D3.3 Open Call Evaluation Report

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101134083

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Work Package	3
Delivery Date (DoA)	28/02/2025 – extension to 31/03/2025 approved by the Project Officer
Actual Delivery Date	01/04/2025
Abstract:	The main purpose of this report is to present the evaluation process of the submitted proposals and their evaluation in the context of the OpenAgri Open Call.

Document Revision History			
Date	**Version**	**Author/Contributor/ Reviewer**	**Summary of main changes**
01/02/2025	V0	Maja Radisic (FSH), Milica Mušicki (FSH)	ToC sent for approval
28/02/2025	V1	Dušan Pevac (FSH), Neda Marković (FSH), Maja Radisic (FSH)	Introductory chapters added, first set of feedback received
10/03/2025	V2	Nataša Narevski (FSH), Miroslav Ferenčak (FSH), Maja Radisic (FSH)	Information on the finalized evaluation process included
15/03/2025	V3	Aleksandar Šiposki (FSH), Vladimir Nikić (FSH)	Statistical analysis of the Open Call added
30/03/2025	V4	Maja Radisic (FSH)	Document sent for internal check
01/04/2025	V5	Nikos Marianos (GSC), Christopher Brewster (UM), Maja Radisic (FSH)	Feedback received and incorporated; report ready for submission

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Title: Democratising digital farming through tailored open source and open hardware solutions
Type of action: HORIZON Research and Innovation Action
Topic: HORIZON-CL6-2023-GOVERNANCE-01-13
Start date of project: 1 January 2024 ● Duration: 36 months

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	
EC	European Commission
OS	Open Source
ADS	Agricultural Digital Solution(s)
OC	Open Call
DoH	Declaration of Honour
FTP	Funding and Tenders portal

Executive Summary

The main purpose of this deliverable is to summarize all the work carried out regarding the Open Call activities, namely:

- **open call launch and support to potential applicants,** where the OpenAgri Open Call team ensured that all the doubts and questions that potential applicants had are responded timely,
- **promotional activities regarding the Open Call,** where several events where the call was presented have been given,
- **eligibility check** of the applications received, where specific items were checked in order to ensure that only eligible applications are entering the evaluation process,
- **selection of the external experts/evaluators**, based on their expertise, since each application is checked by one evaluator with technical expertise and one evaluator with business and/or agricultural expertise,
- **contracting with selected evaluators**, where each of them signed the Contract and Non-disclosure agreement, as well as Exclusion of the conflict of interest,
- **organization of the briefing with the selected evaluators** to give them a better overview of the project, objectives of the Open Call and mandatory requirements (what each application must have)
- **handling the post evaluation activities,** such as technical compliance check, consensus meeting and similar,
- **compiling and preparation of the Evaluation Summary Reports** and informing all the applicants on the outcome of the evaluation process.

Further to this, in the time of submission of this report, OpenAgri Open Call team is in the contracting process with the winning consortia.

1. Introduction

1.1. Project Summary

The overall aim of the OpenAgri project is to democratise digital farming by enabling the development and deployment of innovative cost-effective energy-efficient OS software and open hardware-based ADSs that can operate at a high performance even in remote areas with weak connectivity. This will be achieved by a) ensuring the co-creation of ADSs by engaging farmers and farm advisors in participatory prototyping activities inspired by the makerspaces approach; and b) providing access to a number of reusable OS software services designed to support the edge and mixed computing mode, and a "sociotechnical infrastructure".

Using a multi-actor approach, OpenAgri will involve farmers, ADSs providers, farm advisors and scientists in 14 Sustainable Innovation Pilots (SIPs) in ≥10 countries across Europe, and guide them in co-creating and piloting edge, cloud and mixed-model ADSs addressing important challenges of agricultural production. 5 SIPs have been pre-selected and 9 more will be awarded through an Open Call, enabling a dynamic response to a changing policy and technology landscape. Finally, building on a thorough analysis of EU agriculture and the results from the SIPs, OpenAgri will create a Decision Support Tool that will allow Policy Makers, Farmers and Farm Advisors to select the best possible cloud, edge or mixed ADSs for any given set of conditions.

1.2. Document Scope

The purpose of this deliverable is to present the work performed regarding the preparation for the Open Call, promotion of the call once it was open for submission, selection of the evaluators and supporting them prior to the start of the evaluation process and during the evaluation process, organization of the post-evaluation activities and information of all the applicants on the outcome of the evaluation.

1.3. Document Structure

This document is comprised of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the project and the document.

Chapter 2 gives more information on the open call itself, promotion activities performed, along with the statistical overview of the applications received.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the in-depth description on the evaluation and selection process, as well as the outcome.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the activities of the contracting phase.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and next steps.

2. Open Call details

A major focus of OpenAgri's Open Call is to support the co-creation and testing of mature and ready to use **Agricultural Digital Solutions (ADSs)** that will be based on OS software and open hardware components, with the main focus on improving the sustainability performance of current agricultural practices, increase farmers trust in the use of digital solutions and to avoid vendor lock-in through interoperable-by-design mechanisms. These solutions should be mature cloud solutions that could be adapted to edge or mixed and they should operate in remote areas with limited connectivity, across more countries, crops and framing conditions, by introducing additional open-source software and open hardware outputs that will become available to the community and boost the project's overall impact. **The goal of this Open Call is to deploy high value and impactful pilots, employing OpenAgri's methodologies and technologies.** OpenAgri provides a set of generic OS software services that will act as reusable building blocks in support of AgriTech providers for developing more complete ADSs.

