AquaLoops4Med

Open Call text

Publication date: 1/12/2025

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Interregional
Innovation
Investments
Instrument

Contents

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AERIS	Aeris Tecnologías Ambientales
AGENSO	Agricultural & Environmental Solutions
ARPAB	Regional Agency for the Protection of the Environment of Basilicata
CWP	Catalan Water Partnership
ICRA	Catalan Institute for Water Research
IRTA	Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology
MoLP	Municipality of Lake Plastira
NTUA	National Technical University of Athens
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
UNIBAS	University of Basilicata

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1. About the AquaLoops4Med project

1.1 Project overview

AquaLoops4Med is a European project funded through the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument (Grant number: 101161349) and is supported by the European Union. The AquaLoops4Med project aims to create an interregional network that fosters efficient and sustainable water management across the Mediterranean, with a specific focus on the agrifood sector.

Through interregional investments, the AquaLoops4Med project will demonstrate, scale-up and commercialize innovative, sustainable and circular solutions to enhance water management, reduce water losses, and exploit alternative water sources and wastewater treatment practices. The project involves four participating regions - Catalonia, Basilicata, Attica and Thessaly - with the goal of straightening their innovative ecosystems, with an emphasis on supporting local SMEs, including both technology providers and end users. While a set of flagship SMEs are already involved as project partners, a second stream of SMEs will be supported through cascade funding. Through this joint effort, the AquaLoops4Med project aims to address the shared challenges of water management in the agrifood sector, as well as to create a new value chain in the participating less-developed regions.

For more info about the AquaLoops4Med project please see:
https://cwp.cat/en/projectes/aqualoops4med-3/

Acronym	AquaLoops4Med
Title	Mediterranean network for sustainable and circular water management in the agrifood sector
Call	I3-2023-INV2a
Duration	36 months; 1.09.2024 – 31.8.2027
Total cost	3.619.646,24 euros
EU contribution	2.788.752,25 euros

1.2 Project Partners

The AquaLoops4Med project brings together 13 partners from 4 European regions, coordinated by the Catalan Water Partnership (CWP hereafter). Our collaboration spans the entire Quadruple Helix, encompassing public authorities, research institutions, SMEs, and end-users from the agri-food sector, ensuring a comprehensive and demand-driven approach.

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Table 1.1: AquaLoops4Med project partners

Partner Logo	Partner Short name	Parnter full name	Region, Country
	CWP	Catalan Water Partnership	Catalonia, Spain
	ICRA	Catalan Institute for Water Research	Catalonia, Spain
	IRTA	Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology	Catalonia, Spain
	AERIS	Aeris Tecnologías Ambientales	Catalonia, Spain
	WE&B	Water, Environment and Business for Development	Catalonia, Spain
	NTUA	National Technical University of Athens	Athens, Greece
	AGENSO	Agricultural & Environmental Solutions	Athens, Greece
	HYDRASPIS	HYDRASPIS	Thessaly, Greece
	MoLP	Municipality of Lake Plastira	Thessaly, Greece
	Fresh Milk	Fresh Milk	Thessaly, Greece
	BIOINNOVA	BIOINNOVA	Basilicata, Italy
	UNIBAS	University of Basilicata	Basilicata, Italy
	ARPAB	Regional Agency for the Protection of the Environment of Basilicata	Basilicata, Italy

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1.3 Contact points

For any enquiries regarding the AquaLoops4Med project, please contact the project Coordinator:

comunicacio@cwp.cat

For any enquiries about the present call for proposals, please send an email to your regional contact point listed in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Regional contact points

Region	Name	Email
Catalonia	Lucia Gusmaroli	lucia.gusmaroli@cwp.cat
Basilicata	Monica Brienza Vincenzo Trotta	monica.brienza@unibas.it vincenzo.trotta@unibas.it
Attica	Eleni Nyktari Stavroula Kappa	eleni_niktari@hotmail.com kappa.stavroula@gmail.com
Thessaly	Dimitris Banousis	dbanousis@gmail.com

For any technical issues related to the submission process, please contact:

Lucia Gusmaroli lucia.gusmaroli@cwp.cat
Eleni Nyktari: eleni_niktari@hotmail.com
Stavroula Kappa: kappa.stavroula@gmail.com

2. AquaLoops4Med Open Call objectives, thematic priorities and key challenges to be addressed

2.1 Call objectives

The overall objective of **AquaLoops4Med's Open Call** is to support 15 to 18 SMEs through 5 to 9 subprojects for the **demonstration, scale-up and commercialisation of innovative solutions contributing to sustainable and circular water management in the agrifood sector to be implemented over a period of up to 8 months**. These solutions should aim to advance technology and improve or develop one or more processes related to key domains of the water management value chain in the agrifood sector **and must be aligned with regional S3 priorities as shown in Table 2.1**. More information on the S3 of the participating regions can be found here.

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Table 2.1: Complementarity of S3 priorities in the AquaLoops4Med regions.

Region	S3 Priority Areas
Basilicata	• Bio-based and integrated economy • Green economy • S3 thematic platform: Agrifood
Thessaly	• Agrifood and nutrition
Attica	• Agrifood value chain
Catalonia	• Environmentally friendly resource system • Sustainable food system

The project will seek interregional investments within the regions of Attica, Thessaly, Catalonia, and Basilicata following the thematic priorities and key challenged described in section 2.2.

2.2 Thematic priorities and key challenges

The AquaLoops4Med project aims to address shared challenges of water management in the agrifood sector, while fostering the development of new value chains. To this end, AquaLoops4Med has identified 10 key subdomains distributed across four critical domains, covering the entire water management value chain within the agrifood sector:

- Water and wastewater management
- Irrigation
- Agricultural Practices for water efficiency
- Gas emissions from wastewater treatment

Table 2.2 details subdomains as well as the identified challenges in water management within the agrifood sector. A list of non-exhaustive examples of innovative solutions can be found in Annex 2.

Table 2.2: AquaLoops4Med Open Call – thematic priorities, subdomains and current challenges.

