework.

### 1.3 Methodology for gathering Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

The lessons learnt and experiences from the execution of the project - especially from the analysis of the regional acceleration ecosystems, the exchanges with different acceleration stakeholders, and the piloting of new or improved acceleration services - project combined with the experience amassed by the project partners from providing business acceleration services and managing acceleration programmes, provide a foundation for the recommendations.

They were gathered and analysed using a collaborative and structured approach, focusing on **project definition, process, impact, and proposals for improvement**. This methodology ensured a comprehensive evaluation and provided clear and actionable recommendations.

A series of three online workshops were held with the participation of the different partners of the consortium. In these workshops, the different elements of the project were



discussed, good practices, challenges and lessons learnt were analysed, and the resulting recommendations were considered.

In addition, information from the monthly monitoring meetings during the implementation of the pilot projects in the different regions has been used.

## 2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of challenges and best practices from the Food-scalEUp project has culminated in a series of lessons learnt and recommendations for business acceleration providers and policy makers.

**Lessons learnt and recommendations for business acceleration providers**, as well as for other key actors in acceleration ecosystems are gathered in [“Recommendations for business acceleration providers”](#)

**Recommendations for policy makers** are gathered in this document. They have been written using a thematic approach, focusing on specific areas such as **ecosystem collaboration and partnership, integration and long-term sustainability and knowledge sharing and communication**.

### ECOSYSTEM COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

#### Recommendations for policy makers

- Engage early in the design and implementation phases in collaboration with stakeholders of the ecosystem to align initiatives with regional policies.
- Promote transparency and consistent communication with acceleration and scaling up stakeholders to build trust and engagement.
- Identify appropriate forums to interact with actors involved in acceleration and scaling up programmes, gather feedback, and use this information for policy development in a collaborative manner.
- Inform about regulatory challenges early in the process and contribute to proactive mitigation strategies, minimizing disruptions and ensuring compliance.
- Align business acceleration and growth strategy with the needs of SMEs to encourage higher participation and retention rates in acceleration programmes and guarantee an impact in business growth and job creation.
- Explore public-private partnership models to combine resources and expertise from both sectors, addressing the challenge of supporting innovative startups.
- Engage clusters as intermediaries and knowledgeable of the businesses needs
- Promote living Lab activities to foster experimentation, co-creation, and connections within a quadruple-helix ecosystem. Early stakeholder inclusion, particularly end-users, is crucial for success.



## INTEGRATION AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

### Recommendations for policy makers

- Ensure that acceleration programmes are integrated into a broader territorial strategy and maintain a holistic approach. This includes coordinating support services across different programmes to avoid fragmentation and ensure comprehensive coverage.
- Centralize the support by establishing a one-stop-shop public service to streamline access to acceleration and scaling resources.
- Enhance the coordination between regional, national, and European policy levels to ensure cohesive strategies and resource allocation.
- Thoroughly analyse and use acceleration programmes evaluation and insights to refine the regulatory framework, making it supportive of the acceleration and scaling up of agrifood companies.
- Ensure a flexible regulatory environment that can adapt to emerging needs while supporting innovation.
- Consolidate public-private partnership models for startups support through sustainability plans and resources.
- Provide flexible and long-term funding schemes to ensure the sustainability of acceleration programmes and the continuous support to startups and SMEs in the different scaling stages
- Define impact indicators in collaboration with the acceleration stakeholders (including business acceleration providers) in order to improve transparency, accountability and the stakeholder engagement.
- Understand one's role in the ecosystem and value chain is vital.

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COMMUNICATION

### Recommendations for policy makers

- Encourage knowledge sharing among policy makers from different territorial scales (local, regional, national and European) and different territories (cross-regional cooperation) on effective support mechanisms and best practices, enhancing the overall support ecosystem for agri-food companies.
- Implement comprehensive communication strategies that clearly define the benefits and access frameworks to acceleration services.
- Enhance trust, openness, and cooperation with quadruple helix actors through successful Living Labs.



## 3 CONCLUSIONS

The integrated recommendations from the Food-scalEU project emphasize the importance of cohesive policies, robust stakeholder engagement, and clear communication strategies. Policy makers are encouraged to use these insights to create supportive environments for startups and SMEs in the digital agri-food sector, thereby enhancing regional and global competitiveness.

### **Annex I** Summary Recommendations for policy makers



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY-MAKERS INVOLVED IN ACCELERATION AND BUSINESS GROWTH

### ECOSYSTEM COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Engage early in the design and implementation phases to align initiatives with regional policies.
- Promote transparency and consistent communication with acceleration and scaling up stakeholders to build trust and engagement.
- Identify appropriate forums to interact with actors for policy development in a collaborative manner.
- Inform about regulatory challenges early in the process and contribute to proactive mitigation strategies.
- Align business acceleration and growth strategy with the needs of SMEs .
- Explore public-private partnership models to combine resources and expertise from both sectors.
- Engage clusters as intermediaries and knowledgeable of the businesses needs.
- Promote living Lab activities within quadruple-helix ecosystem.

### INTEGRATION AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

- Ensure that acceleration programmes are integrated into a broader territorial strategy and maintain a holistic approach.
- Centralize the support by establishing a one-stop-shop public service to streamline access to acceleration and scaling resources.
- Enhance the coordination between regional, national, and European policy levels to ensure cohesive strategies and resource allocation.
- Analyse and use acceleration programmes evaluation and insights to refine the regulatory framework.
- Ensure a flexible regulatory environment that can adapt to emerging needs.
- Consolidate public-private partnership models for startups support through sustainability plans and resources.
- Provide flexible and long-term funding schemes to ensure the sustainability of acceleration programmes and support to startups and SMEs in the different scaling stages
- Define impact indicators in collaboration with the acceleration stakeholders.
- Understand one's role in the ecosystem and value chain.

### KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COMMUNICATION

- Encourage knowledge sharing among policy makers from different territorial scales (local, regional, national and European) and different territories (cross- regional cooperation).
- Implement comprehensive communication strategies that clearly define the benefits and access frameworks to acceleration services.
- Enhance trust, openness, and cooperation with quadruple helix actors through successful Living Labs.