OpenAgri Open Call aimed to attract small consortia of two entities, formed by an Agricultural Digital Solutions (ADSs) provider (SME, university, research institute, non-profit organization) and an end-user (a farm, farm structure, farm cooperative or other agrifood production organization or company representing farms). Their goal is to collaborate and co-create new Open Source (OS) ADSs building on existing mature cloud solutions, demonstrating both Edge and Cloud/mixed versions of the ADSs, and piloting them in areas with low connectivity to compare the results and see if the performance of the new solution is adequate.

Open Call (OC) selected 9 new SIPs of the same structure as the 5 core SIPs. The OC was focused on countries, crops, overall conditions, production processes and/or technologies not already covered by project SIPs, with the expectation that they will benefit from the most recent developments and innovations in the area.

2.1. Introduction to the Open Call

The Open Call was managed by the OpenAgri partner Foodscale Hub, lasting from September 2nd to December 2nd, 2024, via the Open Call Hub – a platform dedicated to running Open Calls, including evaluation of received applications and communicating with all actors in the process. This provided a great opportunity for actors in the agri-food system who wish to contribute to enhancing the transparency within the food system value chain.

Under the Open Call, the OpenAgri project set out to fund 9 external subprojects - Sustainable Innovation Pilots (SIPs), each consisting of 2 members. The total sum for the Open Call is 900,000.00 €, with each SIP set to receive financial support of 100,000.00 €.

The response to the OpenAgri Open Call was exceptional, where 106 applications were submitted by applicants from 25 different countries from Europe and beyond.

After conducting all of the envisaged Open Call activities, OpenAgri consortium has succesfully selected 9 external SIPs. The awarded SIPs will go through a 18-month implementation process, starting from 1st of May, 2025.

The Financial Support to Third Parties in OpenAgri will be given as deliverable-based funding in three installments, corresponding to the completion of dedicated phase, upon the acceptance of the relevant deliverables by the responsible OpenAgri project partners.

2.2. Open Call publication

The OpenAgri website, as one of key tools of the project, supporting the ecosystem building and the project's communication activities, was the main point of information for future applicants for the Open Call.

Figure 1 OpenAgri Open Call published on the OpenAgri website

Following the requirements of the European Commission, the OpenAgri Open Call has been published on Cascade Funding page of the Funding & Tenders Portal.

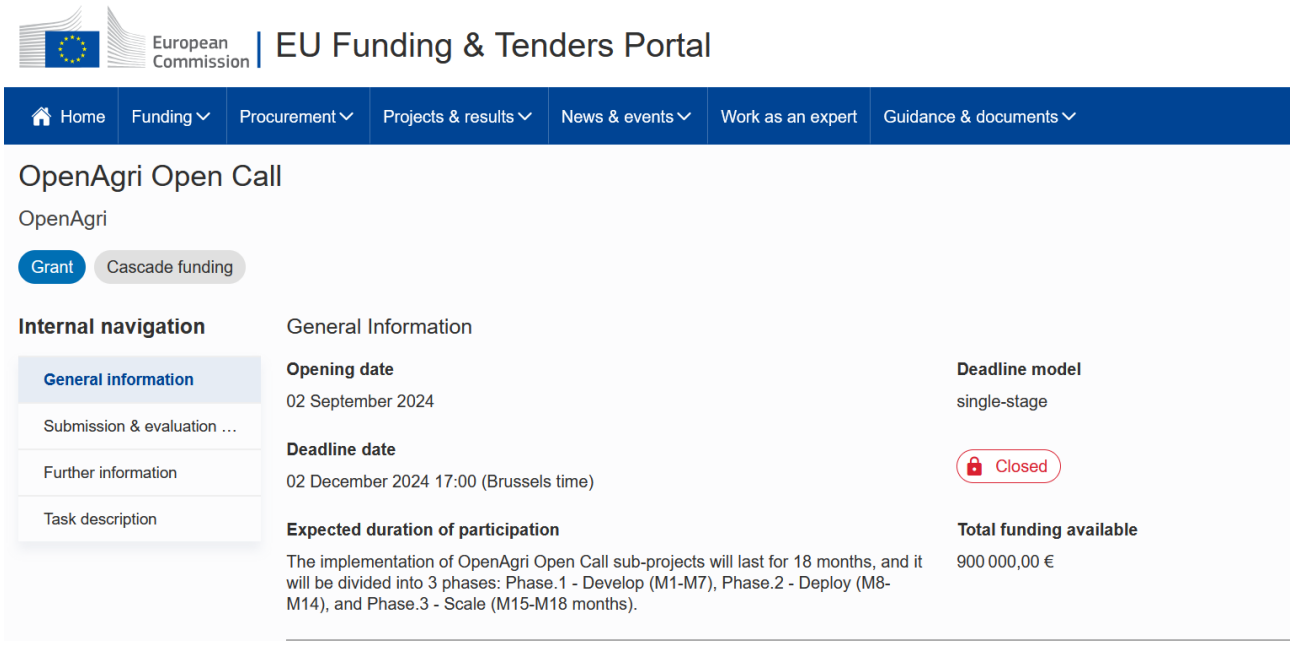


Figure 2 OpenAgri Open Call published on the EC's Funding &Tenders Portal

The OpenAgri Open Call was launched using the platform Open Call Hub, owned by Foodscale Hub. It is a browser-based application that serves as a tool to: i) collect the applications submitted by the Open Call participants in Foodscale Hub's projects that have FSTP, ii) have the applications reviewed and marked by the external evaluators, and iii) automatically create the rank list that determines the applications to be funded within the Open Call. The platform is customized and adjusted for each project with an Open Call according to the specific needs.