DOMAIN I: Water & wastewater management	
Subdomain	Current challenges
Collection & Storage	Ageing or inadequate infrastructures lead to significant **evaporation losses** and **contamination risks,** particularly in open storage systems exposed to high temperatures and prolonged droughts. Many systems lack **adaptation to local conditions**, leading to inefficiencies and operational issues. The **technical complexity** and **high CAPEX-OPEX** hinder the adoption of advanced storage technologies, particularly in small or decentralized

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	settings. Moreover, there remains a **strong dependence on large-scale centralized systems**, which limits flexibility and resilience against extreme weather events.
Anti-flood protection	The absence or ageing of flood protection infrastructure and mitigation measures in agricultural areas leaves them vulnerable to extreme rainfall and erosion. There is a lack of modern, integrated flood management systems, and existing structures are often poorly maintained or inadequate. This limited capacity to prevent or mitigate flooding threatens both agricultural productivity and infrastructure.
Water reclamation/ reuse	Although **advanced wastewater treatment technologies for reuse exist**, their **adoption remains limited and geographically uneven**. Barriers include regulatory constraints, social acceptance barriers, and a lack of incentives or demonstration projects in the agrifood sector.
Pre-, main & post treatment	Available **treatment technologies are often costly and not fully adapted** to the specific needs of the agrifood sector. Many facilities rely on **conventional, energy-intensive systems** with limited digitalization and automation. As a result, **operational costs remain high**, and **emerging contaminants** are not adequately addressed. Smaller or decentralized plants struggle to **maintain consistent performance and regulatory compliance**, further limiting efficiency and sustainability.
Valorisation	The preferred practice remains disposal rather than resource recovery, due to the **complexity and cost** of advanced valorisation systems. While technologies for nutrient and energy recovery exist, they are mainly suitable for large-scale applications and difficult to scale down economically. Limited integration of valorisation into existing infrastructures and dependency on fossil-based fertilizers and energy sources

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	hinder the transition toward a circular wastewater economy.

DOMAIN II: Irrigation	
Subdomain	Current challenges
Advanced monitoring and forecasting tools	**Inefficient water management and undetected leakages** continue to cause significant losses in irrigation networks. The **lack of effective monitoring and decision-support systems** prevents timely interventions and data-driven optimization of water use. In many cases, **outdated infrastructure and irrigation methods** reduce efficiency and increase vulnerability to water shortages. Furthermore, **insufficient integration of remote sensing, IoT, and predictive analytics** limits the ability to forecast water needs accurately and adapt to growing climate-induced variability in water availability.

DOMAIN III: Agricultural Practices for water efficiency	
Subdomain	Current challenges
Crop selection & advanced tools for water-efficient agriculture	While **data-driven crop selection models** and **climate-resilient varieties** are emerging, their **integration of water-use efficiency considerations remains limited**. Farmers often lack **access to locally adapted crop varieties** suited to variable water conditions, as well as **reliable data on crop water needs and soil interactions**. The **use of digital decision-support tools** such as crop modeling software or precision agriculture platforms is still **restricted by financial, technical, and knowledge barriers**. As a result, **traditional crop selection practices** continue to dominate, prioritizing yield and market demand over water optimization, thereby slowing the transition toward **climate-resilient, water-efficient agricultural systems**.

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Cultivation practises for water-efficient agriculture	Despite growing awareness, the **predominant reliance on traditional cultivation methods** results in **inefficient irrigation and poor water management**. Sustainable practices such as conservation tillage, precision irrigation, or soil moisture monitoring remain **underutilized** due to **high investment costs**, **limited access to technology**, and **insufficient technical support and training** for farmers. Moreover, the **lack of demonstration sites, advisory networks, and financing schemes** constrains the adoption of innovative approaches. Consequently, water efficiency in cultivation remains low, making agricultural systems **vulnerable to drought and climate variability**.

DOMAIN IV: **GHG emissions from wastewater treatment**	
Subdomain	Current challenges
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions monitoring and mitigation in agrifood wastewater treatment	Although **greenhouse gas emissions from agrifood wastewater treatment are significant, real-time monitoring technologies remain rarely implemented** due to their high costs, technical complexity, and limited user awareness. As a result, **continuous and reliable GHG data are lacking**, which hinders the accurate quantification of emissions and the design of effective mitigation strategies. **Existing emission reduction technologies are typically expensive** and not easily adaptable to small or decentralized treatment systems common in the agrifood sector. **This gap limits the sector's ability to reduce its carbon footprint** and capitalize on opportunities for biogas recovery and renewable energy generation.

Please note that the list is not exhaustive, and applicants may propose additional challenges and potential solutions aligned with the AquaLoops4Med domains. Applicants may address one or multiple subdomains within a single proposal.

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2.3 Type of activities that can be funded

The AquaLoops4Med's Open Call seeks to support projects proposing innovative solutions that are in line with the call's thematic priorities. **These solutions must demonstrate a high level of technological readiness (TRL ≥ 6), and must achieve an increase of at least one TRL by the end of the projects.**

The types of activities that can be funded must contribute to the demonstration, scale-up and commercialisation of innovative Solutions contributing to the sustainable and circular water management in the agrifood sector. Such activities include:

a. Demonstration and validation

- Implementation of pilot or demonstration installations under real operational conditions.
- Validation of the performance, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of innovative water technologies.
- Field trials assessing efficiency of a novel solution compared to current practices.

b. Scale-up and deployment

- Upscaling of technologies previously validated at pilot scale to pre-commercial or operational level.
- Design, construction, and operation of pre-commercial demonstration units or modular systems.
- Integration of innovative water systems into existing agrifood processing, irrigation, or wastewater infrastructures.

c. Commercialisation and market uptake

- Market-ready demonstration projects with end-users or industrial partners.

In particular, projects should focus on **advancing technology and improving or development processes related to innovative solutions** in **the identified key domains** (as described in Table 2.2) **of the water management value chain within the agrifood sector**.

Applications will only be considered eligible if they align with the objectives of AquaLoops4Med and have an initial Technology Readiness Level (TRL) between 6 and 8 (as shown in Figure 2.1). Applications with initial TRL below 6 or already at TRL 9 will not be eligible.

