

# Feeding the future: Research and Innovation for Europe's Agri-Food systems

How the new Strategic Approach on research and innovation supports competitive, resilient and sustainable agriculture, forestry, rural areas and food systems



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*The Future of Food Security in an era of Permanent Disruption*

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# The EU agri-food sector: a strategic asset



**450 million Europeans** rely on Europe's agri-food system for sufficient, affordable, healthy and high-quality food.

**1.500 billion** Turnover of the EU food and drink industry in 2026, making it the EU's largest manufacturing sector.

**30 million** People employed across the EU agri-food sector, representing around 15% of all EU jobs in 2023.

**€50 billion** EU agri-food trade surplus in 2025 -more than any other region in the world.

**25%** of the EU population lives in rural areas, which cover more than 75% of EU territory.

**44%** of the EU's territory is covered by forests, providing vital environmental, economic and societal resources.

# Policy context and new challenges

**Sustainable competitiveness** driven by R&I is at the core of both the **Vision for agriculture and food** and the **strategy for European life sciences**.



19 February 2025

The **Vision for agriculture and food** calls for updating the 2016 R&I approach for agriculture, forestry and rural areas.



2 July 2025

The **life sciences strategy** foresees a new strategic R&I agenda on food systems, building on Food 2030.

**A New strategic approach to research and innovation is needed to better target investment, align priorities with scientific progress and seize new opportunities.**



# Evidence base: consultations and analysis

## Workshops

*Food 2030  
stakeholders  
&  
AgRI 2040  
Conference*



## Surveys

*Open consultation  
on future-proofing  
R&I in agriculture,  
forestry and rural  
areas, and Food  
2040 survey*



## Targeted expert consultations

*SCAR workshop  
and Task Force on  
Startup and  
Scaleup*



## Staff working document

*Lessons learned  
from a decade of  
EU collaborative  
R&I investments*



New strategic approach to research and innovation for competitive, resilient and sustainable agriculture, forestry, rural areas and food systems



Future-proofing  
EU agri-food through  
**Research & Innovation**

# What the strategic approach aims to change



**Deployment of  
new technologies**



**Dissemination and  
uptake of R&I results**



**Thematic R&I needs  
for the future**

## **Goal:**

- **Support Europe's resilience, food security and strategic autonomy**
- **Safeguard and boost the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU agri-food sector**



# Two interlinked frameworks

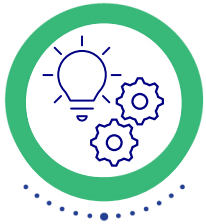
for a sustainable, resilient and competitive agri-food future

AgRI  
2040

Food  
2040

**Work together** to strengthen the entire agri-food innovation ecosystem

## Cross-cutting priorities



Competitiveness,  
Startups and  
scaleups



Food security,  
resilience and  
preparedness



Natural  
resources and  
circularity



Food and feed  
safety, nutrition and  
health



Fairness



Global cooperation  
for sustainable  
agriculture, forestry,  
rural areas and food  
systems