The OpenAgri Open Call was published on 2nd of September, 2024, on the Open Call Hub, where a specific page for the OpenAgri Open Call Hub was created (https://opencallhub.eu/open-call/openagri).

A specific tab dedicated to the Open Call was created on the OpenAgri project website (https://horizon-openagri.eu/open-call/) covering in detail all the necessary information for the applicants: OpenAgri Open Call Kit documents, main technical requirements, timeline of the Open Call, information on the OpenAgri internal SIPs (for reference), etc. Additionally, a discussion page was created on the Open Call Hub, where interested applicants could ask questions to the OpenAgri consortium and receive answers from the project partners.

The funding scheme and tentative timeline were presented as infographics in a visually engaging format as well, as given in the figure below.

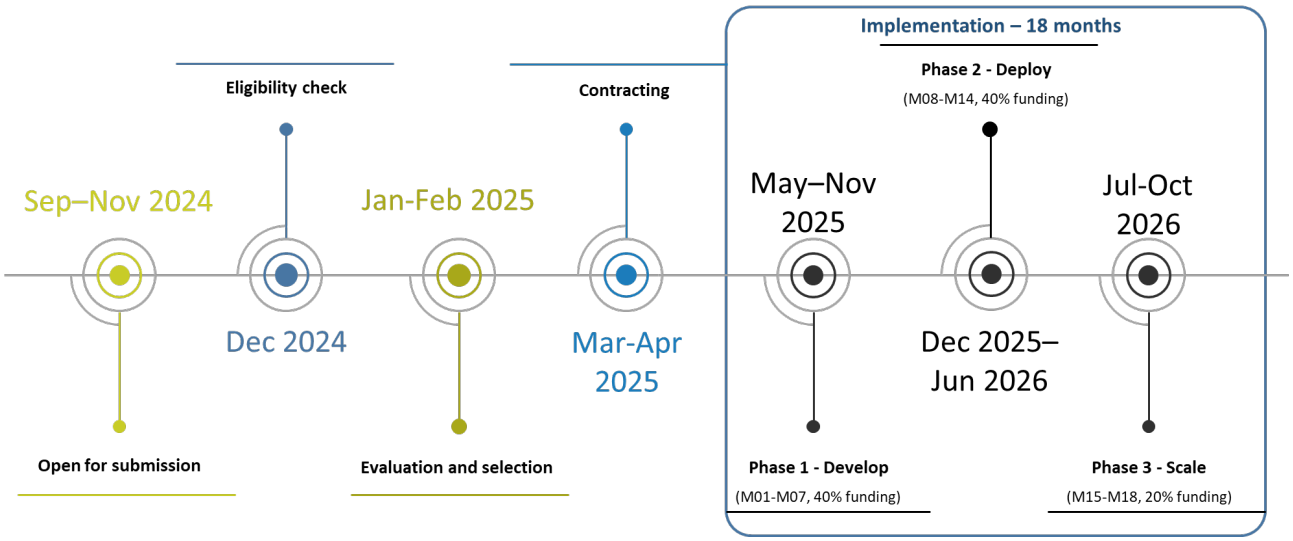


Figure 3 OpenAgri Open Call timeline

The OpenAgri Open Call kit was made publicly available at the OpenAgri project website and included the following documents:

- Annex 1 - Open Call Text
- Annex 2 – Applicants' guide
- Annex 3 – Proposal Template
- Annex 4 – Declaration of Honour (DoH)
- Annex 5 – Declaration of Conducting Business
- Annex 6 – Consortium Declaration
- Annex 7 – Bank Account Form - only relevant for the winners of the Open Call.
- Annex 8 – Model Subgrantee Agreement – only relevant for the winners of the Open Call; during the period when the Open Call was ongoing, this document was only given as a reference for the applicants. The final version of the Subgrantee Agreement template was distributed to the Open Call winners during the Contracting phase.
- **OpenAgri Open Source components,** on the following link on the OpenAgri website: https://horizon-openagri.eu/os-solutions/
- Frequently asked questions & answers published at the community feed of the specially dedicated channel for OpenAgri Project and Open Call on the Open Call Hub Platform/OpenAgri OC tab, link: https://opencallhub.eu/

More detailed information about these annexes is available in the deliverable D3.2 Open Call Guidelines, while the annexes themselves have been included as Appendices to same deliverable.

All the interested parties had the opportunity to post questions related to the OpenAgri Open Call at the page dedicated to discussion (i.e. FAQ section) where OpenAgri partners were heavily involved in answering

these questions. Alternatively, the email address openagri@opencallhub.eu was also used for communication with interested parties and potential applicants, which was also used to direct the interested parties to the FAQ section. All the completed/answered answers were published on the discussion corner, helping the applicants receive the necessary additional information about the application process and the Open Call in general.

2.3. Open Call promotion

The promotion of the OpenAgri Open Call was performed both on a central level by the OpenAgri Dissemination and Communication leader FSH, and by individual OpenAgri project partners in their respective networks.

Website: A dedicated page within the OpenAgri project webpage was created to provide the necessary information about the Open Call, as well as the documents and the links for the submission process.