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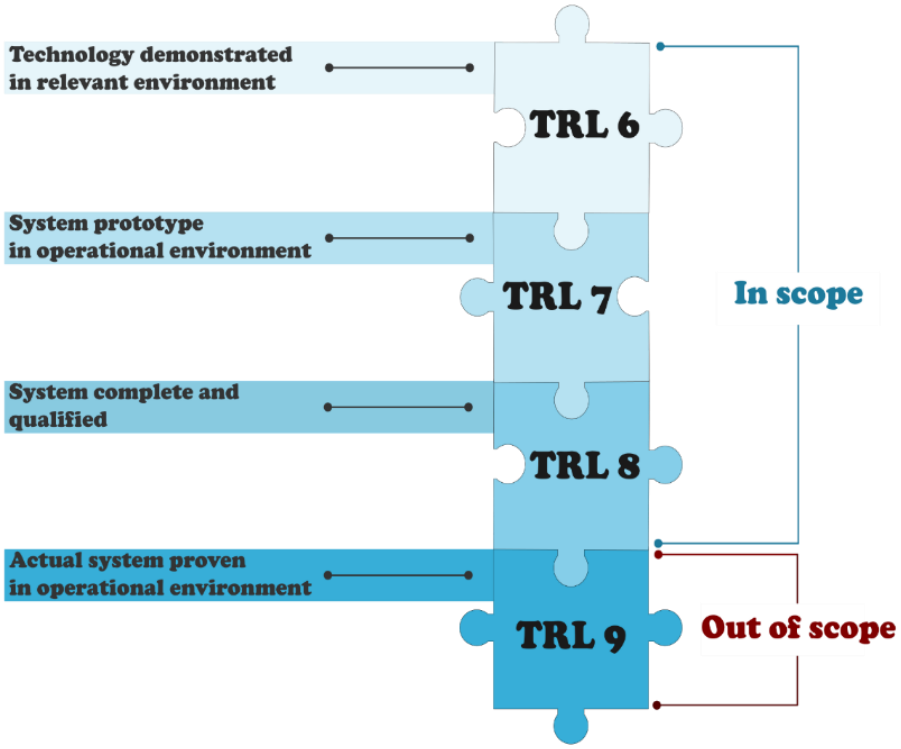

Figure 2.1: Innovation maturity levels at project start

3. Budget, form of grants and payment scheme

3.1 Budget and form of grants

The available budget for the AquaLoops4Med Open Call is **€850,000**. The maximum amount of financial support that can be offered **per SME** is up to **€60,000**, regardless of whether the interregional consortium consists of 2 or 3 applicants. **In compliance with the I3 programme rules, under no circumstances can an SME receive more than €60,000 in financial support under the AquaLoops4Med project.**

Successful proposals shall receive the requested financial contribution in the form of a ***lump sum***. During the submission procedure, applicants must declare the amount to be requested up to the maximum grant amount (60,000€ per SME). A lump sum is a fixed amount of money which can be used by beneficiaries for purposes related to the achievement of the project objectives. Applicants must provide the estimated lump sum breakdown for the action (per beneficiary) following the budget template document, based on the following cost categories:

1. Direct staff cost: costs related to hours of the staff of the beneficiary dedicated to actual work under the project
2. External expertise (subcontracting), limited to 20% of the total project budget: work carried out by an external provider
3. Other direct costs: consumables; travel costs; equipment

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The estimated budget must be based on expenditures incurred during the period of implementation of the project. It will be determined in accordance with the usual accounting and management principles and practise of the applicants. It will respect the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The final amount of financial support will depend on the actual extent to which the action is implemented.

3.2 General terms and beneficiaries' obligations

- All payments will be made in Euros (€).
- Payments will be issued to each member of the interregional consortium (i.e. SMEs) individually.
- Costs incurred for the implementation of the subprojects must be directly and solely related to achieving the project's goals and expected results. These costs must be transparent, reasonable and justified and must comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- The AquaLoops4Med project will not be responsible for covering any costs incurred by beneficiaries as a result of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the AquaLoops4Med funding scheme.
- The submission of an application does not constitute an entitlement to funding.
- The recipients of the financial support from AquaLoops4Med ("Beneficiaries") must ensure that the European Commission, the European Anti-fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors (ECA) can exercise their powers of control, on documents, information, even stored on electronic media, or on the final recipient's premises.

In addition, beneficiaries must ensure that they comply with the following obligations:

- Beneficiaries (i.e. SMEs - members of interregional consortia) must retain adequate records and other supporting documentation that prove the implementation of the action for a period of five (5) years after the final balance payment.
- If there are on-going checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigations or other pursuits of claims under the Agreement (including the extension of funding), the beneficiaries must keep these records and other supporting documentation until the end of these procedures.

3.3 Payments terms of the financial scheme

The funding will be provided in two instalments.

PREFINANCING

Selected applicants will receive the first payment, representing 50% of the total grant, upon signature of the Sub-grant agreement.

PAYMENT OF THE BALANCE

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The remaining 50% of the grant will be disbursed upon successful completion of the project, subject to a positive evaluation of the final deliverable provided by the applicant at the end of the implementation period (up to 8 months).