## Enablers



Governance



Technologies



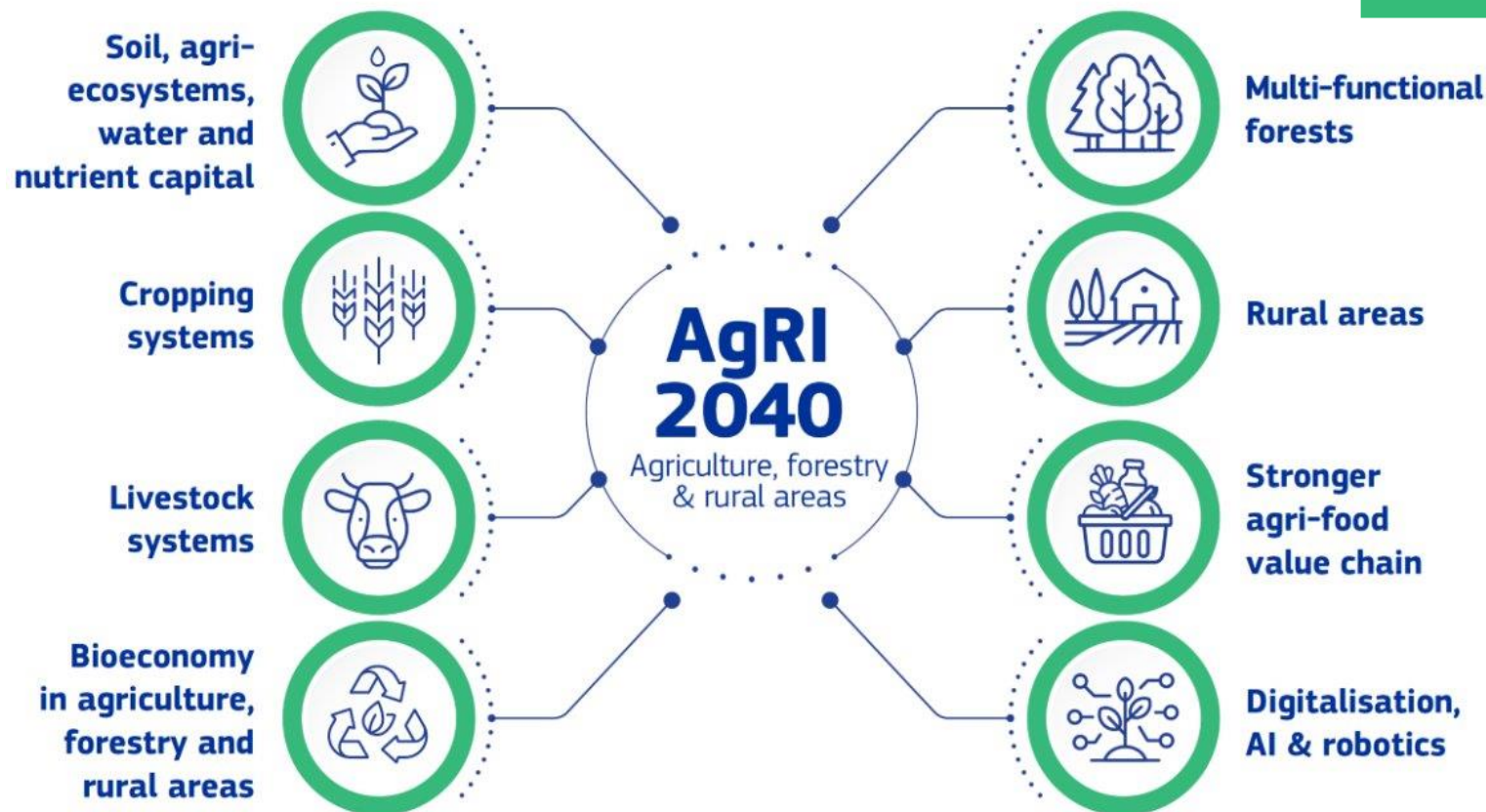
Territories and  
communities



# Guiding future research and innovation for agriculture, forestry and rural areas: AgRI 2040



Thematic R&I needs  
for the future



# Food 2040: areas of action

Food 2040 focuses on R&I needs across food systems, including the interfaces with health, consumers, industry, regions and aquatic food. It proposed six areas of action.

## Place-based food systems

Local and regional food economies; rural-urban links; social innovation

## Aquatic food

Sustainable fisheries, aquaculture and blue bioeconomy

## Scaling innovations and fair solutions

Business models, investment, power imbalances, AI and biotech



## Healthy and sustainable diets

Nutrition, protein diversification, microbiome, affordability and equity

## Resource efficiency & zero-pollution

Food waste, energy transition, packaging and post-harvest solutions

## Food environments & consumer empowerment

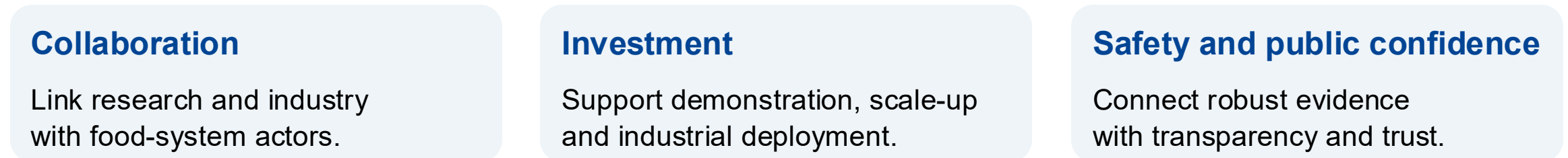
Availability, affordability, labelling, marketing, trust and education

# From excellent research to innovation at scale

Connect research, industry, communities and public authorities to turn promising solutions into practical impact.



## Three conditions for innovation at scale



# From research to concrete impacts

## For citizens & consumers

Safer, healthier and more affordable food

## For farmers and foresters

Better equipped to respond to climate pressures, rising costs and changing market needs

## For rural communities

More resilient and attractive places to live, with locally adapted innovation and new opportunities

## For innovators and businesses

Stronger pathways from research to market, supporting scale-up and industrial deployment

**But innovation only delivers impact if people understand it, trust it and see its value**



[Read more on Food 2040](#)

# Thank you



*Subscribe the for updates*  
[Food 2040 Stakeholders list](#)



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