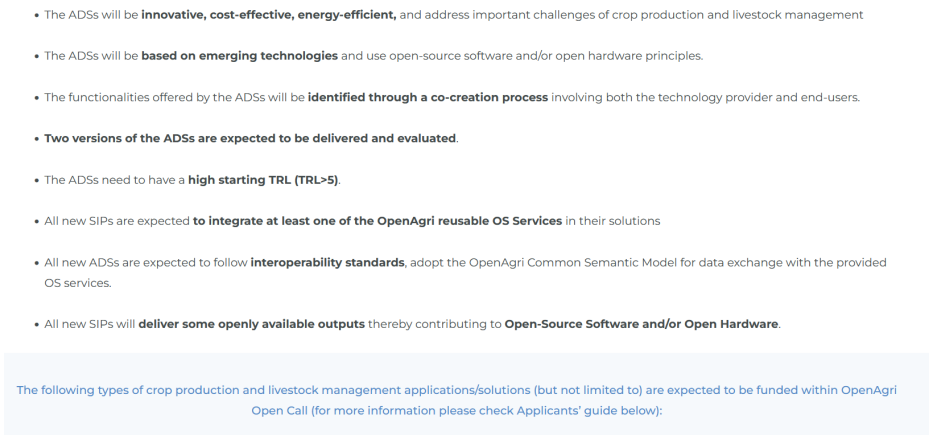


Figure 4 OpenAgri Open Call information on the OpenAgri website

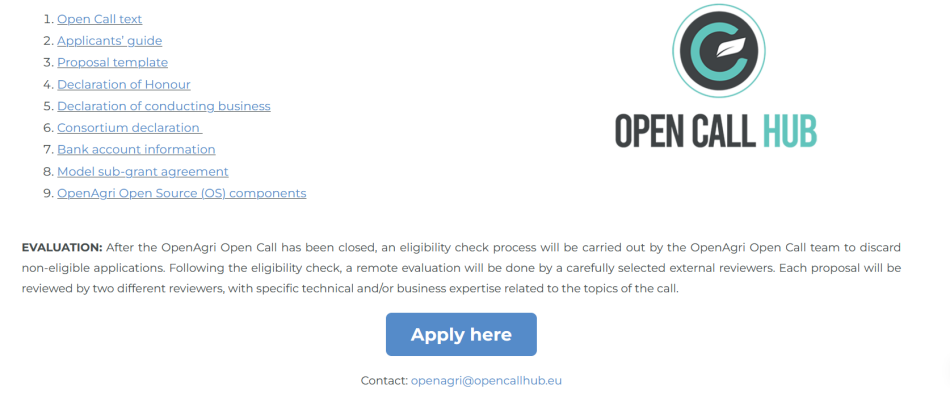


Figure 5 OpenAgri Open Call Kit published on the OpenAgri website along with the link to the Open Call Hub platform

In addition to this, blog posts on the Open Call have been prepared and published.

Figure 6 Blog post on OpenAgri Open Call

Figure 7 OpenAgri Call for evaluators published on the OpenAgri website

Social media: Various posts were published in the dedicated social media channels of OpenAgri, especially on LinkedIn and Twitter/X. Screenshots of several selected posts have been presented below.

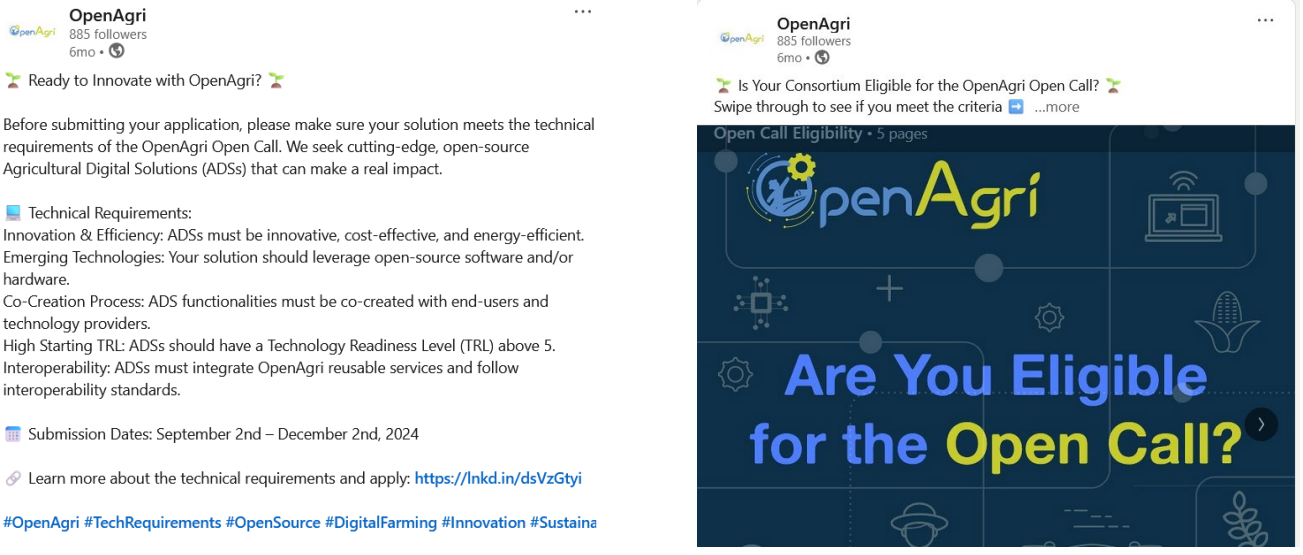
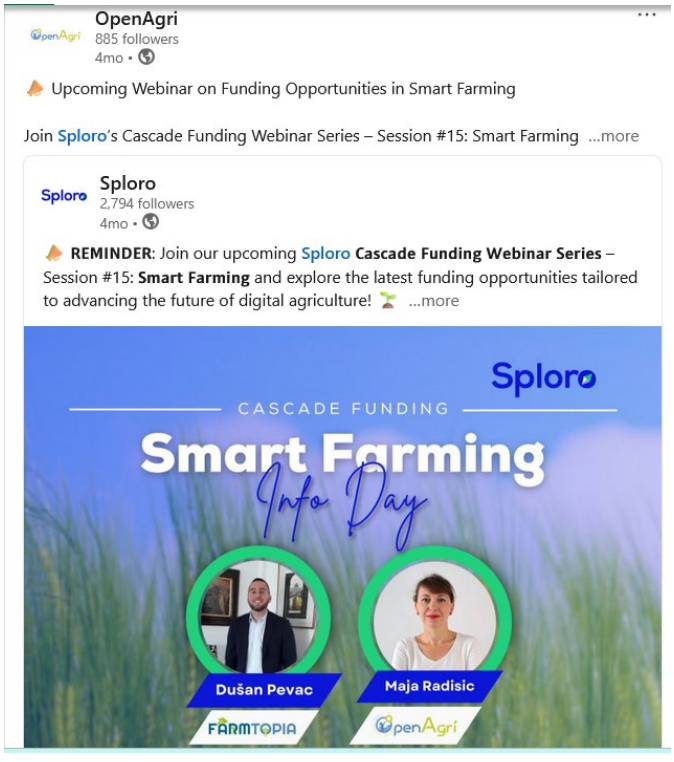