4. Timeline

Stage	Date
Call Opening Date	1 December 2025
Call Closing Date	27 February 2026
Evaluation period	2 - 30 March 2026
Publication of results and information to all applicants	1 April 2026
Signature of the Agreement	22 April - 14 May 2026 (tentative)
Implementation of the subprojects	May 2026 - January 2027 (tentative)

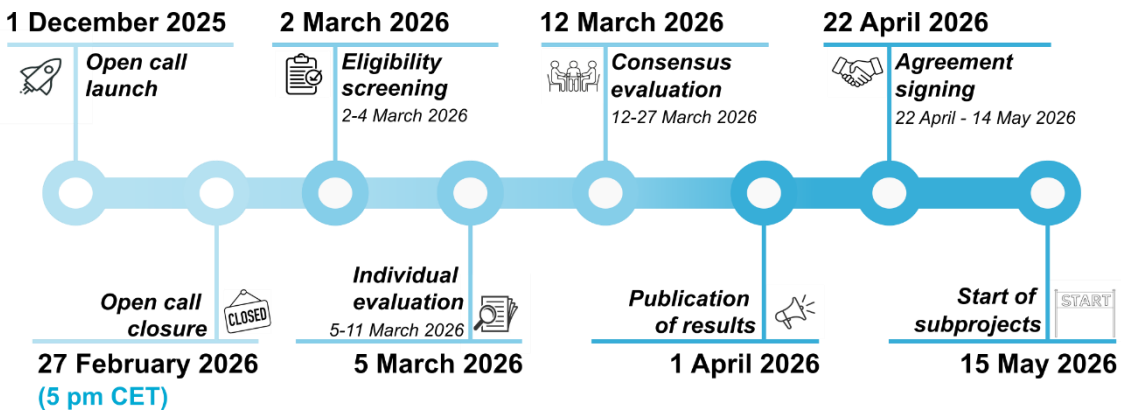

Figure 4.1: AquaLoops4Med Call timeline

5. Admissibility and eligibility

5.1 Admissibility

The call is announced through the project's coordinator webpage and the EU Funding&Tenders platform. Only proposals submitted within the deadline (February 27th, 2026, 17.00 CET) will be evaluated. Upon receipt of each proposal, a submission confirmation e-mail will be sent.

- English is the official language of the AquaLoops4Med Open Call. Submissions even partially written in another language will not be evaluated.
- Applications must not exceed the character limits stated in each section of the pre-defined template (see Annex I)

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- Applications must be submitted exclusively via the online submission platform (link) before the official deadline (February 27th, 2026, at 17.00 CET). Late submissions will not be accepted, and no additions or modifications will be considered after the call closure.
- Applications will be considered admissible only if they include all the following documents following the original templates available at the project's coordinator webpage page. Other formats will not be accepted.
    - Application form
    - Budget table
    - Declaration of Honour

Failure to comply with any of the requirements above will automatically rule the proposal out from the evaluation process.

5.2 Eligibility criteria

- Applicants must be SMEs as defined by the EU (2003/361/EC)[1]. All applicants must use the SME self-assessment tool (SME self-assessment questionnaire) provided by the European Commission. The results of the completed questionnaire must be submitted together with the application.
- Applicants must have been legally established at least 6 months prior to the submission deadline.
- Applicants must be established in one of the following EU regions and countries at the time of application submission.

[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361

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Table 5.1: Eligible regions

Country	Region	NUTS 2 code
Spain	Catalonia	ES51
Italy	Basilicata	ITF5
Greece	Attica	EL30
	Thessaly	EL61

- SMEs must apply as small interregional consortia. Mono-beneficiary applications from individual SMEs will not be eligible. The call is open to technology providers and end users, such as agricultural farms, food processing industries or other relevant SMEs active in the agrifood sector, provided they contribute to the validation or co-development of innovative solutions.
- Consortia can be composed of either 2 or 3 SMEs from at least 2 different regions. One SME will act as lead applicant and will coordinate the consortium through the whole project.
- Applications must address at least one of the domains detailed in Table 2.2.

5.3 Additional information

Multiple applications

Multiple applications under the same call are not allowed. In case of multiple submissions from the same SME, all proposals will be automatically rejected.

Conflict of Interest and Exclusions

- Any potential conflict of interest between applicants and one or more AquaLoops4Med Consortium partners will be assessed on a case-by case basis. The AquaLoops4Med Consortium partners, their affiliated entities, employees, and permanent collaborators cannot participate in the open call.
- Entities under liquidation or classified as enterprises in difficulty according to Commission Regulation No 651/2014, Article 2(18) are not eligible. Entities excluded from receiving EU funding under national or EU law or by decision of a national or EU authority will not be accepted.

Declarations

- All applicants must accept the declarations as described in the corresponding section of Annex I.
- All applicants must submit a Declaration of Honour, confirming compliance with the eligibility requirements.

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6. Evaluation and selection process

To ensure transparency and equal treatment for all applicants, a four-step evaluation procedure will be applied in the Aquallops4Med Open Call, as outlined below:

1) Admissibility Check. An admissibility check will be performed by the Selection Committee to discard inadmissible applications in accordance with section 5.1 of this call text. Proposal must meet **all** the admissibility criteria.
2) Eligibility Check: An eligibility check will be performed by the Selection Committee to discard ineligible applications in accordance with sections 5.2 and 5.3 of this call text. Only applications that meet these conditions will advance to the evaluation stage.
3) Evaluation of the Proposals: Each proposal will be evaluated by three independent reviewers from the AquaLoops4Med consortium (review panel), each from a different organization. The evaluation will be conducted in two steps:
    1.1.1. Individual evaluation: Each member of the application review panel will assess the application form, based on the evaluation criteria.
    1.1.2. Consensus evaluation: All the members of the application review panel will meet online to collectively evaluate the application forms, based on their individual evaluation, ensuring a coherent, fair and transparent evaluation process.
4) Selection of the proposals. The Selection Committee will oversee and validate the evaluation process, ensuring consistency and the absence of conflicts of interest, fraud or double funding. The Committee will develop a ranking list according to the results and communicate the results to successful applicants via e-mail. The AquaLoops4Med Selection Committee will be composed by four representatives of the project consortium. Both the members of the Selection Committee and the Review Panels will sign a declaration of absence of conflicts of interest.

6.1 Evaluation criteria

Proposals passing the admissibility and eligibility checks will be evaluated and ranked according to a set of criteria, namely relevance, potential impact, quality and efficiency of implementation. Each of these criteria includes specific sub-criteria, as outlined in Table 6.1.

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Table 6.1: Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria	Sub-criteria	Score	Weighted Score
1. Relevance (30%)	1.1 Technical quality, alignment with AquaLoops4Med domains and S3 priorities	5	10
	1.2 Innovation potential	5	10
	1.3 Expected results	5	10
Total Relevance			30
2. Impact (40%)	2.1 Contribution to the value chain	5	10
	2.2 Interregional impact	5	10
	2.3 Commercialisation strategy	5	10
	2.4 Market potential	5	10
Total Impact			40
3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation (30%)	3.1 Feasibility, coherence and effectiveness of the work plan	5	10
	3.2 Use of Resources & Cost-Effectiveness	5	10
	3.3 Quality and Complementarity of the Consortium	5	10
Total 'Quality and efficiency of the implementation			30

A 5% bonus will be awarded to cross-country projects, with participants from at least 2 different countries.

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6.2 Scoring system and ranking

Proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria described in Table 6.1, with scores assigned to each. A minimum threshold of 60% of the maximum score applies to every criterion This corresponds to at least 18 points for Criterion 1 ('Relevance'), at least 24 points for Criterion 2 ('Impact') and at least 18 points for Criterion 3 ("Quality and efficiency of the implementation")

In addition to meeting these individual thresholds, proposals must achieve an overall score of at least 70% across all criteria to be considered eligible for funding. Proposals that fail to meet the threshold for any individual criterion or the overall 70% threshold will not be funded.

Each sub-criterion is scored on a scale from 1 to 5 points, with the following interpretations:

1 - Poor. The sub-criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 - Fair. While the proposal broadly addresses the sub-criterion, there are significant weaknesses.

3 - Good. The proposal addresses the sub-criterion well, but with at least one moderate weakness.

4 - Very good. The proposal addresses the sub-criterion very well, although with minor weaknesses.

5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the sub-criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

Half-points are not allowed in scoring. However, decimal points may arise during the score normalization process, which is a part of the overall evaluation procedure. Each sub-criterion has a specific weighted score (see Table 6.1) that contributes to the final score calculation. The score for each criterion will be determined by summing the weighted scores of its individual sub-criteria.

The same evaluation criteria and scoring system will be applied to all proposals. The overall score for each proposal will be calculated by summing the weighted scores of the three criteria, with a maximum possible score of 100 points.

Proposals will be ranked according to their overall score (the sum of the scores for all criteria), and funding decisions will be made according to this ranking. In case of two or more proposals achieving the same overall score, the following rules will be used for ranking:

- Priority will be given to the proposal with the higher score in the Impact criterion.
- If the tie persists, the next determining criterion will be Relevance, followed by Quality and Efficiency of implementation, in that order.

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6.3 Evaluation procedure

The evaluation process is expected to be completed within a maximum of 30 days from the closing date of the Open Call. Upon conclusion of the evaluation, applicants will be notified of the assessment outcomes via e-mail. This notification will include instructions regarding the next steps for successful applicants. The list will also be made publicly available on the website of the project coordinator. A reserve list will be established for projects that meet the score threshold (see section 6.2) but cannot be funded due to budget limitations. Applicants on the reserve list may be contacted if one or more selected projects fail to sign the Subgrant Agreement.

7. Monitoring and reporting process

Each successful proposal will be assigned a dedicated monitoring technician, who will support them throughout the entire project implementation period. These monitoring technicians are partners of the AquaLoops4Med project and will serve as a communication bridge between the selected subprojects and the AquaLoops4Med consortium. They will provide support, guidance, and expertise regarding the implementation of the project. The assignment of monitoring technicians will be based on an analysis of the awarded applicants' profiles, considering their technical and scientific expertise, as well as regional proximity (i.e., whenever possible, the technician will be from the same region as the lead applicant).

Throughout the implementation period of the awarded subprojects, applicants must hold regular monthly meetings, or additional meetings as needed, with their assigned monitoring technician. These meetings will serve to present progress, discuss the project's status, and receive advice or support as needed. It is recommended that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Milestones, with clear, measurable, and verifiable characteristics, shape these discussions. This will provide a clearer understanding of the project's progress, help identify any support needs, and enable timely mitigation actions if necessary.

In the case of poor or non-performance during the implementation period, the applicant's participation in the Open Call may be terminated at any time, with the legal consequences outlined in the Subgrant Agreement for the Open Call taking effect.

One month after the end of each reporting period (see table Table 7.1), as will be defined in the Subgrant Agreement, the beneficiaries of the Open Call are required to submit a performance progress report for their project. In addition to the progress report, the relevant deliverables that validate the work completed must also be submitted.

The overall aim of the above is to evaluate:

- The extent to which the project work plan and related deliverables have been fulfilled.
- The level of achievement of the declared KPIs.
- The impact achieved in accordance with the approved proposal.

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Table 7.1: Required reporting documents

Reporting procedure
2 reports: Mid-term report: The Beneficiaries must submit a mid-term report halfway through the project implementation. Final report: The Beneficiaries must submit a final report at the end of the project. Deliverables: in accordance with the work plan submitted at proposal stage

For selected subprojects, the respective interregional consortium members must establish an internal consortium agreement regulating their cooperation. This internal agreement should define the terms of cooperation, including Intellectual Property Rights, as well as the use and dissemination of the results or outcomes generated in the subproject through the funding obtained under the AquaLoops4Med FSTP scheme. The AquaLoops4Med partners are not responsible for the content of the consortium agreement signed between the partners of the subprojects.

8. Complaints and Appeal procedure

If, following the announcement of the Open Call results, any complaints regarding the project selection process arise, they must be submitted by the lead applicant on behalf of the project to **the project coordinator (comunicacio@cwp.cat)** within **five (5) calendar days** of the results being communicated. The complaint must be submitted in English and should clearly include the following information:

- Lead contact name and contact details
- The subject of the complaint
- Information and evidence supporting the alleged breach

Based on the details provided by the applicant, the Redress Committee - comprising one representative from each AquaLoops4Med beneficiary partner - will review the complaint. The committee will assess the case, determine whether the complaint is justified, and notify both the applicant and the consortium of its decision.

If the complaint is deemed justified, the Redress Committee will notify the reviewers to re-assess the application and the specific section of the evaluation related to the complaint. The reviewers will then provide the Redress Committee with an updated assessment.

Applicants will be informed of the final decision regarding the complaint by the Review Committee within **15 days** from the date of the complaint submission. This decision will be final

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and binding for all parties involved and not subject to further complaint proceedings if the complaint is based on the same grounds.