Figure 8 Set of posts on the OpenAgri Open Call published on the LinkedIn

Webinars: In order to further spark interest in the Open Call, but also to provide useful practical information to interested parties (with careful consideration of those who lack experience in applying for funding), OpenAgri funding opportunities were presented in several webinars.

Figure 9 Invitation to the OpenAgri Open Call webinar



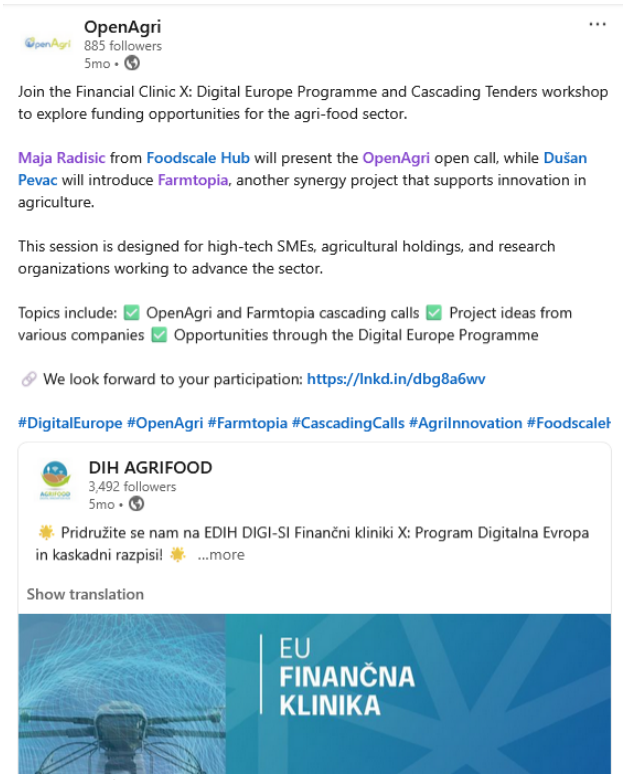


Figure 10 Invitations to the webinars where OpenAgri Open Call was promoted

In addition to webinars, OpenAgri Open Call was also promoted in live events (such as the Synergy Days conference in Barcelona in October 2024).

Figure 11 Presentation of the OpenAgri Open Call during the Synergy Days 2024 in Barcelona

2.4. Open Call results and statistics

From the 106 applications generated by the Open Call Hub platform, one of them was instantly discarded, as it was used by the Open Call Hub administrators to test the platform, meaning that 105 applications entered the eligibility check phase. These applications have been submitted from all over Europe and beyond, by applicants **from 25 different countries**. Out of these applications, four applications were duplicates (applicants wanted to re-submit the applications, so they had to create a new account and proceed with the submission; only the last application from the applying consortium is considered as eligible and proceeded to the evaluation).

Two applications had the same entity within the consortia. According to the Applicants' Guide of the OpenAgri Open Call, "*appearance of an entity in multiple applying consortia will also be treated as a risk of double funding and consequently, all applications from consortia where this entity is present will automatically be discarded as ineligible*". Therefore, these two applications were discarded, and the applicants were informed.