9. Confidentiality and data protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU) ensures that data processing respects the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, including their dignity, confidentiality, personal identity, and right to data protection.

By applying to the AquaLoops4Med Open Call, applicants acknowledge and consent to the storage and use of their personal data for the purpose of executing the objectives and work plan of the AquaLoops4Med project.

The AquaLoops4Med consortium is committed to managing personal data and project-related information with confidentiality, except for the call results, which will contain the following information:

- Information on successful applications will be published before the subgrant's conclusion, including the project title, names of SMEs, and a short description of the project (as provided by the respective applicants in the application template).
- Information on successful applications that will be published after the subgrant's conclusion, including the project title, names of SMEs, the funding awarded, and an updated short description of the project (as provided by the respective project partners in the final report).

Data processing carried out by AquaLoops4Med will adhere to GDPR principles, particularly those outlined in Article 24, ensuring lawfulness, fairness, and the protection of applicants' rights and confidentiality. Applicants are informed that the data provided will be treated and used solely for the purposes related to the procedure for which the documentation was submitted.

The National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) will act as the Data Controller for this open call, while the Catalan Water Partnership (CWP) serves as the designated Data Protection Officer (DPO) for the AquaLoops4Med project.

All personal data collected during the application process will be stored on Aqualoops4Med's SharePoint, which complies with GDPR requirements. Data stored on EU Funding & Tenders Portal will only be accessible to authorized personnel involved in the evaluation and management of the AquaLoops4Med project. Moreover, data will also be stored in the project repository, managed by the project coordinator, CWP.

Applicants may exercise their rights regarding their personal data under Article 12 of the GDPR, which guarantees transparent access to their personal data and the ability to request updates, rectifications, or other actions regarding its processing. For inquiries or concerns about data processing, please contact the DPO of AquaLoops4Med project at comunicacio@cwp.cat.

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The selection and evaluation of applications will be conducted with the highest ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality of all information received. Kindly be informed that the AquaLoops4Med team has made every effort to request only the *minimum* information necessary to carry out the evaluation procedure or the support programmes. All collected data will be securely retained for a period of 5 years following the end of the AquaLoops4Med project.

10. Intellectual property rights

As mentioned in Section 7.1, successful consortia must reach a written agreement on Intellectual Property Rights, including the use, exploitation and dissemination of the results generated through funding obtained via the AquaLoops4Med Open Call. If partners have not agreed on IPR by the time of Subgrant Agreement signature, the project will not be eligible for funding.

11. Communication, dissemination and visibility

The awarded subprojects must actively promote their activities, objectives and outcomes. Unless otherwise requested or agreed upon by the European Commission or the AquaLoops4Med project coordinator, all communication and dissemination activities related to the project - whether in electronic/digital form, on social media, or through other channels - must acknowledge AquaLoops4Med and EU support. The following must be included:

- Display the EU emblem
- Display the AquaLoops4Med logo
- Include the following acknowledgment:

"This project has received funding from the European Union's Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument under AquaLoops4Med project (GA nº 101161349)."

Once the Subgrant Agreement is signed, a communication kit containing all the required logos will be provided to all beneficiaries.

12. Gender equality

Concerning gender balance, the AquaLoops4Med consortium strives for a balanced representation regarding female participation and will actively pursue this goal. Accordingly, applicants are strongly recommended to actively promote and take measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men throughout the implementation of their project activities.

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Applicants should aim to address gender issues and achieve balance across all levels of personnel involved in their projects, including supervisory and managerial positions, whenever feasible.

13. Disclaimer

Purpose: This text is developed for the I3 AquaLoops4Med project for information purposes only. No rights can be claimed based on this document. This document does not reflect the views of the European Commission and EISMEA.

Mistakes or inconsistencies: The AquaLoops4Med consortium is not responsible for any mistakes or misinterpretations that this text may cause. In the case of inconsistencies, the AquaLoops4Med consortium will determine the steps to be taken, in cooperation with the applicant concerned.

Consequential damages: In no event shall either party be liable to the other, or to any of its affiliates, for any consequential, incidental, indirect, special, punitive, or exemplary damages - including without limitation any loss of profits, business, or goodwill - rising out of or in connection with this sub-funding scheme, even if such party has been advised of the possibility of such damages.

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ANNEX I - Application Platform

AquaLoops4Med – Application Platform

Basic information

Title of project proposal

Acronym of project proposal

Domain (dropdown menu)

Total requested budget in euros

Project duration (months)

TRL at project start and TRL at project end

Please explain how your partnership fulfils the interregional eligibility criteria. *max 1500 characters*

Does your project involve partners from more than one country? Y/N

Contact details (Lead applicant)

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Name and Surname	
Email address	
Phone number	

Consortium information

Please indicate the number of SME partners in the consortium

PP 1 – LEAD applicant – SME1		Company legal name
Region		(dropdown menu: Attica, Thessaly, Catalonia, Basilicata)
Website (if applicable)		
Main field of activity		
Address		
Legal Status		
VAT number		
Company registration date. Please note that applicants must have been legally established at least 6 months prior to the submission deadline. Proof will be required before Subgrant Agreement signature.		
Number of full-time staff equivalent currently employed		
Contact person	Name, surname	
	Function/Role	
	Email	
	Phone (code country format)	

Partner (SME 2)	Company legal name
Region	(dropdown menu: Attica, Thessaly, Catalonia, Basilicata)
Website (if applicable)	
Main field of activity	
Address	
Legal Status	
VAT number	
Company registration date. Please note that applicants must have been legally	

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established at least 6 months prior to the submission deadline. Proof will be required before Subgrant Agreement signature.		
Number of full-time staff equivalent currently employed		
Contact person	Name, surname	
	Function/Role	
	Email	
	Phone (code country format)	

Partner (SME 3) (this option will only appear if "Please indicate the number of SME partners in the consortium" is 3)		Company legal name
Region		(dropdown menu: Attica, Thessaly, Catalonia, Basilicata)
Website (if applicable)		
Main field of activity		
Address		
Legal Status		
VAT number		
Company registration date. Please note that applicants must have been legally established at least 6 months prior to the submission deadline. Proof will be required before Subgrant Agreement signature.		
Number of full-time staff equivalent currently employed		
Contact person	Name, surname	
	Function/Role	
	Email	
	Phone (code country format)	

Gender Equality

The AquaLoops4Med project seeks gender balance, diversity protection and social inclusion. Applicants are encouraged to take all measures to promote gender balance in project teams and leadership roles, and to integrate the gender dimension into innovation activities where

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relevant as well as to address diversity, although it is not a strict elegibility requirement nor will it be evaluated.

Are there any female participants involved in the project activities? Y/N

How many female participants are involved?

Provide an explanation on how your project will address gender equality and social inclusion (not mandatory) (max. 1000 characters)

Upload your project proposal

Application form

Please use the official Application Form template (Max. 10MB) available at: https://cwp.cat/en/news/aqualoops4med-open-call/

Budget table

Please provide the estimated lump sum breakdown per partner-SME and per work package by filling in the template provided here: https://cwp.cat/en/news/aqualoops4med-open-call/. The eligible cost categories are detailed in the Call text, section 3.1. *max 10MB*

Please note that each SME can apply for a grant of max. €60,000.00.

Annex

Only **one Annex** can be submitted, including diagrams, charts, and Letters of Interest. It must be a PDF and can be **up to 5 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size**. The font must be legible at 100% zoom. (No fixed template)

SME self-assessment document

Please upload the results of the EU SME self assessment. All applicants need to perform the assessment. Upload as many files as project partners.

Declarations

Confidentiality and Data Protection

GDPR Compliance

In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR), the AquaLoops4Med consortium ensures that all personal data collected will be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently, safeguarding the rights and freedoms of the data subjects, including their right to privacy, dignity, and data protection.

By submitting this application, the applicant consents to the collection, processing, and storage of their personal data for purposes strictly related to the management, evaluation, and

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implementation of the AquaLoops4Med project (Grant Agreement No. 101161349), co-funded by the European Union.

The AquaLoops4Med consortium commits to protecting this data and maintaining its confidentiality, except for specific project-related disclosures, which may include:

- Before the end of the project: Public listing of selected projects with project title, partner names, and a short public summary (as submitted).

- After the project ends: Final reporting data including updated project description and awarded funding amounts.

Data will only be accessible to members of the AquaLoops4Med consortium and to authorized bodies of the European Commission for monitoring and auditing purposes.

☐ I understand and agree

Privacy Declaration

By submitting the application, the applicant agrees that the submitted project idea and associated personal data may be shared internally among AquaLoops4Med consortium partners for evaluation. All data will be handled confidentially in accordance with the principles outlined above and as specified in Article 15 of the Grant Agreement.

☐ I understand and agree with the AquaLoops4Med privacy declaration.

Applicant Declarations

The Applicant hereby declares that:

☐ All applicants are Small or Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) as defined by the EU (Check EU SME definition)

☐ All project partners listed in this application have provided their explicit consent for participation and for the proposal's content.

☐ All information contained in this proposal is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge.

☐ The proposed activities comply with ethical principles, including those of research integrity.

☐ There are no conflicts of interest between the applicants of the subproject and any of the AquaLoops4Med partners.

Financial Stability and Capacity

☐ I confirm that the applicant is not "in difficulty" as defined in Section 2.1 of the Community Guidelines on State Aid for Rescuing and Restructuring Firms in Difficulty (2004/C 244/02).

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☐ I confirm that the applicant and each listed partner possess the financial and operational capacity required to successfully implement the proposed activities.

Declaration of Honour

Please upload the DoH signed by all partners. The template is available at: https://cwp.cat/en/news/aqualoops4med-open-call/

Consent and Agreement

☐ I understand and agree with the AquaLoops4Med Terms and Conditions.

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ANNEX 2 - Examples of innovative solutions

AquaLoops4Med Open Call – thematic priorities and types of activities

	Subdomain	Current challenges	Example of innovative solutions
DOMAIN I: Water & wastewater management	Collection & Storage	Ageing or inadequate infrastructures lead to significant **evaporation losses** and **contamination risks,** particularly in open storage systems exposed to high temperatures and prolonged droughts. Many systems lack **adaptation to local conditions**, leading to inefficiencies and operational issues. The **technical complexity** and **high CAPEX-OPEX** hinder the adoption of advanced storage technologies, particularly in small or decentralized settings. Moreover, there remains a **strong dependence on large-scale centralized systems**, which limits flexibility and resilience against extreme weather events.	*Advanced water collection and storage systems:* Innovative cost-effective equipment for water collection and storage (e.g. tanks, piping). These systems may include pre-treatment options such as pumps with filters before collection/storage and could be applied to treat different water sources such as rainwater, greywater, etc.
	Anti-flood protection	The absence or ageing of **flood protection infrastructure and mitigation measures** in agricultural areas leaves them vulnerable to extreme rainfall and erosion. There is **a lack of modern, integrated flood management systems**, and existing structures are often poorly maintained or inadequate. This limited capacity to prevent or mitigate flooding threatens both agricultural productivity and infrastructure.	*Flood protection and mitigation systems:* Solutions such as drainage systems, modular flood barriers or permeable infrastructures. These can be integrated with real-time monitoring and weather forecasting to enable adaptive flood prevention strategies in agricultural settings.
	Water reclamation/ reuse	Although **advanced wastewater treatment technologies for reuse exist**, their **adoption remains limited and geographically uneven**. Barriers include regulatory constraints, social acceptance barriers, and a lack of incentives or demonstration projects in the agrifood sector.	*Advance water/wastewater treatment systems:* Production of high-quality reclaimed water from non-conventional water sources that can be reused in industrial agrifood settings or irrigation or building's operational needs.