After the eligibility check was conducted **99 out of 106 applications advanced to the evaluation stage.**

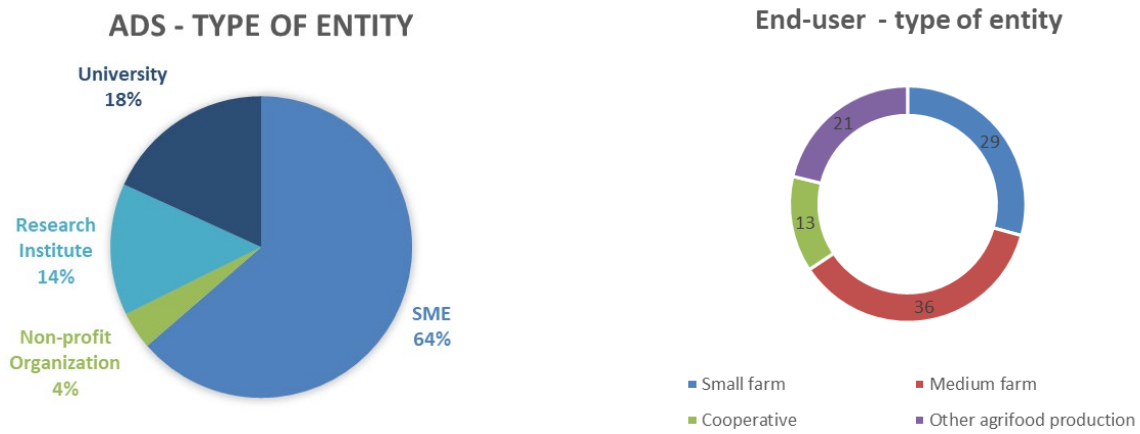


Figure 12 Types of applicants within the applying consortia in the OpenAgri Open Call

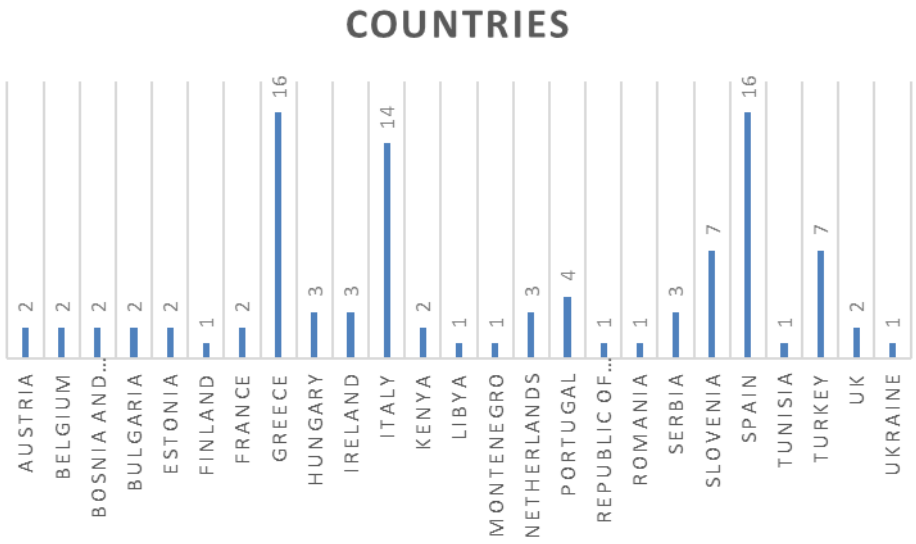


Figure 13 Countries of origin of applicants within the applying consortia in the OpenAgri Open Call

19 out of 99 applications came from the country already present in OpenAgri internal SIPs, while only 4 consortia opted for the same crop/application area already present in OpenAgri internal SIPs.

3. Evaluation and selection process

3.1. Selection of the evaluators

The search for evaluators for the OpenAgri project began with a Call for expression of interest launched on 23rd of September, 2024. Experts were invited to register on opencallhub.eu (OCH), a platform tailored for facilitating open calls. From a pool of over 400 potential evaluators on OCH, 32 were chosen to participate in the evaluation process.

Throughout the evaluator selection phase, rigorous criteria were employed to ensure the utmost quality and diversity among the chosen evaluators. Here are the key considerations:

- **Expertise and Experience:** 16 evaluators were selected for their technical expertise, while another 16 were chosen for their business and/or agricultural knowledge to ensure a balanced evaluation of applications.
- **Geographical Diversity:** Efforts were made to involve evaluators from various countries, resulting in a panel representing 21 different nations.

Foodscale Hub, as the Open Call Manager and the Treasurer of the project, has signed contracts with these evaluators, to be reimbursed at 100€ per application assessed. The contracts with the external evaluators will be made available to the European Commission upon request.

3.2. Administrative eligibility check

The OpenAgri Open call was ongoing from September 2nd, 2024, until December 2nd, 2024, during which a total of 106 applications were received. The eligibility check took place during December 2024, wherein the following actions were undertaken:

- The applicant consortium consists of a registered ADS provider (SME, university, research institute, non-profit organization) and an end user (small farm, medium farm, cooperative or other agrifood production organization) - Classification of Application Type (both for ADS and end-user),
- The SIP demonstrates a European dimension (“through cross border experimentation or expanding the impact of local SIPs to European scale”).
- Eligible legal entities from eligible HE country/countries
- Is the application written in English language,
- Proposed work to be carried out after the selection process,
- Examination of Submitted Documents and Annexes (if all required documents are correctly submitted),
- The submission has been made in a timely manner and in accordance with the rules.
- Alignment with the Open Call’s objectives.
- Identification of used OpenAgri Open Source Services
- Identification whether the country where the solution will be deployed (country of the end-user) is already present in the OpenAgri internal pilots (SIPs) or not
- Identification whether the crops/application fields are already present in the OpenAgri internal pilots (SIPs) or not.

Out of the 106 applications received:

- 1 application was automatically rejected as it as a test submission by OpenAgri team members
- 4 applications were rejected as they were the duplicates submitted by the same participants.