	Subdomain	Current challenges	Example of innovative solutions
	Pre-, main & post treatment	Available **treatment technologies are often costly and not fully adapted** to the specific needs of the agrifood sector. Many facilities rely on **conventional, energy-intensive systems** with limited digitalization and automation. As a result, **operational costs remain high**, and **emerging contaminants** are not adequately addressed. Smaller or decentralized plants struggle to **maintain consistent performance and regulatory compliance**, further limiting efficiency and sustainability.	*Modular, low-energy wastewater treatment systems:* Low-energy, modular wastewater (pre-,main or post-) treatment solutions designed for agricultural and/or food processing industry needs. These systems will improve feasibility and adoption from farms or agrifood processing plants.

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	Valorisation	The preferred practice remains disposal rather than resource recovery, due to the **complexity and cost** of advanced valorisation systems. While technologies for nutrient and energy recovery exist, they are mainly suitable for large-scale applications and difficult to scale down economically. Limited integration of valorisation into existing infrastructures and dependency on fossil-based fertilizers and energy sources hinder the transition toward a circular wastewater economy.	*Advanced recovery of wastewater-derived resources* • *Production of plants growth enhancers:* Innovative systems converting wastewater-derived organic waste into bio-fertilizers. These solutions reduce reliance on synthetic inputs, lower nutrient runoff, and contribute to improved soil-water efficiency and overall water quality protection. • *Production of other added-value substances*: Innovative technologies or processes leading to the reliable and cost-effective production of high added-value substances from wastewater (as enzymes, biopesticides, organic acids, aromatic compounds). *Biogas recovery/upgrading system for anaerobic wastewater treatment processes:* Innovative technologies or processes for energy recovery (e.g. chemical or membrane-based biogas upgrading systems) leading to a clean energy source from agricultural or agri-industrial wastewater.

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	Subdomain	Current challenges	Example of innovative solutions
	Monitoring	The **existing monitoring and control systems are often costly, complex, and not user-friendly**, restricting their use in small and medium-sized facilities. There is a **lack of affordable, real-time monitoring tools** for both water quality and consumption. Data are frequently **fragmented or underutilized**, impeding predictive maintenance and efficient water management. Consequently, **optimization of processes and early detection of contamination events** remain insufficient.	• *Digital water/wastewater monitoring systems:* Adaptive, cost-effective water/wastewater monitoring solutions to monitor water quality or quantity or both in real-time applications. • *Optimisation of water consumption:* Monitoring systems for minimising the water dependence from conventional water sources in industrial production processes within the agrifood sector.
DOMAIN II: Irrigation	Advanced monitoring and forecasting tools	**Inefficient water management and undetected leakages** continue to cause significant losses in irrigation networks. The **lack of effective monitoring and decision-support systems** prevents timely interventions and data-driven optimization of water use. In many cases, **outdated infrastructure and irrigation methods** reduce efficiency and increase vulnerability to water shortages. Furthermore, **insufficient integration of remote sensing, IoT, and predictive analytics** limits the ability to forecast water needs accurately and adapt to growing climate-induced variability in water availability.	*Data-driven water management systems:* Solutions for detecting leakages and/or monitoring system, with possible integration of AI technology using smart meters and remote sensing for optimized water management on agricultural fields.

	Subdomain	Current challenges	Example of innovative solutions
DOMAIN III: Agricultural Practices for water efficiency	Crop selection & advanced tools for water-efficient agriculture	While **data-driven crop selection models** and **climate-resilient varieties** are emerging, their **integration of water-use efficiency considerations remains limited**. Farmers often lack **access to locally adapted crop varieties** suited to variable water conditions, as well as **reliable data on crop water needs and soil interactions**. The **use of digital decision-support tools** such as crop modeling software or precision agriculture platforms is still **restricted by financial, technical, and knowledge barriers**. As a result, **traditional crop selection practices** continue to dominate, prioritizing yield and market demand over water optimization, thereby slowing the transition toward **climate-resilient, water-efficient agricultural systems**.	*Digital solutions and decision support systems for optimal crop selection:* Digital solutions/tools, with possible integration of AI to assist farmers in selecting the most suitable crops based on multi-parameter criteria (water availability, soil properties, climate conditions). Higher productivity and efficient water use are supported by matching crop choices with local water availability.
	Cultivation practises for water-efficient agriculture	Despite growing awareness, the **predominant reliance on traditional cultivation methods** results in **inefficient irrigation and poor water management**. Sustainable practices such as conservation tillage, precision irrigation, or soil moisture monitoring remain **underutilized** due to **high investment costs**, **limited access to technology**, and **insufficient technical support and training** for farmers. Moreover, the **lack of demonstration sites, advisory networks, and financing schemes** constrains the adoption of innovative approaches. Consequently, water efficiency in cultivation remains low, making agricultural systems **vulnerable to drought and climate variability**.	*Automated precision farming systems:* Integrated solutions that can combine robotics, sensors, data-driven decision-making to optimize water inputs and cultivation operations. These systems enable site-specific irrigation, reduce water waste, and improve crop water use efficiency. When combined with stress and disease detection tools, they further support optimized plant health while ensuring sustainable water management.

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	Subdomain	Current challenges	Example of innovative solutions
DOMAIN IV: GHG emissions	Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions monitoring and mitigation in agrifood wastewater treatment	Although **greenhouse gas emissions from agrifood wastewater treatment are significant, real-time monitoring technologies remain rarely implemented** due to their high costs, technical complexity, and limited user awareness. As a result, **continuous and reliable GHG data are lacking**, which hinders the accurate quantification of emissions and the design of effective mitigation strategies. **Existing emission reduction technologies are typically expensive** and not easily adaptable to small or decentralized treatment systems common in the agrifood sector. **This gap limits the sector's ability to reduce its carbon footprint** and capitalize on opportunities for biogas recovery and renewable energy generation.	*Real-time GHG monitoring systems:* IoT-based systems with possible integration of AI-driven analytics for monitoring GHG emissions from wastewater treatment on farms/ agrifood industries. In water-related processes (wastewater treatment & irrigation), these systems support their optimization and contribute to a more sustainable water management.

Please note that the list of examples of innovative solutions is not exhaustive, and applicants may propose additional challenges and potential solutions aligned with the AquaLoops4Med domains. Applicants may address one or multiple subdomains within a single proposal.

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