- 2 applications were rejected, since they had the same entity within the consortia (and that is against the rules set in OpenAgri Open Call Kit/Applicants' guide)

Consequently, a total of 99 applications successfully passed the eligibility check and proceeded to the evaluation stage.

3.3. Evaluation

Prior to commencing the evaluation process, evaluators were invited to participate in a briefing session organized by the OpenAgri Open Call team. An online briefing session was held on December 23, 2024, covering the following key areas in depth:

- Introduction to the OpenAgri project
- OpenAgri project objectives
- OpenAgri Project Consortium
- OpenAgri Open Call timeline
- What to be careful with during the evaluation
- Evaluation criteria
- Evaluation process
- Application structure
- Evaluation schedule
- Technical aspects of using OCH during the evaluation process

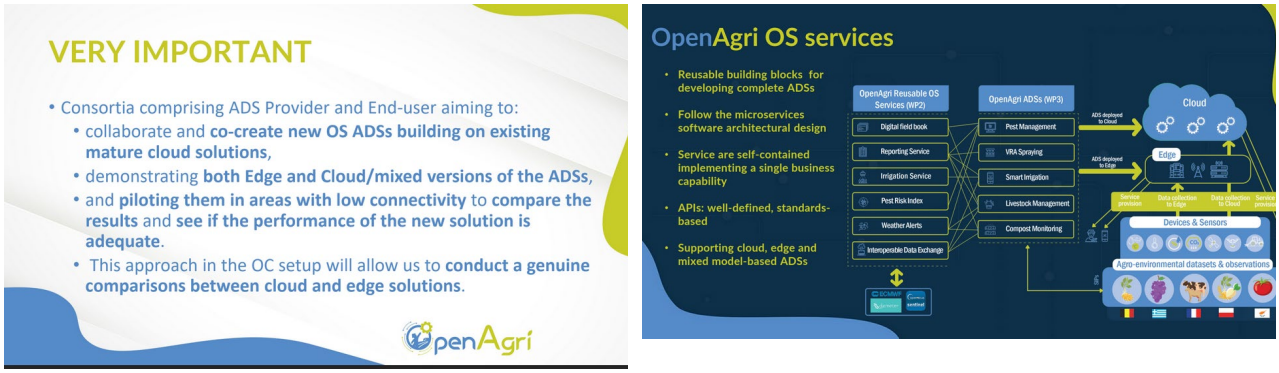


Figure 14 Overall presentation on the OpenAgri project and Open Call

Figure 15 Presentation on the technical aspects of the OpenAgri evaluation process on the Open Call Hub

The task of the evaluators was to carefully review the application files submitted by the applicants and evaluate them based on four criteria:

1. **Excellence – Weighting factor 30%** (Design, novelty, and reliability of the solution; potential for wide range of application; value proposition of the proposal; current TRL of the solution and pathways to achieving a higher TRL; utilization of a digital technology not already present in the OpenAgri

consortium, or combination of different technologies with the ones present in OpenAgri will be considered an advantage)

2. **Impact - Weighting factor 30%** (Economic viability of the solution; sustainability strategy (including financial projections) and its potential scalability to other countries/regions, especially those with a major potential impact on increasing food security and resilience across Europe; economic, environmental and societal impact of the proposed solution. Deployment of the pilot in a sector (i.e. crops/livestock) not already covered by OpenAgri SIPs will be considered as an advantage.)
3. **Implementation - Weighting factor 20%** (Team capability and their key expertise; technical resource plan; the plan to use the OpenAgri Reusable OS Services; the overall delivery plan; allocation of resources and timeline)
4. **Replicability - Weighting factor 20%** (The OS components to be offered to the public after the end of the project; the ability of developed ADSs to be reused by other farmers in other conditions and/or for other crops)

A total of 99 applications were assigned to 32 evaluators following specific principles:

- Each application was reviewed by one evaluator with a business and/or agricultural background and one with technical expertise.
- Applications cannot be assigned to evaluators from the same country as the application's country of origin or the member countries of the consortium.
- Efforts were made to ensure a fair distribution of evaluation tasks, with each evaluator assigned an average of up to 6 evaluation tasks.

Evaluators utilized a scoring scale ranging from 1 to 5 for each criterion, with 1 indicating the lowest and 5 indicating the highest score. To proceed to the next stage, the average score for each criterion needed to be at least 3.

Evaluators were prompted to provide comments for each criterion, elucidating the reasoning behind the assigned scores. The rank list was automatically calculated on the OCH platform.

The evaluation process commenced on December 23rd, 2024, and it was planned to be concluded on January 23, 2025. However, one evaluator decided to drop out, so his evaluations were promptly reassigned to the other 3 evaluators.

At the end, all 198 assigned evaluations were submitted by the evaluators and received by the OCH within the but prolonged timeframe.

3.4. Technical compliance check

Following the completion of the evaluation process by the external experts, the OpenAgri Open Call panel of technical and coordination experts have been conducting a assessment of the applications with special focus on technical compliance with the OpenAgri project as a whole. For an application to be compliant with OpenAgri Open Call, it should focus on co-creating a new edge or mixed model-based OS ADS building on an existing mature cloud solution. It should also pilot the two versions to compare the results and see if the performance of the new solution is adequate. This approach in the OC setup was followed to allow us to conduct genuine comparisons between cloud and edge solutions.

The evaluators were asked to reflect on the following questions and make any adjustments to the evaluations if necessary:

1. Does the proposal mention that it has two versions of the same ADS or at least a single ADS with two operation modes based on the connectivity?

2. Do the two versions or two operation modes offer the same functionalities? If not, and in case the edge component performs certain things while the cloud component focuses on something else, OpenAgri is not interested in such application.
3. Do the applicants compare results coming from the two versions to see which is better?

Evaluators provided their feedback and finalized the evaluation process successfully.

3.5. Consensus meetings

Following a detailed analysis of the evaluation marks and rank lists, several cases of significant discrepancies between the marks given by the two evaluators emerged, triggering the conditions for the organisation of Consensus Meetings between evaluators, moderated by Foodscale Hub, as the OpenAgri Open Call Manager. These meetings were initiated when the variance between given marks exceeded 3. This need arose for 14 applications and 6 pairs of evaluators. The details about the consensus meetings (including which applications they were related to, which criteria and the outcome regarding the marks in question) will be made available to the European Commission upon request.

In order to be timeefficient, the consensus meeting were organized by email all evaluators successfully aligned their scores.

Following the first four Consensus Meetings being held between February 26, 2025, and March 4, 2025, all evaluators successfully aligned their scores. Subsequently, the process advanced to generating the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR), with 99 ESRs distributed to the applicants on March 7, 2025.

3.6. Redress procedure

Within **three working days** of the delivery of a rejection letter determining the application as ineligible or an Evaluation Summary Report that ranks the application below the selection threshold, the applicants were able to submit a request for redress to the OpenAgri Advisory Board via the following email address: openagri@opencallhub.eu.

No redress requests were received.

3.7. OpenAgri Open Call winners

As a result of the previous activities, a list of OpenAgri Open Call winners has been generated.

	Application name	Type of the ADS partner	Country of origin (ADS provider)	Type of the end-user partner	Country of origin (end-user)	Application sector
1	Precise Olive Irrigation Solution in fluctuating water supply conditions	SME	Greece	Small farm	Greece	olives
2	Collaborative Development of Open Source Aerial detection ADS: Implementing Multispectral and Hyperspectral drone technologies for olive groves and vi	SME	Greece	Cooperative	Greece	Olives and vineyards

3	Agricultural Digital Twin for Intelligent Decision-Making	Research institute	Portugal	Medium farm	Spain	almonds, pistachios, and maize
4	SPOTIFLY	SME	Greece	Other AgriFood Organisation representing farms	Spain	Pest management in olives
5	A Smartphone-based DSS to Democratize Access to Precision Farming for Sustainable Management of Cherry Orchards	SME	Italy	Other AgriFood Organisation representing farms	Italy	cherry orchards
6	Smart Health and Efficiency Enhancement Through Prediction and Conductimetry for Animal Reproduction and Evaluation	Research centre	Spain	Cooperative	Spain	Sheep farming
7	Identifying insect pests in leafy green vegetables using AI image recognition	SME	Bulgaria	Medium farm	Bulgaria	Pest management in cabbage
8	Smart Feed System	SME	Slovenia	Medium farm	Slovenia	livestock
9	Smart Community Integrated Beehive	University	Slovenia	Medium farm	Slovenia	beehives

Table 1 List of winners of the OpenAgri Open Call

The information on the winning consortia will be published on the OpenAgri website once the contracting phase is finalized and they started with the sub-project implementation).

4. Contracting phase

Following the distribution of the Evaluation Summary Reports, the Open Call winners have been invited to the Contracting phase, in which the first step was sending out the first draft of the Subgrant Agreement, to fill in the organizational data of both consortium partners.

In addition to the Sub-grant Agreement, the winners were also asked to send the following documents:

- The original signed Consortium Declaration (signed by both partners)
- The original signed Declaration of Honour (as given in Annex 4 of this Contract) for the ADS provider
- The original signed Declaration of Honour (as given in Annex 4 of this Contract) for the end-user
- Declaration of Conducting Business (as given in Annex 5 of this Contract) for ADS provider
- Declaration of Conducting Business (as given in Annex 5 of this Contract) for end-user
- Copy of ID-card or Passport of legal representative(s) of the ADS provider
- Copy of ID-card or Passport of legal representative(s) of the end-user
- Copy of the original Extract of registration for ADS provider
- Copy of the original Extract of registration for end-user
- Proof of VAT registration, or equivalent (in case VAT is not applicable) for ADS provider
- Proof of VAT registration, or equivalent (in case VAT is not applicable) for end-user
- Bank Information Form (as given in Annex 6 of this contract) for ADS provider
- Bank Information Form (as given in Annex 6 of this contract) for end-user

At the moment of submission of this deliverable, the contracting phase is currently ongoing, planned to be finalized by the end of April 2025, since the implementation of sub-proejcts is set to start on May 1st 2025.

5. Conclusions and next steps

The OpenAgri Open Call has been successfully executed, with great collaboration between the OpenAgri project partners, applicants and evaluators. The KPI related to the Open Call applications received initially set out in the Grant Agreement was significantly exceeded, which means that the OpenAgri Open Call promotional campaign has proved very successful.

The application procedure was tailor-made and adapted to the target audience of the OpenAgri Open Call, using agile tools and documents in order to make the process effective and appealing for interested parties. The remote evaluation based on a set of predefined criteria, quick access to results and transparent communication with applicants led to great satisfaction and no challenges in handling the process.

At the moment of submission of this deliverable, the contracting phase is currently ongoing, planned to be finalized by the end of April 2025, since the implementation of sub-proejcts is set to start on May 1st 2025.